



County of Sonoma

Response to Questions presented to Vegetation Management Grant Program

April 18, 2023

The following Questions were generated from the virtual workshops on April 4 and April 11 as well as questions sent to the VegManagement@sonoma-county.org email address. Please feel free to review the materials presented in the virtual workshops: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLi1-rnF1nMqqGbAWgnJx5ENXeGkw0YNdo>

Question:

1. If our proposal is for educational outreach do we need to complete this mapping exercise?

Response:

Yes. If your project is county-wide the geographic center of Sonoma County is the Sonoma County Airport. Use the Airport as your project area and indicate clearly in your narrative that this is a countywide educational project. If your project concerns all southern Sonoma County then identify a logical center and use that as your project area.

Question:

2. What will happen to the projects that were previously entered in the CWPP project list?

Response:

An email will be sent to those who have entered their project in the 2021 CWPP Plan requesting that you re-enter the project. This should not take too much time since you have prepared a Project Description and the Project Entry Portal will allow you to refine the project map.

Question:

3. What level of authority do you need to demonstrate that we have public land approval? In other words, a land steward or state authority.

Response:

Please the name and contact information of the person for the corresponding public agency. The County will reach out the public agency to see if they are familiar with your project and agree with the proposed objectives.

Question:
4. The Grants application states that your project must be either exempt from CEQA or CEQA review must be complete before the Grant Award.
Response:
That is NOT correct. We want to see that you are clear on the type of CEQA compliance your project qualifies for. If you believe it qualifies under an exemption you should state which exemption is appropriate. Permit Sonoma will ultimately prepare the Notice of Exemption if the project qualifies for grant funding.
Private landowners are unable to file an Exemption. Please inform us which CEQA Pathway you are choosing to use.

Question:
5. Is there any Map or anything online that will show where Cal-Fire would like priority fuel breaks or vegetation management work done?
Response:
At this point, no, but that's where the collaboration with us comes into play. Please consult with local fire services and CALFIRE representatives to learn what areas serve as a strategic fuel break.

Question:
6. Is roadside fuel reduction where the project involves removal of hazardous vegetation in the right of way areas within 15 feet of the road's edge, a CEQA exemption?
Response:
It depends. There are different considerations. If you're working near certain streams or if your project is working around certain wildlife occurrences or if there's the potential for impacts on wildlife it may exclude the project from a CEQA exemption where it might be necessary to a higher level of CEQA analysis. We would encourage you to write out what you are proposing and document where it is going to be. That way we can take a look at that point and help determine, at that point, if it is CEQA exempt.

Question:
7. What's the current cost of an encroachment permit? Is it per day or how does that work?
Response:
See link to Encroach Permits procedures via Permit Sonoma. Please include this cost in your budget if required.

Question:
8. What's a typical turnaround time for the CEQA exemption? How long does it typically take for an NOE to be processed once the grant is approved?
Response:
It depends on the complexity of the project. If you've supplied all the information that we need, and you document all your avoidance measures and have completed the Project Description, it will typically require a few weeks to process. It may take quite longer if there is insufficient information or the scope of the project needs to be modified.

Question:
9. Is there a list of approved and vetted tree service companies that we can access and contact?
Response:
Unfortunately, the County cannot advocate for any specific tree service. This is a competitive grant process so we will rely on you doing the research, and talking to groups to be able to identify the most appropriate service provider for your project.

Question:
10. Is it possible to enter more than one public land entity for the Project Entry Portal survey?
Responses:
The Project Entry Portal survey box for Public Entity has sufficient room to enter additional public entities, if applicable. If you are working with the Parks, enter the Park, enter the name of the Contact, the email of the contact, separate it out, enter your next Park, your next contact and your next email contact. You can list them out just separate them in that box.

Question:
11. Will an applicant need to complete an Request for Proposal for tree service contractors, or can we use ones we already have a relationship with.
Responses:
It is NOT necessary to prepare a Request for Proposals to select the contractor you hope to use to complete your project. We encourage you to use the people you are comfortable working with that meet your minimum criteria.

Question:
12. Who should we talk to?
Response:
The grant deadline should NOT be the best motivator to design and develop a project. We encourage you to use the resources mentioned during the workshops. Chief Nicholls and his regional chiefs are available to discuss your project and are able to understand what you are trying to accomplish, and what steps need to be taken. The Community Wildfire Prevention Plan Hub Site is also designed to help connect landowners to understand whose working in your particular area, so we encourage you to follow up and look at all the resources. Finally, please visit the Sonoma County Ag + Open Space Vegetation Management Grant website for additional resources.

Question:
13. Will the vegetation management program fund CWPP planning and writing or Fire Wise community plans?
Response:
The Vegetation Management Grant program will not fund Community Wildfire Prevention Plan development or Fire Wise community plans. There may be opportunities to pursue funding from the US Forest Service’s Community Wildfire Defense Grant program for funding.

Question:
14. Are electronic signatures allowed for the signature pages or would they need to be in ink and scanned?
Response:
Either an electronic signature or a scanned signature is acceptable.