

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT PROVIDING DEFENSIBLE SPACE FOR YOUR STRUCTURES ON MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY PARKLAND



## **WHY DID I RECEIVE THIS LETTER?**

A structure you own or occupy is within 200 feet of property managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority as established by local ordinance.

The Conservation Authority is giving you permission to clear brush on Conservation Authority property within 200 feet of occupied structures on your property.

## **THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY HAS CLEARED BRUSH NEAR MY HOUSE IN THE PAST, WHY THE CHANGE?**

As a result of recent changes in State law, the Conservation Authority has revised its brush clearance policy. Under the law, the owner of an occupied structure is solely responsible for maintaining "defensible space" around the structures on their own property and on adjacent parkland.

## **DOESN'T THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY HAVE TO CLEAR BRUSH TO PROTECT MY STRUCTURES?**

Under California law (Section 51184 of the Government Code), you are responsible to maintain "defensible space" around your occupied structure and on adjacent protected parkland.

## **WHAT IF I DON'T CLEAR BEYOND MY PROPERTY LINE?**

You are required by State law to maintain 100 feet of "defensible space" around your structures. Local laws require 100 feet and up to 200 feet of clearance in Ventura County and Los Angeles County and 200 feet in the City of Los Angeles.

## **THERE IS A FENCE BETWEEN OUR PROPERTIES. HOW DO I GET ACCESS TO CLEAR BRUSH ON CONSERVATION AUTHORITY PROPERTY?**

You can access Conservation Authority parkland without motorized vehicles from any public access point or entrance including dead-end streets. You

are also welcome to erect an access gate from your property for this purpose.

## **HOW WILL I KNOW HOW FAR TO CLEAR?**

The enclosed aerial photograph shows the allowable clearance area from your occupied structure.

## **CAN I CUT DOWN TREES IN THE ALLOWABLE CLEARANCE AREA?**

You can thin trees in accordance with recommended defensible space guidelines. However, you do not have permission to cut down, or cause major alterations to, trees on Conservation Authority properties.

## **CAN I CONTRACT WITH THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO DO THE CLEARANCE?**

The Conservation Authority does not have the capability to provide brush clearance services. Although we do not recommend or endorse any contractor, a list of brush clearance contractors is on the back of your aerial photograph.

## **CAN I CLEAR THE BRUSH MYSELF?**

Yes.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE USE OF GOATS FOR BRUSH CLEARANCE?**

This is allowed.

## **CAN I PLANT AND IRRIGATE FIRE-RESISTANT NATIVE PLANTS ON MRCA PROPERTY?**

Yes. A recommended planting scheme is on the back side of this brochure. Any plant native to the Santa Monica Mountains is acceptable.

## **WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?**

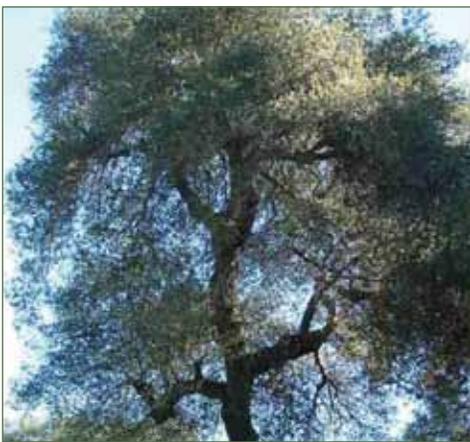
Visit the CONSERVATION AUTHORITY website at [www.mrca.ca.gov/fire-prevention.html](http://www.mrca.ca.gov/fire-prevention.html)

Or call: 888-687-0552

## HOW TO CREATE DEFENSIBLE SPACE AND BEAUTIFUL NATIVE LANDSCAPING AT THE SAME TIME

Planting of a few key native species can make an attractive year-round landscape. These six native plant species are evergreen shrubs and trees that are tolerant of some irrigation and have natural fire resistance. It is important to properly irrigate new plantings. Both under-watering, and over-watering, can lead to unhealthy plants. Once established, these plants will be able to thrive without any supplemental irrigation. Use of these six basic species offers a low cost, low maintenance method to promote fire safety while increasing the amenity value of land located within brush clearance zones.

Brush clearance does not mean clearing all plants, but the selective removal and trimming of highly flammable vegetation. Irrigation of partially cleared hillsides will also improve the fire resistance and appearance of remaining shrubs. Space small trees and large shrubs a minimum of 15 feet between canopies or three times their height for smaller trees. For trees and shrubs of less than 18 feet, remove lower branches to one-third of their height. Maintain all plants by regularly removing dead branches and leaves.



**Coast Live Oak**  
*Quercus agrifolia*  
• Tall—great screening ability



**Toyon (Christmas Berry)**  
*Heteromeles arbutifolia*  
• Needs minimal water



**Sugar Bush**  
*Rhus ovata*  
• Likes sun and little or no water



**Holly-leaved Cherry**  
*Prunus ilicifolia*  
• Fast-growing—moderately drought-tolerant



**Coffeeberry**  
*Rhamnus californica*  
• Needs partial shade and summer irrigation to obtain size



**Lemonade Berry**  
*Rhus integrifolia*  
• Good for erosion control

