



## **REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

**DATE:** Regular Meeting of July 23, 2024

**TO:** Mayor and Members of the City Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Dante Hall, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** Approval Of East Bay Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group  
Memorandum of Understanding

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Adopt a resolution authorizing the City of Hercules to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with other jurisdictions in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties to form a Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group (WPCG) to improve region-wide collaboration to reduce wildfire risk.
2. Appoint a member of the City Council to serve on the Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group (WCPG) as the elected official representing the City of Hercules

### **BACKGROUND:**

The risk of catastrophic wildfire is growing due to changing conditions driven by climate change. The Camp Fire, which swept through the town of Paradise in 2018 causing 85 deaths and destroying more than 18,000 buildings, was the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California's history. The wildfire that swept across parts of Maui, destroying much of Lahaina on August 8, 2023, killed at least 97 people, making it one of the deadliest in the nation.

A wildfire that gains enough momentum during these extreme conditions is virtually unstoppable until winds change. Embers flying ahead of a firestorm can easily ignite homes in suburban and urban areas outside of the hills. This occurred during the 2017 Tubbs Fire which raced through the Coffey Park neighborhood in Santa Rosa.

Additionally, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) has determined that the East Bay Hills along the Alameda and Contra Costa Counties border, extending north to Hercules and south to Fremont, is a high wildfire risk zone. Given the growing danger of wildfire, a regional approach to mitigating risk is practical. Wildfire does not respect geographic boundaries, so coordination and collaboration between jurisdictions are essential.

The East Bay Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group is a grassroots coalition of community organizations working with county staff and elected officials who desire to address threats from wildfire.

### **ANALYSIS:**

Coordination among the many jurisdictions, fire districts, and other regional agencies in the East Bay wildfire zone is a challenge without a clear framework for coordination. The East Bay Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group initiated an effort to facilitate the coordination of wildfire prevention efforts in the East Bay Hills in 2019. Attached to this report is an overview of the needs to be addressed by the group (Attachment 3). Initially, the group secured endorsements for a potential Joint Powers Agency (JPA) and made preliminary presentations to elected bodies and commissions to obtain support for a joint resolution that will allow local jurisdictions to explore the formation of the JPA. From December 2021 through June 2022, more than 20 jurisdictions and agencies participated in several workshops for jurisdiction and agency representatives to consider a governing structure, goals, funding strategies, and implementation approach.

These workshops resulted in the nomination of a smaller working group composed of both fire professionals and elected officials from Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, and the Cities of Berkeley, Oakland, Richmond, and Pinole, and the Moraga-Orinda Fire Protection District. In the summer of 2022, the working group made the recommendation to pursue the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in lieu of forming a new JPA. In June 2023, public officials representing 28 jurisdictions agreed on the final draft of the MOU.

The final MOU establishes the Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group's primary purpose, which is to provide regional coordination among elected officials and policy support to fire chiefs and their staff for the following:

1. The development of model fire codes; and
2. The development of joint plans to reduce flammable vegetation and replace it with wildfire-resistant vegetation where appropriate; and
3. To identify and apply for state, federal, or other funds to assist with wildfire risk mitigation activities; and

4. To support planning for wildfire evacuations and response, especially where efforts cross jurisdictional boundaries between one or more of the Participating Agencies; and
5. To work cooperatively to influence legislation at the State level to mitigate wildfire risk and to make wildfire safety a priority.

The City of Pinole, the City of Berkeley, the City of Oakland, Contra Costa County, Contra Costa County Fire, Alameda County, Alameda County Fire, the City of Richmond, the City of El Cerrito, and the Kensington Fire Protection District, have all approved the MOU.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This action does not have any direct fiscal impact. WPCG members may implement dues to fund activities if agreed to by 100% of WPCG members.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution
2. MOU for Coordination of Wildfire Prevention Activities to Protect the East Bay Hills in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties
3. WPCG - Overview of Needs to Be Addressed and Related Efforts
4. East Bay Hills Wildfire Prevention & Coordination Presentation