



FLASH

Fire-adapted Landscapes and Safe Homes Program

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS



What is FLASH?

The Fire-adapted Landscapes and Safe Homes (FLASH) Program shares the cost of managing wildfire prone vegetation (hazardous fuels) with property owners who live within the wildland-urban interface (WUI)—or the transition zone between wildland and human development. The goal of the program is to help property owners adapt their homes to survive, and their landscapes to thrive, in a wildfire environment. This is accomplished by providing Program participants with financial assistance and recommendations on how to effectively create defensible space around their home and reduce hazardous fuels along access routes and in strategic locations on their property. Guidance provided by the Program is consistent with the best available science and is intended to help property owners comply with state and local vegetation management laws and ordinances.

Participation in the Program begins with a site visit from a trained FLASH Technician. During this site visit, the Technician evaluates wildfire hazards and provides a recommended vegetation management prescription. Upon mutual agreement of the work to be performed, a reimbursement estimate is developed to determine the Program's share of cost. Once the recommended work is completed, a FLASH Technician conducts a final site visit to document achievement of project objectives. If the work is completed to specifications, the landowner is reimbursed at a per-acre rate appropriate to the site conditions (i.e. a higher rate for higher fuel loads or difficult work conditions such as steep terrain). The landowner is free to hire whomever they wish to complete the work and may even conduct all or part of the vegetation management work themselves.

The FLASH Technician will also perform a risk assessment of the home to identify simple fixes and longer-term upgrades that can help "harden" the home against wildfire. The landowner learns how their home rates when it comes to building materials, fire hazards near the house, and accessibility to firefighters. Although grant funds are only available to reimburse a portion of the cost for vegetation management work, participants are encouraged to also address other fire safety issues identified in the home risk assessment.

The FLASH Technician may also discuss local fire behavior, history, and ecology as well as various vegetation treatment methods. Information is also provided about local fire safe councils (FSCs), Firewise Community groups, and available fire protection services, as applicable.

Why FLASH?

Fire is a natural component of the landscapes of Humboldt County and will continue to shape them. Every community across Humboldt’s heavily forested landscape experiences periodic windows of opportunity during which conditions are right for a small ignition to grow into a destructive wildfire. Historic development patterns have resulted in the establishment of many small, isolated communities with limited fire protection and prevention resources. Furthermore, wildfire suppression over many decades has resulted in the buildup of fuel and has increased the potential for higher fire intensities, greater loss of life and property, and higher fire suppression costs.

Recent and historic wildfire events in and near Humboldt County have shown the potential for extremely hazardous burning conditions resulting in substantial threat to life, health, and property. Local rural residents have become more and more aware of this threat and are looking for ways to reduce the fire hazards around their homesteads and along their access routes. The FLASH Program represents a response to this increased awareness and desire to take action.

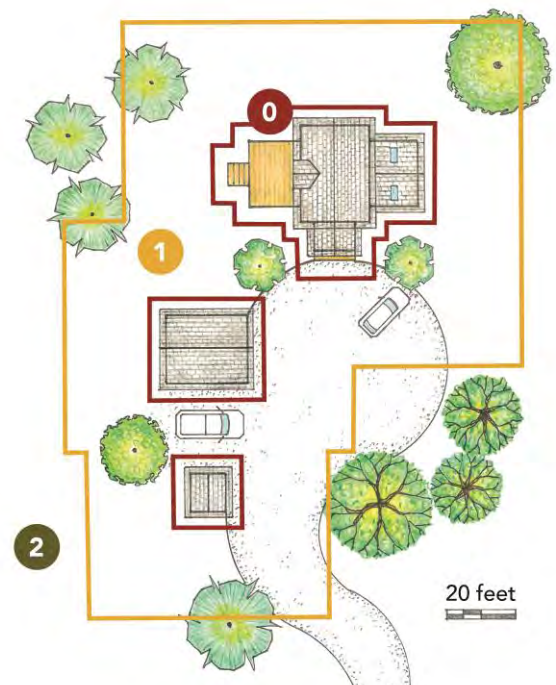
The FLASH Program aims to empower property owners through education and direct experience. The home risk assessment and prescription provided by FLASH Technicians includes discussion with the landowner about which trees to remove, how high to prune, slash disposal, the best tools to use, home fire safety, and more—information critical to maintaining the effectiveness of FLASH treatments.

The Program’s design considers that the initial cost of thinning hazardous fuels is much higher than the cost of maintenance. The financial assistance provided through the Program enables property owners to take action. Without such an incentive, the financial burden and work required may be overwhelming. Not only is maintenance a less daunting task, but participating property owners also have a vested interest in maintaining their projects because of their substantial cost-share investment, contributed directly or as “sweat-equity”.

Landowners who choose to participate in the FLASH Program reap great personal benefits. Most importantly, they dramatically increase the chance of their home surviving a wildfire. The Program can also support a landowner’s ability to meet or even exceed state vegetation management requirements; increase the safety of their evacuation routes; and improve their chances of getting or retaining fire insurance.

The work completed under the FLASH Program confers a public benefit as well as a private one. Conducting hazardous vegetation management around homes and along access routes decreases the likelihood of a wildfire spreading into home ignition zones or impeding safe evacuation of the neighborhood; it also provides firefighters with the option to deploy their resources to protect homes, thereby reducing the risk of structure loss. Well-managed vegetation also decreases wildfire intensity, making it less likely to ignite structures and minimize the potentially destructive impacts of embers. By reducing the ignition potential on individual properties, the threat of wildfires spreading into the greater community or the wildlands is also reduced.

Focus on preparing areas closest to the home (Zone 0) and work outwards to the property line (Zone 1 and 2). Clearing access routes is also critical.



Program Administration

The County of Humboldt, on behalf of the Humboldt County Fire Safe Council (HCFSC), applied for and received funding through the California Climate Investments (CCI) Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Fire Prevention Program Grant program. The FLASH Program leverages private landowner contributions to multiply the benefits of public funds for public good.

While the program is offered countywide, priority is given to participants who meet the criteria of elderly, disabled, and/or low income. It is also a priority of the FLASH Program to increase the effectiveness of vegetation treatments by incentivizing participation from adjacent properties, particularly in high hazard areas, to create a landscape (rather than islands) of defensible space within target neighborhoods. Through professional services agreements with the County, local fire safe councils, community organizations, or independent contractors implement the FLASH Program within their respective service areas. Overall grant administration and program oversight are provided by the Humboldt County Natural Resources Planning Division with guidance from the HCFSC, UC Cooperative Extension, and CAL FIRE. Each of these organizations bring experience and expertise to the process of designing and carrying out the best possible program.

PROGRAM STEPS & REQUIREMENTS

Program Steps

I.	HCFSC / County	Solicit interest forms from potential program participants
II.	County	Prioritize interested landowners and confirm willingness to participate.
III.	FLASH Technician	Conduct initial site visit and Home Risk Assessment, as applicable.
IV.	FLASH Technician	Identify fuels reduction project boundaries, acreage, environmental impact information, and treatment prescriptions.
V.	FLASH Technician	Develop reimbursement estimate and map. Take “Before” photos.
VI.	Landowner	Sign Participation Agreement, Reimbursement Agreement, and other forms.
VII.	Landowner	Initiate fuels reduction work (only after all paperwork is completed).
VIII.	FLASH Technician	Conduct completion visit (and any necessary follow up visits) and approve project completion forms. Take “After” photos.
IX.	County or FLASH Technician	Reimburse landowner per Reimbursement Agreement.

Program Requirements for Landowners

- Meet the minimum 0.5 acre project area requirement (some exceptions may be made, particularly for groups of adjacent properties).
- Participate in an initial site visit and Home Risk Assessment, as applicable (before any work is completed) and follow-up visit(s) from Program staff to assess progress and to determine funds to be paid out.
 - Information will be gathered during these visits to document the project through photos, maps, and work descriptions. The County Grant Administrator and/or the CAL FIRE Grant Manager may also visit sites with landowner permission.
- Agree to cost-share rates and practices determined by the FLASH Technician based on fuel loading, slope, ecosystem type, and accessibility.
- Submit a W-9 Form with social security number or employer ID number (required by the IRS if reimbursement amount exceeds \$600).
- Document contribution to project costs using the Landowner Contribution Documentation form (landowner’s time can be calculated at the rate suggested by Independent Sector, currently \$31.51/hour). Receipts must be retained, and in-kind hours must be tracked by the landowner and reported to the FLASH Technician.
- Meet the fire risk reduction standards of the program by adhering to the vegetation management recommendations of the FLASH Technician (guidance materials will be provided).

- Comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and ordinances (Environmental Compliance Considerations are discussed with each landowner to ensure awareness of laws).
- Dispose of fuels created during operations by chipping, hand-pile burning, or in limited circumstances, by lop-and-scatter.
 - Hand piles must be burned on already disturbed areas (such as landings, driveways, roads, areas that have previously been used for burn piles).
 - If burning is the slash disposal method employed, landowners must have a valid permit to conduct open burning issued by the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District. For more information call (707) 443-3093 or visit the District’s website at: www.ncuaqmd.org.
- Complete all project work, including full slash disposal, in a timely manner. All work must be completed before reimbursement can be received.

Eligible Treatments

- **Thinning and Limbing:**
 - **Shaded fuel break** – Reduces surface fuels and ladder fuels and can reduce density of the canopy.
 - **Defensible space** – Reduces the volume of, or disrupts the vertical and horizontal continuity of, fuels within 100 feet of structures (more space may be warranted on steep slopes).
- **Managing Grass and Flashy Fuels** – Removal of brush and flashy fuels including strategic mowing in open areas.

Program Contribution Rates

- Landowner Contribution: Program participants are expected to support the successful completion of their project with direct funds and/or in-kind (non-monetary) contributions.
 - Direct funds: Examples include equipment rental or payments to a vegetation management contractor. There are no mandates or restrictions on who may be hired to complete the work. **Participants must retain their receipts and provide them to their FLASH Technician.**
 - In-kind: The most common in-kind contribution is the “sweat equity”, or hours invested by the landowner, multiplied by a standard rate. **Participants must track these hours and report them to their FLASH Technician.**
 - Projects may be completed using one or both of the above contribution types.
- Landowners will be reimbursed according to the per-acre rates below. An estimated total reimbursement will be determined by the FLASH Technician and will be agreed upon by both parties prior to the start of work.
- The maximum reimbursement per ownership is \$3,000 (special circumstances may warrant additional funds pending County approval).

Thinning and Limbing

\$200/acre Light
 \$400/acre Moderate
 \$650/acre Heavy

Managing Grass and Flashy Fuels

\$100/acre Light
 \$300/acre Moderate
 \$550/acre Heavy

- Bonus: +\$100 for work done in the Defensible Space Zone (within 100 feet from structure) that conforms to state guidelines.

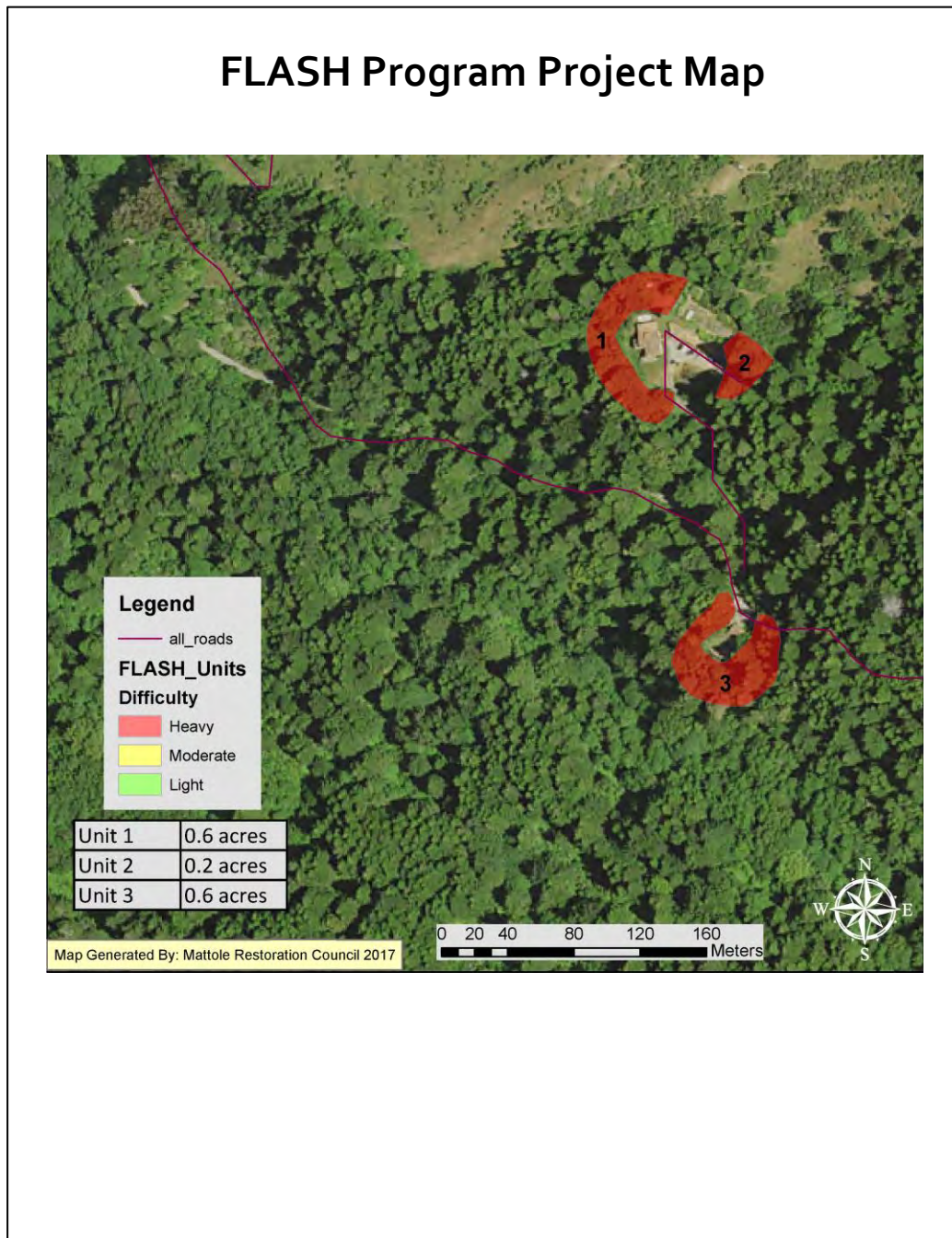


Funding for this project provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection as part of the California Climate Investments Program with support from the following organizations:



Example of Project Map

Once a landowner decides to participate and the FLASH Technician determines that it is an eligible project, map units, treatment types and documents are finalized. Proposed units should be mapped with GPS unit and be mapped in such a way that on the ground unit boundaries are clear. This may mean indicating number of feet from road or house to edge of unit. The FLASH Technician will also help with flagging the boundaries of the unit.



Examples of Photo Documentation

“Before” and “After” photos are important for demonstrating the initial need for the fuels treatment as well as the extent of the work completed with the project funds. FLASH Technicians try to find a natural marker, such as a large tree that will remain, or use flagging tape in the “Before” photo and attempt to capture the same scene and angle in the “After” photo to demonstrate the change that has been made. In some cases, several “After” photos, illustrating the overall quality of the treatment can be taken, even if they don’t precisely match the location of “Before” photos.

BEFORE



AFTER

