

To: San Rafael City Council

From: Belle Cole, Chair of the Ecologically Sound Practices Partnership and co-chair of the Dominican Black Canyon Neighborhood Association Firewise Committee (DBCNA)

1. We commend San Rafael Fire Department staff for their outreach and education work. As Co-Chair of the DBCNA Firewise Committee we are beneficiaries of the Department's dedicated attention to the needs of this community. Fire Department staff participate on our Firewise Committee, helping us to plan, prioritize, complete accreditation requirements, and collect essential data on households. Their participation enables us to assist in explaining Defensible Space measures to neighbors, including the home inspection process and enforcement program. Community members gravitate to Fire Department staff when they join us at educational sessions, seeking their data and advice. By substantially investing in staff during the past three years, the San Rafael Fire Department, as part of MWPA, has produced outstanding leaders in development and implementation. This excellence carries over to the work of the Ecologically Sound Practices Partnership (ESP) where these same staff continue their outreach in programs and field trips engaging all MWPA jurisdictions.

2. We appreciate that San Rafael Fire is devoting a quarter of program funds to 'home hardening'. We encourage the Council to support combining this investment with additional energy efficiency improvements that reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions causing climate impacts like wildfire. These improvements align with local initiatives for insulation and electrification, with a strong emphasis on replacing no-longer-functioning gas appliances with energy efficient electric appliances in existing buildings. They are feasible and available in the form of monetary incentives through the Inflation Investment Act (tax credits), Infrastructure legislation and State funds.

3. We note the detail devoted to explaining the use of prescribed burns and the explanation of the different types of pile burning. Pile burning results in a substantial volume of GHG emissions and is monitored carefully. Managing biomass on site is being studied as a recovery pathway by the Marin Biomass Project, along with additional recovery pathways with the potential to reduce carbon emissions and optimize carbon sequestration.

The findings, available in 18 months, will be of direct interest to MWPA and all jurisdictions.

4. In 2023, there are three prescribed burns planned for areas within the MWPA San Rafael Zone. No prescribed burning is planned for City-owned lands. Two burns, one within the Terra Linda/Sleepy Hollow Preserve owned by Marin County Parks and one within China Camp State Park, are planned for areas within the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) where San Rafael Fire Department has emergency response and fire code jurisdiction. The third prescribed burn is planned for lands owned by the City of Novato and privately-owned lands within unincorporated areas of the San Rafael Zone where Marin County Fire has emergency response jurisdiction. We urge paying careful attention to public interest in prescribed burns by keeping the public informed and by responding to any concerns.

5. In 2022, the Wildfire Team started offering a Defensible Space Grant in addition to the ongoing direct assistance program. This grant was developed to assist homeowners with the financial burden of creating defensible space to lower wildfire impact on individual properties. The grant program was made retroactive to 2021 to compensate property owners who took mitigation steps before the grant release. There is considerable demand for the grant programs. We encourage you to give a high priority to informing the community about the grants and to continuing their availability.

Thank you very much for your on-going attention to reducing climate impacts like wildfire that are increasingly confronting San Rafael residents.