

Forest Management Assistance - For Sonoma County Nonindustrial Forestland Owners and Managers

Why manage your forest? Through management, you increase your forest’s assets and minimize its liabilities.

Increase your assets: When in good health, forests can provide merchantable timber, recreation opportunities, aesthetic value, and ecosystem services such as water filtration and wildlife habitat.

Reduce your liability: Unmanaged forests can present a fire hazard, host invasive species, or exacerbate poor water quality in local streams.

How to manage your forest?

Connect with a forester or a technical service provider.

If you aren’t already working with a registered professional forester (RPF), your local Resource Conservation District (RCD) can help you connect with one. Foresters can assist you with every step of management. State law requires a licensed forester to approve some forestry activities.

You can also receive forestry help from the technical staff of your local RCD, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), or the California Department of Forestry and Fire Management (CAL FIRE). Reach out to connect with a representative today.

| Provider | Contact Info |
|---|--|
| Private forester | See a list of local foresters. |
| Sonoma County RCDs Take our survey to get in touch! | SonomaRCD.org or www.GoldRidgeRCD.org |
| Petaluma Office NRCS | NRCS locator tool. |
| UCCE Sonoma County | https://cesonoma.ucanr.edu/ |
| CAL FIRE CA Forest Improvement Program | CAL FIRE CFIP |

Develop a forest management plan.

A forest management plan is a holistic, long-range document that records your goals as a landowner, describes your property, lists and maps your planned management activities, and tracks your progress over time.

| Source | Financial Assistance | Availability |
|--|---|---|
| UCANR Forest Stewardship Workshops | Low-cost workshop assists with plan writing and provides funding for a technical assistance visit with an RPF | Offered quarterly, across the state virtually with regional in-person technical workshops |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| North Bay Forest Improvement Program (NBFIP) | Competitive funding reimburses part of cost to work with private consulting RPF | Offered on a rolling basis to RPFs on behalf of landowners |
| Resource Conservation Districts (RCD) Gold Ridge and Sonoma | Currently offering assistance with 15% cost share | Inquire about staff availability |
| Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) | Competitive funding reimburses part of cost to work with Technical Service Provider | Funds competitive applications on a rolling basis. |
| CA Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) | Competitive funding source reimburses part of cost to work with private consulting RPF | Not available at this time. Typically funds competitive applications on a regular basis. |
| Hire a private forester. See a list of some local foresters here. | None outright, see NBFIP, CFIP, or EQIP | Available as foresters are available |

Comply with permitting or environmental review requirements.

Within the forest management plan, you will list your planned management activities, such as tree planting, thinning, pruning, removing invasive species, improving wildlife habitat, and more. Forestry activities may be subject to regulations, and you need to work with someone who can tell you what you need to do.

Common permits that you might need: Timber Harvest Permit, Waste Discharge Permit (Water Quality), Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement (CDFW) and/or, Grading Permit (County of Sonoma). You may also be interested in improving your property’s structural hardening and defensible space, to comply with the state’s [Public Resources Code 4291](#).

If your project is funded or managed by a public entity (such as the RCD, CAL FIRE, NRCS), the public agency should lead the environmental review process for your project.

If timber harvest is a planned activity, you will need to develop an additional document: either a Timber Harvest Plan* or a Non-Industrial Timber Management Plan. **Note: Financial assistance is not available for Timber Harvest Plans because commercial activities are not an appropriate use of public funds.*

Get the work done.

The programs below can provide funding to hire contractors and supervising foresters, purchase materials, or reimburse your own labor to help you accomplish the work laid out in your Forest Management Plan. Other programs may exist, and this list will be updated.

| Source | Financial Assistance | Availability | RCD Project | Defensible Space/ Home Hardening | Forest Health |
|--|--|--|-------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Incentive Programs (appropriate funding for smaller projects) | | | | | |
| Safer West County Defensible Space Capacity Building Project | First-come, first-served funding reimburses part of cost of defensible space, covering ~75% | Available ongoing basis for residents of Camp Meeker, Forestville, Monte Rio and Occidental. | X | X | |
| Sonoma County Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project | Sign up here to learn more. | Limited locations see map . Phase 1: identify sites for fuels reduction treatments by end of 2023. Phase 2: Implementing the selected fuel reduction treatments. Anticipated to begin in 2024. | | X | |
| Sonoma County Wildfire Adapted | Defensible space and structure hardening assessments, community workshops, and rebate incentives to help property owners understand, prioritize, and complete risk-reduction projects. | The Wildfire Adapted Program Map depicts the 14 areas that are currently included in the Wildfire Adapted program. Funding available in late 2023 or early 2024. | | X | |
| Wildfire Resilient Sonoma County | Competitive funding reimburses part of the cost of mitigation projects in built and natural environments to reduce the risk of devastating wildfires. | Use the contact on the bottom of this webpage to learn more about availability. | | X | X |
| County Vegetation Management Services | Primarily addresses defensible space, the area from buildings put to a radius of 100 feet (or the property line) | For questions or appointments call the County Office at (707) 565-2361 to speak with a vegetation management specialist. | | X | |
| North Bay Forest Improvement Program | Competitive funding reimburses part of cost, covering ~60% | Offered on a semi-annual basis | X | | X |
| Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) | Competitive funding reimburses on set cost/unit, covering ~50% | Funds competitive applications on a rolling basis | | | X |
| Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) | Competitive funding reimburses on set cost/unit, covering ~50% | Funds competitive applications on a rolling basis | X | | X |
| CA Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) | Competitive funding reimburses part of cost, covering ~60% | Funds competitive applications on a regular basis | | | X |
| LandSmart Grazing | Competitive rebate program to graze for fuel management up to \$20,000 and Mini-grants for grazer infrastructure. | Funds competitive applications on a regular basis to be notified sign up for RCD newsletter | X | X | X |
| Grant Programs (appropriate funding for larger projects) | | | | | |
| Sonoma County's Vegetation Management Grant Program | Competitive funding covering majority of activity costs | Funds competitive applications on an annual basis | | X | X |
| CAL FIRE Fire Prevention Grant Program | Competitive funding covering majority of activity costs | Funds competitive applications on an annual basis | | X | X |
| CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant Program | Competitive funding covering majority of activity costs | Funds competitive applications on an annual basis | | | X |
| Private Foresters | | | | | |

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| CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant Program | Competitive funding covering majority of activity costs | Funds competitive applications on an annual basis | | | X |
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Track your progress, evaluate success, and plan for the future.

After each project or major change to your property, work with your forester to update your Forest Management Plan and maps. Stay in touch with local agencies to keep in the loop on new aid opportunities.

Partner with larger planning efforts.

In Sonoma County, there are many opportunities to collaborate with local and regional planning efforts related to forestry or fire protection. Check in with your local RCD or [Fire Safe Council](#) to learn about new or emerging partnerships in your area. Some examples are listed below.

Neighborhood level

- [FireWise Community](#) or [COPE Group \(Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies\)](#)
- Forest council or Forest Stewardship Plan
- Watershed council or Watershed Stewardship Plan

County level

- [Sonoma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#)

Ready to Get Started?

Contact your local RCD. Fill out our [Landowner Interest Form here](#). All links in this document are available through the Landowner Interest Form.



SCAN ME