

**DUDEK**



# Gaviota Coast Community Wildfire Protection Plan

County Board of Supervisors Hearing – February 7, 2023



# Acknowledgements:

- CAL FIRE awarded a Fire Prevention Grant to the Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council to develop the CWPP for the Gaviota Coast communities. The Fire Prevention Grants are part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment — particularly in disadvantaged communities.





# Speakers:



**Rob Hazard**

Fire Marshal, Santa Barbara County Fire Department



**Scott Coffman**

Project Manager, Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council



**Scott Eckardt**

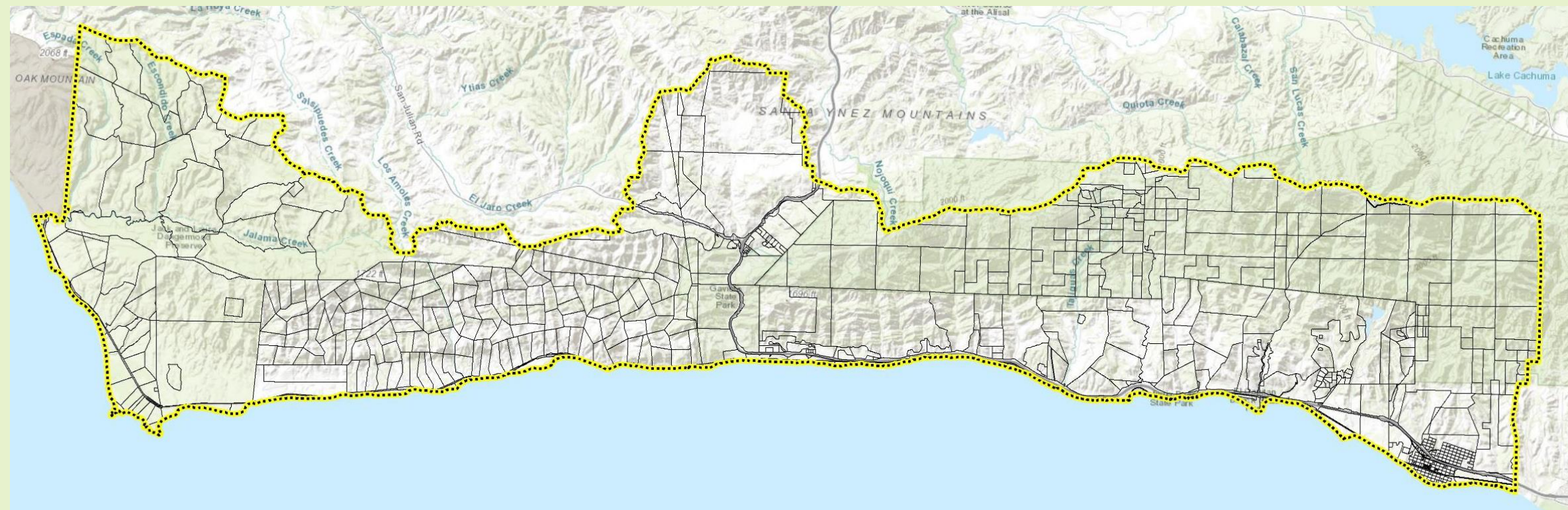
Forester/Fire Protection Planner, Dudek





# Presentation Overview

- Community Wildfire Protection Plan Overview
- Gaviota Coast Plan Timeline and Development Overview
- Plan Area Overview
- Plan Recommendations
- Fire Department Recommendations





# What is a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)?

- A plan for at-risk communities that:
  - Is developed collaboratively
  - Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends *Best Management Practices*
  - Recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability







# A Community Wildfire Protection Plan is not...

- A Decision Document
- A Vegetation Management Plan
- An Environmental Analysis Document
- A Project

CWPP's are educational documents that make recommendations but do not commit agencies or the public to a course of action.







# Plan Requirements

- Minimum Requirements
  - Regional collaboration
  - Develop prioritized hazardous fuel treatment units
  - Develop strategies to reduce structural ignitability
- Plan Approval
  - Local Government (Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors)
  - Local & State Fire Agencies (Santa Barbara County and CAL FIRE)
- Benefits of an Approved Plan
  - Identify and clarify priorities for the protection of life, property, and critical resources
  - Access to federal and state grant funds to accomplish wildfire hazard mitigation work







# How Can This Plan Help the Community?

- Better identify fire risk
- Expand wildfire risk reduction options:
  - Vegetation/Fuels
  - Structures
- Access to grants
- Stakeholder coordination
- Integration of fuel treatments with cooperators
- Best Management Practices developed for the community







# Gaviota Coast CWPP Timeline:

- 2016/2017: SBC Fire began collaboration with Gaviota Coast community
- 2017: Gaviota Coast Steering Committee formed
- 2019: Steering Committee approached SBCFSC, SBFSC supported CWPP, CWPP grant application
- 2020: CWPP grant awarded, planning and RP process
- 2021: CWPP development process begins
  - Field Assessments: Spring 2021
  - Development Team Engaged
  - Hazard Assessment: Summer/Fall 2021
  - Public Meeting #1: September 2021
  - Alisal Fire: October 2021
- 2022: CWPP development process continues
  - Development Team Meetings: Spring 2022
  - Public Draft CWPP: July 2022
  - Public Meetings #2 (August 2022) and #3 (September 2022)





# Development Team

- SBCFSC
- Santa Barbara County Fire
- Las Varas Ranch
- The Nature Conservancy
- California State Parks
- Reagan Ranch
- Hollister Ranch
- Venadito Canyon Community
- Farren Road Community
- El Capitan Estates Community
- Arroyo Hondo Preserve
- El Capitan Canyon Resort







# Agency Representatives

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Santa Barbara County Executive Office
- Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management
- Santa Barbara County Planning Department
- Santa Barbara County Public Works
- United States Forest Service (USFS), Los Padres National Forest
- Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), Fire Department





# Meetings

- Development Team
  - June 25, 2021
  - August 13, 2021
  - March 24, 2022
  - May 2, 2022
- Agencies
  - March 1, 2022
- Field Assessments/ Meetings
  - March 9, 2021
  - March 16, 2021
  - March 17, 2021
  - May 28, 2021
  - November 15, 2021





# Community Input

- Public Workshops
  - September 28, 2021
  - August 16, 2022
  - September 20, 2022
- Survey
- Web Page
- Field Meetings
- Development Team Representatives



The screenshot shows the FireSafe Council website for Santa Barbara County. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Home, About, How to Prepare, Resources, Support Us, and a red button for Current Wildfires. The main banner features a scenic view of the Gaviota Coast with the text "Gaviota Coast Community Wildfire Protection Plan". Below the banner, the title "Draft Gaviota Coast Community Wildfire Protection Plan" is displayed, along with the update date "Updated July 2022". A paragraph of text describes the Draft Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and its purpose. To the right, a map shows the project area in orange, highlighting the coastal region between the Purisima Hills and the Santa Ynez Mountains, with labels for Lompoc, Buellton, and Solvang.

**FireSafe COUNCIL**  
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Home About How to Prepare Resources Support Us **Current Wildfires**

## Gaviota Coast Community Wildfire Protection Plan

### Draft Gaviota Coast Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Updated July 2022

A Draft Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) has been prepared for the Gaviota Coast community. This Draft CWPP evaluates the Plan Area's fire environment and the risk posed by wildland fire, identifies actions to reduce the threat to the community from wildland fire, and identifies and prioritizes



The map shows the project area in orange, highlighting the coastal region between the Purisima Hills and the Santa Ynez Mountains, with labels for Lompoc, Buellton, and Solvang.





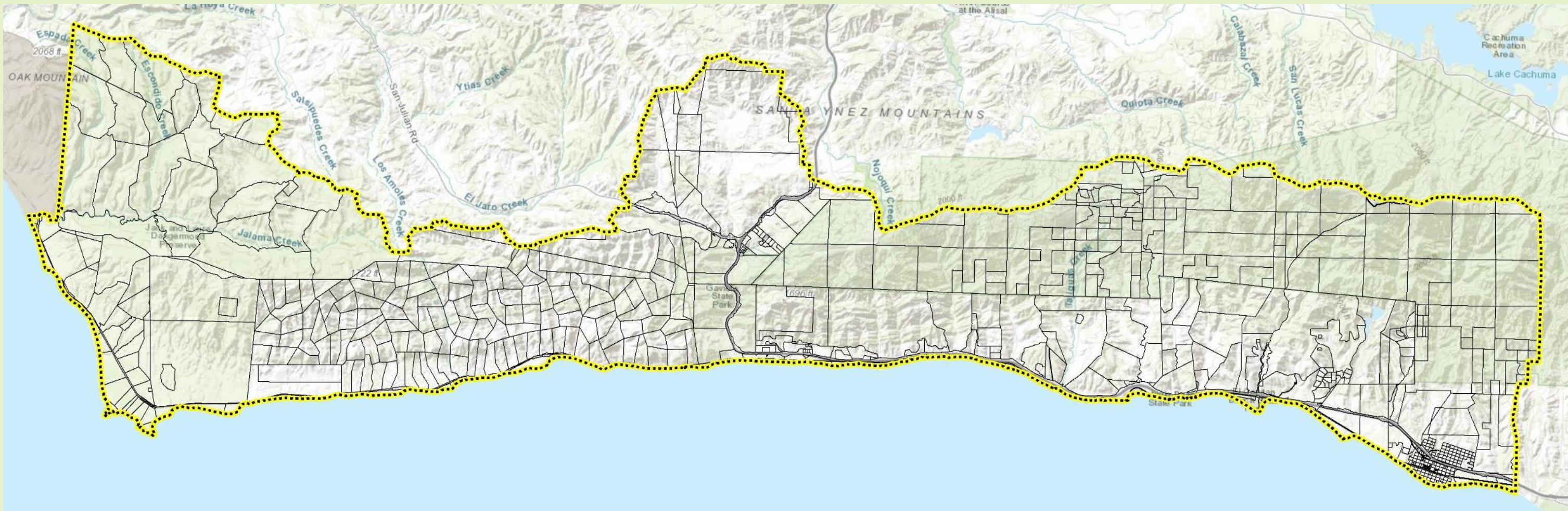
# CWPP Goals

- Reduce wildfire hazard within the Plan Area to enhance community and firefighter safety.
- Enhance protection of values at risk from wildfire, including structures, infrastructure, agricultural resources, recreational resources, and natural and cultural resources.
- Integrate fire and fuels management activities with land management priorities.
- Increase community awareness and education about practices to reduce wildfire risk, including defensible space, fuels reduction, and structural hardening.
- Encourage communication and coordination of fire and fuels management activities with affected stakeholders.





# Plan Area

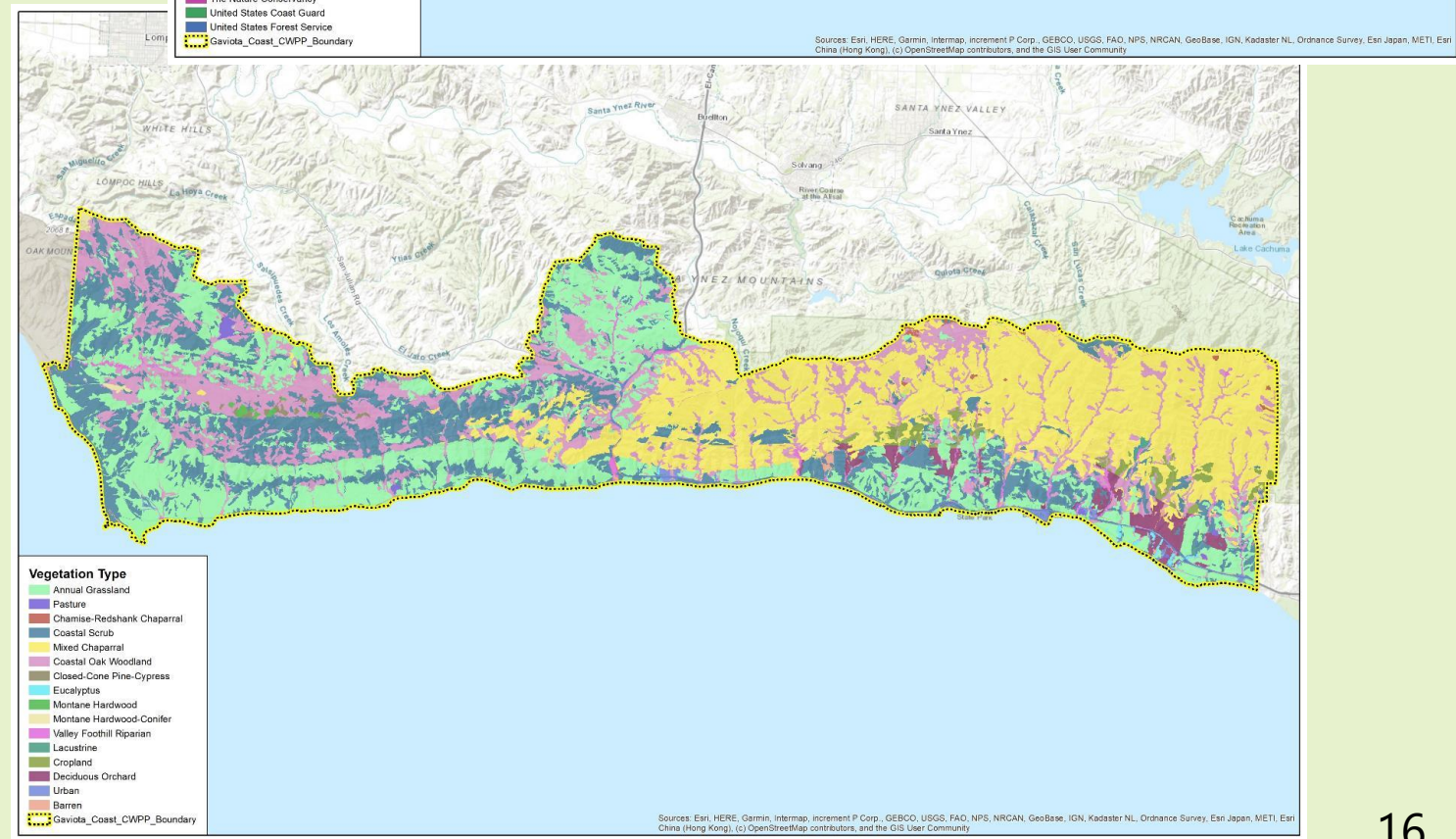
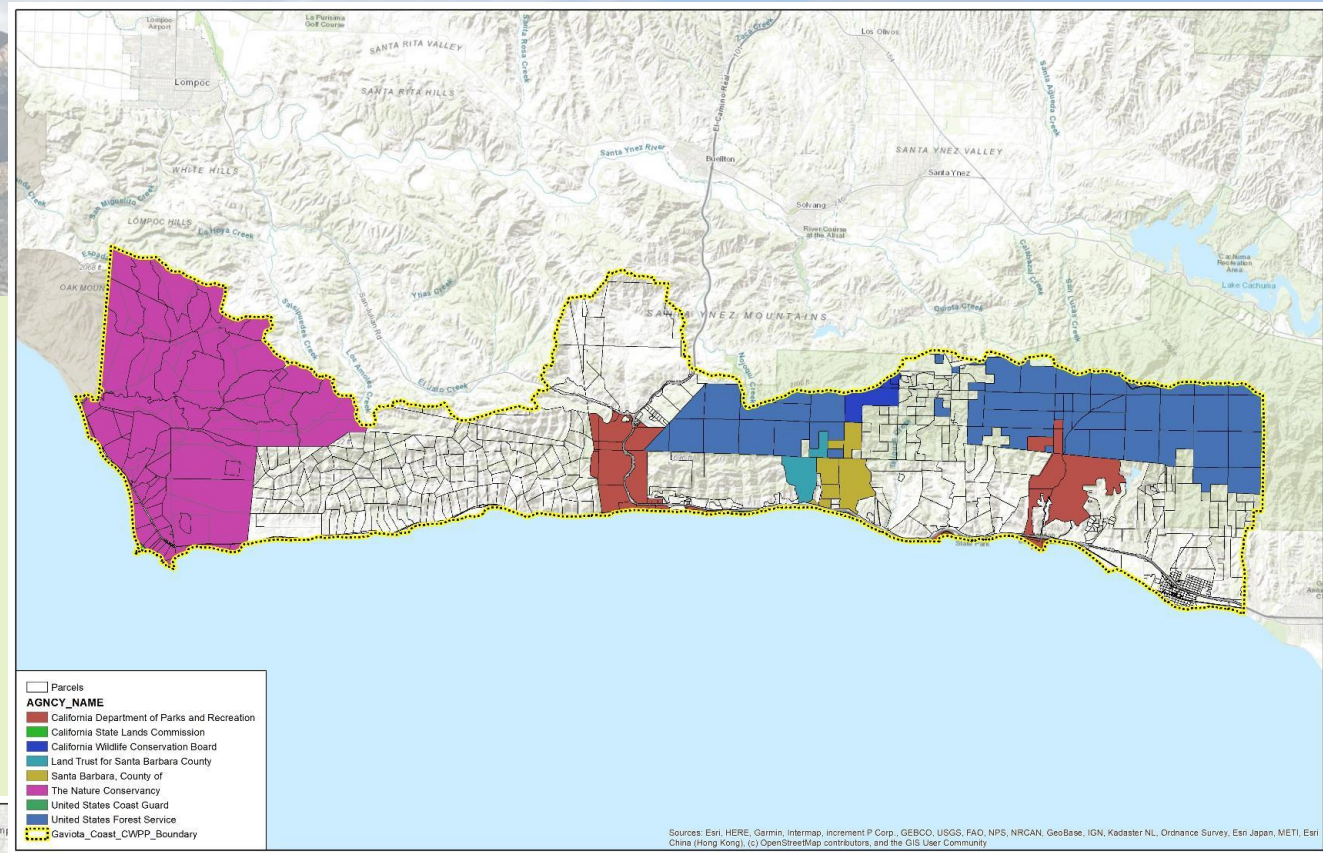






# Plan Area

- Ownership:
  - Private (74.8%), Public (25.2%)
- Wildland Urban Interface (WUI):
  - 1% of land within 100' of structures, influence zone covers most of Plan Area
- Vegetation
  - 49% shrub-dominated
  - 29% grass-dominated
  - 20% tree-dominated

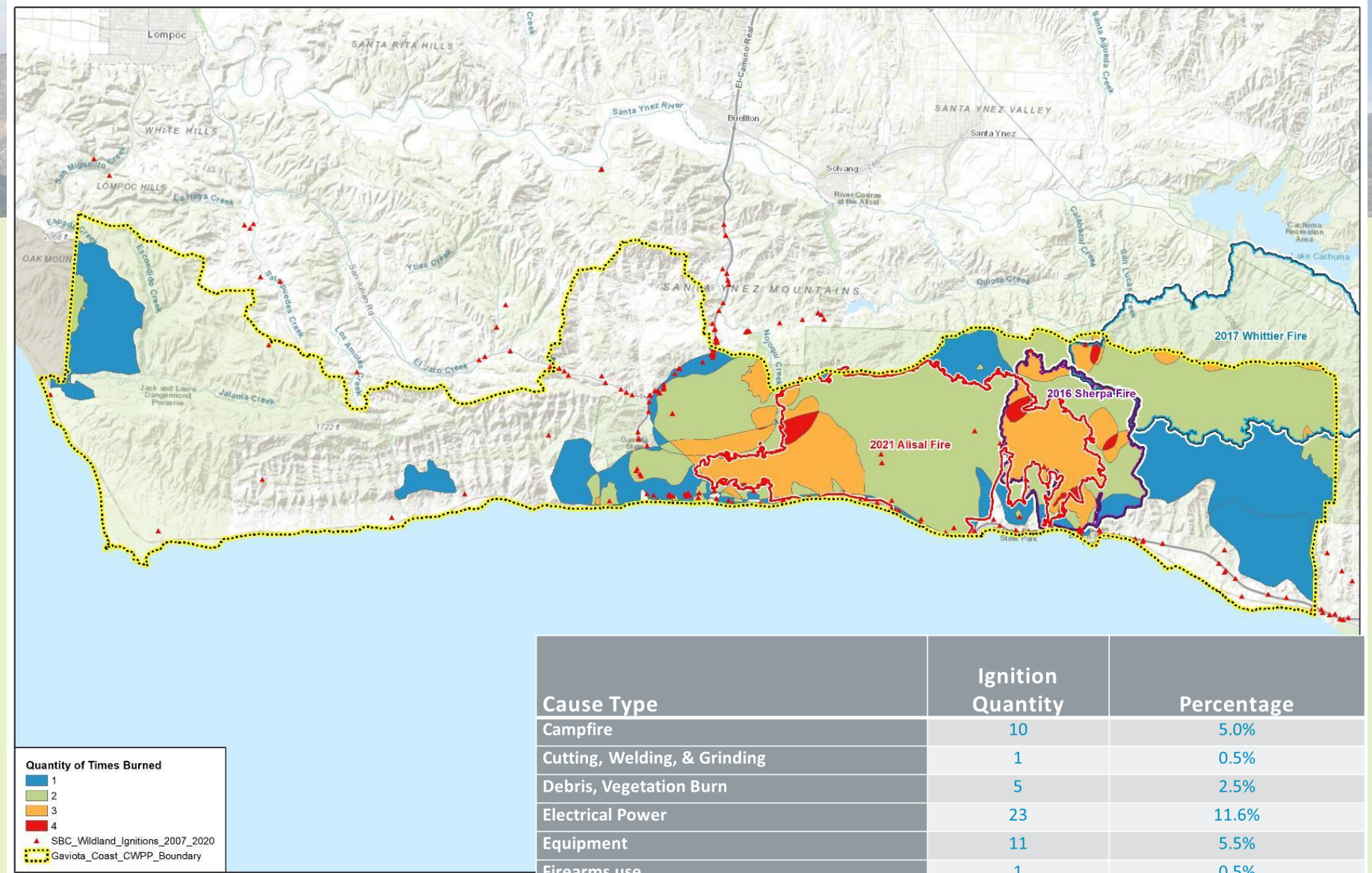






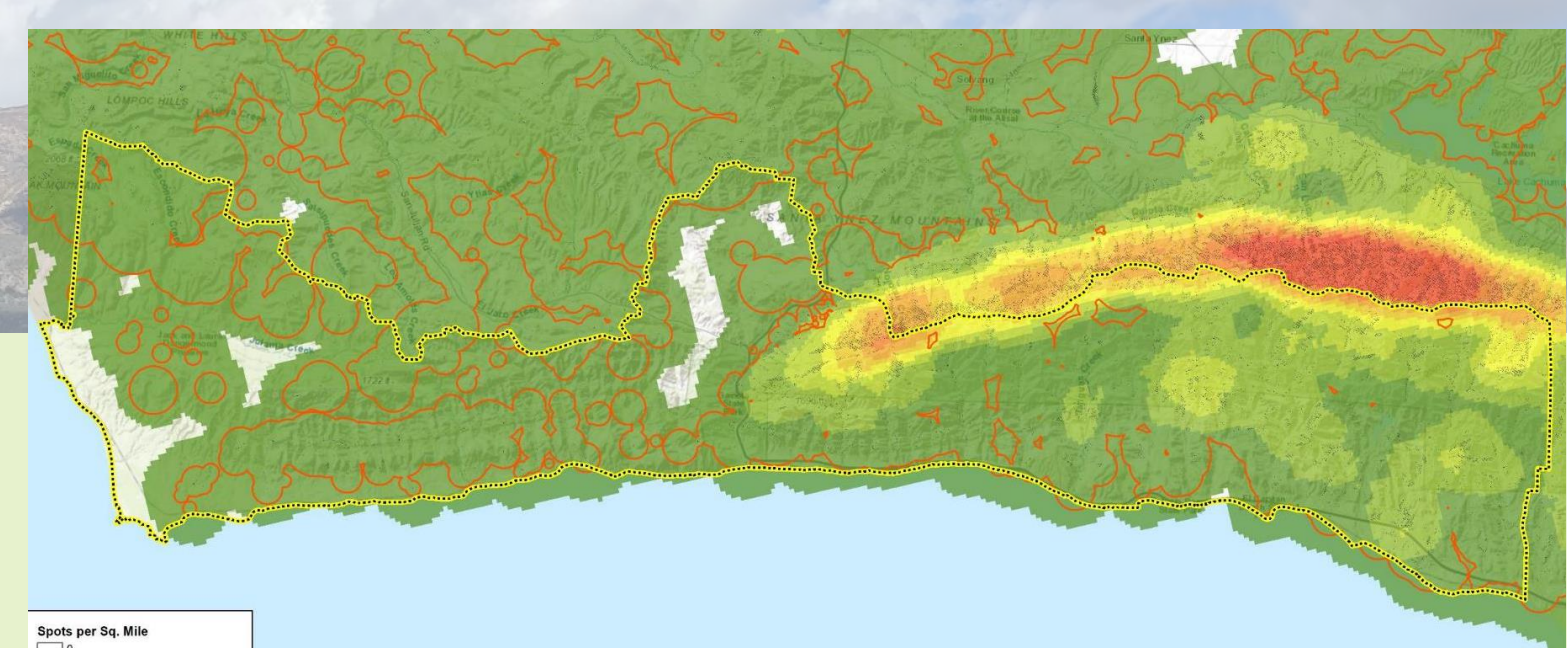
# Plan Area

- Fire History – 36 fires (9-79,000 acres):
  - 2016 Sherpa (7,466 ac)
  - 2017 Whittier (18,412 ac)
  - 2021 Alisal (16,970 ac)
- Ignitions:
  - 199 within 2 miles (2007-2020)
- Alisal Fire (October 2021)



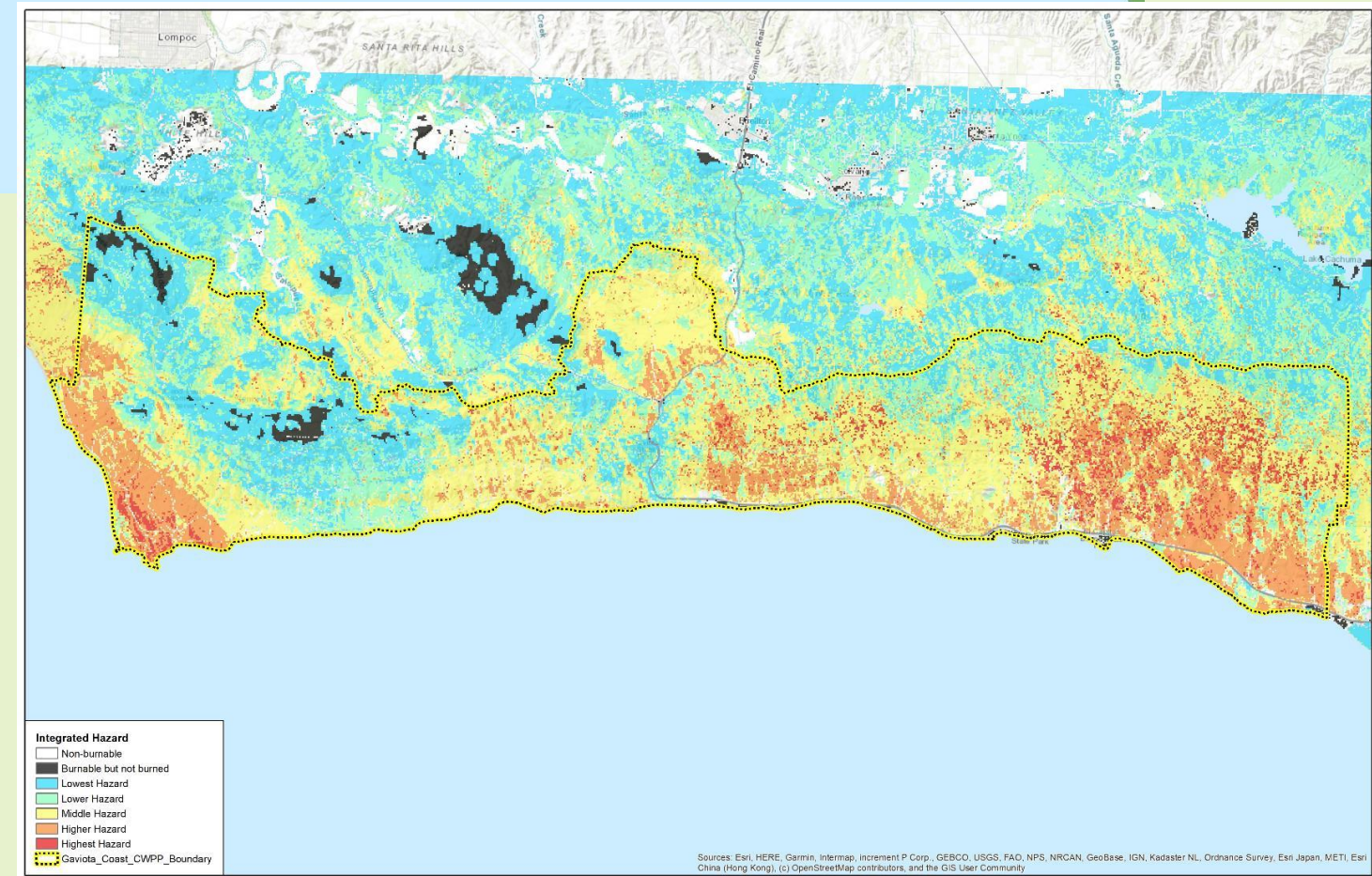
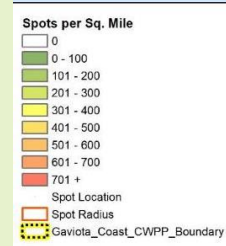
Cause Type	Ignition Quantity	Percentage
Campfire	10	5.0%
Cutting, Welding, & Grinding	1	0.5%
Debris, Vegetation Burn	5	2.5%
Electrical Power	23	11.6%
Equipment	11	5.5%
Firearms use	1	0.5%
Fireworks	2	1.0%
Incendiary	12	6.0%
Lightning	3	1.5%
Other	8	4.0%
Playing with Fire	1	0.5%
Railroad	4	2.0%
Smoking	1	0.5%
Spontaneous Combustion	2	1.0%
Undetermined	65	32.7%
Vehicle	50	25.1%





# Hazard Assessment

- Fire Behavior and Hazard Modeling:
  - Spotting
  - Integrated Hazard
  - Vegetation Age
  - Suppression Difficulty







# Key Issues Identified by Community

- Ignition Potential
  - Roads and gathering/parking areas
- Limited Communication Capabilities
  - Canyons/landscape constraints
  - Internet availability
- Post-Fire Erosion/Debris Flow Risk
  - Access/egress implications
- Grazing Practices
  - Higher fuel loads in formerly grazed areas
- Evacuation
  - Road networks, management
- Fuel Breaks
  - Importance for protection of communities
- Defensible Space
- Access
  - Ranch roads important for SBC Fire
  - Access important during fire events
- Critical Infrastructure
  - Communications systems, roads
- Population
  - Non-English speaking community members
  - Recreation/tourist community





# Values at Risk

- **Population**
  - Temporal/transient
  - Frontline populations and communities
- **Structures**
  - Eastern portion of Plan Area
  - Structure density
- **Critical Infrastructure**
  - Transportation
  - Communications
  - Landfill/MRF
- **Ranching and Agriculture**
  - Infrastructure/crops
  - Productivity
  - Access
- **Recreation**
  - Access
- **Natural Resources**
  - Threatened and Endangered Species
  - Critical Habitat
  - Environmentally Sensitive Habitat
  - Cultural and Historic Resources
  - Streams and Water Resources
  - Erosion and Slope Stability





# Action Plan (Recommendations)

- Categories:
  - Vegetation Management
  - Structural Ignitability
  - Community Outreach and Education
  - Access and Evacuation
  - Funding
  - Infrastructure and Communications
  - Post-Fire Recovery





# Action Plan (Recommendations)

- Vegetation Management
  - Agriculture and Grazing
    - Continue/expand to maintain fuel loads
    - Orchard edge treatments
    - Connectivity (other grazed areas, Ag buffers)
  - Defensible Space
    - Increase compliance
    - Firewise communities
    - Protect historic/community structures
  - Vegetation Management
    - Roadside treatments
    - Invasive species removal
    - TRAs
    - Maintain existing projects
    - Targeted treatments (fuel load reduction, invasive species control)





# Action Plan (Recommendations)

- Vegetation Management
  - Fuel Breaks
    - Camino Cielo
    - Connect existing breaks in eastern portion of Plan Area
    - Maintain breaks around critical infrastructure
    - Connecting north-south breaks
    - Establish north-south break near Hollister Ranch
    - Ridgeline shaded fuels breaks (Hollister/Dangermond)
  - Prescribed Fire
    - Continue and expand where feasible
    - Coordinate with landowners







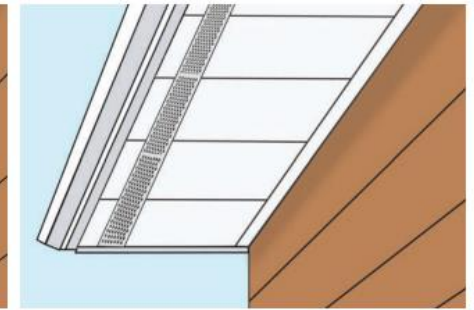
### Eaves

The under-eave area provides a point of entry for flames if nearby vegetation or other materials are burning. There are two basic designs for under-eave construction: open-eave and soffited-eave (i.e., one that is boxed in). Open-eave designs are more vulnerable to flames—heat can build up in an area between the roof rafters allowing for more rapid fire spread laterally, which increases the likelihood that fire will find a location to enter the attic. Vents that are in the blocking between rafters in open-eave construction are more vulnerable to the entry of embers than vents in a soffited-eave.

OPEN EAVE



SOFFITED EAVE



#### HOW TO REDUCE THE VULNERABILITY OF EAVES

- ▶ Inspect open-eave areas for gaps where embers could lodge or pass through into the attic. All vents should be screened and all other gaps should be filled with durable caulk.
- ▶ Enclose under-eave area to create a soffited eave.

▲ Enclose open eaves to protect attic spaces from ember intrusion.

# Action Plan (Recommendations)

- Structural Ignitability
  - Structural retrofit programs
  - Evaluations, community education, and grant funding opportunities
- Community Outreach and Education
  - NFPA Firewise program
  - Signage/awareness materials
  - Focused outreach to marginalized/vulnerable communities
  - Agricultural community outreach
- Access and Evacuation
  - Ranch road access/connections
  - Fire road maintenance
  - Access restrictions
  - Emergency access/fallback zones







# Action Plan (Recommendations)

- Funding
  - Grant opportunities (vegetation management, structural hardening, land stewardship)
- Infrastructure and Communications
  - Data collection/alert (RAWS, cameras)
  - Suppression equipment
  - Communications infrastructure
  - Safety zones
- Post-Fire Recovery
  - Evaluate alternative access opportunities
  - Minimize invasive species spread
  - Develop post-fire rehabilitation guidelines





# Fire Department Recommendations

- The Board of Supervisors Adopt the Gaviota Coast Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- Determine that adopting the Gaviota Coast Community Wildfire Protection Plan is not the approval of a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).





# Gaviota Coast Community Wildfire Protection Plan

