



ANNUAL REPORT



2025-2026

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Our Mission and History

Our mission is to promote wildfire safety and community resilience in the communities of the Santa Monica Mountains through education, technical support, subject matter expertise, and community driven action plans.



The Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Council was founded in 2024 by Pauline Allen, Executive Director, Danielle Picciano, Director of Programs, and Haddee Hammound, Board Member.

In our first years of service, the council completed a wide variety of projects, including multiple community fuel reduction workdays, community defensible space buffers, interactive education events, ecological research, oak woodland restoration, and more.

By partnering with residents, agencies, and other local organizations, we promote a collaborative approach to wildfire resilience. Our team is dedicated to continuing this work to help protect the unique ecosystem and communities of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Programs and Partners

Our Programs

Our programs are centered around community education, defensible space, and home hardening. These programs include Firewise Assistance, Home Ignition Zone Evaluations, Community Workdays, Community Buffer Program, Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Assistance, Gold Spotted Oak Borer (GSOB) Monitoring, and more.

Our Partners

Our partners include: Agoura Hills Fire Safe Council, California Climate Action Corps, California Fire Safe Council, California State Parks, City of Agoura Hills, City of Calabasas, City of Malibu, City of Malibu Public Safety, City of Westlake Village, Emergency Preparedness in Calabasas (EPIC), Fire Safe Palisades, FormLA Landscaping, Los Angeles County Agriculture Weights and Measures, Los Angeles County Fire Department: Forestry Division, Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation, Los Angeles County Regional Planning, Los Angeles Prescribed Burn Association, Malibu Brigade, Malibu Lakeside Fire Safe Council, Malibu West Fire Safe Council, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), San Diego Resource Conservation District and Fire Safe Council, Santa Susana Mountains Fire Safe Council, The Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM), Topanga Canyon Fire Safe Council, Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness (TCEP), TreePeople, and Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council (VRFSC).

Community Projects

City of Agoura Hills CWPP

SMMFSC partnered with the City of Agoura Hills to administer a community wildfire protection plan which was adopted by the city council May 27, 2026.



Evacuation Board Game

The Evacuation Board Game was adapted by our CCAC fellows from the original version created by UC Davis professor, Tom Maiorana. We created custom maps of the SMMs so residents can use this game as a tool for evacuation planning.

Fire Safe Festival

Community members gathered at the Malibu Forestry Unit for the 2nd annual Fire Safe Festival. This event featured the newly completed Wildfire Learning Center and Defensible Space Demonstration Garden, screen printing, acorn art, and the winners of our Student Art Contest.



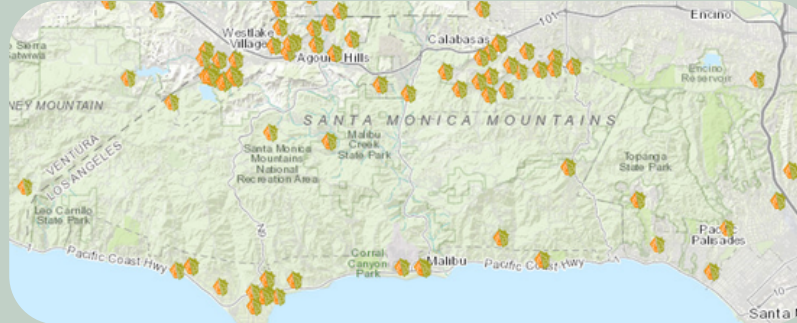
Wildfire Café

SMMFSC hosted our first round of Wildfire Cafés this spring. Both the virtual and in-person (at The Getty Villa) events provided a meaningful space for the community to connect, reflect, and heal together one year after the 2025 fires.

Community Projects

Firewise USA

There are over 40 Firewise USA sites in the Santa Monica Mountains most of which gained recognition recently. SMMFSC stepped in to support Firewise communities with ongoing work by launching the Firewise Networking Calls, coordinating Community Workdays, providing risk assessments, educational event support and materials. We have helped establish 4 new communities between July 2025- June 2026.



43 Firewise
communities in the
SMM

Hosted 9 Firewise
Networking Calls



Firewise Community Workdays

SMMFSC has led multiple community workdays, coordinating events with community leaders and providing essential resources such as green waste dumpsters and educational materials or demos. Neighborhood residents team up for a day to remove hazardous vegetation and harden their homes. These events not only help to reduce ignition risk and improve home hardening, they also foster stronger neighbor-to-neighbor connections that are essential for emergency preparedness.

Fire Safe Palisades

SMMFSC supported a group of motivated Palisades residents in creating a new Fire Safe Council called Fire Safe Palisades. What began as a few Firewise communities trying to educate and inspire their neighboring HOA's has led to a dedicated group of volunteers working to complete widespread home hardening and defensible space projects throughout the Palisades.



Landscape Projects

Community Buffer Program

SMMFSC manages an ongoing community-led defensible space through habitat restoration project located along a 3 acre stretch of Topanga State Park land that borders the Entrada community. SMMFSC, community leaders and a group of volunteers planted over 70 native plants including scrub oaks, coast live oaks, and toyon shrubs to reduce growth of invasive flashy fuels and create ecologically sustainable defensible space. Ongoing efforts include watering plants every 2 weeks, weed maintenance, volunteer oversight, community education, and plans to expand the buffer.



Tending the Oaks Workshop

SMMFSC, Dr. Lee Klinger (tree scientist and author of "Forged by Fire") and local Indigenous science educators Samantha Johnson, Kat High, and Joeline Tamm led a collaborative workshop aimed to educate land managers on oak woodland fire ecology and ecosystem resilience. Some activities included hands on application of fire mimicry understory clearance methods, application of biochar and soil amendments, trunk limewash and a demonstration of a surgical remedy for stem canker and sudden oak death infections.

Gold Spotted Oak Borer Surveys

SMMFSC's CCAC fellows hosted multiple educational presentations and survey days throughout the Santa Monica Mountains. These were opportunities designed to invite community members to learn how to identify signs for these beetles, increasing citizen science participation and the likelihood of early detection within the region.



Big thanks to 200+ volunteers that participated in SMMFSC events this year!

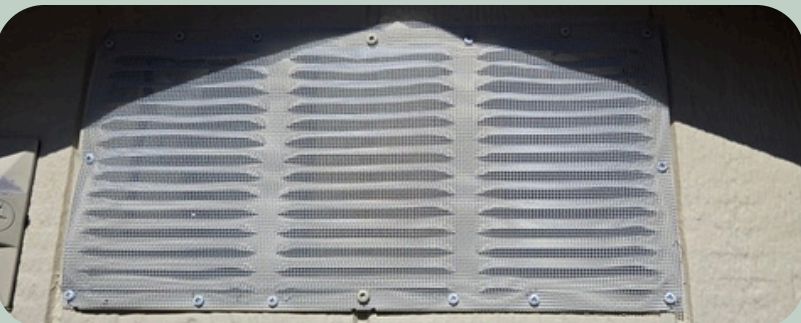
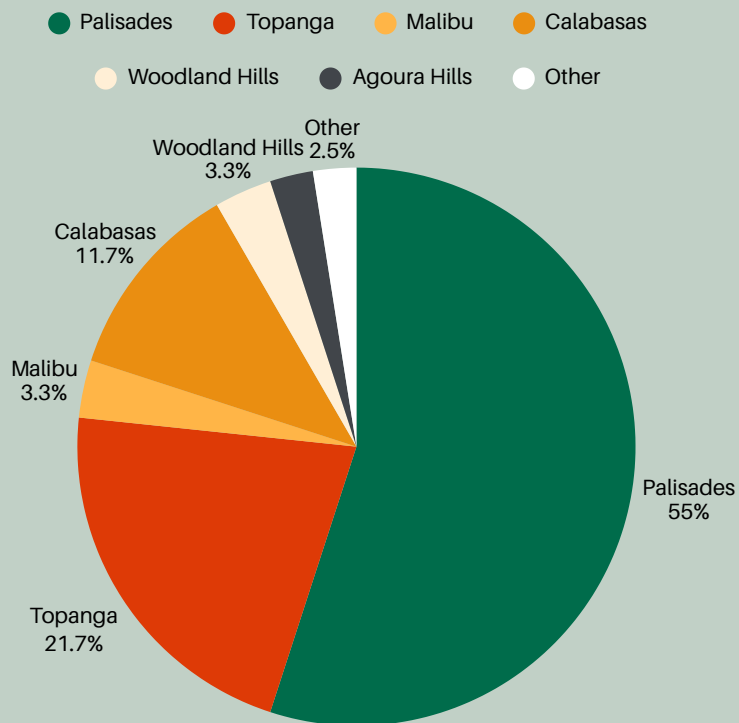
Home Hardening Projects

Home Ignition Zone Evaluations

SMMFSC completed 120 Home Ignition Zone Evaluations from July 2025 to June 2026. Home Ignition Zone Evaluations (HIZ) are free consultations of your property where our evaluators will provide recommendations for home hardening and defensible space to increase wildfire resiliency.



Home Ignition Zone Evaluations 25-26



Vent Assistance Program

In Dec 2025- Mar 2026 SMMFSC successfully ran a pilot Vent Assistance Program, retrofitting 28 homes with 1/16th Wildfire Defense Mesh. All residents received free mesh and installation! SMMFSC worked with The Sages to prioritize applications for Topanga seniors. The other retrofits were awarded to Firewise members in Malibu and Pacific Palisades. SMMFSC hopes to make this an ongoing program available to all.

Testimonials

The heart behind all our programs is our residents. We are deeply grateful to all the motivated and thoughtful community volunteers that make our programs successful.



Fire Safe Council Support

"SMMFSC has been a strong advocate and partner to the newly created Fire Safe Palisades Fire Safe Council. Their guidance and expertise have helped us grow the number of Firewise Communities from 3 to 6 with more pending. We continue to seek their council on a myriad of topics." -*Beth Preminger*



Vent Protection Program

"The Vent Retrofit Program provided by the Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Council was such a great initiative and wise choice of funding towards home hardening. We are incredibly grateful to now have ember-proof vents installed around our Topanga Canyon home — which gives us an added peace of mind and helps protect our home from wind-driven embers. Thank you once again to the Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Council." - *Topanga Canyon Resident*



Firewise Community Workday

"Westlake Pointe is set over 13 acres of lush landscaping with towering trees throughout. Nestled in the Santa Monica Mountains, we are continually aware of the fire dangers the nearby landscape poses; however, with great community work alongside the support and resources from the team at SMMFSC, we were able to fill a large 40 yard garbage bin full of dead and dying debris, leaves, and branches from around our community. In the process, we've reduced the risks of wildfires affecting our community while creating beautiful spaces for future fire-resistant planting throughout our property where we call home. We are grateful to SMMFSC for their continued support of our community and the unified efforts to keep us safe." -*Gabe Albarian*

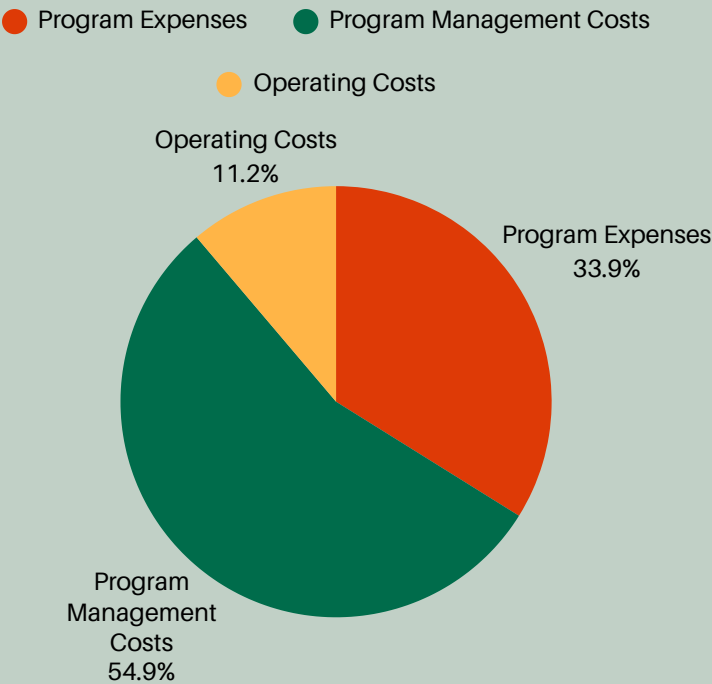


Community Buffer Program

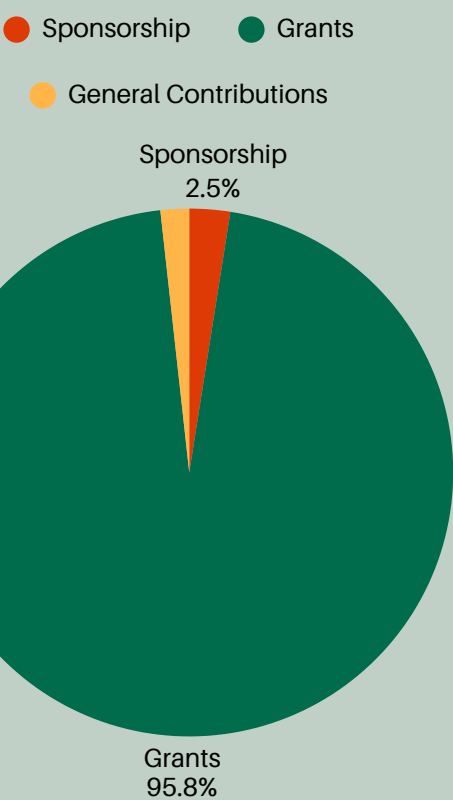
"The SMMFSC has been an indispensable partner for our community group. Without their guidance and support we would be stuck at square one struggling to communicate our needs for fire safety." -*Megan Williams*

Financial Summary

25-26 Expenses



25-26 Income



Grant Funding Acknowledgement:



Mountains Recreation & Conservation Authority



Our Board



Jerry Vandermeulen: Board President

Gabe Albarian: Board Member

Megan Currier: Board Treasurer

Mike Dyer: Board Member

Bradley Yocum: Board Secretary

Ryan Ulyate: Board Member

Haddee Hammound: Board Member

Our Team



Pauline Allen: Executive Director

Emma Strassner: CCAC Fellow

Danielle Picciano: Director of Programs

Helio Sigala: CCAC Fellow

Josephine Cacciato: Program Manager

Jessica Laubender: CCAC Fellow

Elena Vengas: Administrative Assistant

Seychelle Bradley: Communications Consultant

Crystal Martinez: Accountant

Looking forward



Looking ahead, SMMFSC's goals include expanding educational opportunities through programs such as a speaker series, defensible space workshops, and a Good Fire curriculum. We aim to expand our relationships with local Tribal communities and create opportunities to amplify Indigenous voices and perspectives.

We will continue expanding our wildfire resilience programs, including the Home Ignition Zone Evaluations, Firewise Support, Community Buffer Program, GSOB education, community workshops, and Community Wildfire Protection Plan support. We will continue building community knowledge, strengthening partnerships, and advancing wildfire resiliency throughout Santa Monica Mountains.

Get Involved!

Educate yourself and
your neighbors

Lead and join
communitiy efforts

Support our work
through donation

Contact



Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Council

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