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Santa Clara County FireSafe Council Receives USDA Forest Service Grants for Defensible Space Fuel Reduction Programs in Lexington Hills

Los Gatos, December 10, 2008 – The USDA Forest Service has selected the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCFSC), a local non-profit organization dedicated to preventing wildfires in Santa Clara County, for two grants totaling \$226,315 to help residents build Defensible Space around their homes. Funding will be used for the SCFSC Defensible Space Chipping Programs, helping residents reduce hazardous fuel around their homes, including the identification and removal of trees infected with Sudden Oak Death Syndrome (SOD). These efforts will be focused in the high fire risk areas of Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Saratoga and Lexington Hills, which includes the communities of, Aldercroft, Chemeketa and Redwood Estates.

The Lexington Hills Fire in 1985 burned over 14,000 acres and several dozen homes and most recently, the Summit Fire in May 2008 burned over 4,200 acres and 31 homes.

“Wildfire prevention and education efforts are critical for our area,” states Rick Parfitt, Summit Rd. homeowner and SCFSC Secretary. “This additional funding will help us increase the efforts already in place, address the issue of dead and dying trees infected with SOD, and ultimately prevent the type of devastation we’ve witnessed with past wildfires.”

Residents of the Santa Cruz Mountains have experienced a considerable number of wildfires and consequent loss. The area has a high concentration of trees infected with SOD creating an even greater risk for loss of life and structures. SCFSC Defensible Space Chipping Programs are designed to minimize this risk. Homeowners will be able to clear Defensible Space around permanent structures and the SCFSC will hire a contractor to chip the vegetation into mulch that homeowners can use. In addition, this grant can fund Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAP) projects where SCFSC will pay for both the clearing and chipping for qualified seniors and disabled residents. Through Federal Grants and local matching funds, SCFSC is able to provide these services to the community free of charge. SCFSC appreciates tax-deductible donations of any amount. Donations can be sent to Kim Gardner, Area Coordinator, Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, 20895 Panorama, Los Gatos, CA 95033.

To further reduce risks from wildfires in the Lexington Hills area, SCFSC is sponsoring the development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). To learn more about our chipping programs and the CWPP, please visit our web site at, www.sccfiresafe.org/LHCWPP.htm. The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our mission is “Mobilizing the people of Santa Clara County to protect their homes, communities and environment from wildfires.” The council meets at 2:00 PM on the second Tuesday of each month. Interested organizations and individuals are welcome to attend! For more information and meeting locations, see www.SCCFireSafe.org, e-mail info@SCCFireSafe.org or call (408) 975-9591.

Funding for this Chipping Program provided by a National Fire Plan grant from the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council and by matching funding from companies and individual contributors. Our Community Outreach, Education and Youth programs and other council activities are also funded by National Fire Plans grants from the USDI Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service and by grants and donations from local agencies, companies, foundations, organizations and individual donors. The views and conclusions contained in this press release are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the California Fire Safe Council, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, local government or fire agencies, or the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute an endorsement by the California Fire Safe Council, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council or the U.S. Government.

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