



HOGBACK RIDGE FUEL BREAK PROJECT

Mount Veeder Ridgeline · Napa & Sonoma Counties · Completed February 2026

A cross-county land resilience project — built through partnership.

253

11.4

6

project divisions

3

years, 2023–2026

\$1.5M

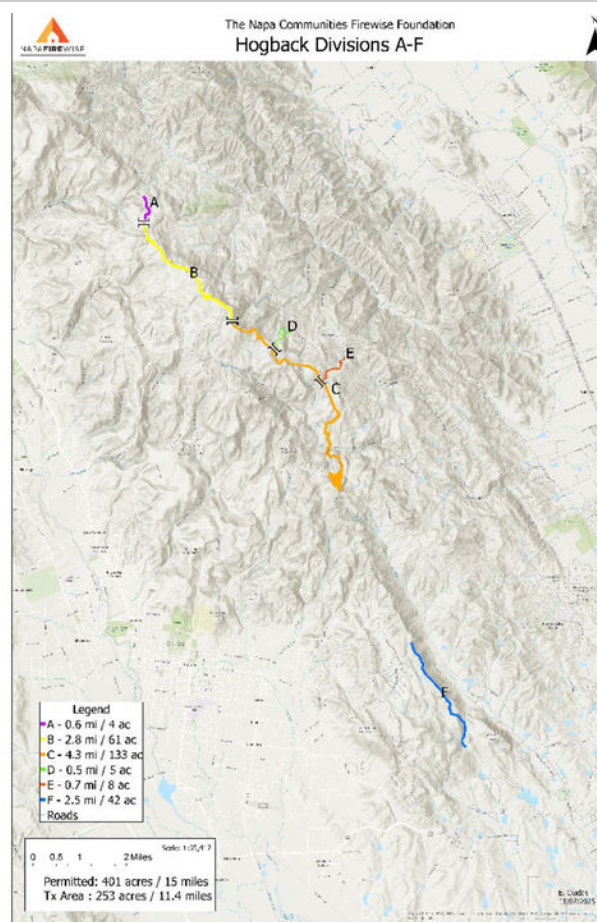
WHY THIS RIDGELINE

The Mount Veeder ridgeline — over 2,500 feet, cooled by Pacific westerlies just 30 miles away — is one of the most strategically significant fire positions in Northern California.

Westerly winds and steep terrain can turn a fire into a regional catastrophe in hours. A major fire here threatens communities, agriculture, and open space on both sides of the county line.

The area has experienced repeated large fires: the 1923 Trinity Fire, 1964 Nuns Canyon Fire, 1996 PG&E Fire, and the 2017 Nuns Fire. Since 2017, rapid fuel buildup and accumulated dead debris has dramatically increased fire risk in this area.

Home to iconic wineries, this ridgetop route had existed informally for decades — fragmented, overgrown, and unusable for fire response — until now.



WHAT WAS BUILT

The Hogback Ridge Fuel Break is an 11.4-mile shaded fuel break and emergency access corridor spanning six divisions across the ridgeline — one of the longest contiguous fuel breaks of its kind in the North Bay. The project treated 253 acres under a single coordinated prescription, with work methods adapted division by division to terrain, fuel type, and environmental constraints.

Treatment across the project deployed the full spectrum of modern fuel management: remote-controlled masticators operating on slopes too steep for conventional equipment, heavy tracked masticators processing

dense fuel concentrations in high-priority zones, directional felling and hand crews working terrain inaccessible to machines, and track chipping with broadcast or haul-off depending on proximity to watercourses and sensitive areas. Riparian buffers, watercourse protection zones, and cliff-edge setbacks were maintained throughout. All watercourses were protected and native growth preserved.

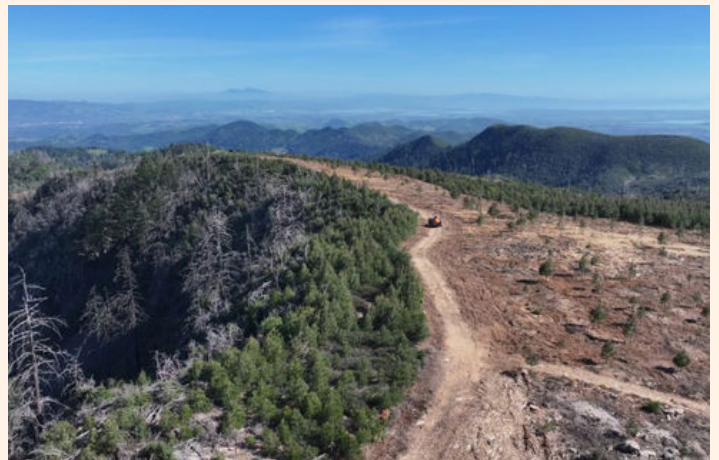
A significant portion of the work targeted French Broom (*Genista monspessulana*), a highly invasive, fire-promoting species that colonizes disturbed terrain aggressively and increases surface fire intensity. Its removal is ecological restoration with direct operational consequences: less fuel, slower fire, more time for response.

The project also required genuine adaptive management. When mid-project field surveys determined that the original replanting plan wasn't viable for site conditions, scope was restructured around broom mitigation as the primary treatment — a revision reviewed and approved by the U.S. Forest Service. The result is more durable than what was originally designed.

Work even continued through a Sierra-level snowstorm to keep the project on schedule.

PROJECT IMPACT

- ✓ Within 3 miles of the project's polygon, nearly 10K homes and structures — including some of the valley's most historic vineyard properties — now have a first line of defense they did not have before. Exceed to a 5-mile radius and major population centers could be impacted.
- ✓ What that work delivers is a defensible ridgeline — and a fire response capability that has not existed here in any operational form until now.
- ✓ For the first time firefighters have a continuous, navigable corridor across 11.4 miles of previously fragmented and largely inaccessible terrain. That means anchor points for containment lines, improved effectiveness for aerial retardant drops, and safer ground for crews when fire enters this zone — reducing both operational risk and suppression costs at the moment they matter most.
- ✓ The August 2025 Pickett Fire demonstrated how proactive fuel reduction directly improves suppression outcomes and operational safety — proof this work matters



The average cost to rebuild a single Napa County home exceeds the total investment in this project.

“Projects like Hogback Ridge give firefighters a fighting chance.”

— JC Greenberg, CAL FIRE/Napa County Fire

Fire doesn't follow county lines. Neither can we.

Hogback Ridge is proof of concept: landscape-scale, cross-county wildfire resilience built through partnership.

PARTNERS & FUNDERS

Collaboration is the foundation of Napa Firewise. The Hogback Ridge Fuel Break is the fullest expression of that model.

ACCESS PARTNERS

- The Schlatter Family
- Mayacamas Winery
- Napa Valley Vintners
- Multiple additional

PROJECT VENDORS

- Artemis
- Burn Bot
- Wildland Corporation
- Environmental Resources Services
- FRM

AGENCY PARTNERS

- Napa County Fire
- CAL FIRE
- U.S. Forest Service
- Napa Resource
- Napa County (match)

FIRE SAFE COUNCILS

- Mt. Veeder Fire Safe Council
- Mayacamas Fire Safe Council
- Fire Safe Sonoma



OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS

- Overgrown debris limited access for full project scoping—Napa Firewise dozer cleared debris before any vendor could access the site. Napa Valley Vintners funded the dozer; without it, there was no project.
- County-line maps with errors — validated on the ground by NCFF's Jeff Enos across multiple route options.
- Private land across two counties — unlocked by multiple access partner relationships built over years.
 - Scope required mid-project redesign — adapted with RCD expertise and Forest Service approval
- December rains, equipment challenges, and a permit hold — absorbed by schedule buffer and a committed team.

HOW THIS GOT FUNDED

December 2022

NapaValleyVintnersidentified a Congressionally Directed Spending opportunity in the federal appropriations process and brought it to Napa Firewise — helping develop the advocacy and application for a designated federal earmark specifically for Hogback Ridge. That earmark was confirmed in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, signed into law in December 2022, with \$1.5 million set aside for the project.

Early 2023

Napa Firewise submitted a formal application to the USDA Forest Service to receive the designated funds — the required step between a congressional earmark and an actual award. The application was approved and the grant formally awarded.

2023–2026

Threeyears of field work across six divisions — completed February 2026, on budget and on deadline.

Additional funding partners made the project possible:

- ✓ Napa Valley Vintnersalso funded the Napa Firewise dozer that cleared the initial access route — without it, no contractor could reach the site, and the project could not have begun.
- ✓ Napa County stepped in with match funding when an archaeology survey created an unexpected budget gap mid-project.

WHAT THIS PROTECTS

Hogback Ridge sits above one of the most economically and agriculturally significant landscapes in the county. The communities, farms, and vineyard estates within its influence zone represent generations of land stewardship — and real exposure when fire runs this corridor.

A GIS analysis of the project polygon shows nearly 10,000 structures within 3 miles across Napa and Sonoma counties. This ridgeline does not protect one county. It protects both sides of the line simultaneously.

The risk runs in both directions. Ignition can start in the wildland and push into communities or begin in the urban interface and run into the hills. A treated, navigable ridgeline slows fire behavior in either scenario — creating conditions for rapid containment regardless of where the fire starts and in the direction it is moving. Firefighters who have worked on this terrain have described this project as one of the most operationally significant fuel breaks constructed in the North Bay in a generation.



To date, Napa Firewise has treated more than 6,800 acres across 315 funded projects countywide. Hogback Ridge is the most complex and strategically significant of them.

WHY FUNDERS INVEST

- ✓ Proven firefighter safety benefit
- ✓ Reduced suppression costs
- ✓ Rapid containment potential
- ✓ Cross-county community protection
- ✓ Replicable model for the region
- ✓ Improved forest health

WHAT COMES NEXT

With 315 funded projects in Napa Firewise's countywide database, the stewardship obligation is real — maintenance is what makes this investment and others last.

The economics are unambiguous. A UC Davis study published this month in *Science* found that every dollar spent on fuel treatments saves \$3.75 in wildfire damages, based on real fire data from nearly 300 western wildfires. The case for prevention has never been better documented.

Looking ahead, early scoping suggests Hogback Ridge could one day link north to Diamond Mountain — a defensible corridor spanning roughly 25 miles along the Napa–Sonoma border. What makes that possible is sustained support for the work that precedes it.

Continued advocacy and investment in pre-fire work is critical — the treatments, the stewardship, and the community partnerships that build resilience before fire arrives. This ridgeline is proof the model works.

A healthy forest is a resilient forest.

Advocate

Support sustained investments in fuels management and wildfire resilience.

Partner

Connect us with landowners, funders, and regional leaders who share this vision.

Give

Support Napa Firewise's mission to build fire-resilient communities through prevention and partnership.

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