

Marin

TAM VALLEY

Joint effort battles risk of a firestorm



IJ photo/Frankie Frost

Matthew Rainey works with a crew from the Marin Conservation Corps in clearing brush behind a house on Durant Way in Mill Valley. Residents cleared brush within 100 feet of their homes.

Neighbors, agencies focus on prevention

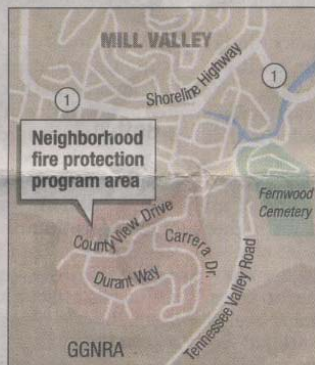
By Jim Staats
Marin Independent Journal

THE wildfire prevention efforts of a Tamalpais Valley neighborhood have snowballed into a multi-agency program pairing community members with local service groups.

A program enlisting residents of the Marinview neighborhood to clear vegetation from around their homes near Mount Tamalpais has been supplemented by county Fire Department evaluations, Conservation Corps clearing work and \$48,000 in federal funding.

"We're really surrounded by pretty high densities of brush," said Jim Burns, a 12-year resident who chairs the neighborhood's emergency preparedness committee.

"We're almost completely surrounded by public land and we



IJ map

have one entrance into and out of our neighborhood," he said of the 243-home community just off Tennessee Valley Road. "We've had professionals tell us we face a (fire) risk pretty similar to what

“We’ve had professionals tell us we face a (fire) risk pretty similar to what Southern California faced and what the Oakland hills faced.”

Jim Burns, WHO HEADS THE TAM VALLEY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE

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Burns said those concerns helped rally residents to clear

See TAM VALLEY, page C2

TAM VALLEY: Residents, agencies join to prevent wildfires

From page C1

brush within 100 feet of their homes. The debris was hauled away by the Tamalpais Community Services District, where manager Jon Elam said the material was enough to fill 35 to 40 dump trucks.

As residents weeded, the Marinview Homeowners Association partnered with other agencies including the Marin Conservation Corps, Southern Marin Fire Protection District, the Mill Valley School District and the Marin Municipal Water District to apply for grant funding to expand the program. The effort helped garner a \$48,000 National Park Ser-

vices grant last summer.

Southern Marin Fire Capt. Cary Gloeckner, vegetation management specialist for the department, became involved to help determine how to spread funding projects throughout the 130-acre neighborhood. Gloeckner said homeowners have been keeping track of time spent on the project and the district has been tracking the tons of debris hauled away.

"The rest of the state could look at Marinview as a pilot program and see how they used the defensible space model, forms to assess fire risk and how they worked with other stakeholders to help relieve fire fuel on their

space," he said.

Gloeckner was referring to a National Fire Protection Association form that evaluates potential wildland fire risk which he has used on 100 Marinview homes so far. The form scores fire risk based on slope, topography, canyon arrangement and vegetation type, among other factors.

"If you look at where Marinview is in relation to the coast, it is very similar to Point Reyes where the Vision Fire occurred in the 1990s," Gloeckner said. "You could say frequency of fire occurring is infrequent, but if it did occur, the fire would be dangerous.

"These homeowners realize

that."

One region rated high for fire danger is a 35-home and parcel area between Via Recondo and Durant Way where a 20-person Marin Conservation Corps crew started clearing vegetation last week.

Gary Miltimore, the Corps' natural resource manager, said crews will focus on the area through February.

"We're looking at approximately 10 acres that we're concentrating on," he said.

"It's a win-win when the community comes in and does the work, too."

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