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MOFD profile rising statewide as Cal Fire ups mitigation funding

By Nick Marnell



Firefighters prepare to execute a controlled burn as part of the North Orinda Shaded Fuel Break. Photo courtesy MOFD The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, observing how the Moraga-Orinda Fire District has managed the \$4 million North Orinda Shaded Fuel Break mitigation project, has not only offered high praise for MOFD but backed it up by giving the district more money for additional wildfire fuel mitigation. The NOSFB, a 1,500-acre, 19-mile state funded effort to reduce dangerous fuels along open space areas, extends along a ridge between Tilden Park and Acalanes High School.

Particularly impressive to Cal Fire is the job the district does to update the public on the progress of the fuel break. Cal Fire Assistant Deputy Chief Angie Lottes said that tracking progress has been difficult from a data reporting perspective for most of the 35 Community Wildfire Prevention & Mitigation Projects that Cal Fire has funded in 2019, but she praised the public outreach of MOFD. The district posts a link to a weekly update on its

website, with tabbed sections covering basic information, the timeline, work progress and plenty of photos of the undertaking.

Fire Chief Dave Winnacker had assured Cal Fire that the fuel break project will be largely completed by the Dec. 31 deadline, and he told Jake Hess, Cal Fire Santa Clara Unit chief, that if there was any extra money available from other state projects, MOFD could take it on. "Up to an additional \$2 million," Winnacker said.

Hess came through with \$250,000, which MOFD will use for tree removal in Tilden Park and at the San Pablo Reservoir drainage area, between Briones Park and the south finger of the reservoir. "He has been a phenomenal partner, who has advocated for this project as if it were his own," Winnacker said of the Cal Fire unit chief.

Lottes noted that only one other state mitigation project - the North Fork American River Fuel Break - was using as many private contractors all at one time as MOFD, and she again praised the district project management. "We might consider using MOFD as a model," Lottes said.

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