

Ventura County Fire Department Provides Matching Funds for Localized Fire Hazard Mapping Project

CAMARILLO, Calif. – The Ventura County Fire Department will provide \$125,000 in matching funds to the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council to support a localized fire hazard mapping project.

The county Board of Supervisors approved the funding Tuesday, Nov. 1, on a unanimous vote.

“The Ojai area is among the highest wildfire risk areas in the entire state,” said Board Chair Matt LaVere, who represents the Ojai area. “The 2017 Thomas fire and the many even larger wildfires throughout the state that have occurred since that time has shown us the significant role burning embers play in the astonishing speed at which these fires spread and threaten our communities.”

“Modeling and preparing in advance for such rivers of burning embers is another example of the outstanding work the Ojai Fire Safe Council, our Ventura County Fire District, along with other local partners, are doing to better prepare and protect the people of Ojai for the inevitable next major wildfire,” LaVere said.

Existing state wildfire hazard maps identify high-level wildfire hazards and identify areas for vegetation management requirements and resilient building standards. The new project is designed to develop more detailed maps that consider local fire hazards, environmental conditions, evacuation vulnerability, and water and power needs. Its goal is to provide a more thorough understanding of risks, especially in high-risk communities across the county.

Additionally, the project will model ember casts from potential wildfires across Ventura County, a key factor in the spread of wildfires.

“Mapping the hazardous fire area and ember cast zone will validate and enhance our ability to help our most vulnerable communities with fire prevention and preparedness efforts so they can be more resilient the next time a wildfire happens,” Fire Marshal Massoud Araghi said.

The project is one of six underway by partners in the Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative under a \$2.7 million grant from Cal Fire. Other projects will update the county’s community wildfire protection plan, educate people in the county about wildfire dangers and safety best practices, help residents harden their homes against wildfires, assess wildfire vulnerabilities and evacuation capabilities countywide, and host a regional wildfire summit.