

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Crest Fire Safe Council



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Preface

What is a community wildfire protection plan?

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are *blueprints* for preparedness at the neighborhood level. They organize a community's efforts to protect itself against wildfire, and empower citizens to move in a cohesive, common direction.

Among the key goals of the Crest CWPP, which was developed collaboratively by citizens, and federal, state and local management agencies, are to:

- Align with the San Diego region's cohesive pre-fire strategy, which includes educating homeowners and building understanding of wildland fire, ensuring defensible space clearing and structure hardening, safeguarding communities through fuels treatment, and protecting evacuation corridors.
- *Identify* and *prioritize* areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatment.
- Recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect the community.
- Recommend measures to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.



Note: The CWPP is not to be construed as indicative of project "activity" as defined under the "Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, Chapter Three, Projects Subject to CEQA." Any actual project activities undertaken that meet this definition of project activity and are undertaken by the CWPP participants or agencies listed shall meet with local, state, and federal environmental compliance requirements.

The Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County produced this report in partnership with the San Diego County Fire Safe Council which is comprised of a 15-member Board of Directors consisting of leading representatives from federal, state & local agencies and stakeholders throughout San Diego County. In accordance with the federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

Snapshot of the Community

Each community in San Diego County has a unique history and identity. Below is a description of what sets this area apart, including its landscape, preparedness, and firefighting resources.

I. OVERVIEW

Crest, CA

Crest is a unique mountain-top community that overlooks the Dehesa Valley to the south, Lakeside to the north, and El Cajon to the west. During the 1920's, the area of the current Rural Village was planned and subdivided into resort-style developments.

Originally known as Suncrest and La Cresta from 1928 to the early 1960s, Crest is located at an altitude of 1620 feet above sea level. It wasn't until the 1950s when the elementary school was proposed, the volunteer fire station was built, and a water district established, that folks joined forces to create the single community of Crest, CA.

Today this small community of approximately 2800 residents, who primarily live in single family dwellings, retains its small-town flavor. In addition, there are two mobile home parks, one county library, two county parks, Crest Community Association Clubhouse, two markets, one restaurant, two churches, an elementary school, and a gas station at the entrance of the community at the primary evacuation route (corner of La Cresta

Road/Mt View). Residents keep the vibrant community flowing through their volunteer efforts with the Crest Community Association, Crest Fire Safe Council, and the Crestridge Reserve.

It is important that the historic townsite in Crest remains the focus of the community. The historic townsite of Crest is, today, an area of single-family homes with diverse architectural styles built at densities typical of suburban areas. The topography isolates Crest from the urbanized areas to the north and west, while giving the residents convenient access to urban amenities via La Cresta Road. Many of the residential streets in Crest are narrow and unpaved, which is consistent with the rural character of the area. Horseback riding is an important recreation in Crest and trails are often used. The landscape within the Crest Rural Village is varied with introduced species mixed in with the indigenous oak and coastal sage scrub. Many stands of eucalyptus trees, which have existed since the early days of the settlement, continue to thrive.

Large groupings of granite rocks are another important aesthetic element of Crest. There are a number of major drainages out of Crest. One, in particular, flows through the center of town. This watercourse, and the trees and other vegetation that line it, form a significant aesthetic element to the character of the Crest Rural Village. Seven other intermittent spring drainages include Mountain View Road/Frances, Cornelius Ranch Springs, Rios Canyon streambed, Dawn View/Al Bahr Road drainage, Crest Rural Village drainage, South Lane Park/South Lane Spring, and Gibson Highlands/Mountain View Road drainage.

The townsite of Crest contrasts with the area of estate development that spreads out to the north. Existing lot sizes range from less than one acre to eight acres with many large undeveloped, but heavily constrained tracts of land to the south, east, and west. The steep slopes that surround the Crest Rural Village are mostly exposed granite. Suncrest or Dehesa Mountain to the south, Ironside

Mountain to the northeast, and El Capitan in the distance to the north, are highly significant scenic resources.

Also, these massive granite formations are somewhat unstable with large boulders that occasionally separate and roll down the slopes. Thus development, both on the slopes and at their base, can impact scenic resources and can be potentially hazardous.



II. LANDSCAPE

Topography

The ridge top community of Crest includes Crest, La Cresta and Suncrest with an area of approximately 4179 acres. Perched atop a granite mountain, it is surrounded by El Cajon to the West, Lakeside to the North, Harbison Canyon to the East, and Dehesa Valley to the South. Steep slopes limit access to two main roads, La Cresta Road from the West and Mountain View Road to the East. Much of the mountain slopes are owned by government agencies or private nonprofit organizations and dedicated as permanent open space.

Forester Creek drains to the West, Rios and Los Coches Creeks to the North, Harbison Canyon Creek receives stormwater from the eastern slopes and runoff from the southern slopes reaches the Sweetwater River.

Vegetation is coastal sage scrub on the drier slopes, with mixed chaparral on the northern aspects and in the steep canyons. Finger canyons intersect with the developed lands at the ridge top. The serpentine Valley View Truck Trail that connects northern Crest with Interstate 8 at Los Coches Road

has been maintained by the California
Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
as a Fire Agency access road.

Fire History

Crest has a history of relatively frequent fires along the slopes, especially in the Dehesa Valley and Valley View Truck Trail areas. Large fires burned the north and east slopes in the 1940s. The Laguna Fire (1970) destroyed many homes in Crest and adjacent Harbison Canyon when Santa Ana winds pushed fire west from Laguna Mountain to El Cajon. History repeated itself in 2003 when the Cedar fire swept the northeastern slopes and destroyed or damaged over 308 homes and other buildings.

Key Infrastructure

- Water Tank on Alta, La Cresta and Mt View roads
- Residential Structures
 - o 1296 Single Family Homes
- Protected Habitat
 - Greater Crestridge-South
 Ecological Preserve (EHCowned/managed)
 - Greater Crestridge-East Ecological
 Preserve (EHC owned/managed)
 - Crestlake Ecological Preserve (EHC-owned/managed)
 - Crestridge Ecological Reserve (CDFW-owned, EHC-managed)
- Historical Sites Metate (Indian Grinding stones)



Maps

Using technology and local expertise, the sponsors of this CWPP have included a series of maps depicting the site and situation of the **Crest Fire Safe Council** (Appendix C). The following maps are visual aids from which the **Crest Fire Safe Council** and community members can assess and make recommendations.

- 1. Area Communities Map
- 2. Fire Hazard Severity Map
- 3. Fire History (2000-2024)
- 4. Evacuation Map

III. FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES

Everyone plays a role in protecting the Crest Community from wildfire. Below are the primary agencies responsible for firefighting and community emergency response:

- San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection
 District: Structural fire protection and
 emergency medical services.
- CAL FIRE: Fire protection in State Responsibility Areas (SRA).

Both agencies can support each other with structural fire protection, emergency medical services, and wildland firefighting through mutual aid agreements.

Collaboration

Strong working relationships are critical in ensuring that our communities are well-prepared. This section describes those key partners and their roles in developing this CWPP.

I. KEY PARTNERS

The **Crest Fire Safe Council** led the development of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), with guidance and support from several partners. The development team included representatives from the agencies described in the table below.

ORGANIZATION	ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES
Crest Fire Safe Council 501(c)3	Provide local information and expertise to include community risk and value assessment, development of community protection priorities and methods.
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)	Facilitation of planning process and approval of CWPP process and minimum standards. Provides input and expertise on forestry, fire and fuels, and Firewise concepts.
San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District	Provides location information and expertise, to include community risk and value assessment, development of community protection priorities, and establishment of fuels treatment project areas and methods.
San Diego County Sheriff's Office	Primary responsibility for evacuations and repopulation.

San Diego Gas and Electric (SDGE)	Provide input and expertise on planning and hazard mitigation. Provide input, advice, programs, grants in support of the Fire Safe Council.
San Diego County Dept of Parks and Recreation	Provide local information and expertise for County Dept of Parks and Recreation-managed lands, wildland urban interface, including fire prevention and fuels treatment and activities.
Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Grants Program	Provide input, expertise on planning and support in fuels mitigation projects and direct FSC support. Provide grant opportunities to eligible homeowners for Defensible Space and Structure Hardening. Provide grant opportunities to FSC for larger scale community protection projects to improve fire safety and structure protection.
Endangered Habitats Conservancy (EHC)	Maintenance of fire abatement zones and designated emergency routes within EHC-owned properties.
San Diego County Fire Safe Council	Provides educational outreach and support for pre-wildfire disaster planning, defensible space, and fuel reduction.
The San Diego Regional Fire Foundation	Provide education to increase safety awareness by emphasizing personal responsibility and opportunities for the public to protect their families, homes, businesses, and our environment.
The San Diego River Conservancy	Provide education and opportunities to conserving land, protecting or providing recreational opportunities, open space, wildlife species and habitat, wetlands, water quality, natural flood conveyance, historical and cultural resources.

Community Engagement & Education

Understanding wildfire risk is a key building block in preventing the loss of property and life. This section discusses efforts to build awareness, starting with the individual.

I. PRIORITIES

- Continue to provide education on defensible space and home hardening.
- Educate the public on Ready, Set, Go specifically regarding understanding the difference between an Evacuation Warning and Evacuation Order.

II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Continue to conduct town hall community information meetings where San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District and CAL FIRE presented information on Defensible Space and Home Hardening.
- Continue to provide information on KnoxBox on various social media platforms/Crest
 Community Association Newsletter.
- Continue to provide information on Home Assessment Program and Defensible Space Assistance Program on various social media platforms/Crest Community Association Newsletter.

- Continue to provide information on Smoke Alarms for Seniors Program from the Burn Institute on various social media platforms/Crest Community Association Newsletter.
- Continue to encourage community members to sign up to receive official San Diego County emergency alerts (including evacuation notifications) at AlertSanDiego.org or other phone apps.
- Utilize Crest Constant Contact email and phone system (One Call) as a community forum for local updates.
- Continue to provide PACE/Evacuation info in community Welcome wagon, Crest
 Community library and other community events (7/4, Holiday events, Crest Community Association mtgs).
- Ensure Crest FSC participation/attendance at San Diego County FSC general meetings and Coffee Chat meetings to disseminate relevant information to Crest Community members.
- Continue to update and keep relevant Crest FSC website.

- Educate the Crest community on how to submit requests for a Defensible Space compliance inspection to the San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District for a local hazardous property.
- Educate the Crest community on FireWise designation and assist in organizing community residents to submit an application.

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Research other programs/opportunities to bring education to Crest Community members to assist them in creating, maintaining and updating their Defensible Space and Home Hardening.
- Provide informational briefs to Crest community members on various options for fire mitigation.
- Distribute the "Your Personal Wildland Fire Plan Action Guide" to Crest Community members.
 - https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/file s/rsg-english.pdf
- Notify residents of the San Diego County's
 "Ready, Set, Go" Program
 https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/s
 dc/sustainability/news/Wildfire-Preparedne
 ss.html.
- Provide workshop opportunities for Crest community to attend SD County FSC "Fire Operations in the Wildland Urban Interface" and "Last Chance Survival Simulation."
- Hold monthly Crest Fire Safe Council meetings to include community member to gather feedback/concerns and disseminate information.

- Pursue funding/volunteerism necessary to update Crest FSC website and disseminate literature.
- Educate and encourage homeowners to comply with all roadside clearing codes.

Structural Hardening

Long before a wildfire sparks, there are numerous steps that residents can take to protect their homes and other structures. This section describes some of those efforts.

I. PRIORITIES

- prior to current fire building codes,
 particularly regarding attic ventilation,
 roofing materials and window design. San
 Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District
 strongly encourages eligible homeowners
 to apply for a Sunrise Powerlink Fire
 Mitigation (SPFMG) annual grant to assist
 with retrofitting and home hardening. Each
 year to apply for and use a Sunrise
 Powerlink Mitigation Grant (SPMG) to
 retrofit each of these concerns.
- In addition, the San Miguel Consolidated
 Fire Protection District encourages
 homeowners to reduce their home's
 ignitability by compliance with Defensible
 Space:
 - Increasing the distance between the fuel bed and a structure to lessen direct flame impingement and to reduce the likelihood of flying embers initiating a structural fire.
 - Removing flammable infrastructure such as fences,

decks and flowerbeds in Zone 0 (within 5 feet of the home).

II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Crest FSC continues to promote the Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Grants Program to the community of Crest, to assist with their creation of Defensible Space and Structure Hardening of their home to be more fire resilient against wildfire.
- The Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Grants program provides education and grant assistance to homeowners in home hardening of existing features which may not be Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) rated and provide education on items to retrofit/replace making the home more resilient against wildfire.
- These projects are ongoing, homeowners have the opportunity to utilize annual grants to upgrade their home to current fire code standards.

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

 Crest FSC will continue to promote the SPFMG Program to existing and new

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homeowners. We would also like to meet with SPFMG to discuss including firefighting foam protection as an item for reimbursement via the annual grants.

Defensible Space

Creating a buffer between buildings and the grass, trees, shrubs, and other wildland areas surrounding it are essential to improving survivability. This section looks at efforts to build this key layer of protection.

I. PRIORITIES

- Key priorities for Crest FSC related to defensible space includes:
 - Educate residents/homeowners
 on Defensible Space compliance
 and opportunities for assistance.
 - Chipping for fuel reduction and abatement.
 - Assisting with 100' defensible space around structures, ingress and egress routes, and driveways for disadvantaged residents.

II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Assist with Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Protection Grant presentations at Crest community town hall.
- Reduce fuel vegetation 100 feet from structures along South Lane County Park property.
- Lifting tree limbs to 6 feet off the ground and removing invasive vegetation at South Lane County Park.

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Pursue SPFM Community Protection Grants to provide chipping, clean up events, & fuel reduction.
- County of San Diego Parks & Recreation will continue to partner with Urban Corps annually for fire fuel reduction at South Lane County Park.
- Identify low-income, disabled and/or elderly residents who may need assistance with Defensible Space, and provide them education for Defensible Assistance Program opportunities.
- Pursue grant funding to provide curbside chipping to assist residents with the disposal of vegetation.
- Ensure close collaboration between appropriate government entities and the community to mitigate wildfire risk.
- Work closely with appropriate government entities to enforce defensible space requirements to ensure all Crest properties meet current Defensible Space ordinances.

Fuels Treatment

Fuels are **combustible materials** such as grasses, leaves, plants, shrubs and trees that feed flames. This section describes efforts to treat and manage these materials in the community.

I. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

South Lane County Park Fuels Reduction Project: Fuels reduction funded by a grant from San Diego River Conservancy was completed in May 2024. After which, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will contract with California Conservation Corps (CCC) for vegetation and graffiti abatement services.

Regular ongoing maintenance: DPR will have a regular ongoing maintenance schedule for weed abatement in the park. This will include mowing, trimming, and clearing of dry vegetation in areas that are prone to wildfires.

II. PRIORITIES

- Identify high-risk areas: DPR will identify and prioritize high-risk areas within South Lane County Park where weed abatement is most critical. This will include trails, and areas adjacent to residential or developed areas.
- Create firebreaks: DPR will establish firebreaks by clearing wide strips of land to create barriers that can help prevent the





- spread of fires. These firebreaks can help protect sensitive areas and infrastructure within South Lane County Park.
- Crest FSC will collaborate with DPR in seeking grant opportunities to fund fuel reduction efforts at South Lane County Park.
- Crest FSC will work with Department of Public Works and other government agencies to ensure proper fuels reduction on Primary and Alternate evacuation routes.
- Roadside vegetation management on key evacuation routes.

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

 Coordinate with local authorities: DPR will coordinate weed abatement efforts with local fire departments and land management agencies to ensure that best practices are being followed and to stay informed about any fire danger assessments or warnings.

Evacuation Planning

Identifying key corridors in and out of a community – as well as temporary refuge areas – is essential to being prepared for evacuation. This section provides an overview of the PACE system (primary, alternate, contingency and emergency) used to plan ahead.

Evacuation planning is a dynamic process subject to the nuances of each community. Below is an overview of the Crest's key ingress and egress, as well as designated evacuation corridors, Temporary Refuge Areas, completed projects, priorities and future projects.

I. OVERVIEW OF INGRESS AND EGRESS

The community of Crest has just two evacuation options to provide for rapid and orderly evacuation in the event of the threat of an approaching catastrophic wildfire.

Comprehensive action must be taken to maintain these road conditions to provide for both evacuation and the movement of fire equipment in the event of wildlife.

La Cresta Road currently serves as the only westerly evacuation route in the event of wildfire. Events of 2003 demonstrated this route is insufficient to facilitate the rapid evacuation of all residents to Crest, plus westbound evacuation traffic from Harbison Canyon, Dehesa and the surrounding areas.

Suncrest Truck Trail is a private road originating in Crest, descending to the west into the city of El Cajon, where multiple connections to other transportation arteries exist. While the County of San Diego has secured the majority of voluntary easements along Suncrest Truck Trail, some portions of the trail may be impassable due to road conditions and have locked gates preventing expedient egress. Suncrest Truck Trail should only be utilized if directed to do so by public safety officials.

San Diego County Sheriff's Office and California Highway Patrol are responsible for road closures and assists during evacuations.

II. DESIGNATED EVACUATION CORRIDORS

Crest

PRIMARY West on La Cresta Road

ALTERNATE East on Mountain View Road

CONTINGENCY None

EMERGENCY Suncrest Truck Trail*

*Suncrest Truck Trail is gated, and at times impassable due to road conditions. It should only be used if directed to do so by public safety officials.

III. TEMPORARY REFUGE AREAS

Crest Elementary School, Nancy Jane Park, South Lane Park.

IV. PRIORITIES

- Work with San Diego County, CALFIRE and other government agencies to secure and properly maintain Suncrest Truck Trail as a viable emergency route.
- Prioritize education about the community's Evacuation Plan, even when there have not been any recent wildfire events. During outreach events, specific tools such as the PACE documentation will be referenced.
- Improvements to Suncrest Truck Trail are critical to allow it to serve as a 24/7, 365, all weather, all condition option for evacuation and/or movement of fire equipment, at the discretion of the incident commander in the event of wildfire.
- Ensure proper signage for evacuation routes.
- Work with San Diego County, Caltrans and CAL FIRE to maintain roadside brushing on the major evacuation routes.

V. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

 Outreach regarding the PACE Evacuation Plan for the Crest community has been completed; it was posted on the Crest FSC website, is delivered on the Crest Community Welcome Wagon baskets for new residents, and posted

- on San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection's website.
- CFSC has been meeting monthly with an ad hoc committee of the Subregional Planning Group, EHC, San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District and San Diego County to get signed permits from Suncrest Blvd.

VI. FUTURE PROJECTS

- San Miguel Consolidated Protection District and San Diego County to get signed permits from Suncrest Blvd residents to access the Suncrest Truck Trail.
- Pursue grant funding to improve/maintain
 Suncrest Truck Trail access for all vehicles.

Other Mitigation & Preparedness

There are countless ways that communities can act to protect themselves ahead of wildfires. This section details additional past, current and future efforts underway that were not previously mentioned.

I. PRIORITIES

 Implement fire-code compliant reflective address signs across our community. These signs make it easier for first responders to find your home in poor visibility.

II. COMPLETED AND/OR ONGOING PROJECTS

 Completed E-Waste pick-up for Crest community through Crest Community Association (1/2024).

III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Pursue grants to develop a reflective address sign program and work to install up to 1200 approved reflective address signs during the new two years.
- Compile a list of mitigations vetted with the California fire insurance industry to assist owners in taking actions that will help them remain insured against wildfire at a reasonable cost.

09Signatures

This plan must be approved by the following key parties: the local author (examples include Fire Safe Council President, Firewise Community, Tribal National, HOA, etc.), the chief of the primary responding fire agency, the CAL FIRE Unit Chief, and chair of the CWPP review committee. This section includes these signoffs.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan, as developed for as developed for Crest Fire Safe Council:

- Was collaboratively developed and meets the intent of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act
 (HFRA) in emphasizing the need for agencies to work collaboratively with communities in
 developing hazardous fuel reduction projects, and places priority on treatment areas
 identified by communities themselves in a CWPP. Interested parties and federal land
 management agencies in the vicinity of this CWPP have been consulted.
- Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment that will protect areas within this CWPP.
- Recommends measures to reduce ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.
- Is intended for use as a planning and assessment tool only, utilizing a compilation of community issues/goals and projected fire mitigation strategies. The CWPP is not to be construed as indicative of project "activity" as defined under the "Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, Chapter Three, Projects Subject to CEQA." Per the Community Guide, Section 3.1.1, "CEQA only applies to public agency decisions to approve, or actions to carry out, a discretionary project." Any actual project activities meeting this definition of project activity and undertaken by the CWPP participants or agencies listed shall meet with local, state, and federal environmental compliance requirements.
- Assists and encourages compliance with current county and state fire code standards.

President of the
Fire Safe Council Submitting this CWPP

Participating Fire Agency representative (State, Local, or Tribal)

andy lawler

San Diego County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Review Committee:

This CWPP was reviewed and recommended for approval by the San Diego Community Wildfire Protection Plan Review Committee as demonstrated by the signature below.



The CAL FIRE Unit Chief has final signing authority on CWPPs in San Diego County. The signature below attests that the standards listed in the section above and the content of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan are proposed to be met and mutually accepted.



Appendices

This section includes important additional information that complements other portions of the plan.

APPENDIX A. MEETING TRACKING DOCUMENTS

This CWPP was developed for the community of Crest, through a series of community meetings. The Fire Safe Council Name members who contributed to the document include the following:

Community Representatives

- Georgia Schneider
- Kandhy Franklin
- Kathy Fiedor
- Ron Tatro
- Janya Humphrey
- Pete Fabor
- Suzanne Mullins
- Judy Becker
- Chris McDonald
- Greg Sullivan
- Diana Griffin

Agency Representatives

- Fire Captain, Thomas Shoots, CAL FIRE/San
 Diego County Fire
- Carl McCullough, Department of Public Works
- Jon Newman, San Miguel Consolidated Fire Protection District

Chris Manzuk, Endangered Habitats
 Conservancy

Meetings Dates

- February 6th, 2024: Crest Fire Safe Council and CAL FIRE
- March 12th, 2024: Community Meeting
 March 18th, 2024: Sunrise Powerlink
- Mitigation Grants Discussion with Bonnie Burchill

APPENDIX B. MAPS

Figure 1 Area Communities Map

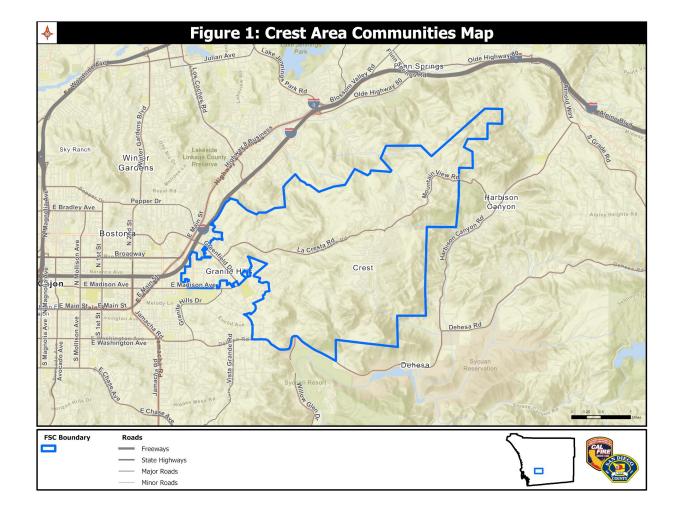


Figure 2 Fire Hazard Severity Map

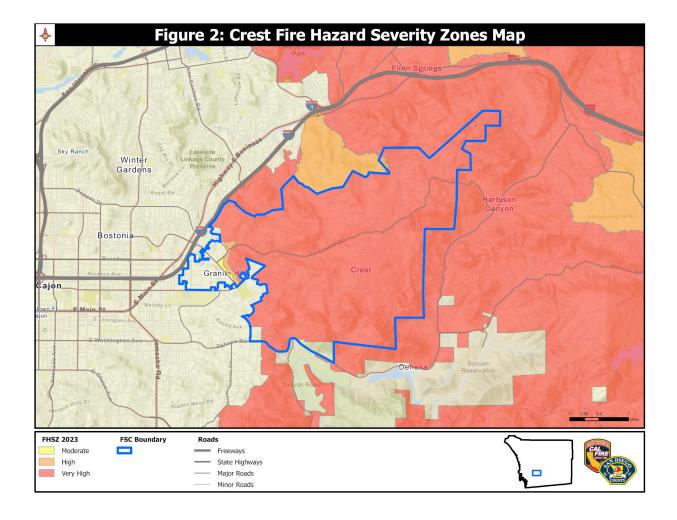


Figure 3 Fire History 2000-2024

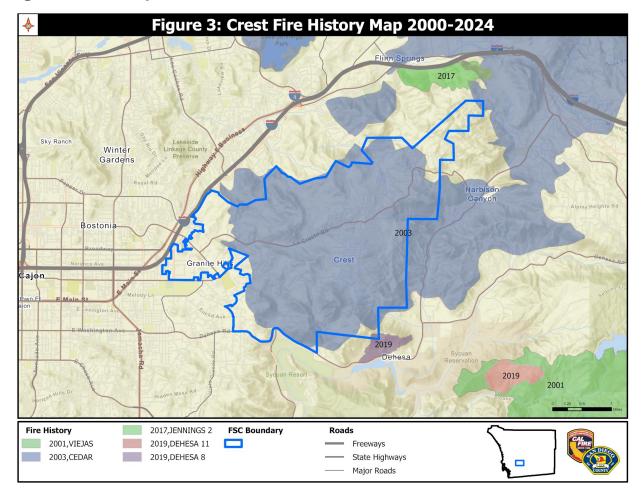
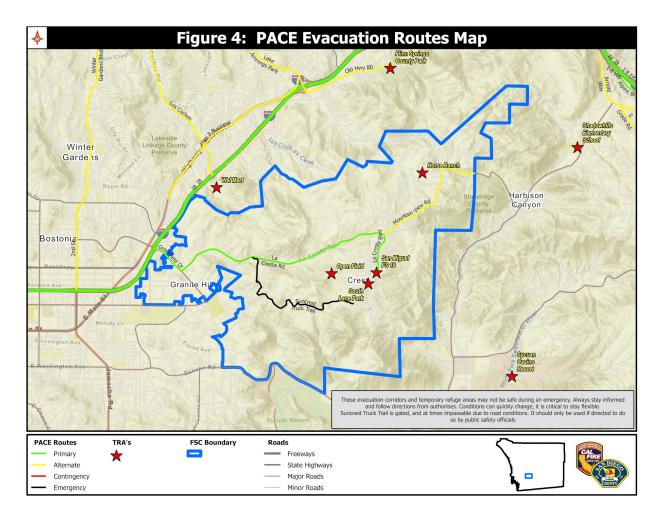


Figure 4 Evacuation Map



^{*}These evacuation corridors and temporary refuge areas may not be safe during an emergency. Always stay informed and follow directions from authorities. Conditions can quickly change; it is crucial to stay flexible.

^{**}Suncrest Truck Trail is gated, and at times impassable due to road conditions. It should only be used if directed to do so by public safety officials.