



## **Proposal to the City of Ojai (V.2 June 18, 2025)**

For Service Period August 1, 2025 to July 31, 2026



Cover photo: Christopher Danch, Executive Director of Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council, and Mayor Andy Gilman at the Taormina Community Emergency Preparedness Meeting on 05-04-2025

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: OJAI VALLEY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL PROPOSAL**

## **Background**

The Ojai Valley faces exceptional wildfire vulnerability, ranking in the top 1% nationally for risk. The Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council (OVFSC), with 25 years of service, has secured over \$8 million in funding and demonstrates extraordinary leverage capability (24:1 return on City investments).

In this proposal, the OVFSC proposes a technical infrastructure contract with the City of Ojai to provide critically needed services as outlined below:

## **Scope of Services (August 1, 2025 - July 31, 2026)**

### **A. Community Outreach & Education**

- Conduct wildfire preparedness workshops, home hardening assessments, and insurance education
- Implement neighborhood emergency planning and Firewise Community development
- Host annual Wildfire Safety Fair
- Integrate data into interactive Digital Dashboard

### **B. Wildfire Risk Mitigation**

- Conduct home hardening assessments and train new assessors
- Conduct wildfire risk assessments at the structural, parcel and community levels
- Develop Ojai Valley Fuels Reduction Implementation Plan
- Transform CWPP recommendations into fundable, shovel-ready projects
- Implement targeted pilot program in a high-density residential zone

### **C. Emergency Preparedness & Response**

- Install a minimum of 7 Beacon Boxes within city limits to bridge information gaps between local and out-of-area emergency personnel

### **D. Assist and Coordinate with City of Ojai on Planning and Policy**

- Assist in updating Ojai Valley General Plan Safety Element

### **E. Capacity Building: Leveraging other Resources**

- Expand capacity to obtain federal, state, and private foundation grants
- Develop multiple revenue streams for resilient long-term operations

F. The OVFSC Board will designate one member to represent the Board with the City Council, Staff and residents.

## **Contract Obligations of the OVFSC**

- Track Key Performance Indicators and report on outcomes

- Conduct monthly coordination meetings with designated City Staff
- Provide quarterly progress reports and Council presentations

### **Professional Fees**

Total fixed fee: \$482,778 including all necessary expenses. The proposed project fee covers the services of in-house staff time such as Executive and Assistant Directors, and Staff for Home Hardening Assessments, Community Outreach & Education, FireWise Communities Coordination, Partnerships Development, plus other administrative functions such as web development. The project execution will also include key consultants and contractors for engineering, risk assessments, GIS, data visualization, planning, implementation, and translation.

- Initial 10% due upon contract signature
- Remaining 90% invoiced in 12 equal monthly installments

# OVERVIEW OF WILDFIRE AND THE OJAI VALLEY

## Current Risk Profile

The Ojai Valley confronts an **unprecedented wildfire threat**, ranking among the **top 1% nationally and top 3% in California** for wildfire risk according to Headwaters Economics. This designation places our community among the most fire-vulnerable areas in the United States.

## Geographic and Environmental Vulnerabilities:

- Surrounded by rugged mountains and chaparral-covered canyons with steep, inaccessible terrain
- Exposed to extreme hot-dry weather systems and high-impact Santa Ana winds
- Majority of the valley designated as High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones by CAL FIRE

## Infrastructure and Development Challenges:

- 89% of building stock constructed before 2009 WUI building standards—predating modern fire-resistant design requirements. Most structures lack fire hardening measures of any kind
- There are the Highways 150 and 33 with single-lane bottlenecks constraining evacuation capacity. Limited egress routes makes mass evacuation very difficult and risky
- Extensive communication "dead zones" compromising emergency alert systems
- Critical electrical grid vulnerabilities within a "utility load pocket" where interruption could trigger a valley-wide catastrophic grid failure

**Recent Regulatory Changes:** The 2024 update to CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) maps has dramatically expanded fire severity ratings into previously unregulated Local Responsibility Areas. This change now subjects **thousands of Ojai residents** to state and local defensible space regulations and building standards for the first time, creating urgent compliance needs throughout the community. (See new LRA map on next page)

**Existential Threat Assessment:** The Ojai Valley—and specifically the City of Ojai—possesses the identical risk profile that preceded catastrophic urban conflagrations in Pacific Palisades, Altadena, Lahaina, and Paradise. The convergence of extreme fire weather, vulnerable building stock, limited evacuation options, insufficient water infrastructure, and inadequate emergency communications creates conditions for potentially devastating community-wide destruction.

**Current Mitigation Gap:** Despite these extraordinary risks, comprehensive wildfire preparedness and mitigation efforts have not yet taken root in the City of Ojai. This gap between risk level and response represents an urgent public safety priority requiring immediate, coordinated action.

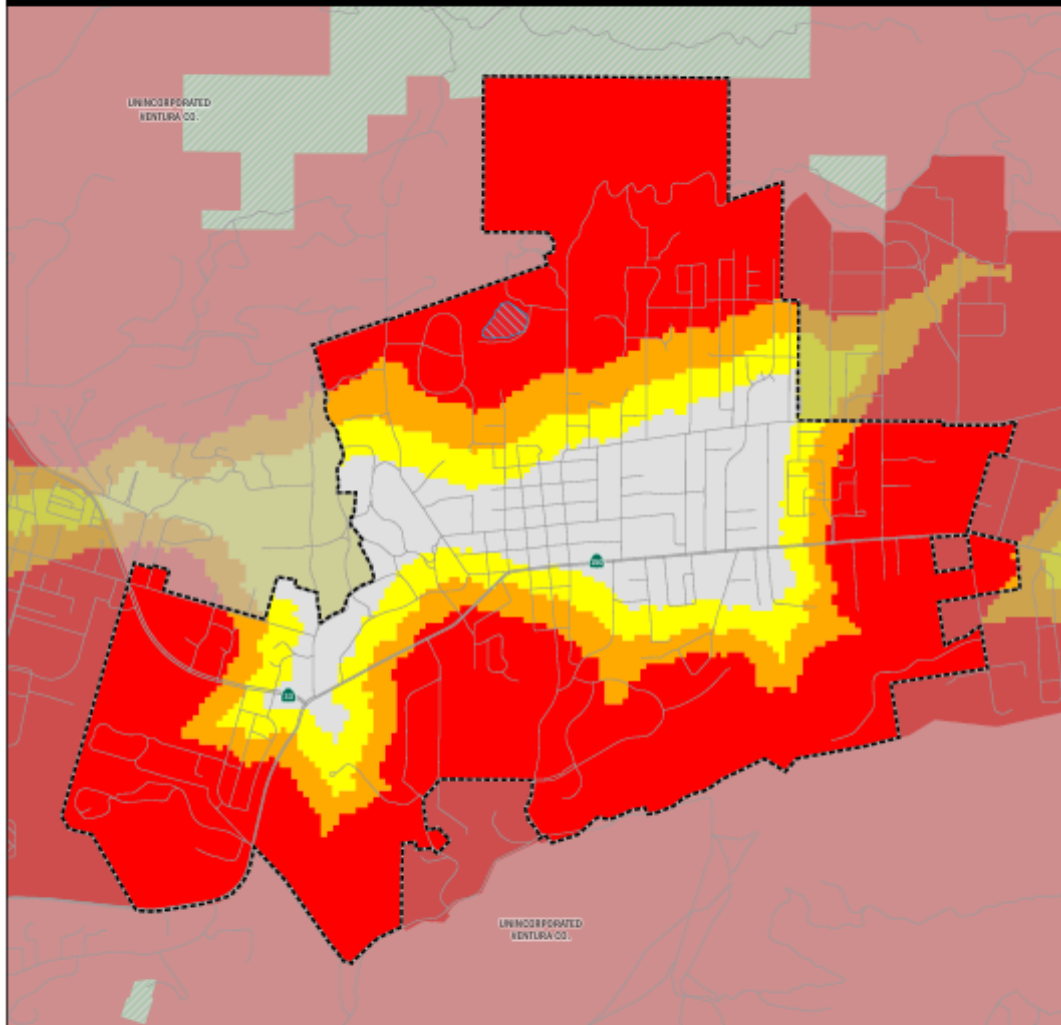




# Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones

As Identified by the  
State Fire Marshal

March 10, 2025



## Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in Local Responsibility Area (LRA), as Identified by the State Fire Marshal

Very High High Moderate

## Fire Hazard Severity Zones in State Responsibility Area (SRA), Effective April 1, 2024

Very High High Moderate

0 1  
Miles  
0 1  
Kms

Projection: NAD 83 California Teale Albers  
Scale: 1:21,000 at 11" x 17"

— Incorporated City Waterbody  
— Unzoned LRA Federal Responsibility Area (FRA)

Government Code section 51178 requires the State Fire Marshal to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent

statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. Moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather,

and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal as a major cause of wildfire spread.

The State of California and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection make no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy of data or maps. Neither the State nor the Department shall be liable under any circumstances for any direct, special, incidental, or consequential damages with respect to any claim by any user or third party on account of, or arising from, the use of data or maps.

Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California  
Made Crawford, Secretary for Natural Resources, CA Natural Resources Agency  
Joe Tyler, Director/Chief, CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Daniel Berland, State Fire Marshal, CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Data Sources:  
CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZSRA22\_3, FHSZLRA\_25\_4)  
CAL FIRE State Responsibility Areas (SRA25\_4)  
City and County boundaries as of 10/22/24 (CA Board of Equalization)

# PROPOSAL TO THE CITY OF OJAI

## Scope of Services

### Overview

Our scope of services covers the following strategic areas:

- Community Outreach & Education
- Wildfire Risk Mitigation
- Emergency Preparedness & Response
- Assist and Coordinate with City of Ojai on Planning and Policy
- Capacity Building: Leveraging other Resources

Our work addresses wildfire risk as a complex combination of fire hazard and risk, exposure (e.g., structures, population, critical infrastructure), and vulnerability (e.g., physical, social, environmental, economic). Our scope of services aligns directly with these main components as set out in the Ojai Valley Community Wildfire Protection Plan recommendations and responds specifically to the Goals, Tactics, and Strategies established by the City of Ojai.<sup>1</sup>

We will initially focus our efforts on areas in the Ojai Valley that are at highest risk from wildfires based on our assessment rubric and framework to ensure that our work is effective and has the most beneficial impact.

Work in these areas could include:

- Free and/or subsidized tree removal and vegetation clearing (based upon available grant funding or funding by the city)
- Home hardening assessments
- Supporting the development of local Firewise Communities

(This is also addressed under B.1, Structural Hardening, Parcel & Community- Level Mitigation Section 4)

## A. Community Outreach & Education

*Addressing City Tactics 2A, 2C, and 2H*

*Service Area: Ojai Valley Area Plan (please see Appendix for the map)*

OVFSC will conduct educational outreach programs covering home hardening, defensible space, and Firewise Community development. This outreach includes wildfire-appropriate landscaping guidance (including plant lists), evacuation preparation checklists (“Residential Emergency Checklist”), and an online resource library for community preparedness.

### Service Deliverables:

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<sup>1</sup> Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council has reviewed the 2025/26 City Council Goals & Tactics with respect to “Wildfire Safety Risk Mitigation.” Please see Appendix for our response and recommendations to achieve the goals.

**1. Wildfire Preparedness Workshops (Minimum 4 annually with a target of reaching as many City residents as possible)**

- Coverage of Ready, Set, Go!, VC Alert, OVFSC Dashboard Live Streaming, PulsePoint, Watch Duty and City of Ojai Disaster Resources Guide

**2. Neighborhood Emergency Planning Initiative**

- Promote and support community emergency planning at HOA and neighborhood levels
- Model implementation based on successful Taormina Community Emergency Response Project
- Provide templates, training, and ongoing support for local neighborhood emergency coordinators

**3. Home Hardening & Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment Program (With a target of conducting at least 100 free assessments)**

- Conduct free assessments in partnership with Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council
- Provide confidential, actionable recommendations for each assessed property to the homeowner

**4. Specialized Home Hardening & Defensible Space Workshops (Minimum 2 annually)**

- Focus on newly subject properties under CAL FIRE Local Responsibility Area (LRA) designations
- Provide detailed information on retrofit building materials and fire-resistant landscaping
- Distribute comprehensive landscaping checklists and plant selection guides

**5. Comprehensive Firewise Community Development (With a target of at least 3 certified Firewise Communities during the first year)**

- Plan and begin implementation of a 3-year project to have every residential property within the City limits to be part of a certified Firewise Community
- Ongoing support of existing Firewise Communities

**6. Annual Wildfire Safety Fair**

- Community-wide event featuring interactive demonstrations
- Resource vendors, equipment displays, and expert presentations
- Family-friendly education and hands-on learning opportunities

**7. Property Insurance Crisis Education Series & Workshops (Minimum 2 annually with a target of reaching as many City residents as possible)**

- Educate Ojai residents on property insurance coverage such as homeowner assistance, mitigation measures, procuring insurance, and making a claim
- Complete Parts 2 and 3 of comprehensive insurance crisis education series. Part 1 was completed in December 2024
- Part 2 Focus: Mitigation standards including Wildfire Prepared Homes (Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety), Safer from Wildfire (California Department of



Insurance), CDI insurance regulations, and information on procuring insurance, making a claim, reporting mitigation measures, and understanding risk scores.

- Part 3 Focus: Examine and discuss alternatives or complements to the private, for-profit insurance model.

## **8. Tool Lending Program**

- Assist the City in developing a “tool lending” program where residents can borrow tools from the City to utilize in their home hardening efforts

## **9. A Dedicated Webpage on the City’s Website**

- Ojai needs a centralized place online where people can get everything fire-related. We will assist the City in building this page and ensuring that nothing there is contradictory to what is on our website. City residents should not have to go to our website to find out information but should be able to go to their own City's website (we should also provide a link here to our website.) It should be the go-to place for City residents—simple, clean, and updated regularly. OVFSC will advise and assist the City in developing what needs to be included on this page. The City will be responsible for all web development and maintenance costs.
- A good example and a model that could be used is the [Malibu Fire Safety Page](#).
- This webpage might include among other items:
  - Evacuation Maps showing zones and potential routes to take in the event of fire (as approved by the Ventura County Fire Protection District and The Ventura County Office of Emergency Services)
  - Home Hardening Info– How to properly retrofit homes to increase resistance to wildfires
  - Defensible Space Rules– What to clear around your house in Zones 0, 1 & 2 and an explanation of each zone
  - Brush Clearance Guidelines– What’s legal, what’s required, authorizations, etc.
  - Fire-Resistant Landscaping– The website should include a list of what plants are good and what plants should be avoided
  - Emergency Alert Sign-Up – Instructions on how to sign up for VC Alert and other warning tools
  - Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS)– Info on what happens when the power goes out and how to respond
  - Workshop/Events Calendar– What’s coming up, how to sign up, etc.
  - Grants and Rebates– Where to find help paying for upgrades
  - FAQs

## 10. Digital Dashboard Integration

- Incorporate collected data into interactive Digital Dashboard



Figure 1 Stakeholder Engagement in 2022

## B. Wildfire Risk Mitigation

Our Wildfire Risk Mitigation is divided into immediate and tactical imperatives such as hardening and a longer-term project management plan to ensure continuity of risk reduction efforts.

### B1. Structural Hardening, Parcel & Community-Level Mitigation

*Addressing City Tactics 2A, 2H, 2I, 2J and 2K*

*Service Area: City Limits*

**Strategic Approach:** Shift from scattered individual assessments to systematic, cluster-based hardening that achieves community-wide "herd immunity" against wildfire spread and urban conflagration.

#### **Program Components:**

- Home Hardening Assessments (HHA)
- Retrofit Rebate Program Development

- Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessments
- Defensible Space Compliance Assistance

### **Service Deliverables:**

**1. Provide Free Home Hardening and Defensible Space Assessments** in partnership with Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council.

The Home Hardening Assessments are confidential to the homeowner, which encourages participation. The whole process takes approximately 3 to 4 hours to schedule, conduct the assessment, walk through the assessment with the homeowner and finalize the report.

### **2. Professional Training Programs**

- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Structure Ignition Potential Assessment Training (**Minimum 2 sessions**)
  - Certification program for up to twenty community volunteer assessors
  - Train-the-trainer model for building a cohort of local home hardening assessors, which enables Home Hardening Assessments to be done comprehensively and within a reasonable amount of time

### **3. Retrofit Rebate Program Development**

- Collaborate with City to design rebate/incentive programs
- Recommend funding streams and direct towards grant applications

### **4. Pilot Program Implementation:**

We have identified an area within the City limits with very high potential of an urban conflagration. To ensure we improve the scale and consistency of home hardening measures, we have designated a residential area bounded by these following streets for intensive Home Hardening Assessments, data collection, wildfire risk scoring, and desired or required retrofits.

**Target Area:** High-density residential zone bounded by:

- West: Canada Street
- East: Shady Lane/Mercer Avenue
- North: Shelf Road
- South: Ojai Avenue

### **Pilot Program Actions:**

- Conduct windshield surveys documenting current conditions and risk factors
- Map risk areas with scoring for prioritization
- Target homes for home hardening assessments based on highest risk scores
- Engage community through door hangers, public service announcements, and direct door-to-door contact with residents. The primary purpose will be to inform

and educate residents of the project and to identify and enlist neighborhood leaders who can help with the second phase. The second phase will be to hold neighborhood meetings and determine interest and willingness to engage in the retrofit program

- Design a program to take the next step of retrofitting and to help identify grants and other funding sources

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Systematic risk reduction in target area
- Data collection supporting future FEMA BRIC and other grant applications
- Enhance wildfire risk scoring and methodology development
- Potential insurance premium reductions for participating properties

## **B2. Ojai Valley Fuels Reduction Implementation Plan - Phase I**

### *Addressing Tactic 2I*

*Service Area: Ojai Valley Area Plan (see Appendix for map)*

**Strategic Need:** The Ojai Valley currently lacks a comprehensive, long-term fuel reduction and vegetation management strategic plan. This critical gap leaves the community vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire and limits our ability to secure implementation funding for protective measures.

**Project Goal:** Develop the foundational "Ojai Valley Fuels Reduction Implementation Plan" following proven models such as the East Bay Regional Park District's approach.

**Key Partners:** City of Ojai, County of Ventura, Ventura County Fire Protection District, Jensen Hughes, The C.R.E.W., Ojai Valley Land Conservancy and Ventura County Resource Conservation District

*The process outlined below is a key part of the transition from the Action Recommendations in the Ojai Valley CWPP and other documents such as the 2025/26 City Council Goals & Tactics to shovel-ready projects for which funding can effectively be obtained.*

### **Implementation Process:**

#### **Phase 1: Strategic Planning and Prioritization**

- Develop prioritization rubric for CWPP-identified projects
- Create 10-year implementation timeline with manageable steps:

- Step I: Highest priority/threat areas
- Step II: Complementary projects building on Phase I
- Step III: Remaining treatment areas
- Step IV: Maintenance and stewardship

## **Phase 2: Apply for State Coastal Conservancy Grant (or other relevant grant programs)**

- Secure landowner agreements for Phase I treatment areas
- Conduct CEQA compliance assessment
- Develop Recommended Treatment Area (RTA) maps
- Identify vegetation types and create detailed management plans
- Compile comprehensive “Ojai Valley Fuels Reduction Implementation Plan” (2026-2036)

## **Phase 3: Implementation**

- Seek implementation grant funding

### **Service Deliverables:**

- Comprehensive risk prioritization map for the Ojai Valley region
- Priority vegetation treatment area identification and mapping for each Fire Planning Unit (FPU)
- Spatial optimization analysis incorporating cost, access, and terrain factors to identify first round of priority project areas
- 3-5 “shovel-ready” fuel treatment projects with specifications

## **C. Emergency Preparedness & Response [Beacon Boxes]**

*Addressing City Tactic 2A, 2C and 2D*

*Service Area: Within City limits*

### **Beacon Box Implementation Project**

**Strategic Need:** Post-Thomas Fire analysis revealed critical information gaps for emergency responders, particularly those unfamiliar with local terrain, population needs, and available resources. The Access & Functional Needs (AFN) population and other vulnerable groups were inadequately served during evacuation and response efforts.

**Solution:** Strategic installation of Beacon Boxes—innovative collaborative tools designed to bridge information gaps between local and out-of-area emergency personnel during wildfire events. Beacon Boxes empower safety personnel with the critical information they need to make informed decisions during a fast-moving wildfire event.

## Beacon Box®



### Beacon Box Features:

- Accurate, detailed road network mapping
- Emergency vehicle turnaround locations
- Fire hydrant and structure location data
- Hazard identification and pool/water source mapping
- Highly curated, locally-specific emergency response information
- Mapping of vulnerable residents that need evacuation assistance

### Implementation Details:

- Strategically map the Beacon Box locations throughout the Ojai Planning Area
- Identify strategic locations identified within City of Ojai limits
- Obtained full VCFD support including commitment from Fire Chief Dustin Gardner for in-kind services and cash match
- Professional installation and maintenance with quality assurance protocols



**Service Deliverable:** Install and commission a **minimum of 7 Beacon Boxes** at strategic locations within city limits

## **D. Assist and Coordinate with City of Ojai on Planning and Policy**

*Supports City Tactic 2I*

### **Services Provided:**

- Assist as requested in the updating of the Safety Element of the Ojai General Plan
- Integrate relevant wildfire plans such as the CWPP findings and others such as the VCFD Unit Strategic Fire Plan and Ventura County Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

## **E. Capacity Building: Leveraging other Resources**

*Addressing City Tactic 2I*

**Enhanced Capacity Through City Partnership:** The proposed funding will enable OVFSC to significantly build on our demonstrated 24:1 leverage ratio of city investments.

### **Service Areas:**

- Expand capacity to obtain federal, state, local, and private foundation grants
- Develop multiple revenue streams for resilient long-term operations
- Partnership Development: Leverage existing networks to create funding collaboratives and shared-cost initiatives

## **Professional Fees**

The proposed Scope of Services above will be provided by the OVFSC for a firm fixed fee of \$482,778 that includes necessary expenses to perform our Scope of Services.

- The proposed project fee covers the services of in-house staff time such as Executive and Assistant Directors, and Staff for Home Hardening Assessments, Community Outreach & Education, FireWise Communities Coordination, Partnerships Development, plus other administrative functions such as web development. The project execution will also include key consultants and contractors for engineering, risk assessments, GIS, data visualization, planning, implementation, and translation.
- **Payment.** The OVFSC will invoice the City for 10% of the agreed-upon fee amount upon contract signature or authorization to proceed. Payment of the initial 10% is due upon receipt of an invoice. The remaining 90% will be invoiced monthly in 12 equal installments.

## **Contract Management & Accountability**

### **Performance Monitoring & Reporting:**

#### **1. Quarterly Reporting**

- Progress reports to City Manager and City Council

#### **2. Staff Coordination**

- Monthly meetings with designated City staff (adjustable per City Manager preference)
- Regular communication on project progress and emerging issues
- Coordination with City departments and initiatives
- Joint planning and problem-solving sessions

#### **3. Council Presentations**

- Quarterly presentations to City Council (adjustable per Council preference)
- Special presentations on significant milestones or emerging issues

#### **4. Annual Report**

- Annual comprehensive review and planning session
- Performance metrics tracking and analysis
- Financial reporting and budget management
- Outcome measurement and community impact assessment
- Community impact showcases and success story documentation

**Value Proposition:** *OVFSC brings decades of specialized experience, established strategic partnerships, extensive network collaboration, and institutional memory to wildfire preparedness efforts. Our integrated approach ensures maximum return on investment while building long-term community resilience against wildfire threats.*

## STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

### *Organization History & Proven Track Record: Established Excellence (2001-Present)*

The Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council (OVFSC) has served the Ojai Valley community for over 25 years. During this time, the OVFSC has developed unparalleled expertise across the full spectrum of wildfire management: preparedness, response, recovery, and risk mitigation. The organization has successfully secured and managed over \$8 million in funding (including cash and in-kind contributions) for diverse initiatives including fuel reduction, vegetation management, wildfire preparedness and safety, and community outreach and education. The OVFSC is highly respected in the wildfire community and has earned recognition as an exceptional fire safe council at both local and state levels.

### **Exceptional Funding Leverage Capability**

One of the OVFSC's most valuable attributes is its proven ability to leverage baseline funding from the City, delivering exceptional return on investment for municipal partners.

### **Case Study #1: Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2021-2024)**

- **City Investment:** \$50,000 Community Service Grant (2021)
- **Total Project Value:** \$1.2 million
- **Leverage Ratio:** 24:1 return on City investment
- **Outcome:** Comprehensive Ojai Valley CWPP with fine-scale risk mapping, vulnerability assessment, evacuation analysis, and digital dashboard

### **Case Study #2: Home Hardening & Firewise Communities (2023-Present)**

- **City Investment:** \$25,000 Community Service Grant (2023)
- **Leveraged Outcomes:**
  - Numerous free home hardening and HIZ assessments valley-wide
  - Educational presentations to multiple homeowner associations and neighborhoods
  - Establishment of five Firewise Communities: Matilija Canyon, Persimmon Hill, Rancho Matilija, Golden West Mobile Home Park, and Ojai Villa Mobile Estates
  - Ongoing collaboration with Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council and VCFD in the development of Firewise Communities in the Ojai Valley Area

### **Current Service Expansion Capacity**

The OVFSC is currently providing home hardening and defensible space assessments throughout the Ojai Valley through partnerships with Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council and VCFD, but *with significant strain on our operations due to lack of funding*. With enhanced City support, the organization is positioned to continue and significantly expand these services and develop comprehensive retrofitting assistance programs, building on the successful foundation already established.

## Recent Major Accomplishments

### 1. **Ojai Valley Community Wildfire Protection Plan (OV-CWPP) - \$1.2 Million Project**

OVFSC recently completed this comprehensive, multi-component planning document, prepared under the recognized federal framework that serves as the foundation for all future wildfire preparedness efforts in the Valley and future funding. This landmark project includes:

#### **Core Components:**

- **Ojai Valley CWPP** - Comprehensive main document with detailed appendices
- **Fine-Scale Risk Mapping** - Precise identification of high-risk areas throughout the Valley
- **Wildfire Vulnerability Assessment** - Community-wide analysis of exposure and susceptibility
- **Evacuation Assessment** - Critical analysis of evacuation routes and capacity limitations
- **Ember Cast Modeling & Mapping** - Countywide ember transport analysis for strategic planning
- **Digital Dashboard** - Interactive online portal providing real-time wildfire data and community resources

This project represents the most comprehensive wildfire planning effort ever undertaken in the Ojai Valley and provides the scientific foundation for all proposed mitigation strategies.

2. **California County Coordinator** - Completed in partnership with the Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative.
3. **Property Insurance Crisis Education Series** - Initiated comprehensive three-part panel series (first panel completed December 2024) addressing critical insurance challenges facing fire-prone communities like ours. Series 2 and 3 are pending.
4. **Graze Ojai Program Expansion** - Successfully advanced our innovative community-supported prescribed grazing program. We hosted the second annual Goatober Festival in October 2024 for community engagement and education. We completed the 2023 Globetrotter Foundation project; it was the first effort at crowdsourcing funds towards community-wide fuel management through prescribed grazing. This showcased effectiveness of prescribed grazing as a fire mitigation strategy.

## Current Active Projects \$2.05M Total

The restricted funding associated with these active projects is limited to fulfilling the grant obligations and do not include any of the scope of services in this proposal to the City of Ojai.

OVFSC currently manages a robust portfolio of wildfire mitigation projects, demonstrating our capacity to oversee large-scale, multi-faceted initiatives while maintaining the highest standards of project management and community engagement.

### 1. **Ojai Valley Fuel Reduction Project Phase 1 - \$800,000** *Funder: CAL FIRE*

This comprehensive fuel reduction initiative addresses critical fire hazards throughout the Valley through multiple coordinated approaches:

- Hazardous Invasive Tree Removal - San Antonio Creek riparian zone (Persimmon Hill area)
- Defensible Space Enhancement - Matilija Canyon and Foster Park communities
- Temporary Refuge Areas - Creation and maintenance in Foster Park and Matilija Canyon
- Prescribed Grazing - VCFD's Upper Ojai Protection Zone
- Ojai Valley Community Defense Zone Treatments – Fuel reduction in partnership with U.S. Forest Service

### 2. **Critical Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessment - \$655,344** *Funder: State Coastal Conservancy*

This grant is being administered under the Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative, and includes:

- Comprehensive vulnerability analysis of critical community assets. This countywide assessment identifies and prioritizes infrastructure protection needs
  - Regional Project Prioritization Plan (RPP) development guidance
  - Ojai Valley CWPP Management Plan creation for long-term maintenance and implementation
- ### 3. **Enhanced WUI Risk Scoring Tool Development - In partnership with UCSB, Jensen Hughes, and Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council**
- Developing improved parcel-level Wildland-Urban Interface risk-scoring tool.
- ### 4. **Prescribed Grazing Educational Curriculum - \$100,000** *Funder: Globetrotter Foundation; Partnership: Grazing School of the West*
- Innovative educational program integrating fire prevention through prescribed herbivory into public and private school curricula, fostering next-generation environmental stewardship and fire-safe practices.

### 5. **Community Resilience Centers Development - \$500,000 (Planning Grant)** *Funder: California Strategic Growth Council*

- Strategic planning for two Community Resilience Centers serving the entire Ojai Valley and Ventura River Watershed, designed to enhance emergency preparedness, response capabilities, and community coordination during wildfire and other emergency events, as well as build overall community resilience.

## **Projects Ideas to Develop (for grant applications and other funding)**

OVFSC maintains an active project development pipeline guided by a holistic framework, though development of these ideas into projects is currently constrained by short-staffing and restricted funding limitations. Key initiatives under development include:

### **Fuel Reduction & Vegetation Management**

- Ojai Valley Fuel Reduction Project Phase 2—federal grant application pending
- Ojai Community Defense Zone—continued expansion of treatments
  - Last Stand Fuel Break
- Ojai Valley Fire Corridors (upper and lower Stewart Canyon)
- North Fork Springs Road
- Skyline and Saddle Mountain slopes
- New Fire Hazard Area (FHA) buffer zones, as determined by the VC Fire Department, in Local Responsibility Areas
- Graze Ojai Program (Community-Supported Prescribed Grazing Program)
  - Program redesign and strategic plan
    - Community-owned grazing
  - Grazing Corridor—a “Wildfire Intensity Reduction Zone” around the Ojai Valley between the built environment and the forest
    - Mapping & Access
    - Strategic Grazing Contracts
  - Lake Casitas Watershed—Research on prescribed grazing effects on watershed function
- Fine-scale vegetation mapping—Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties
- Research potential and cost feasibility of Multi-Spectral Analysis to prioritize fuel treatments
- Enhanced data collection and mapping technologies

### **Community Outreach & Education**

- Specialized workshops on new FRAP maps and Zone 0 defensible space requirements
- Completion of Insurance Crisis Education Series (Parts 2 and 3)
- Expanded neighborhood-level preparedness programs

### **Emergency Preparedness & Response**

- CWPP Implementation & Management:
  - Ongoing Digital Dashboard maintenance and evolution
  - Regional Project Prioritization Plan implementation



- Beacon Boxes
  - Phased expansion throughout Ojai Valley Region
- Ojai Valley Community Resilience Centers
  - Development and Implementation Phases
- Critical Water Infrastructure Assessment for First Responders
- Public Emergency Communications & Messaging
  - Voluntary Geospatial Information (VGI) and Crowdsourced Data Public Emergency Communication & Messaging
    - In partnership with Jensen Hughes, UC Santa Barbara and US Geological Survey
  - Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) Center at Community Resilience Centers

## Partnerships and Collaboration

The OVFSC is a small, nimble and mighty organization that accomplishes its mission through extensive partnerships and collaborations. OVFSC is uniquely positioned to float across various agencies and organizations at various levels through official and informal channels. The OVFSC is a founding member of the Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative ([www.vcrd.org/vcwc](http://www.vcrd.org/vcwc)) which consists of OVFSC, Ventura County Resource Conservation District, Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council, Bell Canyon Fire Safe Council, Oak Park Fire Safe Council, Ventura County Fire Department, and Jensen Hughes.

The OVFSC is a member of the Ventura River Watershed Council and serves on its Leadership Committee and Advisory Group for the Ventura River Watershed Resilience Project funded by the State of California.

### Active Partnerships and Collaborations include:

#### Government

##### Local

- City of Ojai
- County of Ventura
- Ventura County Fire Protection District
- Ventura County Sheriff's Department
- Ventura County Office of Emergency Services
- Ventura County Transportation Commission
- Ojai Valley Municipal Advisory Council
- Ventura County Human Services Agency (Mass Care)
- Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner

##### State

- CAL FIRE

- California Fire Safe Council
- California Rangeland Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)
- State Coastal Conservancy
- Listos! California
- California Strategic Growth Council
- Office of Senator Monique Limon
- Office of Assemblyman Steven Bennett

#### Federal

- USFS Los Padres National Forest
- Office of Rep. Salud Carbajal
- Office of Rep. Julia Brownley

#### **Education**

- Ojai Unified School District
- Oak Grove School
- Thacher School
- Besant Hill School
- Villanova Preparatory
- Ojai Valley School
- Grazing School of the West

#### **Fire Environmental Science and Research**

- UC-ANR (Agricultural and Natural Resources)
- UCSB
- UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, Department of Environmental Health Services (Christina Batteate, PhD, MPH)
- Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (Wildlands Fire Institute)
- UC-Cooperative
- Moritz Lab
- USGS
- Fire-Adapted Communities Learning Network

#### **Community Organization**

- American Red Cross
- ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Services)
- The C.R.E.W.
- HELP of Ojai
- Ojai Valley Land Conservancy
- CalTrout
- Ojai Valley Green Coalition
- Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Krishnamurti Foundation of America
- Krotona Institute
- Camp Ramah

- Ventura River Watershed Council
- California Chaparral Institute
- Los Padres Forest Watch
- Globetrotter Foundation
- Land & Leadership Initiative
- Soil Sponge Foundation
- Santa Barbara Community Environmental Council
- Santa Barbara Fire Safe Council
- Sonoma Fire Safe Council
- Butte Fire Safe Council
- San Luis Obispo Fire Safe Council
- San Diego Resource Conservation District and Fire Safe Council
- California Fire Safe Council
- California Climate & Agricultural Network (CalCAN)
- United Policyholders
- Farmhand Foundation

## **Business & Industry**

- Jensen Hughes
- Kittleson & Associates
- Rincon Consultants
- Ojai Valley News
- Southern California Edison and Edison International
- Shepherdess Land & Livestock
- Ventura Brush Goats
- Watershed Progressive

## OUR TEAM AT THE OJAI VALLEY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

Due to the complexities and interdisciplinary nature of wildfire risk, hazard, and vulnerability assessment mapping, analytical tools and online dashboard development, and extensive community and diverse stakeholder engagement, the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council uses a project team, consisting of staff, board members, and key consultants, with a wide range of experience and knowledge working on wildfire preparedness and response, firefighting and incident command, wildfire resiliency planning, wildfire risk mitigation programs and policies, fire science, database development, mapping and other visualizations, data analytics, security, government and sustainability.

### Staff, Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council

#### **Christopher Danch, J.D. - Executive Director**

Christopher Danch serves as Executive Director of the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council, a position he has held since January 2019. With over 40 years of legal experience and a distinguished background in environmental law and nonprofit management, Chris brings a unique combination of legal expertise and hands-on conservation experience to wildfire safety and community resilience.

A graduate of California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo (B.S. Business Administration, *with honors*, 1977) and California Western School of Law (J.D., 1980), Chris is admitted to the State Bar of California and the U.S. District Courts for the Central, Southern & Eastern Districts of California. His legal practice encompasses business formation, environmental law, construction law, and extensive nonprofit organization experience.

Since joining the Fire Safe Council, Chris has successfully managed over 15 state and federally funded grants totaling over \$1.5 million with approximately \$580,000 in matching contributions. He is currently managing \$2.05 Million in projects. His responsibilities include identifying grant opportunities, writing applications, project management, and overseeing partnerships with key organizations including Ventura County Fire Protection District, USFS Los Padres National Forest, and the Ventura County Resource Conservation District.

Chris has co-founded and directed four nonprofits dedicated to youth development, environmental education, and natural resource conservation, including Concerned Resource & Environmental Workers (The C.R.E.W.), Sunbow Ecology Center, and the Los Padres Forest Association. He conceived and initiated the Condor Trail Project in 1998—a 426-mile trail through Los Padres National Forest that was designated as a White House Community Millennium Trail in 2001 and is now pending congressional designation as a National Scenic Trail.

His environmental and community service includes serving as Board Chairman of the Ventura County Chapter of the American Red Cross for three years, where he helped transform the organization from a \$379,000 annual budget to \$1.2 million and recognized as one of the top chapters in the nation. In 2003, he received both the National Service Award and the prestigious Chief's Volunteers Program National Award from the USDA Forest Service Chief. Chris also has over a decade of experience with clean energy technologies, including thermal conversion and biomass-to-energy systems, making him uniquely qualified to address the intersection of fire safety, land management, and sustainable community development.

### **Kalli Ann O'Connor - Assistant Director**

Kalli Ann O'Connor serves as Assistant Director at the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council. Kalli's work centers on building community resilience within the bioregion of the Ventura River Watershed, utilizing a systems approach that addresses the interconnected nature of environmental, social, and economic challenges. She plays a key role in the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council's development of two bioregional learning centers—community resilience hubs designed to strengthen the Valley's adaptive capacity through various strategies such as education, collaboration, and integrated land management practices.

Her diverse skill set encompasses strategic planning, project and grant management, fundraising, event planning, and community outreach and education. Her holistic approach bridges the gap between fire mitigation methods and regenerative land stewardship, fostering resilience that benefits both human communities and natural ecosystems.

She is a certified Home Hardening and Defensible Space Assessor through CAL FIRE and the National Fire Protection Association, as well as a certified Firefighter Type 2, combining technical credentials with hands-on field experience in fire safety and mitigation.

Kalli was educated at The Thacher School and studied Psychology at the University of Michigan. Kalli then pursued training in Holistic Management with the Savory Institute, where she gained knowledge in business operations for ranching and prescriptive grazing. Kalli integrates ecologically-minded fuel management strategies with agricultural systems, understanding the connections between herbivory, food and fiber production, and landscape-scale fire mitigation.

### **Sudeep Motupalli Rao, PhD - Director - Emergent Systems**

Sudeep is working at a systems-level approach to help the Ojai Valley bioregion in California, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies such as uncontrollable wildfires as the Director of Emergent Systems at The Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council (FireSafeOjai.org).

His work spans a broad spectrum of sectors, fields, frameworks and disciplines such as steel-making efficiency improvements, R&D to prevent radioactive contamination of rivers from legacy labs, ambient-pressure aerogels, biomimetic conservation of limestone monuments, non-contact scatterometry for semiconductor manufacturing, health policy development from deeply-engaging doctors at San Francisco General Hospital and medical residents from UCSF with neighboring community leaders and bioremediation of fugitive macroscopic synthetic plastic micropollutants.

He is the co-founder of technical innovation & design spaces, SlowTechLabs.Net and InnovationSpace.in. He began learning yoga and meditation from his father.

Sudeep appreciates Ojai's life with its evolving aesthetic of natural wild beauty, deep peace, and the harmonization at play of national forest wilderness with urban living, legacy industries, agriculture, farming, education, sports and a long life for us all.

## **Board of Directors, Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council**

### **William D. Castagna - Board Chairman**

Will Castagna has lived in Ojai since 1998 and was one of the original founders of the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council in 2000. He has served the council continuously for over 25 years, as a Board Member, Executive Director and Grants Manager, and he currently serves as the Board's Chairman. Professionally, he is a start-up consultant, helping to grow businesses from ideas through to acquisition. He has also helped create and grow several local non-profit organizations and successfully acquired over \$1M in grant funding for the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council. Programs implemented include wildfire safety education for students, homeowners, landscapers, and farmers and ranchers; the Last Stand Fuel Break project to the north of the valley; the Ojai Valley Wildfire Safety Fair; and house-out defensible space programs in high fire-danger neighborhoods.

### **Randy Coggan, J.D. - Fire Chief (Retired) for Ventura County Fire Department**

Randy Coggan is a retired fire service veteran having served for twenty-five years, coming up through the ranks, and has served as a fire chief for several departments including being a former Fire Chief for Ventura County and later as Fire Chief for the City of Oxnard. As a Fire Chief, Randy oversaw budgets ranging from \$10 Million to over \$45 Million, with staff ranging from 45 to over 450 personnel. During this period Randy served on numerous committees for both the International Association of Firefighters, the International



Association of Fire Chiefs, and the National Fire Protection Association. He also authored the chapter on “Insurance Grading of Fire Departments” in the Fifth Edition of The Fire Chiefs Handbook. After retiring from the fire service, he began a second career in Business Resiliency & Crisis Management working for several major corporations for another ten years before finally retiring in 2023. He and his wife Virginia returned to California in October 2024 settling in the Ojai Valley. He has a Juris Doctorate and is a member of the Washington State Bar Association. When asked what he loves, besides his family, he said serving on the Board of the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council.

### **Neil Lokuge - American Red Cross, Disaster Relief and Response**

Neil Lokuge brings more than 15 years of leadership in logistics, emergency preparedness, and operational strategy to the Ojai Fire Safe Council. As Manager of Business Operations at the American Red Cross National Training Services, Neil leads a national team that supports over \$130 million in annual contracts, with a focus on efficiency, scalability, and client service. He oversees strategic implementation for high-priority accounts, including the organization’s largest military training programs, and has played a key role in modernizing operations.

His previous roles in logistics and disaster service delivery have given him a hands-on understanding of emergency readiness. Neil also served as a Red Cross Disaster Relief Action Team volunteer, having assisted in both national and local disasters, reinforcing his commitment to local resilience and crisis response.

Neil holds a master’s degree in International Management and Policy from UC San Diego, along with certificates in Intergroup Relations (Loyola Marymount University) and Global Logistics (California State University, Long Beach). He is a long-time member of the World Affairs Council of Los Angeles and brings a global perspective to local fire safety efforts in the Ojai Valley.

### **Wayne Maynard - Fire Captain (Retired) Ventura County Fire Department**

Wayne Maynard moved to Ojai while in the 5th grade and has resided in Oak View and Ojai for over 50 years. A local graduate from Nordhoff, he obtained an AA Degree at Ventura College, a Fire Science Certificate at Oxnard College and a Continuing Education Certificate at UCLA in Fire Protection Engineering.

As an Eagle Scout he learned the value and enjoyment of public service which led to joining the Ojai Fire Station Reserve Firefighter Program in 1974. At 19 years of age he was hired as a full-time firefighter with Ventura County Fire Department in 1975. Promoted to Fire Captain in 1984 he worked at various station assignments in the Ojai and Thousand Oaks areas. He attained sufficient training and experience in wildland firefighting to become a Planning Section Chief, part of the command staff during wildland fire incidents and also served in that capacity on a CalFire (CDF) state incident command team. Much of his career was spent working in the Fire Prevention Division of the Fire Department where he became recognized as a national expert in building and fire codes. He served as chairman to the International Code Council Performance Fire Code

Drafting Committee which published the first performance-based fire code in the county. He served on several code development committees with the International Fire Code Institute, the California Building Standards Commission, the California State Fire Marshal office, and the California Fire Chiefs Association.

Although retired in 2011 as a full time firefighter, Wayne continues to do occasional part time work for the Fire Department to assist the Fire Marshal in the development and management of various Fire Prevention Programs. He enjoys hiking and camping and spends some time away from home visiting his grandchildren and traveling to National Parks around the county. Wayne joined the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council as a board member in 2021.

### **Molly Brolin - Director of Community Outreach, Creative Entrepreneur**

Molly Brolin is the Director of Community Outreach at the OVFSC. She is a multidisciplinary entrepreneur with a background in management for professional artists, events and film production, as well as being an accomplished goldsmith and jeweler herself.

She has also worked intimately with collectives and non-profits in New York City and New Mexico, raising funds and doing humanitarian projects, including helping to build a world class skatepark and bringing mutual aid to areas of Navajo Nation. She has experienced first-hand the challenges that Wildland Firefighters face along with their families in integrating the demanding lifestyle and finding balance. In this age of fire there is a call to address a growing mental health crisis, so we must consider the opportunity to build wildfire resilience in this way. She hopes to have a hand in building a local program for this cause.

## **Key Consultants & Contractors**

### **Christina Paez – Wildfire Prevention & Natural Resource Specialist**

Christina has led and supported high-impact projects, including the Grizzly Peak Strategic Fuel Break Collaboration (\$2.8M) funded by CalFire, and has worked extensively on fire risk reduction strategies such as targeted grazing with goats and sheep along the wildland-urban interface. Her work with agencies like the East Bay Regional Park District and Regional Parks Foundation has included efforts in trail development, native plant restoration, and climate-resilient landscaping.

Christina Paez is a seasoned grant writing consultant with nearly two decades of experience securing over \$100 million in funding for public health, parks, and natural resource initiatives. With a strong academic foundation in Exercise Science and Public Health (Epidemiology), she has channeled her passion for the outdoors into impactful work in wildfire prevention, habitat restoration, and natural resource management.

Originally from wildfire-prone New Mexico, Christina brings deep personal insight into the urgent need for proactive land management. She is now pursuing a Master's in Natural Resources with a focus on Wildland Fire and Integrated Natural Resources, aiming to deepen her impact at the intersection of community health and environmental resilience.

**Darlene Rini - PE Director / Global Wildland Fire Service Line Leader (Jensen Hughes)**

- Experience: 25 years
- PE (Fire Protection): CA
- Comprehensive wildfire risk assessments, CWPPs, disaster risk management
- Performance-based Structural Fire Engineering

Darlene is an internationally recognized expert in structural fire resiliency and leads Jensen Hughes' Wildfire Risk Mitigation global service line out of Southern California. She has extensive experience in a range of fire safety, structural fire engineering, and fire-related disaster risk management work. Her primary focus is developing holistic wildfire risk mitigation strategies and action plans at building, parcel, enterprise, and city/county levels to support decision-making, policy development, and wildland urban-interface risk management. She is currently project director on a range of wildfire mitigation planning and risk assessment projects (e.g., San Gabriel Valley COG Regional CWPP, City of Agoura Hills CWRA, FEMA Building Science WUI SME Support, Electric Transmission Texas, Bear Valley Electrical Services, Western El Dorado County CWPP, Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative and SFPE WUI Virtual Handbook Version 2). As Principal Director, Darlene will oversee our services to the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council and VCWC. She will provide technical direction for the rest of the team members while also providing subject-matter expertise in wildfire risk mitigation.

**Marek Jakubowski, PHD - Data Visualization Specialist (Jensen Hughes)**

- Experience: 19 years
- GISciences, remote sensing, data visualization, wildfire ecology, cartography

Marek Jakubowski, PhD, is a geospatial analyst and data visualization expert specializing in wildfire detection, ecology, and mapping. With experience spanning academia, industry, and entrepreneurship, he has led efforts in several wildfire related projects. As VP of Product, he led the development of an AI-driven image analysis platform for early wildfire detection by integrating satellite and terrestrial imagery to provide real-time alerts. He has collaborated with scientific institutions, emergency response agencies, Native tribes, and technology teams to deploy scalable solutions that improve wildfire mitigation, monitoring, and response. His work in fire detection includes a patent of an early-warning satellite system.

Beyond wildfire applications, Marek excels in data visualization and cartography, transforming complex datasets into accessible insights. He has contributed to numerous projects creating GIS-based maps for published books and online platforms. With a background in UX/UI design, GIS, and data visualization, he bridges technical analysis

with user-focused design. Whether developing visualization dashboards for financial analytics or mapping terrain for outdoor enthusiasts, his passion lies in making spatial data both beautiful and practical.

As Project Manager, Marek will work closely with the Project Director to oversee day-to-day management of the Jensen Hughes project team, provide technical oversight of mapping and data dashboard products, and coordinate with the Client on schedule and project deliverables. On the technical side, Marek will help compile and organize extensive wildfire-related geographic data. His focus will be on designing accessible data distribution methods that ensure both fire experts and the public can easily access, understand, and use critical wildfire information to support mitigation efforts.

**Amelia Pludow, PHD Senior Wildfire Mitigation Specialist, Demography, GISciences (Jensen Hughes)**

- Experience: 8 years
- GIScience, wildfire demography, wildfire risk assessments

Amelia is a wildfire/fire risk consultant working out of the Southern California region of Jensen Hughes. She earned her PhD in Geography at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB), where her research focused on better quantifying the demographics of the population likely to be impacted by wildfire and using spatial analysis, location modeling, and GIScience methods to develop risk reduction strategies. She also has a BA from Colby College (Geology and Environmental Studies) and an MA from UCSB (Geography). She has experience in a range of fields including wildfire risk mitigation, resiliency planning, geography, paleontology, and demography. Amelia has worked on projects spanning various sectors, including utilities, non profits, government, academia, and commercial. Currently, her focus is on wildfire risk mitigation planning across California and in other fire-prone regions in North America. She has most recently contributed to consulting services for Tuolumne County Transit Council, Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, City of Redwood City, Society of Fire Protection Engineers Foundation, Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council, Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council, and USFS Pacific Southwest Research Station.

**Matai Blacklock - Technologist & Bioregional Community Builder**

Matai Blacklock is a seasoned technologist and community builder, with experience leading grassroots, corporate, and government projects. After studying Industrial Engineering & Sustainability Studies at RPI in Troy, NY, he worked his way to a Senior Consultant role with the Chief Strategy Office of Deloitte, playing key management roles for Fortune-100 technology and non-profit pro-bono projects, developing a shared services governance model for four US Telecom companies, supporting government lobbying around AI ethics, and leading process optimization efforts for a variety of Wall St. organizations. He is conversationally fluent in French, German and Spanish, and has experience working as a concrete technician, civil engineer's assistant, natural builder, renewable energy salesman, content creator, events producer, and community lead for decentralized coliving and regenerative community projects. Matai currently leads community building efforts for a local farm in Upper Ojai, and is supporting the founding

of a local resource sharing co-operative, housing co-operative, and bioregional learning centers.

### **Maurica Anderson - CAL FIRE Veteran, Vegetation mapping, Risk Assessment**

After growing up on the East Coast, Maurica (*more-EE-suh*) has been fortunate to make California's Central Coast her home and living laboratory since 1996. Driven by a life-long understanding that change is the only constant, her research interests span a wide array of topics such as land restoration and reengaging (western) humanity with the landscape, chaparral ecology, and sociology and wisdom.

Maurica's life's work is encapsulated by a mentor's directive to "leave it better than you found it," applied to doing right by the land and people in our disrupted climate. To that end, she seeks to strengthen bridges through problem solving/connecting, project managing, and active mentoring via a confluence of professional roles within both the public and private sectors. Maurica hasn't found a Fire Safe Council that she won't enthusiastically support, though she works for and volunteers closely with her perennial favorites: SLO County and Ojai Valley. For Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District, she facilitated a fine-scale vegetation mapping project across three counties that informs natural disaster risk assessment, high-priority conservation work, and innumerable restoration and research projects across many land-based fields – please ask her about it! Maurica is thrilled to have recently joined Althouse and Meade as their fire and fuels project manager, so enabling her to work with an even larger network of environmental professionals.

Previously, Maurica worked for CalFire for nearly a decade; taught forestry, GIS, and environmental sciences in Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo's Natural Resources Department (her alma mater); and served in several roles at Cal Poly's Swanton Pacific Ranch, including as coordinator of a statewide fuels management workforce development program and trainings for the CalVTP Programmatic EIR.

### **Cole Bush - Graze Ojai Program Partner, Regenerative Agriculture and Land Management Specialist**

A self-deemed 'shepherdess', Brittany Cole Bush, AKA Cole has over a decade of experience working as regenerative agriculture and land management specialist. Cole aids in the creation of prescribed grazing programs for public safety and ecological enhancement as an educator, practitioner, and consultant. She is the sole owner-operator of Shepherdess Land and Livestock Co., a contract grazing business working with sheep and goats based out of the Upper Ojai Valley at Oak Heritage Ranch. Her on-the-ground experience includes the development and implementation of large-scale prescribed grazing programs in the Bay Area of California as the Project Manager for Star Creek Land Stewards (SCLS), a premier contract grazing operation based out of the Central Valley. During her tenure with SCLS from 2012-2016, she oversaw contract grazing programs impacting over 2,000 acres of private and public lands on an annual basis for vegetation management, ecosystems services, fire fuel load reduction, invasive species management, and biological enhancement, using upwards of 2,000 head of sheep and

goats in over six counties. Cole is also the Co-Director of the Grazing School of the West, an ongoing project creating vocational paths for next-generation agrarians as land stewards through training, technical assistance, and experiential learning. Cole is thrilled to be working to support fire resilience and ecological health with her experience as a land steward shepherding animals, people, and projects.

# REFERENCES

Darlene Rini, PE, Director/Global Wildland Fire Service Line Leader, Jensen Hughes  
Email: [darlene.rini@jensenhughes.com](mailto:darlene.rini@jensenhughes.com)

Celine Moomey, Pre-Fire Specialist, Ventura County Fire Department; CAL FIRE Liaison  
Email: [celine.moomey@ventura.org](mailto:celine.moomey@ventura.org)

Atticus Reyes, Field Representative, Assm. Steve Bennett; President. Ojai Unified School District Board of Trustees  
Email: [Atticus.Reyes@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Atticus.Reyes@asm.ca.gov)

Derek Poultney, Executive Director, Concerned Resources & Environmental Workers (The C.R.E.W.)  
Email: [derek@thecrew.org](mailto:derek@thecrew.org)

Britney Munoz, Statewide Coordinator, California Fire Safe Council  
Email: [bmunoz@cafiresafecouncil.org](mailto:bmunoz@cafiresafecouncil.org)

Matt LaVere, Ventura County Supervisor District 1  
Email: [Matt.LaVere@ventura.org](mailto:Matt.LaVere@ventura.org)

More references upon request.



## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CITY OF OJAI**

This proposal is based upon the City of Ojai performing the following activities:

1. Ensure staff availability during business hours.
2. Upon request, provide Letters of Support and Letters of Commitment to support grant applications or similar purposes.
3. If necessary and appropriate, participate in grant applications as co-applicant. The City agrees that the OVFSC shall remain the grant and project manager unless agreed otherwise between the City and OVFSC.
4. Authorize the City Manager, or his/her designee, regarding any City grants that may be applied for, to provide Letters of Support/Commitment in his/her discretion and further authorize the City Manager to provide, if required by a grant applied for, committed in-kind or cash matches up to \$25,000 in total per grant. Matches exceeding \$25,000 will require City Council approval.
5. Where significant changes to the required scope, priorities, and/or travel reimbursement from the baseline contract requirements are identified through clarifications and/or modifications by the City or other key stakeholders, the City will work with OVFSC to revisit and reach mutually agreed upon updates to the scope, fee, and reimbursements.
6. Support or implement the necessary promotional campaign to help increase public participation, as well as the mechanics of producing media flyers, postings, webpage notifications, public notification boards and final communications content.
7. One staff person (the City Manager or his designee) will be assigned the responsibility of overseeing the project and will be our POC on a daily basis (i.e., a person residents can go to for questions, concerns, etc.). This individual will also be responsible for updating the City website (previously addressed) and assist in scheduling and promoting events, etc.

8. The City will work with the OVFSC to ensure that the Safety Element of the General Plan is updated to include all aspects that relate to Wildfire Safety & Risk Mitigation. This information will assist the Community Development & the Planning Department in adoption 1) more stringent fire safety ordinances, 2) plant lists, 3) brush clearance mandates, etc.

9. The City will attend all appropriate neighborhood meetings and events.

## ACCEPTANCE

Upon acceptance of this Proposal, the City of Ojai and the Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council will mutually prepare a Professional Services Agreement that sets forth the Scope of Services set forth above and contains standards terms and conditions.

**City of Ojai**

**Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council, Inc.**

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Signature

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Signature

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Printed Name

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Printed Name

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Title

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Title

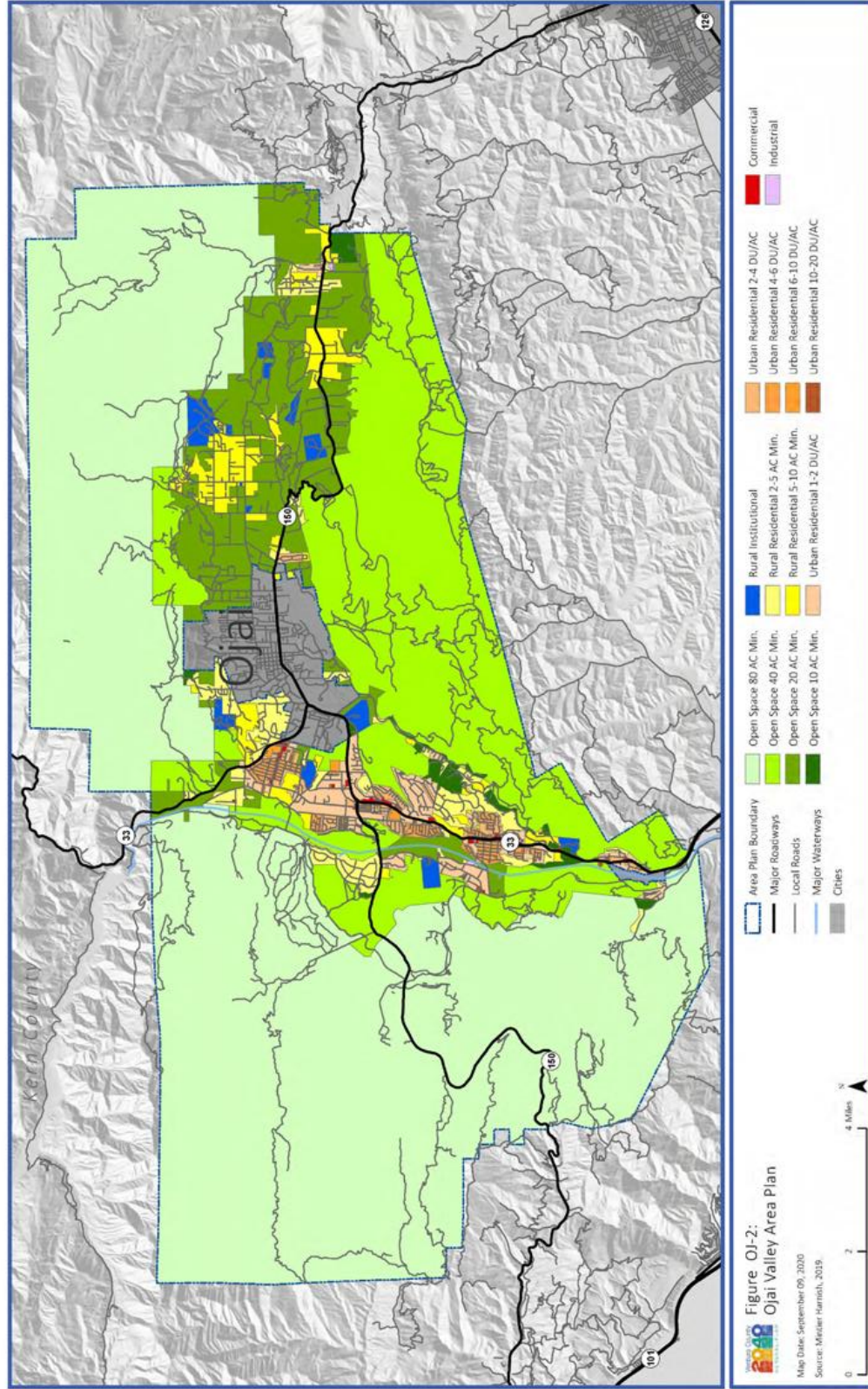
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## APPENDICES

# Ojai Valley Area Plan

Area Plan



September 2020

OV-12

[illegible]



## Our Response and Recommendations to the 2025/26 City Council Goals & Tactics

Goal	Tactic	Responsible Department	Ojai Valley Fire Safe Council Response
Wildfire Safety Risk Mitigation	2A. Create educational outreach program regarding defensible space, and home hardening measures and provide assessment tool(s).	CM	OVFSC has created this program in partnership w/ Ventura Regional FSC and VCFD. OVFSC has online assessment tools and has two in-house certified home hardening and defensible space assessors.
	2B. Evaluate the need for potential mutual-aid agreements with the County or other agencies.	CM	OVFSC has technical competency and proficiency to advise and assist on these potential agreements. OVFSC can assist the City with this.
	2C. Promote participation in "VC Alert" and programs such as "Ready, Set, Go".	CM	OVFSC can assist the City in this effort. Our outreach efforts include promotion of "VC Alert" and "Ready, Set, Go" as part of a comprehensive awareness package. Lessons learned from the Thomas Fire: Need to focus on vulnerable populations including the AFN.
	2D. Explore feasibility and cost to implement local warning systems such as warning sirens, reverse 911, and back-up systems for communications.	CM	Yes, we can help with the feasibility study. We are plugged into FAC-Net (Fire-Adapted Community Network) and we can provide Best Available Technologies and practices. (Not included in this proposed SOW.) We also propose the installation of Beacon Boxes as a bridge between granular neighborhood-level information and fire personnel.
	2E. Evaluate building standards that minimize fire risk.	CD	With our partners, Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety and Jensen Hughes, we can provide the City with recommended building standards that minimize fire risk. We can create a synthesis that is Ojai-specific of all available resources. Our board member, Wayne Maynard, is recognized as a national expert in building and fire codes. (Not included in this proposed SOW.)
	2F. Press utility providers to further harden infrastructure, ensure routine inspection, and underground when feasible.	PW	We can assist PW in interfacing w/ utility providers in fire hardening measures, including underground. We have worked with SoCal Edison in their Wildfire Mitigation Plan updates and have established professional working relationships with our utility providers.
	2G. Collaborate with existing Fire and Sheriff emergency response training to include City officials and staff.	CM	OVFSC would like to participate in these emergency response trainings so we can be a part of a coordinated effort during emergencies.
	2H. Create "Yes" and "No" landscaping Check List for residents.	CM	We can provide a synthesized version of the available landscaping resources and make it Ojai-specific.
	2I. Pursue wildfire prevention grants in cooperation with providers/regional partners to further efforts that will reduce hazardous conditions and fuel sources.	CM	We have raised approximately \$8 million dollars over 25 years through effective fundraising in collaboration with our partners including the Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative. We are continuing to raise funds with local, state, and federal grantors to reduce fuel loads and address wildfire hazard and risk. We are especially looking forward to partnering with the City to secure funds for those projects that are reserved for municipalities and other opportunities.
	2J. Commission report on fire hardening measures.	CM	We can provide the City with a home hardening manual. Our Digital Dashboard is a wildfire database that can incorporate fire hardening measures at parcel level. Parcel Wildfire Risk Scores combine Wildfire Hazard, Home Hardening and Defensible Space ratings into one measure of risk for each parcel in the planning area. The Home Hardening and Defensible Space scores can be reduced by the property owner by implementing mitigation activities.
	2K. Explore homeowner fire hardening incentive program.	CM	We can assist in designing, funding, and implementing such a program. (Not included in this proposed SOW.)
	2L. Research initiative to create micro-grid(s) and initiative to underground utility lines.	CM	Stand-alone microgrids are components of the Ojai Valley Community Resilience Centers (CRC) that will function as emergency centers and serve as a hub to build overall community resilience, for which we obtained a Planning Phase Grant. We can explore partnerships with the City, educational institutions, and local entities to build additional microgrids. The CRCs Project represents a significant funding pipeline beyond the Planning Phase.

[\\*Digital Dashboard link](#)