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Agencies work on 3 ongoing fire prevention projects

By Regina Elling

One of the biggest challenges rural residents face during a wildfire is the threat of burning brush. And with no shortage of fuel to burn on local hillsides, canyons and around homes, any work that can be done to help clear or thin the vegetation is an enormous help.

Cal Fire's Saul Villagomez, battalion chief for the Ramona Fire Department, said he's pleased to report that at least three projects are in the works to help reduce the potential fuel load.



A California Conservation Corps crew works on the defensible space surrounding a canyon near Quail Rock Road. Photos/Kristi Mansolf

“About three years ago, the Ramona West End Fire Safe Council applied for a grant, and received it, to improve the fuel break in their side of town,” he says. “In cooperation with Cal Fire, we are now working on the ongoing maintenance of the project.”

The work is in the area of Rockhouse Road to Kay Dee Lane to Highway 67, and covers both defensible space clearing and road maintenance. Villagomez explained that keeping the brush clear from the road “will improve both the roadway and defensible space in the area, allowing safe egress for the residents there.”

In another part of town, the San Diego Country Estates, full reduction is being done in a cooperative effort of SDCE, Cal Fire, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

“In this project, we are improving the defensible space between Mount Gower Preserve, from the end of Gunn Stage Road to Barona Mesa Road, ending at the Cleveland National Forest,” said Villagomez. “This clearing work, being done through grant money, will give the residents much-needed additional fire protection.”

A third project is of importance to everyone who takes part in any local communications systems.



This photo shows how thick the brush can become in some areas.

“At the top of Mount Woodson is a repeater site, with communication system repeaters for AT&T, Pacific Bell, Cal Fire, numerous utilities, the county and virtually everybody else,” Villagomez said. “So it’s extremely important to keep the vegetation managed from the hiking trails at the bottom all the way to the repeater sites at the top.”

The project is a cooperative effort between Cal Fire and the county of San Diego, and is being paid for by grant money.

“Having cleared the vegetation originally in many of these areas was a huge project, “ said Villagomez. “But it’s no good without the ongoing maintenance; all the work is a huge thing that benefits all our residents.”