

Communication from Public

Name: Lisa Hart

Date Submitted: 04/17/2025 02:53 PM

Council File No: 25-0002-S17

Comments for Public Posting: Dear City Council, While this resolution is no doubt well intended, it would, if implemented, only make Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) lands hotter, drier, and more flammable. Brush clearance as conducted by contractors includes our native shrubs and trees, yet the removal of all of these creates space that will attract highly flammable invasive plants and fuel hotter, more dangerous fires. It is critical to make a distinction between the vegetation species that belong in this ecosystem and the problematic vegetation that has been introduced from elsewhere and causes us problems. As we have seen in recent fires, native plants, especially oak trees, have acted as ember catchers and fire breaks, neither burning themselves nor adding fuel to raging fires. Removing these native trees and shrubs leaves our hillsides barren, prone to erosion and mudslides. Invasive grasses and weeds, which will take advantage of the opportunity to seed themselves in the open area, do not adequately support the slopes. There will be devastating effects on biodiversity as habitat is destroyed, interrupting the ecology and potentially affecting human health. Scientists recognize this as "landscape type conversion," and, as written, this resolution is actively proposing that MRCA lands be converted from native coastal sage scrub and chaparral plant communities to arid, flammable, species-poor grasslands. Although we do not believe that this is the intention of this motion, this would be its result. MRCA lands are valuable because of the biological habitat they conserve. Stormwater and fog keeps plants hydrated and resilient. This motion must be amended to remove all mention of clearing "brush" in MRCA lands because the contractors who do this work, in our experience, do not differentiate good fire-resistant native vegetation from the much more flammable bad invasive grasses, annual weeds, and specific non-native shrubs and trees. Contractors need to be trained to distinguish plants and do invasive weed abatement while protecting the native plants and trees. By all means, remove the flammable mustard, arundo, echium, fountain grass, pampas grass, and other invasive weeds for miles, even from the whole state. Otherwise, as we see across the city, the weed whackers, crawlers, and small bulldozers will just cut everything down. The "700 foot" clearing requirement proposed in the resolution unnecessarily spreads destruction into

the fragile open spaces and parklands, which MRCA is dedicated to preserving. What could the cumulative environmental impact be given this large area? Also, this proposal should align with California law. AB 3074 (Friedman), enacted in 2020, clearly requires "regionally appropriate vegetation management suggestions that preserve and restore native species that are fire resistant or drought tolerant, or both, minimize erosion, minimize the spread of flammable nonnative grasses and weeds, minimize water consumption, and permit trees and shrubs near homes for shade, aesthetics and habitat; suggestions for fuel modification beyond the property line in order to maintain 100 feet of defensible space from a structure...." (The bolding is ours.) The Los Angeles County Fire Department has already embraced this new defensible space law and targets invasive weeds and grasses rather than native shrubs and trees, and we expect LAFD to revise their guidelines to follow the law soon as well. For more information, backed by fire ecology research and related science, see Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM)'s Sustainable Defensible Space. The tragic fires this past January were human sparked, fueled by human-spread invasive weeds and grasses, intensified by flammable human development, and, according to scientists, made worse by human-caused climate change. Please do not require further human-led destruction. Rather, please support human-led repair, restoration, and resilience efforts. We need to stop thinking of nature as fuel and as the enemy. Even lightly hydrated plants can act to stop fires and protect homes, as we saw in January. Sincerely, Lisa Hart Executive Director Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Sustainability Alliance

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL SUSTAINABILITY ALLIANCE®

April 17, 2025

RE: Opposition to [Resolution](#) in [CF 25-0002 S17](#), Public Resources Code Section 4291 / Government Code Section 51182 / Mountains and Recreation Conservation Authority (MRCA) / Brush Clearance / Fire Hazard Severity Zones

Dear City Council,

While this resolution is no doubt well intended, it would, if implemented, only make [Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority \(MRCA\)](#) lands hotter, drier, and more flammable.

Brush clearance as conducted by contractors includes our native shrubs and trees, yet the removal of all of these creates space that will attract highly flammable invasive plants and fuel hotter, more dangerous fires.

It is critical to make a distinction between the vegetation species that belong in this ecosystem and the problematic vegetation that has been introduced from elsewhere and causes us problems. As we have seen in recent fires, native plants, especially oak trees, have acted as ember catchers and fire breaks, neither burning themselves nor adding fuel to raging fires.

Removing these native trees and shrubs leaves our hillsides barren, prone to erosion and mudslides. Invasive grasses and weeds, which will take advantage of the opportunity to seed themselves in the open area, do not adequately support the slopes. There will be devastating effects on biodiversity as habitat is destroyed, interrupting the ecology and potentially affecting human health.

Scientists recognize this as "landscape type conversion," and, as written, this resolution is actively proposing that MRCA lands be converted from native coastal sage scrub and chaparral plant communities to arid, flammable, species-poor grasslands. Although we do not believe that this is the intention of this motion, this would be its result.

MRCA lands are valuable because of the biological habitat they conserve. Stormwater and fog keeps plants hydrated and resilient. This motion must be amended to remove all mention of clearing "brush" in MRCA lands because the contractors who do this work, in our experience, do not differentiate good fire-resistant native vegetation from the much more flammable bad invasive grasses, annual weeds, and specific non-native shrubs and trees. Contractors need to be trained to distinguish plants and do invasive weed abatement while protecting the native plants and trees. By all means, remove the

flammable mustard, arundo, echium, fountain grass, pampas grass, and other invasive weeds for miles, even from the whole state. Otherwise, as we see across the city, the weed whackers, crawlers, and small bulldozers will just cut everything down.

The "700 foot" clearing requirement proposed in the resolution unnecessarily spreads destruction into the fragile open spaces and parklands, which MRCA is dedicated to preserving. What could the cumulative environmental impact be given this large area?

Also, this proposal should align with California law. [AB 3074](#) (Friedman), enacted in 2020, clearly requires "regionally appropriate vegetation management suggestions that **preserve and restore native species** that are fire resistant or drought tolerant, or both, minimize erosion, minimize the spread of flammable nonnative grasses and weeds, minimize water consumption, and permit trees and shrubs near homes for shade, aesthetics and habitat; suggestions for fuel modification beyond the property line **in order to maintain 100 feet of defensible space from a structure...**" (*The bolding is ours.*) The Los Angeles County Fire Department has already embraced this new defensible space law and targets invasive weeds and grasses rather than native shrubs and trees, and we expect LAFD to revise their guidelines to follow the law soon as well.

For more information, backed by fire ecology research and related science, see [Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains \(RCDSMM\)](#)'s [Sustainable Defensible Space](#).

The tragic fires this past January were human sparked, fueled by human-spread invasive weeds and grasses, intensified by flammable human development, and, [according to scientists, made worse by human-caused climate change](#).

Please do not require further human-led destruction. Rather, please support human-led repair, restoration, and resilience efforts.

We need to stop thinking of nature as fuel and as the enemy. Even lightly hydrated plants can act to stop fires and protect homes, as we saw in January.

Sincerely,

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CC:

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Tracy Lovric, District Manager, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM)

Congresswoman Laura Friedman