

Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program Report

County of Monterey
Office of Supervisor Glenn Church, District 2
July 2024 – July 2025



EUCALYPTUS TREE REMOVAL PILOT PROGRAM REPORT

County of Monterey
Supervisory District 2
July 2024 – July 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction & Program Description	4
2. The Application Process	6
Eligibility Criteria	
Submission and Review	
Payment Structure	
Tree and Stump Disposal	
3. Public Outreach	8
Social Media	
Email Communications	
4. Results And Data	9
Removal Method	
Stump Treatment	
Tree Contractors	
Total Trees Removed	
Cost Analysis	
5. Discussion	13
Successes	
Challenges and Lessons Learned	
6. Recommendations	16
Suggestions for Improving the Program	
Considerations for Future Implementations	
7. Summary	18
8. Appendix	19
Survey – Conducted by the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County	
Eucalyptus Removal Program Application Form (<i>Included as it was published for participants in the Pilot Program</i>)	



Introduction & Program Description

The Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program (Program) was developed in response to growing concern among North Monterey County residents about the heightened risk of wildfires. Eucalyptus, which are not native to California, were introduced in the last half of the 19th century as a fast-growing source of timber. Over time, they have spread widely throughout North Monterey County where their high oil content and shedding bark present significant fire hazards. Their shallow root systems make them prone to falling, endangering lives and property. Eucalyptus

present both a safety risk from falling branches and major fire threat. Dense eucalyptus stands suppress undergrowth and significantly reduce habitat availability for native species. In addition, blue gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus Globulus*), the dominant species in the region, is particularly thirsty and can consume up to 200 gallons a day of water. In a typical acre of eucalyptus, five million gallons of water may be consumed in a year.

In early 2023, County of Monterey Supervisor Glenn Church (County of Monterey District 2) and California State Senator John Laird (California Senate District 17), collaborated to create a pilot program aimed at reducing the fire risk that eucalyptus present. The Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program was designed with two core components:

- The voluntary removal of eucalyptus trees from private property in North Monterey County
- A 50-50 cost-sharing component between the County of Monterey and the property owner

North Monterey County was selected as the focus area due to the high density of eucalyptus groves and the region's elevated fire risk. As a pilot initiative, the Program was intentionally limited in both geographic scope and duration to assess its feasibility and community impact.

Senator Laird secured state pass-through grant funding for the Program through the California Office of Emergency Services. Supervisor Church's office then partnered with The County of Monterey Housing and Community Development, Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, North County Fire Protection District and Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District to develop implementation guidelines and eligibility criteria.

The Program was formally launched in the summer of 2024. Most of the tree removal and follow-up work was done within 90 days of the start date although work at a few locations was not completed until early 2025. Administrative loose ends continued until summer of 2025.

Once an application was approved, the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County assumed the primary role of engaging Program participants during the eucalyptus removal. After the Program ended, the Resource Conservation District conducted a survey of those who participated in the pilot Program. Nearly half of the site participants answered the survey, which is a significant response rate. The survey provides a detailed look at how the Program was conducted and viewed by participants. It reported an overwhelmingly positive response rate which confirmed what the Program's staff was hearing anecdotally. It also provided significant data in assessing the Program's successes and areas needed for improvement.

The Application Process

To facilitate participation in the Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program, the County of Monterey Housing and Community Development Department developed a dedicated webpage where interested property owners could access application forms and Program guidelines.

Eligibility Criteria

Trees qualified for removal under the Program were based on meeting at least one of the following criteria:

- Within 100 feet of a home or other structure
- Within a combined total of 60 feet (30 feet on either side) of a driveway or private road
- Trees located beyond these thresholds that were determined to pose a fire or safety hazard, such as near a power line

For trees to meet the last criteria, property owners were required to submit an affidavit of inspection from the appropriate jurisdictional fire district – either North County Fire Protection District or Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District.

Submission and Review Process

Applicants submitted completed applications to the District 2 Supervisor's Office in Castroville either in person or by mail to District 2's P.O. Box in Castroville.

Because of the heightened interest when the program began, there was concern that there might be a rush of applicants and the available funding could dry up quickly, leaving an unfair qualification process. With that in mind, every application was time stamped and the applications that arrived by mail were sequenced by the date of the postmark. While there was an initial rush, some funds remained available after the initial month. That allowed for an extension of the application period for a second month.

Each application was reviewed in two steps. The first step was by District 2 staff for completeness. Staff ensured that the following elements were included:

- Two quotes from licensed and bonded tree service contractors
- A site map and/or photographs identifying the trees proposed for removal
- Any required fire district approval

Completed applications were scanned and transmitted weekly to the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, the program's administrative partner.

In the second step, the Resource Conservation District reviewed submitted applications, conducted onsite verification and communicated directly with applicants to verify eligibility. If fire district verification was required, the Resource Conservation District ensured that proper documentation was obtained and submitted to the fire district.

Payment Structure

A dual payment structure was established to simplify contractor reimbursement.

- Property owners paid 50% of the total cost directly to the tree removal contractor
- The County of Monterey, through funds administered by the Resource Conservation District, paid the remaining 50% directly to the contractor.

The Resource Conservation District managed the disbursement of funds so as to lessen formal county procedures that might unnecessarily burden participants and county staff, and to streamline payments to tree contractors.

Tree and Stump Disposal

Applicants were required to specify their preferred disposal method for felled trees and stumps on the application form. Accepted methods included:

- Felled Trees:
 - Chipping onsite
 - Removal of trunks and branches from site
 - Cutting and stacking for firewood onsite
- Stump Treatment:
 - Grinding
 - Smothering with a tarp
 - Application of approved herbicides

All disposal methods were required to comply with applicable environmental and safety regulations.

Public Outreach

During the application period (July 1-September 1, 2024), District 2 implemented a multi-faceted public outreach campaign to promote the Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program. Outreach efforts included social media posts, targeted emails, District 2 newsletter, printed materials in public spaces such as libraries, and coverage from local media outlets. The goal was to ensure that eligible property owners throughout North Monterey County were informed about the opportunity to apply. Local television stations covered the Program throughout its course, concluding with a tour of completed tree removal in October 2024.

Social Media

District 2 posted the Program a total of 26 times across Facebook, Instagram, Threads, Twitter, and Nextdoor. (Note: that number does not include the numerous occasions District 2 shared information on Instagram Stories, as Stories disappear after 24 hours.)

The highest levels of engagement emerged from Facebook and Nextdoor posts with an average of approximately 2000 impressions on each Facebook post and an average of 1300 views on each Nextdoor post. There were two posts on Facebook that we re-shared that did not have insights available and one post on Nextdoor we re-shared that also did not have insights available, meaning we were unable to determine the number of impressions/views. Those posts were not used to calculate the averages.

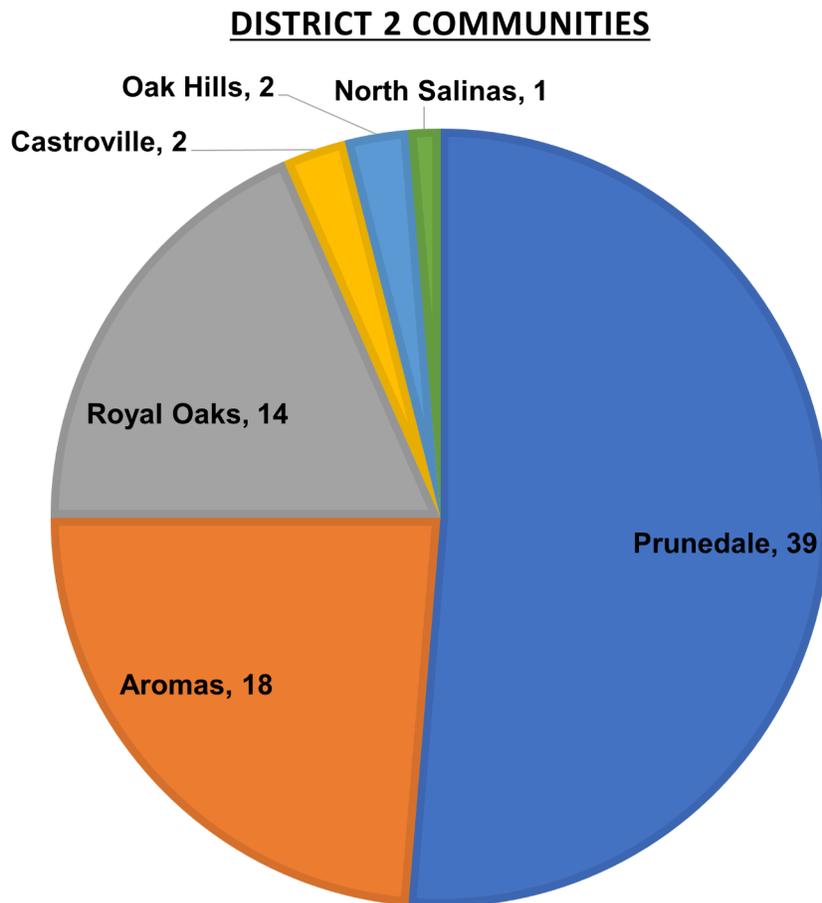
District 2 observed a moderate amount of engagement on Instagram, and the least engagement on Threads and Twitter. For our three feed posts on Instagram there was an average of 122 impressions per post. On Threads, there was an average of 5.5 views per post, and on Twitter there was an average of 42.5 views per post. For comparison, District 2 social media normally receive higher engagement on Facebook and Nextdoor versus other social media. However, the discrepancy is not typically as wide as it was for the Program.

Email Communications

District 2 sent eight different emails about the Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program to 533 constituents between May 23 and August 2, 2024. These emails provided updates, reminders and application resources. The average open rate was 66.5%, significantly exceeding typical benchmarks for public sector email communications.

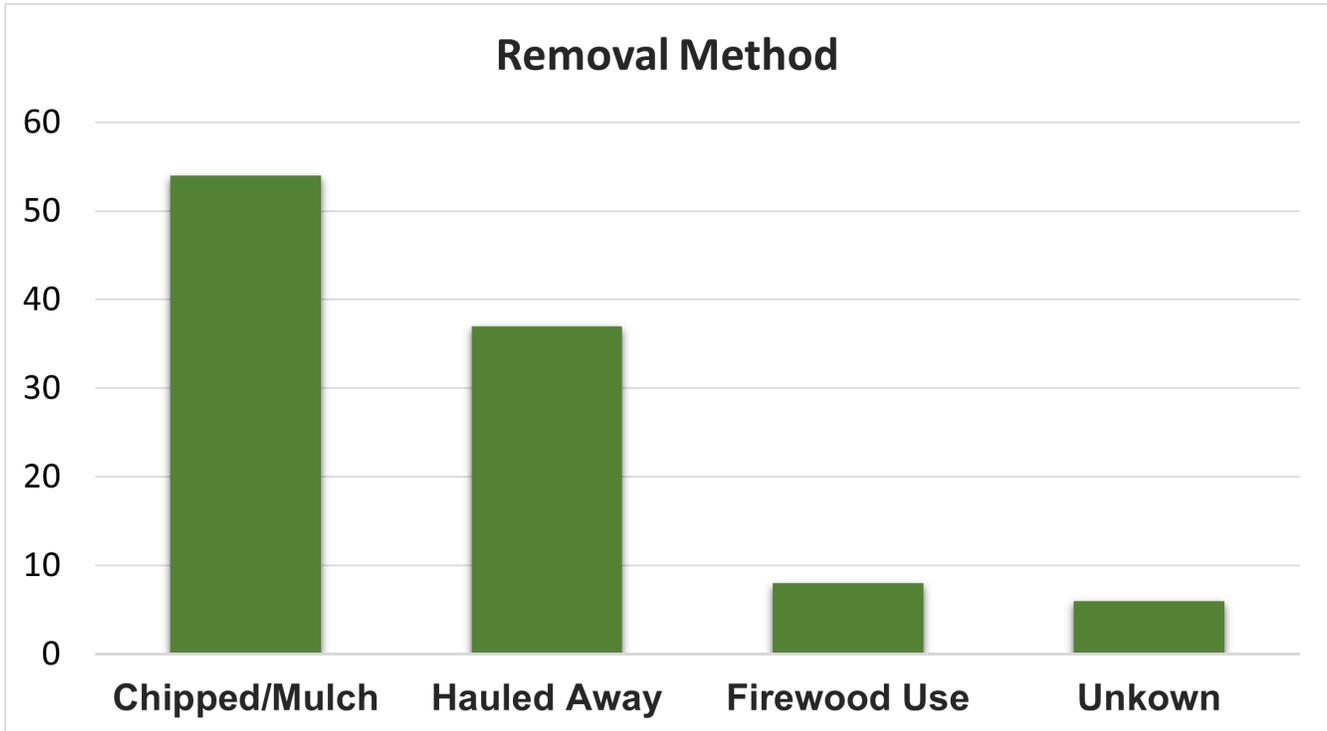
Results And Data

Altogether, 94 applications were received for the Program. Three were disqualified. Two applications were deemed ineligible due to location outside the target area, and one was not completed within the application window. Of the remaining 91, three were from applicants who applied during both application periods. The second application was for more eucalyptus removal on the same properties as the first application. That left 88 unique properties that had applications were submitted. Of those 88 applications, 12 applicants withdrew from the program before completing the removal of eucalyptus. Those 12 represented nearly 14% of the applicants. The remaining 76 properties were distributed in the following communities:



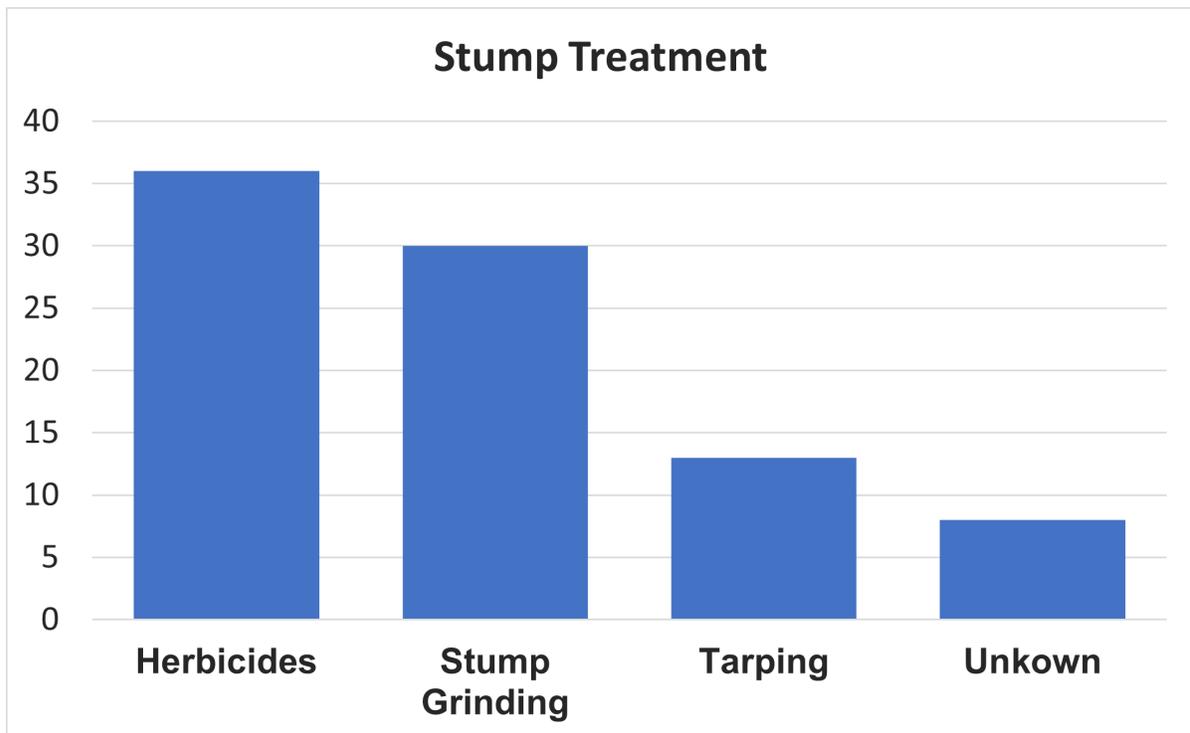
Removal Method

Most eucalyptus trees debris was removed by chipping or mulching, followed by hauling away the wood or a combination of methods.



Stump Treatment

To prevent regrowth of the eucalyptus regrowth, applicants selected from approved treatment options. Some applicants used more than one method. Some applicants also reported months later that they had to take further action to prevent regrowth on the stump. These were anecdotal stories, so they were not quantified. However, it is a concern that needs further consideration if the program is restarted. Applicant stump treatment preferences were:



Tree Contractors

Applicants solicited bids from 31 licensed and bonded contractors for tree removal. While the guidelines required each applicant to provide two bids, property owners retained the discretion to select their preferred contractor. The most sought-after contractors were Rodriguez Tree Service (34), Community Tree Service (28), and Davey Tree Service (24). Overall, the Resource Conservation District reported a total of fourteen (14) licensed tree contractors were utilized for bidding and removal.

Total Trees Removed

Tracking the number of trees removed was challenging. The eucalyptus trees varied dramatically in size. However, a minimum of 816 trees were removed, with many more small ones not included in that total. One rough estimate suggested that the total number of trees removed, both large and small, was double the official count.

Cost Analysis

The lowest bids for all 79 applications (3 properties had two applications submitted and completed) totaled \$1,266,557.42. The high bids were \$1,729,162.82. Applicants were not required to accept the low bid and many did not, preferring to weigh other factors besides cost in choosing a contractor. These considerations included, but were not

limited to, scope of work, availability, working relationships, etc. Altogether, tree removal cost for all 79 applications totaled \$1,463,834.77.

Because of the wide variance in tree size and removal of many small eucalyptus, it is difficult to pinpoint an exact cost to remove a single tree. However, including removal of both large and small trees, it appears the overall cost was approximately \$1,000 a tree or \$2,000 for each large tree. These costs were shared by the Program and property owners

Discussion

Successes

The initial announcement of the Program generated significant enthusiasm and interest both within Supervisorial District 2 and throughout the County of Monterey.

The Program's success is attributed to the following:

- **A Balanced 50-50 Cost-Sharing Model** – This ensured shared responsibility and buy-in between property owners and the County.
- **Clear Recognition of Public Safety Risks** – The widespread public acceptance that dense eucalyptus forests in rural North Monterey County posed safety risks regarding wildfire and falling tree hazards.
- **A Thoughtful Approach Involving Environmental Timing** – Tree removal activities were planned after bird nesting season had passed, avoided monarch habitats, avoided riparian and other environmentally sensitive areas, and were limited to already disturbed terrain with buildings and roads.
- **Strong Interagency Collaboration** – The close partnership between the Office of Senator John Laird, the Office of Supervisor Glenn Church, The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, the County of Monterey Housing and Community Development Department, North County Fire Protection District and Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District provided for a relatively smooth administrative operation.
- **Direct constituent engagement** – Constituent engagement with Supervisor Church's office, Resource Conservation District and the two fire agencies that helped guide residents through the process from application to tree removal addressed problems quickly and effectively.

The participating agencies and elected officials were able to engender trust with a relevant, productive pilot program. This was done by accepting and previewing all applications as well as phone and in-person conversations with the public on the front-end of the process proved feasible over the eight-week application period. The weekly transfer of applications to RCD proceeded smoothly. Once in the hands of RCD staff, North County and Aromas fire personnel provided prompt hands-on assistance with

regular communication to Supervisor Church's staff regarding any unanticipated challenges that might occur. Overall, the pilot demonstrated that proactive communication, technical support, and streamlined coordination between local agencies can effectively deliver tangible safety benefits to rural communities. Staff successfully handled a high volume of inquiries and applications over the eight-week period and weekly coordination and handover of applications with RCD proved efficient and sustainable.

Program inquiries after the application deadline indicate public interest in the continuation of a eucalyptus tree removal program for owners of private property. At the date of this report, Supervisor Church's office continues to get inquiries asking if the program will be renewed.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The program experienced several operational and logistical challenges. Addressing these issues will be essential to improving future iterations of the program and ensuring its sustainability and equity. The problems that arose included:

- **Uneven Contractor Availability and Scheduling Delays** – High demand for a limited number of qualified, licensed tree contractors created bottlenecks in scheduling. In some cases, property owners experienced extended delays receiving service even after approval.
- **Complexity of Application Requirements** – Although the application process was intentionally thorough to ensure fairness and safety, some property owners – particularly those with limited internet access or experience with public programs – found the process burdensome. The required two bids, documentation of tree locations and fire district approvals were cited as barriers by some applicants. While nearly all participants and contractors understood that the property owner was to pay half and the contractor would be reimbursed by RCD later, a few incidents involved the homeowner paying the contractor the full amount, expecting a refund. Resolving this problem was particularly complex.
- **Payment Coordination and Reimbursement Expectations** – Delays in contractor reimbursement due to differing expectations around payment timelines posed challenges. While RCD administered funds efficiently, some contractors unfamiliar with public funding flows expressed frustration.

- **Misinformation and Premature Media Coverage** – During the early stages of the program, some inaccurate or premature information circulated via local media, social media and word-of-mouth. This occasionally led to confusion among the public regarding eligibility, deadlines or program scope.
- **Limited Support for Low-Income Property Owners** – The 50/50 cost-sharing model, while equitable in theory, proved prohibitive for some low- or fixed-income property owners who expressed interest in the Program but could not afford to participate. Although many property owners have financial resources available, many are on limited incomes and this program is not meant to increase financial stress or debt for those who may struggle with ordinary living costs. It is meant to enhance safety in a fiscally responsible manner.
- **Contractor Selection** – While applicants were allowed considerable latitude in choosing licensed contractors, a complication developed with a contractor outside the area. This delayed resolution of the problem considerably as distance and communication became obstacles.
- **Scope Constraints of the Pilot Model** – The decision to restrict the program to District 2 allowed for a focused implementation but also led to frustration among property owners in other fire-prone areas of the County. Future expansion should be communicated early and clearly to manage expectations and build regional support. The interest in the program outside District 2 showcases the Program’s popularity.
- **Unexpected Excess Funds** – After the second application round ended with 91 applicants on 88 properties, the program’s fund was almost entirely depleted which the administrators considered a fortuitous conclusion. Unfortunately, twelve applicants (14% of the total) reconsidered and did not follow through with the removal of eucalyptus on their properties. Unexpectedly, the near zero balance ballooned to approximately \$200,000 left to be spent. Some consideration was given to reopening the application period. It was felt that there might be more applications than funds to distribute and since the goals of the pilot program had already been met, a decision was made not to proceed with a third, abbreviated round, of applications. Discussion had previously concluded that any unspent funds should be distributed to the two fire districts to assist in removing eucalyptus that are a public hazard. All unspent funds are now designated for that purpose.

Recommendations

Based on the results and experiences of the Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program, the following recommendations are offered to guide program refinement and inform future efforts:

Program Improvement Suggestions

- **Enhance Public Outreach and Engagement** – By expanding the use of targeted communications, especially on platforms with high engagement such as Facebook and Nextdoor and considering in-person meetings, the program can broaden its reach. To improve coordination with the media, future efforts would benefit from a designated media release schedule and centralized strategy to ensure consistent and accurate messaging.
- **Streamline the Application and Removal Process** – Simplifying application requirements where possible (e.g. explore online submission tools with built-in document uploads, pre-filled maps or guided workshops) will reduce the administrative burden for both applicants and staff.
- **Clarify and Confirm Processes and Timelines** – Clearer up-front communication protocols and standardized timelines will limit misunderstandings and maintain strong contractor partnerships. The payment instructions should be made very clear to both applicants and contractors and confirmed by them. Greater advance coordination and possible pre-qualification with contractors may help resolve work delays and bottlenecks. While it is important to keep a tight timeline for program completion, there must also be considerable leniency to resolve timing problems satisfactorily. The administrators should be prepared that full completion of the Program may extend months past the intended deadline for a handful of participants.
- **Utilize Local Contractors** – It is recommended that only contractors based relatively close to the project be utilized in the future so as to ease communication over any disputes or problems.

New Considerations to Implement

- **Expand the Program to Other High-Risk Areas** – The success and interest in the Program generated a fair amount of interest elsewhere in the county and beyond. If the program is to continue, then it needs to expand to other high-risk fire areas in the County of Monterey.
- **Establish Long-term Maintenance and Monitoring Strategies** – While participants are likely to be motivated to prevent eucalyptus regrowth because of their financial investment in the process, a maintenance and monitoring plan may be useful.
- **Identify Sustainable Funding Sources** – For this Program to be successful, it needs long-term funding. The prevalence of eucalyptus and the unique fire, safety and environmental dangers they represent makes these trees an ongoing problem. Multi-year state or federal grants, regional partnerships or private-sector support are considerations for ongoing viability.
- **Create a Process for Income-Constrained Property Owners** – It is important to prioritize alternative cost-sharing models or fully subsidized options to ensure equitable access for residents unable to meet the 50/50 contribution requirement.



Summary

The Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program represented a proactive and collaborative response to one of North Monterey County's most pressing wildfire and public safety challenges. Over the course of the 2024 pilot period, the Program received 94 applications and approved 91, ultimately delivering tree removal services across 76 parcels. Most of the eucalyptus removals were completed using environmentally responsible methods such as chipping, mulching and stump treatment to prevent regrowth. Fourteen licensed contractors participated with significant engagement from the community and strong interest after the application period ended.

The Resource Conservation District of Monterey County conducted an extensive survey in which 30 of the 76 program participants supplied positive feedback and constructive suggestions for programmatic improvements. A detailed report and analysis are attached in the appendix. In the survey, "people appreciated the initiative and hoped it would continue with greater accessibility and support, as this project reflects the needs of the community and the North County region of Monterey County."

The Program's success was driven by several key factors: a practical 50/50 cost sharing model; coordination among local, county and state agencies and elected officials; careful scheduling to protect wildlife; and consistent outreach to the public. It also provided a vital opportunity for constituents to engage directly with their local government, fostering trust and transparency in the process.

Importantly, the Program not only addressed immediate fire risk but also laid the foundation for future wildfire prevention strategies. It demonstrated that locally targeted, well-administered environmentally sensitive programs can meaningfully reduce risk while supporting community resilience. The pilot also offered critical lessons, from streamlining application processes to developing equitable funding models, that will inform future expansion.

As climate change intensifies the frequency and severity of wildfires across California, programs like this serve as both a model and a mandate for continued local action. With adequate resources, refined processes and expanded reach, the Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program has the potential to grow as a significant fire reduction effort.

Appendix



North Monterey County Eucalyptus Removal Pilot Program Participants' Survey Report

Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
744-A LaGuardia Street

Salinas, CA 93905

July 2025

Introduction

In June 2024, State Senator John Laird helped secure \$1 million for a Eucalyptus Removal Pilot Program at the request of the County of Monterey District 2 Supervisor Glenn Church for the purpose of wildfire risk reduction around homes in the North County region of Monterey County. Because the Pilot Program required a rapid roll-out, the Supervisor engaged the Resource Conservation of Monterey County to administer it. Of 91 applications received in summer 2024, a total of 76 “defensible space” eucalyptus removal projects were completed by residents using licensed, independent contractors through fall 2024. In the interest of learning from this Program to inform future work, the RCD and the Supervisor’s office developed a simple survey for the Pilot Program participants. The RCD administered the survey via US Mail and e-mail to contacts for each of the 76 Pilot Program sites, from which we received 30 responses. This report briefly summarizes and synthesizes those responses.

Background

According to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), large portions of North Monterey County are classified as “High” or “Very-High” Fire Hazard Severity Zones. These areas are characterized by extensive vegetation and a significant number of rural residences, which increases the risk of catastrophic wildfires. Prominent vegetation in the region includes oak woodlands, chaparral ecosystems, agricultural land, and, unfortunately, dense stands of eucalyptus.

Eucalyptus trees present a unique fire threat due to the high oil content in their wood, excessive bark shedding, and flammable leaf canopies. Their presence near structures and roadways exacerbates the potential for ignition and rapid fire spreading.

The Eucalyptus Removal Pilot Program applied exclusively to unincorporated areas of District 2. Eligible properties were those with eucalyptus trees located within defensible space zones— defined generally as within 100 feet of structures and 30 feet of roadways. Those distances were allowed to vary based on topographic features and Fire Department recommendations.

Approved applicants received reimbursement for up to 50% of the costs of work conducted by state-certified tree removal contractors. The property owner assumed all remaining costs.

Eucalyptus Pilot Program Survey Methods

As noted above, the RCD, in collaboration with the office of Supervisor Glenn Church, developed and administered this survey to receive participants' feedback regarding the Pilot Program's benefits and problems to inform the development of similar projects that promote safe spaces and the conservation of land.

The survey was conducted in two different formats to ensure as many participants as possible could respond. Those included a printed survey, sent via US Mail, and an online survey created by Microsoft Forms and communicated via email. The two formats shared the same template, comprising a total of 12 questions that combined multiple-choice answers and open-ended questions to gather participants' views on the program (Appendix A). From the 76 Pilot Program sites, we received 30 survey responses, which are summarized and represented graphically below.

Results

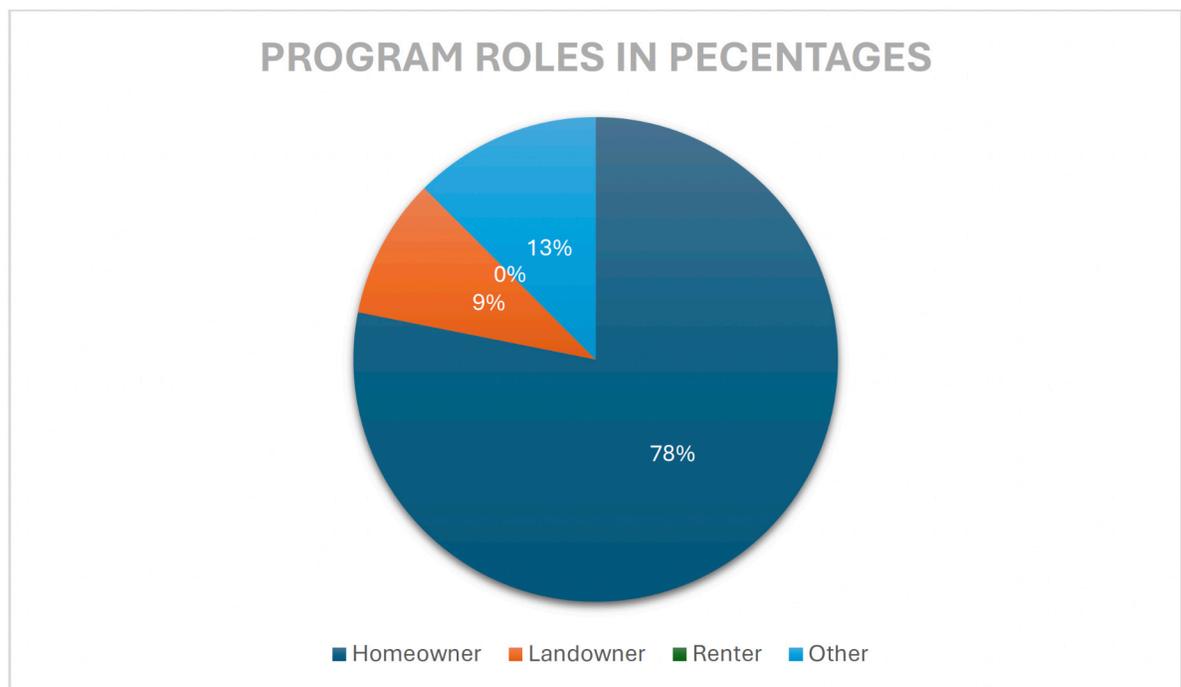


Figure 1. Responses to question one: "Role in the Program (If other please specify)"

The first question of the survey was designed to gather information on program participants' relationships with their respective project sites. 'Homeowner' was selected by 78% of respondents (25 individuals), and 'Other' was the second highest responses (13%, or 4 individuals). Those who answered the 'other' option included neighbors who

managed the work for other participants, a treasurer of a homeowners' association, and participants who describe themselves as both homeowners and landowners. The third and final group corresponded to 'landowners', representing 3 individuals or 9% of the total. Not surprisingly, no (0) participants indicated that they were "renters." Participants could provide multiple answers. A few participants answered twice, selecting both 'landowners' and 'homeowners' as categories that represent their respective project sites.

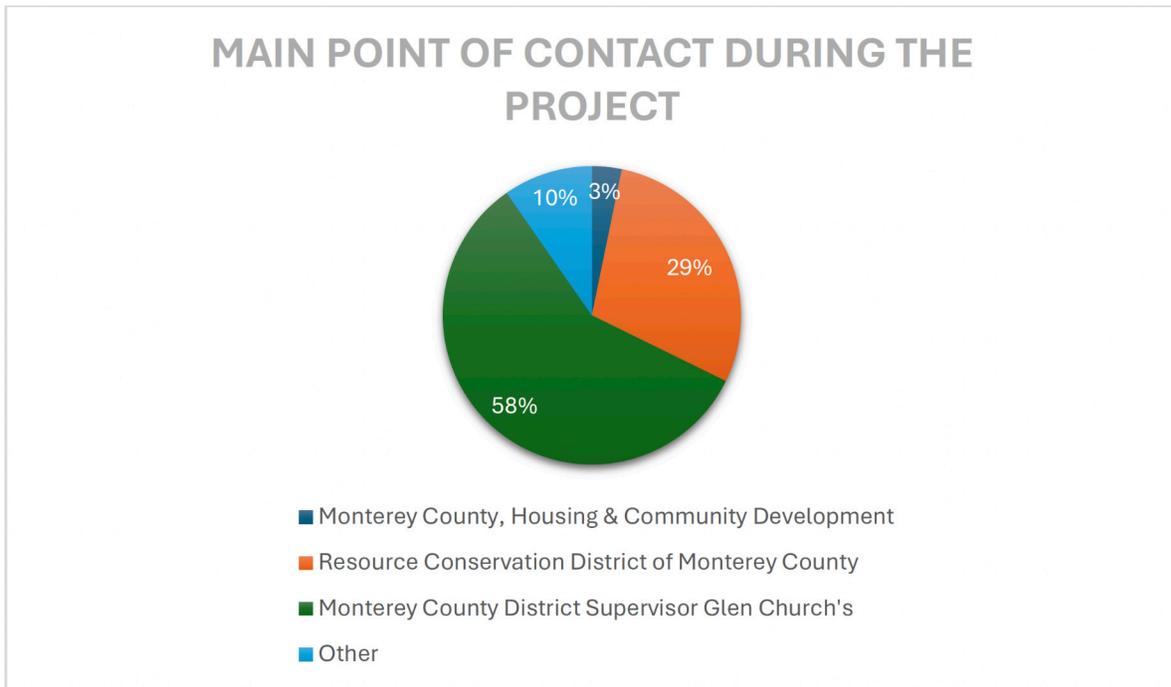


Figure 2. Responses to question two: "Which entity was your mail point of contact during the project timeline?"

The second question of the survey was designed to gather information regarding participants' understanding of administering entities' responsibilities under the project. 18 (58%) of respondents identified the Supervisor's office as their primary contact as compared to 9 (29%) RCD, and 1 for HCD. Of the three selecting "other", 2 participants named Jamie Tuitele-Lewis, and 1 named Marilyn Vierra in Supervisor Church's office as their main points of contact.



Figure 3. Responses to question three: “How many days did it take you to complete your project?”

While this question aimed to gain an overall understanding of the project's timelines, the questions did not account for the number of trees removed, distance, or size of the contracted tree removal company. Some contractors were used by multiple participants, which may have boosted the local economy but also created a bottleneck effect for participants who chose to work with the same contractor. Figure 3 above highlighted that 7 participants answered that their corresponding projects took more than a month to complete. On the other hand, a similar number of respondents indicated that their projects lasted 5 days. The largest group of responses indicated a 6-12 day project duration. From the survey’s answers, it is possible to conclude that the time of 6-12 days was a “typical” project duration. In a few cases, the operator was able to complete the project in under 2 days.

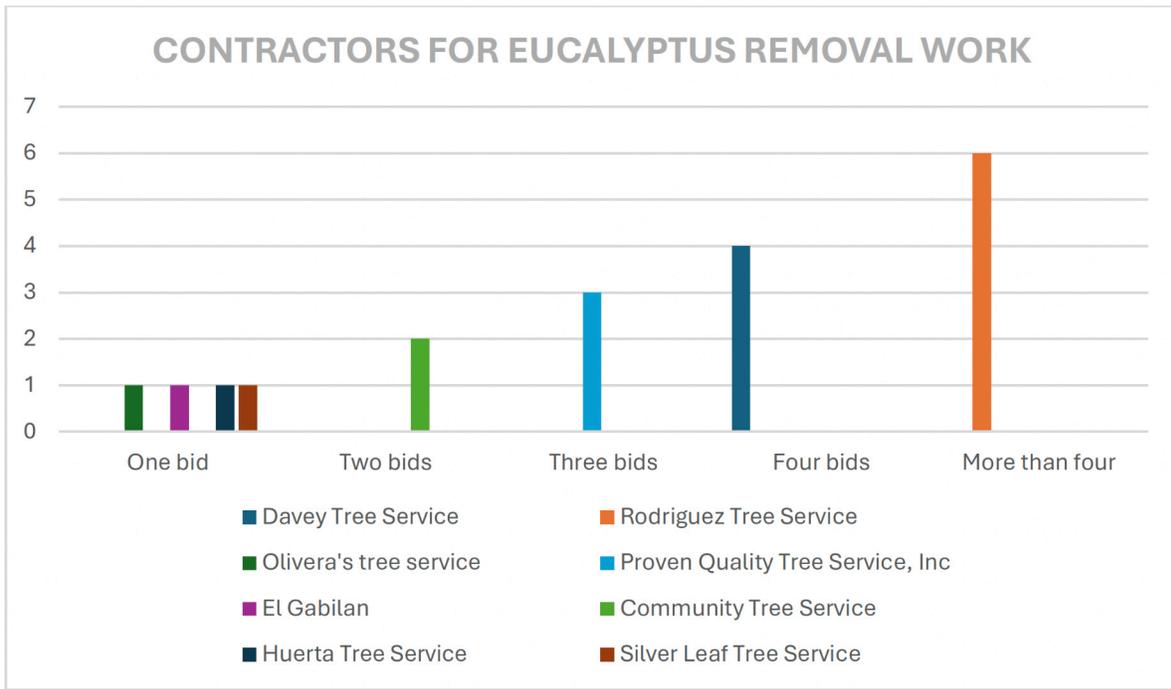


Figure 4. Responses to question four: “How many bids did you solicit for your project? Who was the contractor you selected to conduct the eucalyptus removal work?”

The fourth question of the survey was designed to gather information from participants regarding the contractors hired to complete the implementation portion of the eucalyptus removal. The participants made this initial direct contact with and selection of contractors according to their corresponding bids. During the project’s development, the RCDMC team had multiple correspondences with the contractors regarding the final invoice process. The information gathered indicated that some local operators, such as Davey Tree Service, Proven Quality Tree Service, Inc., and Rodriguez Tree Service, were the most popular contractors servicing the community for the eucalyptus removal.

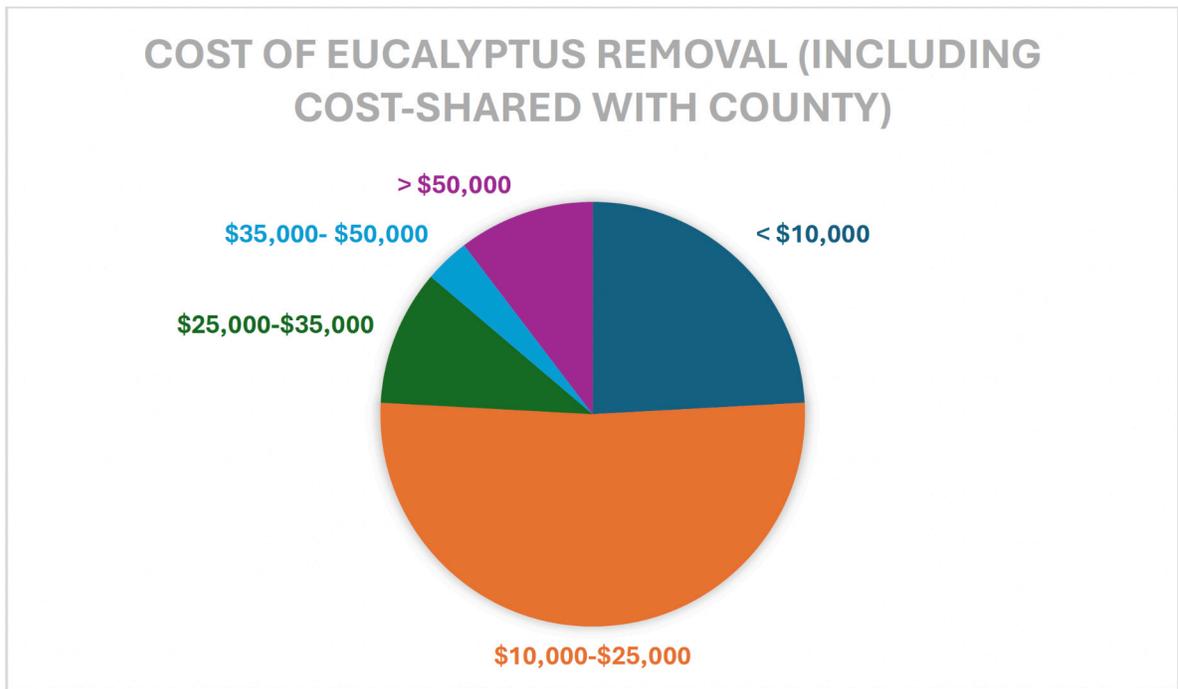


Figure 5. Responses to question five: “How much did your project cost (including cost-share with County)?”

Question 5 of the survey was designed to gather more information regarding the costs associated with each eucalyptus tree removal project. The program's total budget for eucalyptus removal was \$1 million. Every qualified project received 50% of its total billed amount paid by the RCDMC up to \$25,000. Of the participants who answered the survey, 15 answered the \$10,000-\$25,000 category, which received the most responses. The second-highest selected category was less than \$10,000, where 7 participants indicated that their project fell into this expenditure category. The categories of \$25,000-\$35,000 and more than \$50,000 received an equal number of responses, with 3 participants answering for each corresponding category. Lastly, only one participant responded to the survey in the \$35,000-\$50,000 category. With these answers, it is possible to determine that the average expenditure was between \$10,000-\$25,000.

Table 1. Responses to question six: “How many trees did your project remove? (Please provide specific regarding general tree sizes and/or groves)”

1	participant	24
2	participant	1
3	participant	<i>Approximately five large and up to 20 small trees</i>
4	participant	2
5	participant	<i>4 trees 80-100 ft tall</i>
6	participant	<i>2 huge trees, and I think around 8 or 9 big trees.</i>
7	participant	<i>The program was brought to my attention by Proven Quality Tree Service, a local contractor that has been removing eucalyptus trees from the property for the last two years. We were able to have the final stand (6-8 trees, 20"-48" at the base, 75-110' tall) removed at a total cost of \$15,500.00; the program covered half of this amount. Two neighbors also had trees removed through the program that they had been trying to remove for the last three years.</i>
8	participant	<i>23 trees up to 36" diameter</i>
9	participant	<i>8 trees in 3 groups. Est 16-24 inch diameter.</i>
10	participant	6
11	participant	<i>I had 7 trees removed and the bases stump ground. They were all very large and tall. Two were so close to my house that a good windstorm would have destroyed my house if they had fallen. The other 5 trees were on the edge of my property. I used them as a privacy screen, wind break, and occasional source of wood for my wood burning fireplace. I miss them and would really like to put the fence back and plant bushes. A project for the future.</i>
12	participant	<i>8 huge eucalyptus plus 2 medium and smaller eucalyptus between them.</i>
13	participant	<i>5-7 Hard to count as trees had common stumps.</i>
14	participant	<i>One 100Ft Eucalyptus on the neighbors property.</i>
15	participant	<i>1 -21 inch 2 -40 inch 1 -48 inch Removed 1-18 inch trimmed</i>
16	participant	<i>12 large trees</i>
17	participant	<i>12 large trees</i>

18	participant	8
19	participant	<i>3 medium trees and one very large tree. We split the costs of the large tree with our neighbor since it straddled the property line between our parcels.</i>
20	participant	<i>Property 1: 3 trees Property 2: 23 trees Property 3: 12 trees</i>
21	participant	<i>1) Cut 5 large eucalyptus trees behind house. 2) Cut 1 additional midsize eucalyptus tree. 3) Cut all small eucalyptus under trees being cut.</i>
22	participant	<i>1) Cut 5 large eucalyptus trees behind house. 2) Cut 1 additional midsize eucalyptus tree. 3) Cut all small eucalyptus under trees being cut.</i>
23	participant	<i>Approx 6</i>
24	participant	<i>1 80 ft eucalyptus</i>
25	participant	<i>44 trees Large</i>
26	participant	<i>1 large tree</i>
27	participant	<i>I can't remember but quite a few. including some enormous 5' across trees.</i>
28	participant	<i>11 trunks. Some of the trees were 150 ft tall. They were in a tight cluster with some live oak trees.</i>
29	participant	<i>The final count was around 130 eucalyptus trees. Some small ones were also removed and not counted. At least 1/3 of the trees were over 100' tall and several feet in diameter at the base. We feel much safer in our home now from as much fire danger!</i>

Question 6 of the survey was intended to collect qualitative and quantitative data regarding the number of trees removed and participants' reasons for removing eucalyptus trees. The information is provided in Table 1 above. The total trees removed (560) was estimated based on the responses from participants. The average number of trees removed per property, including all tree sizes, was 18. Some important numbers from respondents included the 130 eucalyptus trees removed by one property, and several others reported clusters of more than 20 large trees that were also removed. Lastly, a small number of removed trees were significant, often involving 80-150 ft tall trees. Participants identified that the major motivators for participating in the removal project were to mitigate fire risk, proximity of trees to homes, and storm hazards.

Table 2. Responses to questions seven and eight: “From your perspective, what went smoothly about the Program?”, “From your perspective, what did NOT go smoothly about the Program?”

Highlighted answers from question seven: What went smoothly?	Highlighted answers from question eight: What did not go smoothly?
<p><i>“Getting the bids sent in to the county and getting the reimbursement was easy.”</i></p>	<p><i>“The payment after I submitted the invoice for payment was a bit slow and my paperwork proving completion for the job was temporarily misplaced”.</i></p>
<p><i>“The application process was easy & accessible in terms of paperwork. Finding the local licensed tree contractors was a little cumbersome. Glenn Church's staff was very helpful and Jamie T-L as well. Victor& crew were great. Calfire in Aromas was helpful in identifying which trees posed the greatest fire danger.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Some of the communications about the project and which offices were responsible for what were a little unclear at times. I may have also missed the information somewhere, but I think I saw something on the application after my projects were approved that mentioned limbing trees in addition to removing them. If this activity was in fact covered by the program, there are a couple trees that weren't removed that I would've liked to have gotten hazard limbs trimmed on. But, I overlooked that possibility from hearing the program referenced as the eucalyptus removal project.”</i></p>
<p><i>“Overall, the program worked well and I'm happy with the outcome. Because I was dealing with multiple parcels and multiple projects simultaneously, there was a lot of paperwork, juggling, and coordination. But, I think that was due to my situation, not a function of the way the program was structured and managed.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Researching tree services myself. A lot of companies that said they were insured were not after I compared their contractor's license with site provided. A list of reliable local (insured) tree services would be helpful for the future.”</i></p>
<p><i>“Painless approval process. Excellent tree service with tracked vehicles that worked on steep hills.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Communication with the county was slow at times. The payment to the tree work contractors went particularly slow. Several months after completing the work, and paid by us our portion of the bill, Proven Quality was still waiting to be paid by the county.”</i></p>

Question 9 of the survey asked program participants to suggest improvements for the Program if it were repeated. Overall, the feedback reflected widespread appreciation for the Eucalyptus Removal Pilot Program, along with requests for improvement in funding, communication, and eligibility. Many participants expressed satisfaction, praising its effectiveness and voicing interest in future participation. However, several respondents highlighted challenges such as limited cost coverage, slow payment processing to contractors, and a lack of clear communication regarding timelines and agency roles. Suggestions included expanding the program's scope to include trees beyond current distance limits from structures, creating accessible contractor lists, and ensuring ongoing updates to participants.

Cost was a recurring concern with multiple participants sharing an interest in greater financial support, especially for low-income households and properties with extensive eucalyptus growth. Increased County contributions, pre-approved contractor lists, and more advanced publicity were recommended to improve efficiency and equity. A few also raised environmental and safety issues, advocating for the complete eradication of eucalyptus and better guidance on managing post removal regrowth. Overall, the responses emphasize that while the program made a strong impact, fine-tuning its logistics could help even more residents protect their homes and land.

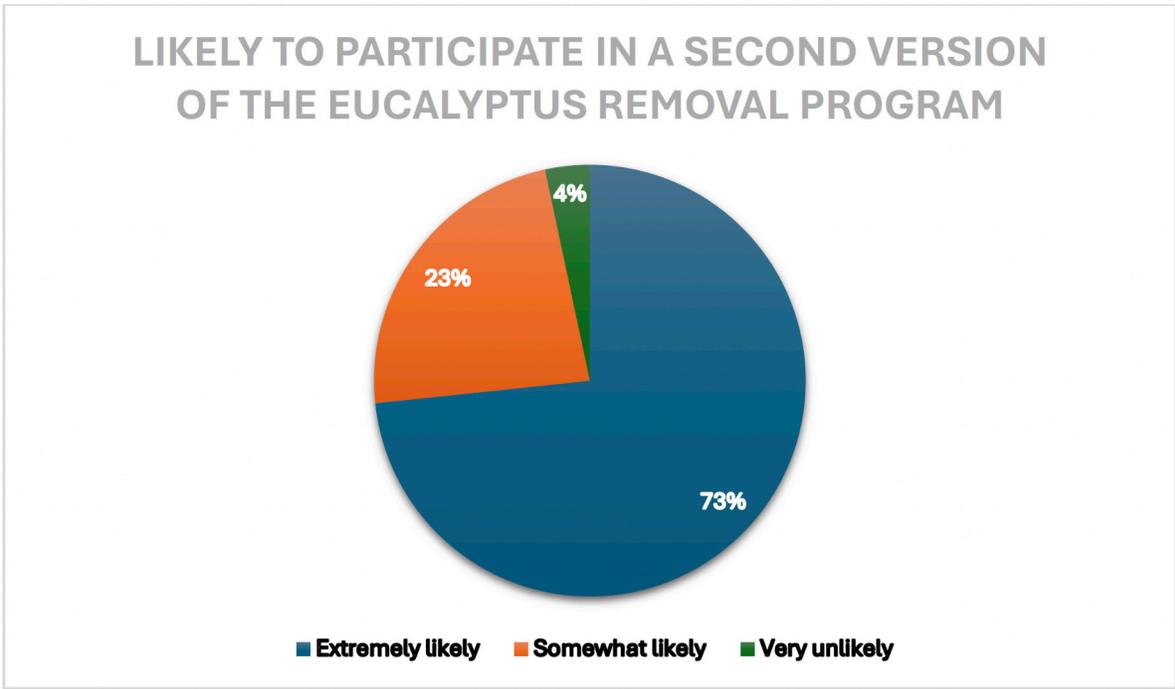


Figure 6. Responses to question ten: “How likely are you to participate in a second version of the eucalyptus removal?”

Question 10 of the survey was intended to gather overall interest from project participants in participating in a second version of the project. The results in Figure 6 show that the majority of survey respondents would participate in a similar program again. Only 1 participant, equivalent to 4% of the respondents, fell into the “very unlikely” category. That participant did not have any more eucalyptus to be removed on their property.

Conclusion

The Eucalyptus Removal Pilot Program was intended to promote public safety through wildfire risk reduction in the northern region of the County of Monterey (Supervisory District 2). 30 of the 76 Pilot Program participants responded to the twelve-question survey, as summarized above. The project provided financial incentives for eucalyptus removal by offsetting half of the associated cost of each project that followed the Program requirements. As a pilot project, the implementation ran into challenges that can be improved in a second version, such as outreach to communities, recommendation of certified operators for tree removal, and streamlining processes between agencies involved to minimize confusion among project participants.

Overall, from the 30 responses, many participants expressed gratitude for the tree removal program but suggested several improvements to make it more effective and inclusive. A common theme was the need to lower homeowners' cost shares, expand financial support (even up to 100% in some cases), and broaden the types of trees eligible for removal—including pines and non native species that pose safety risks.

Respondents also asked for more flexible guidelines, such as allowing stump grinding and trimming of decorative trees, and better outreach to ensure more people are aware of the Program. Suggestions included declaring dangerous neighboring trees a nuisance and reducing disposal fees. Overall, people appreciated the initiative and hoped it would continue with greater accessibility and support, as this project reflects the needs of the community and the North Monterey County region.

RCD Participant Survey

Eucalyptus Pilot Project Survey to Participants

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

Required

The purpose of the survey is to evaluate success and enhance efficiency to improve similar programs in the future.

1. Role in the Program (If other please specify in the box)

Homeowner

Landowner

Renter

Other

2. Which entity was your main point of contact during the project timeline? Please provide the name of the person if you worked with one specific staff member.

Monterey County, Housing & Community Development

Resource Conservation District of Monterey County

Monterey County District Supervisor Glenn Church's Office

3. How many days did it take you to complete your project? (non-consecutive days)

< 1 month

6 - 12 day

5 days

2 days

1 day

4. How many bids did you solicit for your project? Who was the contractor you selected to conduct the eucalyptus removal work?

5. How much did your project cost (including cost-share with County)?

<\$10,000

\$10,000- \$25,000

\$25,000- \$35,000

\$35,000- \$50,000

> \$50,000

6. How many trees did your project remove? ((Please provide specific regarding general tree sizes and/or groves).

7. From your perspective, what went smoothly about the Program?

8. From your perspective, what did NOT go smoothly about the Program?

9. What are your suggestions for improving the Program if we can repeat it?

10. How likely are you are to participate in a second version of the Eucalyptus removal

Extremely likely

Somewhat likely

Very unlikely

11. For further communication for a second version of the eucalyptus removal Project. Please provide your name and the best way to communicate with you.

12. Any other suggestions? What would make you more likely to participate?

Application for Eucalyptus Removal Program

County of Monterey



District 2 – Supervisor Church

Office of Supervisor Church
 11140 Speegle St.
 Castroville, CA 95012
 Phone: 831-755-5022

Date Received:

Application for Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program

This application is for the removal of eucalyptus trees under the 2024 Pilot Program, approved by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors June 4, 2024. This pilot program applies within the unincorporated areas of Supervisorial District 2 in Monterey County. Within this area, the costs of thinning, trimming, or removing eucalyptus trees that are located within the defensible space of structures and roadways may be partially covered by grant funding. This pilot program is funded through a \$1 million grant from the California Office of Emergency Services. Applications will be considered on a first come first served basis while funding remains.

If your application is approved, up to 50% of the costs of the tree service will be paid by the County under this program. The remaining cost will be the responsibility of the property owner. Owners of land in unincorporated Supervisorial District 2 that have eucalyptus trees located within the defensible space (100 feet) of structures and 30 feet of roadways are eligible for this pilot program. This distance may be increased if trees are deemed hazardous based on topography and other considerations in consultation with the appropriate Fire Department.

Property Information:		
Address	City/State	Zip
Nearest Cross Street	Assessor's Parcel Number	
Number of trees to remove		
Reason for Tree Removal: (Check all that apply)		
Defensible Space (within 100 ft from structure)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Proximity to a road (within 30 ft from road)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Hazardous (Requires Fire Department consultation letter)	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Owner/Applicant Information:		
Name	Phone	
Applicant Mailing Address	City/State	Zip
Email		

County of Monterey

Tree Removal Contractor Information	
Contractor 1:	Bid amount:
License Number:	Proposed method of debris removal?
Mailing Address:	Proposed method of stump and limb treatments?
Phone:	Does contractor understand the need for follow up documentation?
Email:	
Contractor 2:	Bid amount:
License Number:	Proposed method of debris removal?
Mailing Address:	Proposed method of stump and limb treatments?
Phone:	Does contractor understand the need for follow up documentation?
Email:	

Owner Checklist:

	Yes	No
Have you attached two quotes, and summarized above?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you attached a diagram showing roads, structures, location and number of trees proposed for removal, and distance of trees from roads and structures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If trees are removed due to hazardous conditions, have you included a letter confirming consultation with your local fire department?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The County of Monterey shall not be responsible in any way for any damage to property or persons caused by or related to trees located on private property. I acknowledge that it is the property owner's responsibility to maintain all trees on his or her property in a reasonable and safe manner, and any inspection performed by the County is limited to advisory assessment only.

I, _____, am hereby consenting, permitting and authorizing County representatives to, as necessary, enter onto my property to conduct any inspection in order to determine whether a permit/waiver should be issued. To the fullest extent allowable by law, I shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the County from and against any and all claims, losses, actions, demands, suits, proceedings, or any other forms of liability of any kind, including all costs and attorney fees, accruing or resulting to the County, in connection with this application. I agree to comply with all federal, state and County laws relating to vegetation removal, disposal and transport. I acknowledge that it is unlawful to alter the substance of any official County form or document. I acknowledge that no work on the subject tree(s) is permitted until written County approval is given.

Signature of Property Owner _____ DATE _____

(Can only be signed by Property Owner)

*County of Monterey reserves the right to take action against any and all parties for the violation of applicable ordinances.

County of Monterey

**FOR DEPARTMENT USE ONLY
EUCALYPTUS TREE REMOVAL PILOT PROGRAM**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date Received by
District 2:

Date Received by
RCD:

Check list of Materials Received:

- Property Owner name and address
- Property APN where work will occur
- Diagram of property showing roads, structures, location and number of trees proposed and distance of trees from roads and structures
- Two quotes including proposed method of debris removal, stump and limb treatments, need for follow-up documentation
- Opinion letter from local fire department (if unique circumstances)

Authorized to proceed?

Final Documentation:

Number of trees removed

Method of slash and stump removal

Treatment of stump and limbs

Date of work

Other relevant information



Acknowledgements

This Program would not have come to fruition without the involvement of several entities.

Senator John Laird secured the \$1 million funding in a pass-through grant from the California Office of Emergency Services.

The Monterey County Resource Conservation District (RCD) performed both application review and management of invoice payments to tree contractors. RCD staff contributed invaluable to this report as well.

County of Monterey Housing and Community Development (HCD) staff developed the program application and brought their expertise to bear on clearing the Program with the California Coastal Commission as well as performing necessary analysis of County permitting, sparing participants from the time and expense of that process.

The North Monterey County Fire Prevention District and the Aromas Tri-County Fire Prevention District applied their fire mitigation expertise on behalf of Program participants seeking to remove trees outside of the prescribed defensible space. Their recommendations have been critical to the effectiveness of the Program for participants and for staffs.

Ruby Sprengle worked tirelessly with District 2 staff to assemble, design, and publish this report. Her design and language expertise has been indispensable.

Participants in the Program have demonstrated appreciation, and more importantly, have been of great help identifying aspects of the Program that need modification.

Lastly, District 2 staff have devoted hours of time coordinating community engagement, developing the protocols and procedures of the Program with RCD and HCD, and working with individual participants to assure their understanding of the Program.

In all, the Eucalyptus Tree Removal Pilot Program has been an overwhelming success because of the contributions listed here and has demonstrated the effect of collegial collaboration among government and non-profit agencies and the people of North Monterey County.