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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 13, 2026

TO: LARPD / EBRPD Liaison Committee

FROM: Max Korten, General Manager

SUBJECT: Vegetation Management Strategy Update

RECOMMENDATION

This is an informational item.

BACKGROUND

The East Bay Regional Park District (Park District) is responsible for managing vegetation across parklands to reduce wildfire risk, maintain public access, and support ecosystem health. East Bay ecosystems evolved with natural processes such as fire, grazing, and variations in weather that supported ecosystem function, biodiversity, and resilience. Due to prolonged fire suppression, changing disturbance patterns, and climate change, vegetation must now be actively managed to address these changing conditions and sustain healthy, resilient parklands. This work occurs across a large and diverse landscape and includes a range of approaches such as manual, mechanical, and chemical treatments, cattle and goat grazing, prescribed burning, and habitat restoration. These efforts require coordination between multiple work units including Park Operations, the Fire Department, and Stewardship, as well as engagement with external partners and regulatory agencies.

While the Park District is already undertaking extensive vegetation management work, the need for a more coordinated and strategic approach to districtwide vegetation management has become increasingly important due to increasing wildfire risk, complex regulatory and permitting requirements, and growing demands for limited staff and resources. Given the size, extent, diversity, and complexity of the Park District's lands, it is not feasible to address all vegetation management needs at once, making prioritization essential. To address this need, a Vegetation Management Strategy (Strategy) is being developed through a collaborative cross-divisional effort. The Strategy is intended to clarify goals and priorities, establish a transparent framework for how vegetation management decisions are made, and work is prioritized over time, and improve coordination across departments.

A cross-divisional Park District team began meeting in spring 2025 to improve coordination, clarify roles and responsibilities, and develop goals to guide districtwide vegetation management planning and decisions.

Community outreach through the Park Advisory Committee (PAC) identified wildfire risk and public safety, trail access, communication and public awareness, and ecosystem health and biodiversity as key priorities. Park District staff have provided input through a districtwide survey, listening session, stewardship seminar, and technical data review discussions.

ANALYSIS

The Strategy is being developed around four overarching goals that came out of staff and community engagement:

- Reduce Wildfire Risk and Protect Communities
- Protect and Restore Healthy Ecosystems
- Maintain Safe and Accessible Parks and Trails
- Strengthen Coordination, Communication, and Sustainable Management

The Strategy will identify priority actions, clarify roles and responsibilities, and identify how to strengthen coordination and communication with staff, partner agencies, and the public.

The Strategy is grounded in a multi-benefit approach that recognizes vegetation treatments can simultaneously reduce wildfire risk, support ecosystem health and biodiversity, restore habitat, maintain recreational access, protect cultural resources, and improve long-term operational sustainability. Because these needs must be balanced with limited resources, the Strategy includes a prioritization framework to help identify where future work may provide the greatest overall benefit.

Developed with technical consultants led by Auten Resource Consulting, the prioritization framework is a GIS-based planning tool. It combines districtwide geographic data and weighted criteria to identify higher-priority areas for further evaluation, rather than selecting or approving specific projects.

The framework uses three models to assess vegetation management priorities:

- **Community Model:** Wildfire hazard, park visitation, people and infrastructure, and access important for fire operations.
- **Ecology Model:** Vegetation and fuel conditions, sensitive habitats, invasive species, and ecosystem health and resilience.
- **Feasibility Model:** Slope and terrain, road and treatment access, existing work, and practical implementation constraints.

The models will produce maps highlighting priority areas for treatment. The maps will inform future work planning alongside staff expertise, operational needs, environmental and cultural review, funding, and site-specific conditions.

The Park District anticipates finalizing the Strategy and prioritization framework by the end of the year and beginning development of implementation guidance in 2027. The Park District will also continue strengthening coordination and exploring opportunities for additional collaboration with partner agencies.

ATTACHMENTS

Presentation



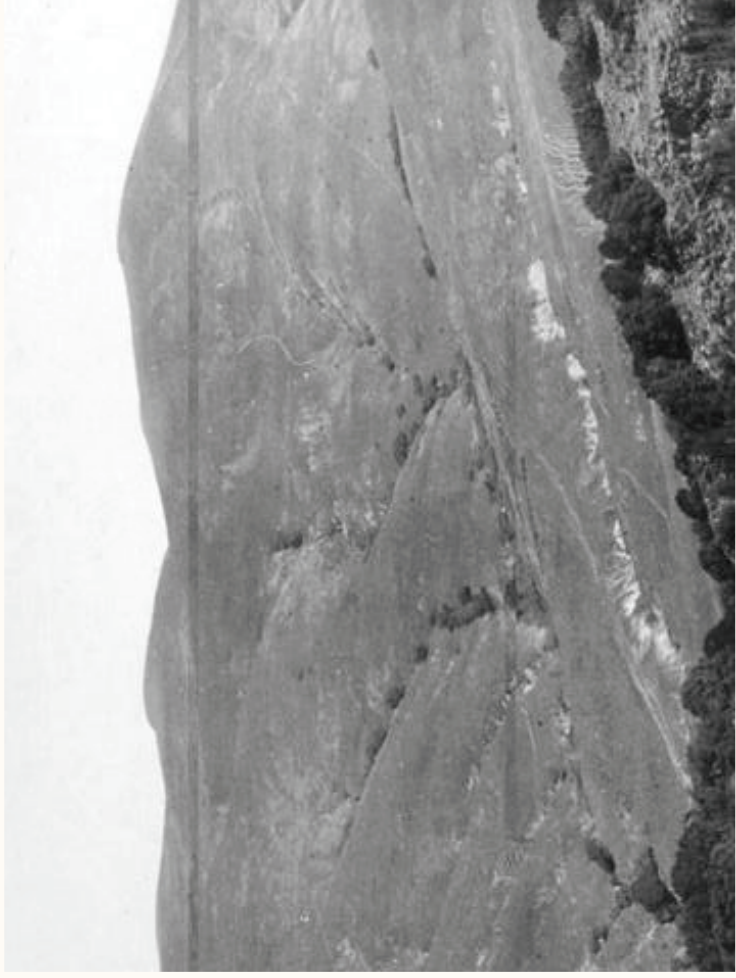
Vegetation Management Strategy



California's landscapes evolved with fire



Changes in Vegetation Have Increased Wildfire Risk



The 1991 Oakland Firestorm shifted focus to prevention



1991 Oakland Firestorm

Catastrophic outcomes are preventable



Sycan Preserve in Oregon illustrates different outcomes from 2021 Bootleg Fire



The East Bay Regional Park District preserves a rich heritage of natural and cultural resources and provides open space, parks, trails, safe and healthful recreation and environmental education.

An environmental ethic guides the District in all of its activities.



Vegetation Management Requires Diverse Approaches



Cattle & Goat Grazing

- Reduce grasses and brush
- Manage fuel buildup
- Maintain grasslands



Mechanical & Manual Removal

- Mowing and brushing
- Forest thinning and pruning
- Trail and roadside clearing



Targeted Herbicide Use

- Control invasive plants
- Support habitat restoration
- Used selectively and strategically



Ecological Restoration

- Habitat enhancement
- Invasive species removal
- Native species recovery



Prescribed Fire

- Controlled burns
- Reduce accumulated fuels
- Restore fire-adapted landscapes

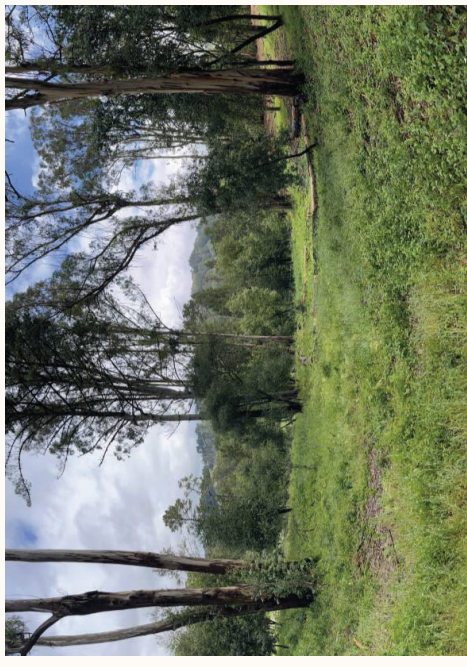
Tilden Project: Golf Course Drive



Before
January 2025



Immediately After
January 2025



1 year after
2026

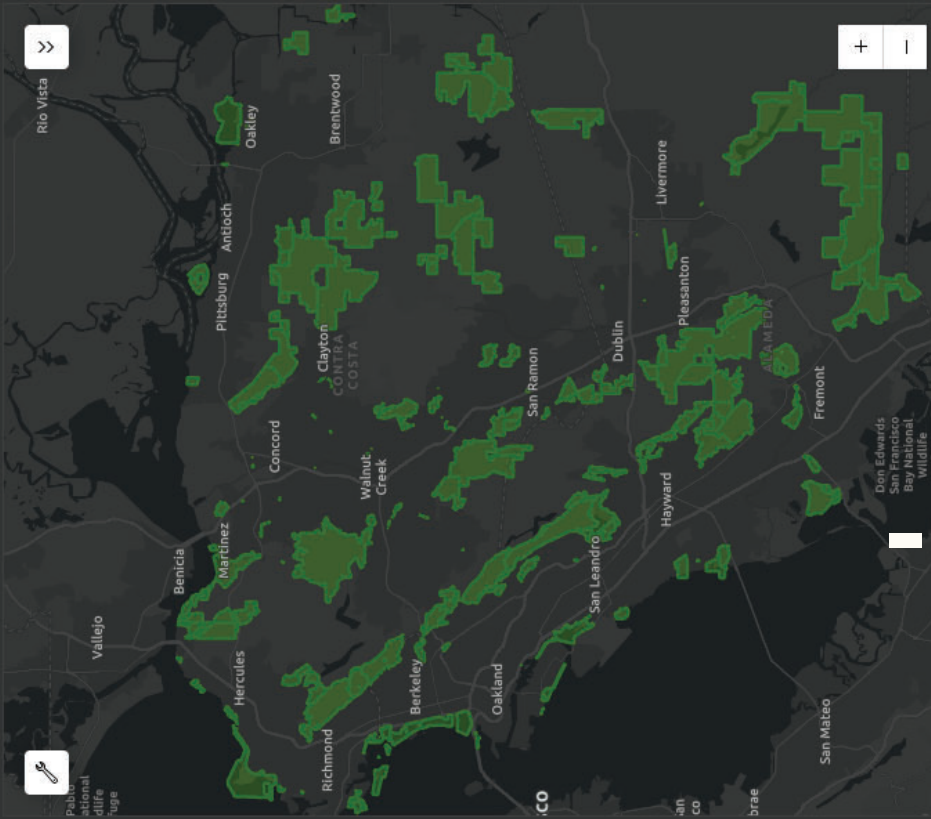
Anthony Chabot: The Carbonizer



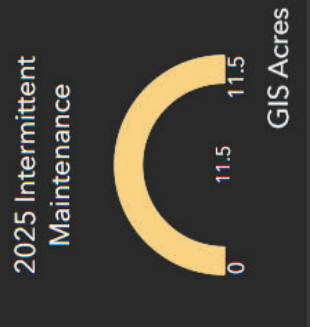
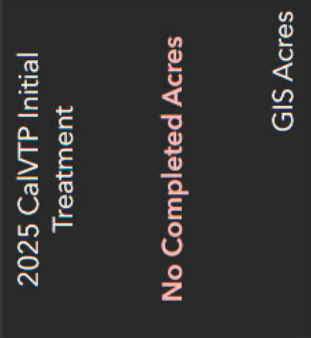
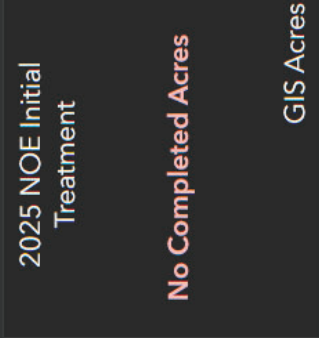
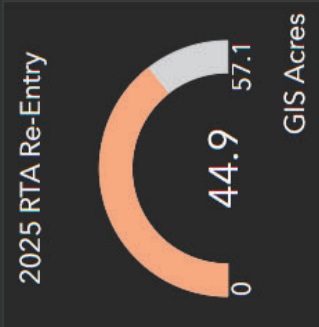
Improved Tracking Tools

Select Layers from the Drop-Down Icon in the Top Right of the Map

No legend



California State Parks, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, FAO, MET/NASA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service. Powered by Esri



Increasing Operational Challenges



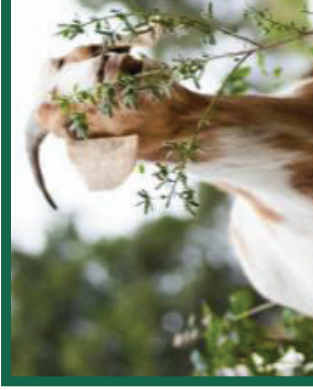
Expanding Responsibilities

As the East Bay's largest public landowner, EBRPD's responsibilities continue to expand.



Rising Risk & Expectations

Wildfire risk and expectations around defensible space continue to rise.



Balancing Multiple Goals

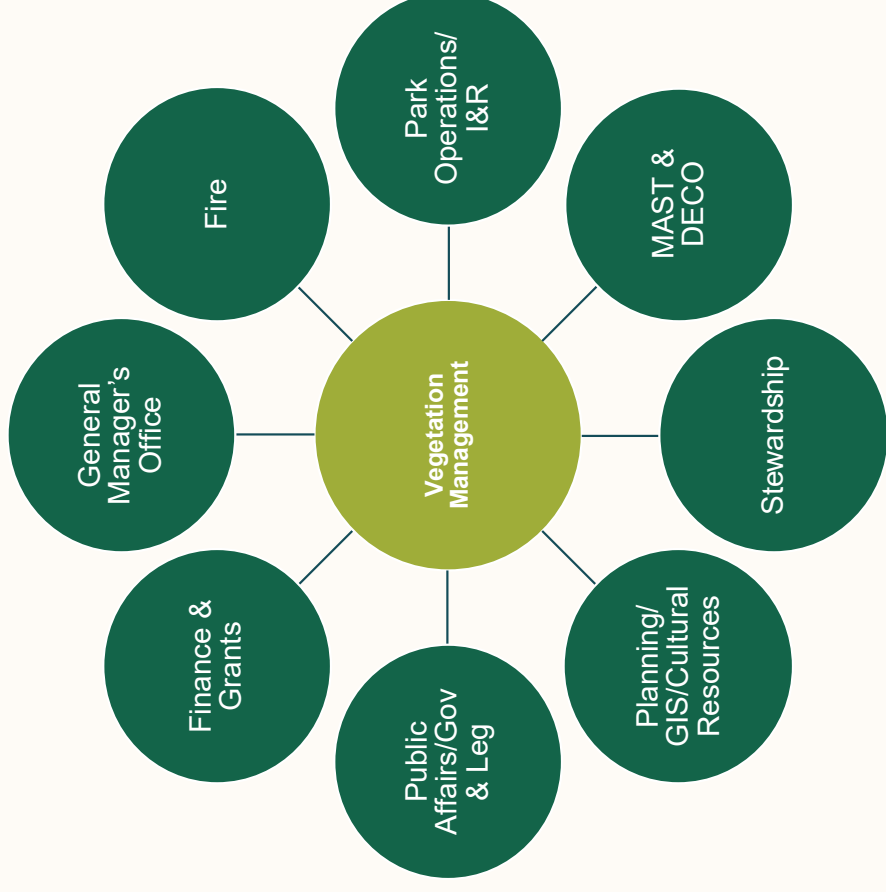
Balancing safety, access, and habitat protection requires planning and coordination.



Limited Resources

Staffing, equipment, and funding are limited, requiring prioritization of work.

Vegetation Management Requires Coordination



Building a More Strategic Approach



Make Strategic Decisions

Focus vegetation management work and resources where they can provide the greatest benefit.



Strengthen Coordination

Clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations across divisions.



Improve Communication, Education & Transparency

Communicate about vegetation management activities and increase public understanding.



Support Resilient, Sustainable Landscapes

Advance approaches that support long-term landscape resilience and sustainable maintenance.

Strategy Engagement Process

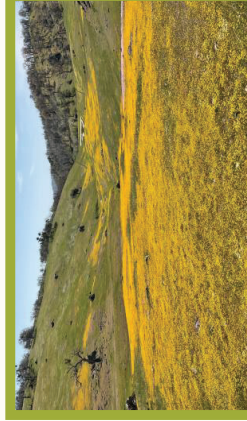


Strategy Goals & Objectives



Reduce Wildfire Risk and Protect Communities

- Wildfire Risk
- Defensible Space
- Emergency Access
- Community Protection
- Resource Protection



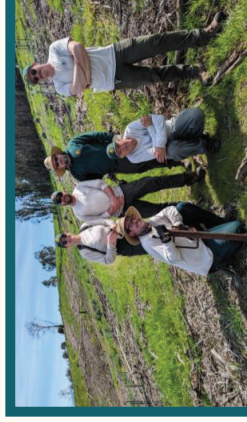
Protect and Restore Healthy Ecosystems

- Habitat & Biodiversity
- Native Species
- Invasive Species
- Watershed Health
- Climate Resilience



Maintain Safe and Accessible Parks and Trails

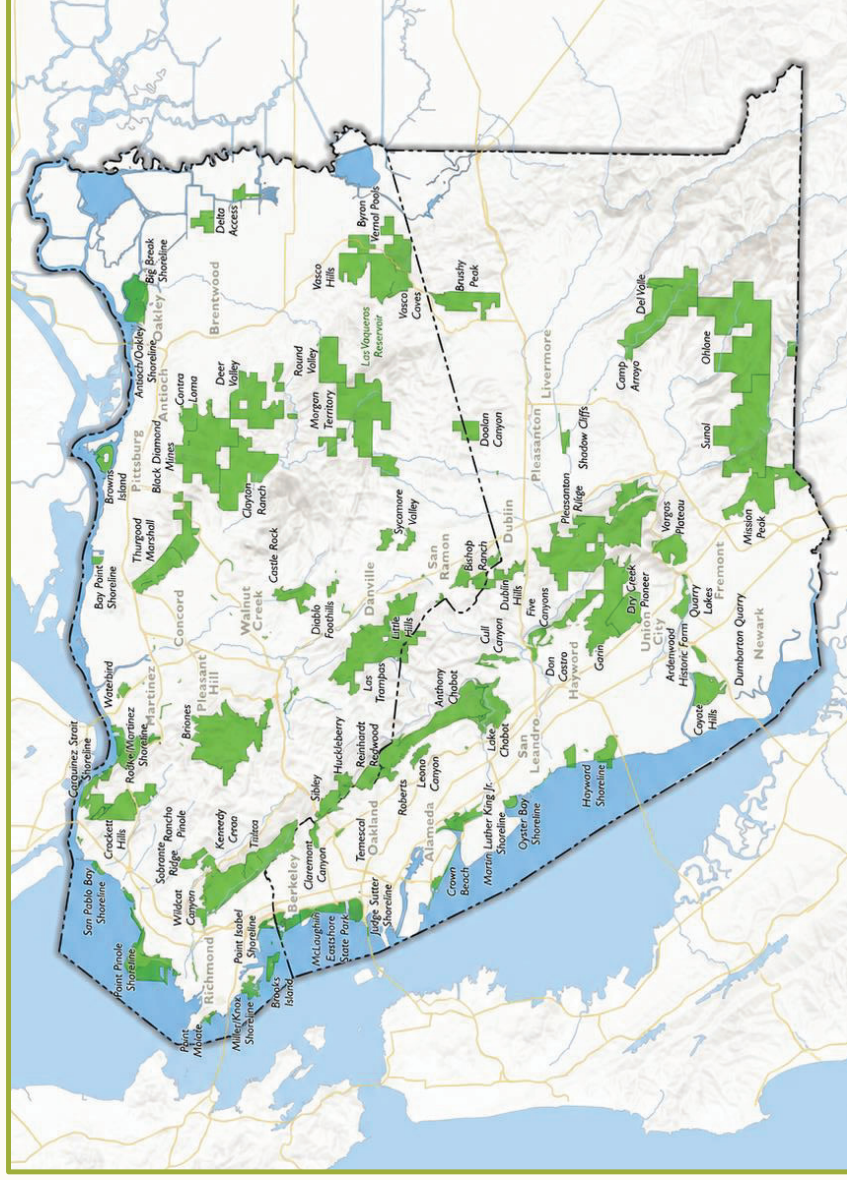
- Safe Access
- Vegetation Hazards
- Seasonal Conditions
- Ongoing Maintenance
- Resource Protection



Improve Coordination, Communication, and Sustainable Management

- Multi-Benefit, Sustainable Projects
- Responsible, Data-Informed Management
- Communication & Partnerships

Strategy Goals & Objectives



Building a Districtwide Framework for Decision-making



Identify Priority Areas

Use districtwide data and agreed-upon criteria to identify areas that may warrant higher priority for vegetation management.



Provide Treatment Guidance

Provide a menu of potential vegetation management approaches based on vegetation type, site conditions, and management goals.

Logic Model Inputs

COMMUNITY

Protecting people and infrastructure and supporting fire operations

- Wildfire hazard and fire behavior
- Park visitation
- Structures and critical infrastructure
- Strategic fire and operations access

ECOLOGY

Enhance and restore ecosystems and protect sensitive resources

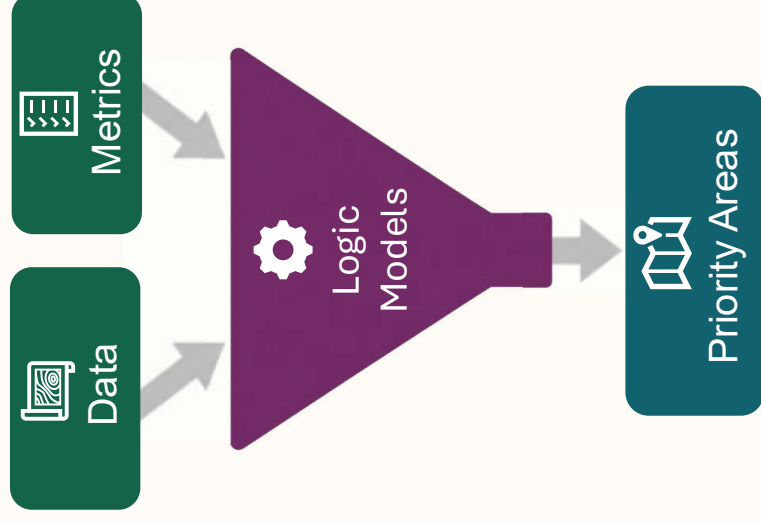
- Vegetation condition and restoration needs
- Invasive species and vegetation encroachment
- Sensitive habitats, plants, and wildlife
- Fire history and natural fire regime

FEASIBILITY

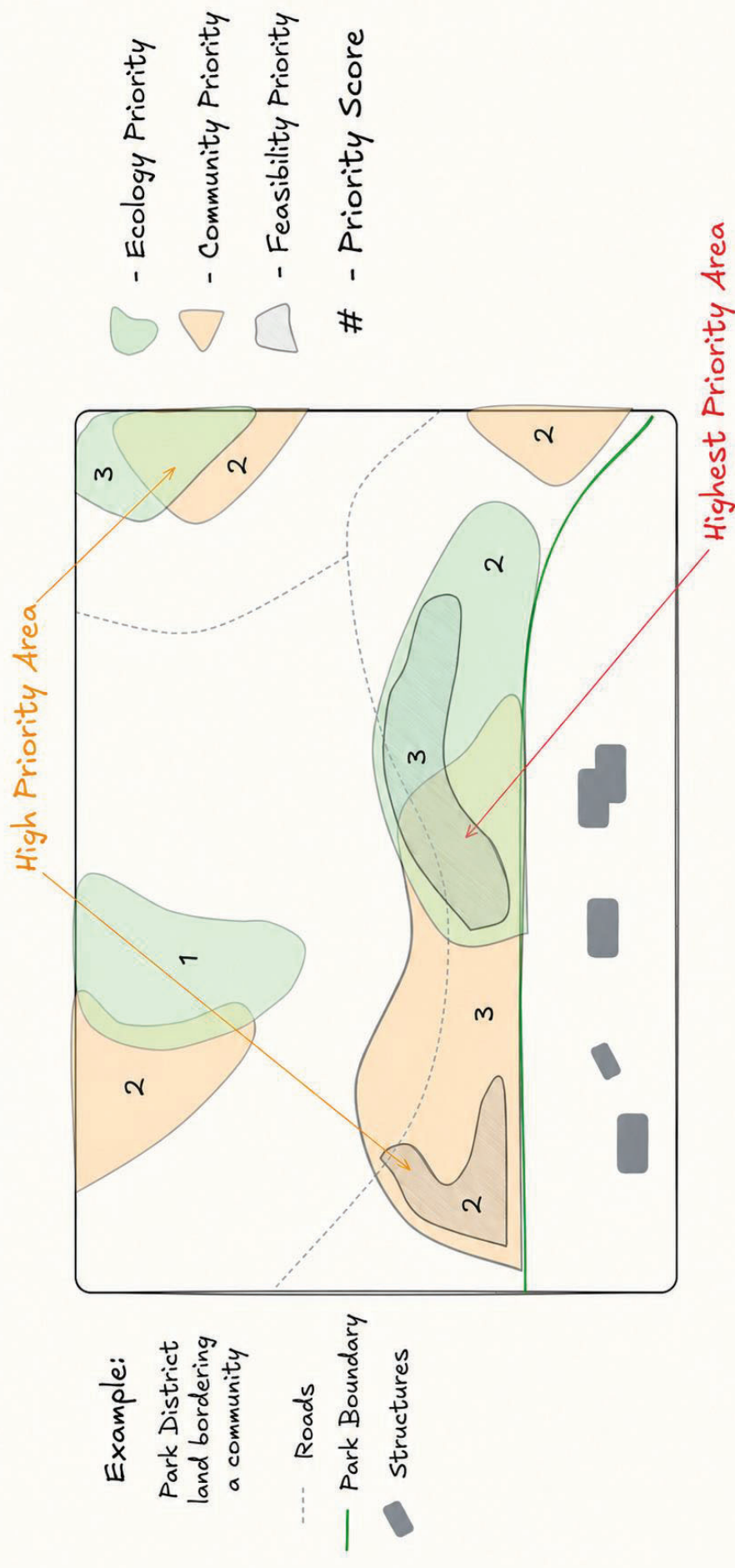
Consider where vegetation management can practically be implemented

- Road access
- Slope and terrain
- Watercourses and water bodies
- Proximity to recent vegetation management projects

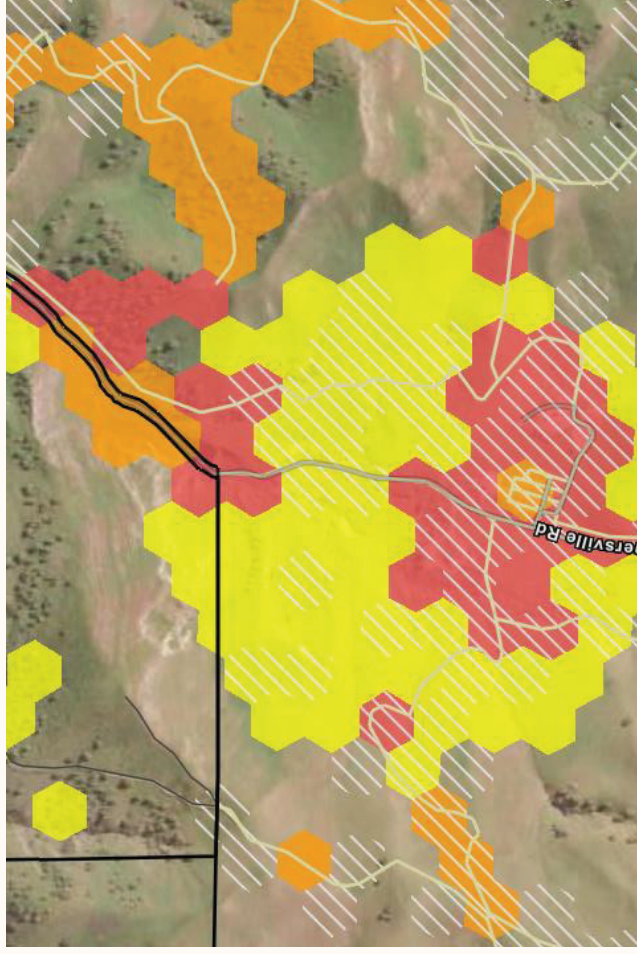
Identifying Priority Areas



Identifying Priority Areas



Identifying Priority Areas



From Priority Area to Project



Next Steps

Fall 2026 Engagement

Continue engagement with community and Tribal partners.

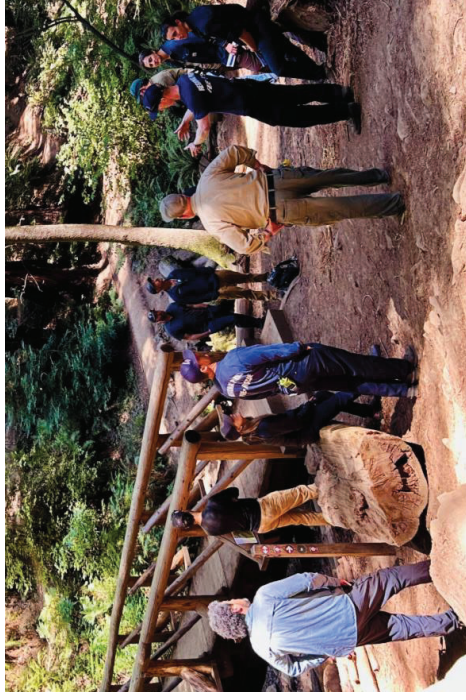
Fall 2026 Finalize Strategy

Finalize strategy actions and complete prioritization framework.

2027 Implementation

Begin implementation and develop operational guidance.

Partnerships are essential for success





Thank you!
