

**Attachment A**  
**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The LAFD Brush Clearance policies have long been a topic of conversation at our Neighborhood Council. You might wonder why I have chosen to ask for this meeting now - there are a few reasons.

- First, our fire seasons are only worsening, and I believe we need a better and more comprehensive approach in the hillsides.
- Second, we have a new (or relatively new) fire chief who might be receptive to meeting with us and hearing what we have to say (we've had difficulty getting anyone to meet with us in the past).
- Third, CalFire has issued changes based on home hardening yet there seems to be a “disconnect” between what the State mandates and what LAFD mandates.
- Fourth, the topic has now been picked up by the Neighborhood Council Sustainability Alliance, and I am the representative.

A small committee (that includes me) met a few months ago to discuss what might be the best course of action to get the City to change its brush clearance policies. A letter has been drafted and it was discussed at our NCSA Advocacy meeting on September 8<sup>th</sup>. The basic outline was approved with the knowledge that it will be edited before it is sent to the full board for approval. The concern(s) expressed in the letter can be summarized as follows:

“While the mission of LAFD is to both to prevent and to extinguish fire, they are instead, if inadvertently, creating a hotter, drier, and more flammable environment in the hillsides. The standards/policies that they set for maintenance and their methods for enforcement are responsible for the loss of critical habitat, the degradation of our watersheds, and the destruction of our tree canopy (as well as many nesting birds).”

Based on the current policies of the LAFD and the knowledge that has been gained in the last few years regarding home hardening and how wildfire spreads, here are a few suggested points to begin our discussion:

1. As part of the home hardening, CalFire is mandating a 5’ buffer of defensible space around the home – this translates to no planting material, no flammable material of any sort within this 5’ zone. (LAFD has not yet issued this requirement)
2. CalFire only requires 100’ of brush clearance, but LAFD requires 200’ even though there doesn’t seem to be any science to back up this additional 100’ of clearance. (In areas where there are smaller contiguous properties, this basically means that the entire slopes get cleared)
3. The brush notices that are sent out to residents every year could include important information about preserving our protected trees and protecting our nesting birds while carrying out the brush clearance requirements. (Other cities/counties in California do it.)
4. Many homeowners hire inexpensive crews who denude their entire hillside when they do brush clearance. LAFD could do more to prevent this practice since it destabilizes the hillside and can lead to a landslide during the rainy season. (It also destroys critical habitat and adds to heat gain.)
5. LAFD’s management and lack of oversight of brush clearance on undeveloped and larger parcels by independent contractors: Witnesses have seen independent contractors denude hillsides and remove protected trees. There needs to be a better approach.