



FAQs: Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy

Updated September 2023

Q. What is the Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy (Forest Health Strategy)?

A. A strategic plan that uses best available data and scientific understanding to identify and locate stressors impacting forest resilience in Marin County and provides a framework for land managers to work together to address threats to the long-term health of key forests at landscape scale.

Some things this document achieves are:

- Describes the condition of key forest communities in Marin County, and how to address threats that currently impact them
- Uses best available data, local knowledge, and expert analysis to identify how and where agencies can make a difference for forests, working both independently and together across jurisdictional boundaries
- Establishes a meaningful baseline to measure future changes in forests, through critical new datasets and methods to build upon
- Delivers a thoughtful path forward for projects and programs designed to protect and improve forest health and resilience in Marin County over the next decade

View the document and learn more at: <https://www.onetam.org/forest-health>

Q. What do we mean by forest health and resilience?

A. The *Forest Health Strategy* defines resilience as “the capacity of systems to absorb or recover from disturbance while undergoing change to retain desired ecosystem services and functions within a mosaic of forest types.”

“Health” refers to a condition of ecosystem sustainability and attainment of management objectives for a given forest area. There are many characteristics used to describe health, and health looks different in different forest types.

This work seeks to preserve the current mosaic of different forest types currently present in Marin and to increase their health and long-term resilience through active management, where feasible and most needed.

Q. What is the current work? Where can I see this work happening?

A. Current projects in this portfolio include Marin Water’s forestry work at sites on Mt. Tamalpais Watershed lands, which aims to increase forest health while protecting critical water storage and delivery infrastructure. Activities include selective thinning of small diameter conifer trees, which would otherwise be naturally removed by wildfire in this fire-adapted landscape, as well as protecting oak woodlands from the spread of sudden oak death by removing infected trees and removing weeds.

Marin County Parks is also initiating forest health work on San Geronimo Ridge to increase forest health and resiliency, enhance biodiversity, improve ecosystem function, and protect communities in/adjacent to Gary Giacomini Open Space Preserve.

A place to see this work in action is the area around Lake Lagunitas. View or download a self-guided forest health walk around the lake at: <https://www.onetam.org/forest-health>

Q. Who are you working with?

A. We are working with many partners to bring the strategy to life:

- The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria to integrate Coast Miwok knowledge and perspective into the *Forest Health Strategy* and are actively engaging with the Tribe on future forest work.
- The Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) and fire agencies to share data and information from the *Forest Health Strategy* and are collaborating on multi-benefit projects to improve forest health and increase wildfire resilience for communities in key areas.
- Many environmental groups in Marin County to share all that we have learned from the forest health strategic planning process, and to get insights and perspectives on future forest health work.
- Communities are an important partner—we are creating opportunities for dialogue about our local environment.

Q. How is One Tam involved?

A. One Tam’s role in forest health work is primarily bringing partners together to increase the impact of our collective work and sharing the importance of these efforts with the public. One Tam shares information with MWPA and the fire agencies to improve coordination and planning, to protect sensitive natural resources, and to bring the forest health lens where possible to projects. While our focus is forest health, we understand the wildfire threat to communities and will support the fire agencies wherever possible in this way.

Q. Who is behind the *Forest Health Strategy*?

A. The *Forest Health Strategy*’s development was led by One Tam, and contributors included One Tam partner staff and scientists, consultants, and the Federated Indians

of Graton Rancheria (the Tribe). The Tribe is the only federally recognized Tribe whose ancestral territory is present-day Marin County. One Tam continues to consult and collaborate with the Tribe to inform this strategy and our future endeavors to ensure the Tribe's perspectives and experiences are part of One Tam efforts. One Tam is also collaborating with the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority and fire agencies on data and information sharing and will partner with them on future projects where there are opportunities for work that can both restore forests and increase public safety. While developed by public lands agencies in southern Marin, it can be a guide for work County-wide, and serve as a model for other regions working to protect forests.

This work stems from previous efforts to understand and improve the health of the Mt. Tamalpais region. In 2016, One Tam embarked on a detailed assessment of the health of Mt. Tamalpais, known as Peak Health. The report summarized the condition and trend of natural resources across the mountain based on available data, including forest communities. The effort also identified data gaps, including the need for consistent, mountain-wide, vegetation community spatial data. The One Tam countywide fine scale vegetation map was developed to facilitate landscape-scale analysis and provide Marin land managers and residents with a tool for understanding the distribution and composition of vegetation communities, including forests. The *Forest Health Strategy* utilized the vegetation map, Peak Health, and other landscape-scale data analysis to develop a deeper health assessment of five key forest types in Marin, with the goal of identifying opportunities for forest restoration and resilience projects.

Q. What is the difference between forest health and fuel reduction?

A. The work of One Tam, fire agencies, and community preparedness are different and complementary. Forest health work on public lands is one part of living in a fire adapted landscape. One Tam partner agencies, MWPA, and fire agencies each work to address wildfire hazards. One Tam forest health work can sometimes overlap as multi-benefit projects (projects that increase forest health while reducing fire risk) with agency work focused on defensible space and reducing hazardous fuels. Other work by the MWPA and fire agencies includes home hardening, wildfire prevention, and evacuation route planning and maintenance.

Large wildfires across the state and region have focused the attention of the public and policymakers on the need to protect communities and critical infrastructure from catastrophic wildfire. Much of this focus involves reducing the risk to people and homes through home hardening, creating defensible space, and managing vegetation along evacuation routes. There is also increased focus on managing forests and wildlands to reduce hazardous conditions where they exist. The *Forest Health Strategy* outlines approaches to combining hazard reduction work with forest management practices that also restore forest health and increase resilience. It can also be used to educate key audiences about the important role of fire in Marin's ecosystems and fire history, stress

from fire exclusion, and approaches to increasing and protecting biodiversity through the reintroduction of beneficial fire on the landscape, where feasible.

Q. Why do we need this strategy? What are the threats to forests?

A. Forests in Marin County provide numerous benefits including wildlife habitat, clean air, drinking water, carbon storage, and world-class recreational opportunities. They also have significant cultural value.

Forests face threats such as plant disease, introduced weeds, fire exclusion, the legacy of colonization, and human-caused climate change.

In order to preserve all that the forests provide, we need a holistic way to address threats and help forests become more resilient at a meaningful scale.

Q. Are you going to do prescribed burns?

A. Fire is an important part of our Marin environment and increasing the use of beneficial fire will be a part of future projects. Our incredible local biodiversity developed with regular fire on the landscape and needs fire to thrive. Fire suppression combined with the removal of Coast Miwok people and traditional Tribal uses of fire on the land over the last hundred-plus years coupled with climate change has made fire in our region less predictable. The *Forest Health Strategy* frames the absence of beneficial fire as a threat to many vegetation communities, including forests. It shows the importance of working with the Tribe, agency partners, and MWPA/fire departments to aid the return of beneficial fire to Marin forests.

Q. What about other things that live in the forest? How do you protect wildlife when you are working in an area?

A. One Tam is doing this work with best available science, in a way that protects biodiversity and habitat diversity for wildlife. We are also studying the impacts of treatments to ensure we are doing the best possible stewardship. This includes pre- and post-project implementation surveys for sensitive plant and wildlife species, critical habitats, and priority weeds. It also includes monitoring how the forests respond to different treatment approaches and using that information to shape management approaches. In fact, compliance and monitoring make up a majority of the activity when we do a forest health project (about 80%!).

Q. I am concerned about a wildfire occurring near my home. Where can I find information on wildfire preparedness?

A. For information on wildfire preparedness for your home and family, please refer to the following:

- Fire Safe Marin - <https://firesafemarin.org/>
- Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority - <https://www.marinwildfire.org/>

Q. I have been visiting a place for a long time and now it looks different because of forest health work. When will it look better?

A. When you see an area where forest health work is happening, it may look different than it used to. It may look more open as a result of reducing the overgrown understory in that area. This work is important for reducing hazardous fuels in those areas.

Each time you visit an area where forest health work occurs, it may look different as the forest responds and new growth occurs. This work takes time and is ongoing. In fact, once work starts, we commit to ongoing care – we may rotate treatments over multiple years, while regularly removing weeds and monitoring wildlife species.

Q. Are there opportunities to get involved?

A. Yes! Everyone has a role in caring for forests. We will be building on this work going forward, so stay tuned through our website, newsletter, and social media for opportunities to learn more and to get involved.

- Get informed!
 - Check out the resources that [MWPA](#) and [Fire Safe Marin](#) have for community members
 - Learn more about forest health work at onetam.org/forest-health
 - Stay updated on One Tam’s work by [signing up](#) for our seasonal newsletter
 - Join an event – stay tuned at onetam.org/calendar for upcoming opportunities
 - Volunteer – learn about opportunities to give back to the mountain at onetam.org/volunteer, and regularly check onetam.org/calendar for opportunities to get involved in caring for our public lands
- Support!
 - Become a One Tam member to support this work – join us at onetam.org/join.

As projects advance, there may be opportunities to lead/participate in neighborhood hikes for educational purposes and potentially to volunteer in community science and/or stewardship of project areas.

Specific neighborhoods or communities that will be directly impacted by forest health projects will need to be engaged in specific work (e.g., Tam Valley, Bolinas, Wolfback Ridge, Tomales Bay, Inverness, and others). We will need to be able to answer questions such as: where and why the work is happening, what the work will entail/how it will be done, a timeline, what changes to expect over time, and how neighbors can get involved.

Q. Who can I contact if I have more questions?

A. Please get in touch with One Tam at info@onetam.org. If you are a member of the media, please contact media@onetam.org. We will direct you to the right person(s) for your question.

