

Review of May 14<sup>th</sup> San Diego Board of Supervisors Meeting: Burning MSCP lands  
Prepared by the California Chaparral Institute  
Contact: Richard Halsey [rwh@californiachaparral.org](mailto:rwh@californiachaparral.org)

On May 14, Supervisor Horn gave a presentation to the SD Board of Supervisors where he advocated **the use of controlled burns throughout San Diego County.**

Supervisor Horn and others advocated:

- Conduct controlled **burns on all MSCP (Multiple Species Conservation Plan) lands** to eliminate flammable vegetation.
- Burn from north to south the area (25% at a time) between El Cajon and Mt. Laguna that has not burned since the 1970 Laguna fire. This includes mostly USFS and private land, including two federal wilderness areas.
- **Repeat burns continuously** to prevent the “*We burn every 4-10 years and it (vegetation) comes back and burns again*” problem.
- Replicate the pattern of burning that has been claimed to occur in Baja California, a pattern that has led to the elimination of much of the region’s native ecosystems.

### **Waiving Environmental Review**

Supervisor Jacob advocated **waiving any kind of environmental review** of such a controlled burn effort. Supervisor Slater-Price concurred saying an “***EIR (environmental impact report) seems not to be necessary to go in and do something that is preventative in nature. What you are doing is actually preserving the wildland by taking this measure because this is, as all of us know, is a natural part of our ecology.***”

In fact, the kind of fire that is visiting San Diego County’s shrubland ecosystems is NOT natural and is leading to the elimination of these systems through type-conversion. Waiving environmental reviews will encourage the destruction of publicly protected native habitats.

Several **misconceptions** about shrubland ecosystems were repeated during the May 14<sup>th</sup> meeting:

- Chaparral in San Diego County needs more fire because it is a natural thing.
- The Cedar fire was so hot that the natural regenerative process isn’t happening.
- Chaparral is regenerated by fire, so we need to burn it.
- Burning native shrublands will “reduce” greenhouse gases.
- Large fires are unnatural and can be prevented by controlled burns.

The negative impact on water quality and supply that would occur by eliminating shrublands and replacing them with weeds was never discussed.

Here is the link to listen to the presentation. It starts at 28:14 and concludes at 49:14. Go down to the Archived Meetings and click the May 14<sup>th</sup> video on the right side.

[http://sdcounty.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=2](http://sdcounty.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=2)

## **May 14, 2008 Official Agenda**

### **SUBJECT:**

### **FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE: A COMPREHENSIVE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

**(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

### **OVERVIEW:**

In the wake of the October 2007 wildfires which forced the evacuation of over 500,000 San Diego County residents and burned over 1,000 structures, and having experienced only four years ago October 2003 wildfires of equal destructive magnitude to these wildfires of 2007, it is crucial that the County manage lands set aside for habitat preservation to prevent the start, slow the rapid spread, and moderate the intensity of all but the most intensely wind-driven massive wildfires. Uncontrolled wildfires pose a threat to public health and safety, property, recreational amenities, and species and their habitats, requiring that emergency measures be taken in response.

The Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) is a comprehensive, long-term habitat conservation program intended to preserve San Diego County's unique, native habitats and wildlife for future generations, and was developed to comply with the federal Endangered Species Act and the State Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act. The MSCP Plan targets 172,000 acres of our County for conservation. The overall effect of the MSCP is that it provides for large, connected preserve areas. MSCP land is intended to remain undeveloped, but as the size and frequency of our native wildfires increase, proper fire management of these open spaces becomes more critical.

The following recommendations will direct the Chief Administrative Officer to draft and incorporate into all existing and future MSCP land management plans, a comprehensive strategy to remove dead or dying vegetation and, where appropriate, to employ strategically placed and periodic prescribed burns as part of that strategy.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There are no fiscal impacts associated with the actions above.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

#### **SUPERVISOR HORN**

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to develop a comprehensive vegetation management program that would include mechanical, biological, and prescribed burns to be incorporated into the land management plans for all existing and future County owned lands and Multiple Species Conservation Program lands.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to return to the Board within 90 days to present a plan and seek the Board of Supervisors' approval of the land management strategy and funding.