



KENSINGTON COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT
Emergency Preparedness Committee
June 25, 2026

KCSD Board of Directors approved on February 12, 2026

2026 Emergency Preparedness Committee Work Plan		
Work Plan Goal/Project	Assigned Members	Steps/Status
1. Red Flag Day Parking - staff to facilitate a workshop with Fire and Police Chiefs and the EPC to arrive at consensus on an approach to be submitted for Board approval.	Blonz, Moss, Watt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of workshop
2. Create two grant tiers (small vs. large) for Board approval and initiate program for FY 2026-27.	Blonz, Moss, Spath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved • 3/1 grant opens
3. Secure \$15k BOD approved funding and develop Kensington Ember Exclusion Program (KEEP) Pilot Program.	Blonz, McCoubrey, Watt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15k approved • Develop mesh program
4. Increase coordination and awareness of vegetation removal programs through Firewise leads, block presentations, and FPO inspections.	Madugo, Paul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas
5. Support Firewise leadership development and resident participation in Kensington Firewise Strategic Plan objectives.	Moss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
6. Determine next steps for Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRADs).	Gluck, Madugo, Spath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
7. Reinforce the community's understanding of the Red Flag Day Banners and improve the community's understanding of Watch Duty to promote early pre-evacuation.	Gluck, Moss, Westphal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
8. Increase earthquake preparedness.	Gluck, Madugo, McCoubrey, Moss, Westphal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
9. Establish a strong CERT program partnership in Kensington.	staff/consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD



Kensington Community Services District

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Submitted to: Kensington Community Services District – Emergency Preparedness Committee

Date: June 25, 2026

Reference Program: HVRR Grant Program — Proposed Enhancements to the Hazardous Vegetation Removal Reimbursement Grant Program (HVRR)

Executive Summary

This report presents three recommended enhancements to the Kensington Community Services District's Hazardous Vegetation Removal Reimbursement (HVRR) Grant Program. These enhancements are designed to address emerging fire risk factors unique to Kensington — specifically eucalyptus concentrations, evacuation route safety, and the long-term sustainability of grant participation. The recommendations are grounded in community feedback, operational observations, and coordination with regional fire safety partners. Each item is submitted for committee consideration and direction.

1. Development of a Dedicated Eucalyptus Program

Background and Justification

An emerging body of concern within the community and fire safety field highlights eucalyptus as a distinct and elevated fire risk. Eucalyptus groves concentrated west of Arlington Avenue pose a direct threat to residential safety and, critically, to the evacuation corridors relied upon by nearly all Kensington residents. These trees present unique hazards: falling debris increases ground-level ignition risk, continuous canopy cover creates fuel ladders, and their oil-rich foliage promotes rapid fire spread.

The HVRR program's current structure is not purpose-built to address the scale or specificity of eucalyptus management. Inquiries from residents about eucalyptus removal and support have increased, and while the program's reimbursement threshold has recently been expanded, no sufficient or sustainable pathway

exists for community-level eucalyptus management. A dedicated program would focus community dialogue, structure grant applications toward a defined goal, and establish the organizational framework needed to pursue county and state funding.

Recommended Actions

- **Develop a formal Eucalyptus Program** separate from the general HVRR framework, with its own scope, eligibility criteria, and funding strategy.
- **Incorporate the Berkeley Program model** as a reference for debris thinning and grove management, adapting it to Kensington's specific needs.
- **Conduct community engagement** to assess the scope of eucalyptus on private property, gauge willingness to participate in mitigation, and educate residents on the fire risk profile of these trees.
- **Pursue targeted grant applications** at the county and state level using the formal program as evidence of a structured community approach — a key requirement for competitive grant consideration.
- **Coordinate formally with Firesafe Kensington** to leverage their eucalyptus mapping work and tap into their network of East Bay Fire Safe partners who have completed analogous projects. Their expertise and existing data represent a significant asset for establishing best practices.

Program Scope Considerations

Mitigation activities should address the full spectrum of eucalyptus hazard reduction, including:

- Debris removal around trees to eliminate ground-level ignition sources
- Limbing to reduce canopy fire risk and ladder fuel continuity
- Strategic thinning to break up continuous fuel and increase spacing between trees
- Ongoing maintenance scheduling to sustain progress over time, paired with chipping programs

The cost burden on individual residents is substantial. A formal program structure allows the District to apply for grant funding that requires demonstrated programmatic intent, rather than relying solely on case-by-case reimbursement.

2. Qualifying Vegetation Removal for Off-Street Parking and Evacuation Route Improvements

Background and Justification

Narrow roadways throughout Kensington create a persistent tension between residential parking needs and evacuation route capacity. With the District actively working with the County to establish no-parking restrictions during red flag conditions, community awareness and compliance depend in part on residents having viable off-street parking alternatives. Vegetation encroachment on private parcels adjacent to roadways increasingly limits the creation of those alternatives.

There is a clear public safety rationale for classifying vegetation that impedes off-street parking capacity or restricts evacuation route clearance as hazardous — thereby qualifying it for HVRR reimbursement.

Recommended Action

It is recommended that any HVRR application seeking reimbursement for vegetation removal that would:

1. Create or expand off-street parking to support red flag day compliance, or
2. Improve sight lines, road shoulder width, or access along a designated evacuation route

These applications may be referred to the Emergency Preparedness Committee Subcommittee responsible for Work Plan Item 4: *"Increase coordination and awareness of vegetation removal program through Firewise leads, block presentations and FPO inspections."*

The Subcommittee would evaluate whether the vegetation qualifies as hazardous under this public safety rationale and, upon confirmation, authorize eligibility for HVRR reimbursement. This referral process ensures appropriate oversight while creating a clear pathway for residents whose properties can contribute meaningfully to community-level evacuation and parking safety.

3. Revising Limitations on Prior Grant Recipients

Background and Justification

Residents who have previously received HVRR awards are currently ineligible to reapply, effectively rendering the program's utility for households with recurring or large-scale vegetation management needs de facto expired. Larger lots, steep properties, and parcels with dense growth often cannot achieve meaningful fire risk reduction within a single funding cycle. As currently structured, the program is finite in its community-wide impact — every applicant awarded becomes a permanently excluded applicant.

Allowing reapplication — with clear prioritization rules — extends the program's long-term value without displacing new applicants.

Recommended Reapplication Framework

Eligibility: Prior recipients may reapply. No award is guaranteed, and reapplication is contingent on the availability of funds after all new applicants are served.

Prioritization Hierarchy:

Priority Tier	Applicant Type	Selection Method
1st	New applicants (no prior award)	First-come, first-served
2nd	Reapplicants (prior award, oldest award year first)	By original award year, then by reapplication date
Lowest	Reapplicants from the most recent award year	Last prioritized within reapplicant pool

This structure ensures the program continues to expand its reach to new participants while creating an equitable and transparent pathway for returning applicants.

Shortening Time to Approval

The current application review cycle creates administrative bottlenecks and delays the time between application and project completion. It is recommended to:

- **Adopt a first-come, first-served rolling model** that awards funding throughout the fiscal year until resources are depleted. This eliminates batch review delays, speeds project execution, and gives applicants timely confirmation of their status.
- **Engage certified volunteers for site validations.** CAL FIRE-certified home hardening and defensible space assessors — typically Firewise Kensington leads or Firesafe Kensington participants — are well-positioned to conduct site visits that confirm address and vegetation eligibility. Volunteers validate only the property address and qualifying vegetation; no personal or financial information is shared or accessed. This approach:
 - Reduces administrative cost and staff workload
 - Increases volunteer engagement and program ownership
 - Accelerates the validation step without compromising accuracy

- **Reserve subcommittee review for edge cases.** The majority of applications clearly meet qualification criteria. Only those requiring further context or judgment should be escalated to the Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee. This keeps the committee's time focused on decisions that genuinely require deliberation.

Summary of Recommended Actions for Committee Direction

#	Enhancement	Recommended Next Step
1	Eucalyptus Program	Direct staff to develop program framework; initiate coordination with Firesafe Kensington
2	Off-Street Parking / Evacuation Route Vegetation	Authorize subcommittee referral pathway for qualifying HVRR applications
3	Reapplication & Process Reform	Approve reapplication framework and first-come, first-served rolling award model