

Landscape Renovation Project on Slope Behind Your Property

What is CAL FIRE?

CAL FIRE is a State agency responsible for protecting natural resources from fire on land designated by the State Board of Forestry as State Responsibility Area (SRA). Preventing wildfires in the SRA is a vital part of CAL FIRE's mission. As part of the CAL FIRE team since 1995, the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) supports the CAL FIRE mission to protect life and property through fire prevention engineering programs, law, and code enforcement and education.

What are Fire Hazard Severity Zones? What is Defensible Space?

The State Fire Marshal is mandated to classify lands within the State Responsibility Areas into Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ). These zones fall into the following classifications: [Moderate, High, and Very High](#). The [FHSZ maps](#) are developed using a science-based and field-tested model that assigns a hazard score based on the factor that influence fire likelihood and fire behavior.

Defensible Space is an area between your house and an oncoming wildfire, where the vegetation has been controlled, trimmed, or removed to refue wildfire threat from embers, flames, and intense heat. It should reach at least 100 feet from the house, garage, and other buildings on the property, or to the property line. For more information, please visit the [Community Safety](#) page or ocfa.org.

Aside from proximity to the Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) and budgets, what else is considered when prioritizing acacia removal projects?

Other work that needs to be completed in a particular area. This includes replacement of galvanized irrigation mainlines, removal and/or pruning of trees that area otherwise inaccessible, irrigation system upgrades to the distribution system (repair broken pipes, update sprinkler heads and nozzles).

Adjacent land is also a consideration. Is the area near a school, residential units, open space, parks? Are residential units on both the top and the bottom of a slope? Are homes only at the top or only at bottom of the slope? Are homes across the street from the slope?

What factors impact the budget and/or cost to complete acacia removal?

There are several factors that affect the budget. This includes accessibility of the slope, which greatly drives the cost of a project. The total area encompassed (square footage). Re-landscaping costs such as irrigation upgrades, plants -species, size and spacing, trees - removals/additions, and mulch.



Answers to FAQs

What is the annual budget for acacia removal projects?

It varies from year to year and depends on where you live. Here's the 2023-24 FY breakdown:

- Master Association - \$100,000
- Slope 1 SBA - \$150,000
- Slope 2 SBA - \$50,000
- Covenant Hills SBA - \$51,500
- Front Yard and Driveway SBA - \$0

Are there sponsorship opportunities or grant funds available to help pay for these acacia removal projects?

Yes, there are wildfire prevention grants through CAL FIRE and the US Department of Forestry. Unfortunately, the acacia removal and eucalyptus tree removal projects were not selected for the USDA Forestry grant funds LARMAC applied for earlier this year. LARMAC is currently exploring other wildfire prevention grant opportunities.

According to the current CAL FIRE map, how many square feet of acacia are in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones?

In the master association alone, there are approximately 1.2 million square feet of acacia in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

LARMAC recently completed an acacia removal project near my home and now the slope, which was once covered in mature plant material that provided privacy, is bare and lacks greenery. Why?

Cost and plant spacing requirements are the primary reasons. OCFA has very specific plant spacing requirements for Fuel Modification Zones and Defensible Space. For instance, often slopes are replanted with one-gallon Acacia 'Desert Carpet' plants. Per the nursery's (manufacturer) recommendation, these plants should be planted between 15-20' on center. Other slopes are replanted with Tacoma at approximately every 10' on center, or Myoporum planted approximately eight feet on center.

Although we understand your concerns for privacy, this is not something that is factored into the decision to remove the acacia. OCFA is only concerned with fire safety, and it must be removed for LARMAC to be in compliance.

How long will it take for the new plants to start to grow and cover the dirt?

There are several factors to consider such as plant species, time of year, irrigation cycles, sun exposure, soil quality, etc. Generally, slopes are replanted using one-gallon plants because they root the fastest. Once they develop an established root system in the soil, between 30-90 days, the plants begin to put on significant foliage growth. During the first 60 days, the plants should double in size, then 90 days to grow to about 2'-3'. In the first year, we expect the plants should cover approximately 30% of the slope. We would expect to see the area would be mostly filled in around the three-year mark.

Day 1



After 12-18 Months



Dorrance - July 2022



Dorrance - November 2023



Disc Golf - September 2022



Disc Golf - November 2023





Answers to FAQs

Is it possible to add more trees if additional plants can't be installed?

Sometimes, but cost is a consideration and OCFA has very specific tree and plant spacing requirements depending on the location/zone. Separate from the requirements for LARMAC, OCFA also has guidelines intended to assist homeowners with vegetation management. For more information, please refer to the [OCFA Vegetation Management Guidelines for Property Owners](#). You can also visit the [Community Safety](#) page on LaderaLife.com for additional wildfire resources.

Why can't LARMAC trim the acacia instead of removing it entirely?

Acacia is a "woody" plant - one of the reasons OCFA doesn't like it. Although you may see green leaves on top, any trimming would remove the greenery you see and leave you with sticks.

Does LARMAC consider the potential risk of mudslides during the rainy season?

Yes. Acacia removal projects are completed in the late spring and summer months, not during the rainy season. And, when the acacia is removed from a slope, the root structure is often left in place to help maintain slope stability. It might not look pretty, but those stumps are left in place for a good reason and will eventually be covered by the new plants.

How much acacia has been removed since the community-wide project began in 2019?

Approximately 924,162 square feet of acacia has been removed since 2019. Here's the breakdown:

- Master Association – 354,819
- Slope 1 – 173,542
- Slope 2 – 57,187
- Covenant Hills – 291,730

You may view the current acacia removal map [here](#).