

Fire Response and Recovery - A Collaborative Effort

The wildfires in our watershed have altered the natural landscape as well as our human built landscape and we all want to do what we can to help with recovery. Fire is, of course, a natural part of forest ecosystems throughout the West, but this fire seemed fundamentally different. As we get back into the areas that burned, we are seeing that in some places it was natural understory fire and in others it was something quite opposite. In the wildlands where there were no houses, acorns are already falling, ready to seed the next generation of oak woodlands. Come spring we will see a flush of native grasses and wildflowers that are adapted to this kind of fire. Home sites and neighborhoods, however, are another story. Houses and buildings burned hot and created localized high intensity fires. These can sterilize the soil surface and make it water repellent. This can exacerbate erosion problems and allow household toxins to wash into our creeks and streams.



What can you do?

- Help volunteer with the [Laguna Foundation](#) and the [California Native Plant Society](#) to collect locally appropriate seeds that can be replanted into burned areas in the spring.
- [Volunteer with Laguna Stewards](#) to help restore healthy wetlands in the Laguna to filter out the sediments and chemicals that will be washing down from the fire damaged areas.
- If your yard didn't burn, now is a great time to welcome the refugee wildlife, water in particular is important this time of year.
- The Sonoma Resource Conservation District has some great [fire recovery resources](#) and they are offering site visits to help landowners manage their land.
- The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board is working hard to [mitigate the water quality impacts](#).
- For more information about debris removal, FEMA and California Office of Emergency Services have a [FAQ sheet](#) located at [Wildfirerecovery.org](#).
- The California EPA is helping landowners remove debris, but they are not planning to complete the removal until early 2018. If your house burned, you might consider covering some or all of it with a tarp before the rains: [Friedman's Home Improvement](#) or [Stevenson Supply](#).
- The Press Democrat had a great article "[First Aid for Sonoma County's Fire Damaged Soil](#)" explaining what happens to soils in high intensity fires and what to do about it.
- To plan for the future [Fireescaping: Creating fire-resistant landscapes, gardens, and properties in California's diverse environments](#) by Douglas Kent can help you reduce your fire risk.

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