



Santa Barbara County gets its first Firewise USA community

The San Marcos Trout Club is recognized for its fire prevention and preparedness plan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SANTA BARBARA, CA – The San Marcos Trout Club (SMTC), a neighborhood of 37 homes tucked into the Santa Barbara foothills, is the first community in Santa Barbara County to be approved as a Firewise USA participant by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

To earn this designation, residents of the SMTC completed a formal wildfire risk assessment, recorded volunteer time for fire safety activities, directed part of their homeowners' association dues to vegetation management, and, most critically, created a three-year action plan to reduce wildfire risk in their community.

While many residents are new to the small community near the junction of Highway 154 and San Marcos Road, at least a dozen current homeowners lived in the SMTC during the Painted Cave Fire of 1990. The SMTC Firewise Committee volunteers include both new and tenured residents with a shared commitment to the safety of its residents, the surrounding community, and the local habitat.

"We live in a very high-risk fire zone, and safety is a key factor in the decisions we make as a community," said Matt Thomas, the current SMTC board president. "Our action plan identifies ways to further improve our defenses and readiness for wildfire together. We're fortunate to call this beautiful part of Santa Barbara home, but it also requires a special vigilance."

The action plan includes increased fire education for residents, expanded vegetation management to reduce fuels, defensible space evaluations, improving water reliability in case of fire, a communitywide evacuation plan, and more.

The [Santa Barbara County Fire Safe Council \(FSC\)](#) is a key partner in the initiative. Community Wildfire Resilience Domain Lead Anne-Marie Parkinson partnered with the SMTC in its wildfire risk assessment and application. "Many of the Trout Club residents are already incredibly wildfire savvy, and they have a lot of energy and ideas to make their community even safer," she said. "The biggest benefit of becoming a Firewise USA community is that residents have mapped out strategies to keep themselves and their homes safer. They may also benefit from reduced fire insurance costs and be better positioned to apply for grants to help fund some of their risk reduction programs."

For more information, contact San Marcos Trout Club Firewise Committee Chair Richard Siegel at (805) 452-1487.

About the Firewise USA program (from its website)

The national Firewise USA® recognition program provides a collaborative framework to help neighbors in a geographic area get organized, find direction, and take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community and to reduce wildfire risks at the local level. Any community that meets a set of voluntary criteria on an annual basis and retains an "In Good Standing Status" may identify itself as being a Firewise® Site.

The Firewise USA® program is administered by NFPA® and is co-sponsored by the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. While the NFPA® administers this program, individuals and communities participate on a voluntary basis.