

# CONTENTS

14.	Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Community Fire Safety Action Plan .....	1
14.1.	Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Description.....	1
14.1.1.	Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Wildfire Environment .....	1
14.2.	Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Evacuations .....	3
14.3	Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Community Meeting Summary.....	3
14.2.1.	Community-Identified Potential Projects.....	4
14.3.	Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Action Plan .....	4

*This page is inserted to facilitate double-sided printing of the document.*

## 14. Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Community Fire Safety Action Plan

### 14.1. Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Description

This planning unit includes the unincorporated neighborhoods and subdivisions in Los Angeles County of West Saddle Peak, Piuma Road, Sea View Estates, Las Flores Heights, Upper Rambla Pacifico, Las Flores Canyon, and Tuna Canyon. The Upper Rambla/Las Flores–Tuna Canyon unit extends from Upper Piuma Road east to and including West Tuna Canyon. Its northern boundary includes Schueren and Saddle Peak roads. The southern boundary is the Malibu city line. This unit is 5.8 miles in area.

Assets at risk in the built environment include less than 300 large, single-family homes, hundreds of outbuildings, trailers, and appurtenances, a communications relay facility, a county fire suppression and flight crew center (Camp 8), a high-volume (200,000-gallon) municipal water tank, many tennis courts and swimming pools, federal and state conservancy lands, and a state park (Tuna Canyon Park). Properties and homes vary in size, with parcels ranging from a fraction of an acre to more than 10 acres. Single-family home prices in the area currently start at \$1.4 million and go up to \$4.9 million. Undeveloped parcels in this unit average \$250,000.<sup>1</sup>



#### 14.1.1. Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Wildfire Environment

Development here is surrounded by open space and high habitat values. Parcels tend to be large. Homes generally are built on hillsides or ridgetops. Density is low. The exception to this is the suburban-style subdivision of Sea View Estates and other neighborhoods of Upper Rambla Pacifico, where homes are clustered. The Coastal Zone extends inland from the beach into parts of this area.<sup>2</sup> The environment includes several Significant Ecological and cultural resources areas. Among the attributes are Las Flores and Tuna Canyon watersheds, oak woodlands, sycamore riparian woodland, riparian corridors, native grasslands, pristine coastal sage scrub, rock outcrop, chaparral, and aquatic habitat, as well as other significant botanical areas. Several sensitive, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species are identified in this unit. The area provides important habitat for native and migratory birds and wildlife. Tuna Canyon is developed only near the ridgeline. Tuna Canyon is considered one of the most pristine aquatic habitats in the Santa Monica Mountains.<sup>3</sup>

Passive recreational opportunities include walking, jogging, bicycling, mountain biking, bird watching, wildflower and wildlife viewing, and horseback riding. Developed and private types include dirt biking, motor biking, motor

<sup>1</sup> Redfin.com, Malibu, [www.redfin.com/search#search\\_location=Malibu%2C%20CA](http://www.redfin.com/search#search_location=Malibu%2C%20CA) (accessed March 6, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> The California Coastal Zone extends 1,000 yards inland from the mean high tide line. In significant coastal estuarine habitat and recreational areas it extends inland to the first major ridgeline or 5 miles from the mean high tide line, whichever is less. In developed urban areas, the boundary is generally less than 1,000 yards.

<sup>3</sup> D. Stolarz (August 19, 2002), “1256-acre Tuna Canyon Park in the Santa Monica Mountains dedicated,” Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy news release.

## PUBLIC DRAFT

touring, pool swimming, and tennis. This area is notorious for illegal sports car and motorcycle racing, also known as “canyon carving,” on the relatively desolate, winding, steep roads. A county program called “Operation Safe Canyons” was established in 2006 to post more speed-limit signs and coordinate a citation program. Law enforcement has increased patrols to curb this activity since 2007 to help prevent accidents and fires.<sup>4,5</sup>

Ingress and egress is from Pacific Coast Highway to the south. Piuma, Saddle Peak, and Schueren roads are winding laterals that eventually connect with Los Angeles County Highway N1 (Malibu Canyon Road) to the west, north to Mulholland Highway, and east to State Route 27 (Topanga Canyon Boulevard). Connectivity and condition of roads in the area vary. Parts of Saddle Peak Road are privately maintained and gated.



Las Flores Canyon, Rambla Pacifico, and Tuna Canyon are geologically unstable. Rambla Pacifico was severed in two in 1984 by a massive landslide. Residents of Upper Rambla Pacifico have had a four-mile detour through Las Flores Canyon since then, as no alternate route has been established.<sup>6</sup> Access to Upper Rambla Pacifico deteriorated during a winter storm in 2010 when a water line underneath the road broke. The street collapsed into the canyon and is not expected to reopen until June 2010.<sup>7</sup> A landslide also split Hume Road. Four-mile Tuna Canyon Road is relegated to one-way downhill due to undercutting by the creek. Lower Tuna Canyon is not developable for these reasons.<sup>8</sup> Hillside parcels in the Upper Rambla/Las Flores–Tuna Canyon area often require use of retaining walls. Roads are narrow, very steep, and winding with drop-offs, hairpin turns, and limited shoulder.

CAL FIRE designated the entire Santa Monica Mountains region as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, including this area.

The Upper Rambla/Las Flores–Tuna Canyon unit has a history of many wildfires: Las Flores-Temescal (1910); Topanga-Escondido (1913); Las Flores #54 (1928); Topanga #50 (November 23, 1938) that destroyed 350 homes in the burn area; Las Flores #47 (October 26, 1942); 1,940-acre Hume (December 27, 1956); County Fire 123158 (December 31, 1958); 28,201-acre Wright (September 25, 1970) with 403 homes destroyed in the burn area and ten fatalities; Trippet (October 30, 1973); 5,197-acre Piuma (October 14, 1985); Saddle Peak (December 9, 1989); 18,000-acre Old Topanga (November 2, 1993) with 400 homes destroyed and three fatalities; and Canyon (October 21, 2007).<sup>9,10</sup>

Structures in the Upper Rambla/Las Flores–Tuna Canyon Planning Unit have a variable age-class. Older structures tend to be wooden. Newer structures generally are constructed of stucco, plaster, or masonry. Many homes, regardless of age, have wooden decks and/or fences. Mature, lush, and tall ornamental vegetation is found around

---

<sup>4</sup> L. Michaelson (2007), “Cops come down hard on ‘canyon carving,’” *Topanga Messenger*.

<sup>5</sup> M. Picarella (February 23, 2006), “Canyons make attractive venue for racing, but residents upset,” *The Acorn*.

<sup>6</sup> V. Shere (May 3, 2007), “Firefighting from ‘lessons learned,’” *Malibu Times*.

<sup>7</sup> H. Eisner and G. Silva (February 11, 2010), “Two LA area roads collapse: Mulholland Drive, Rambla Pacifico Road crumble,” [www.MyFoxLA.com](http://www.MyFoxLA.com).

<sup>8</sup> M. Abramson and T. Gauer (December 18, 2007), Santa Monica Baykeeper comments to California Coastal Commission hearing agenda item, Tuna Canyon Creek.

<sup>9</sup> Robert S. Taylor, Biogeographer/Fire GIS Specialist, National Park Service, personal communication, February 12, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Mike Davis (1998), “The Case for Letting Malibu Burn.” In *Ecology of Fear* (New York: Henry Holt), pp. 93–147.

## PUBLIC DRAFT

structures in most of this unit. Utilities are aboveground. Several single-family homes throughout the unit and part of Saddle Peak are gated. Many structures are of contemporary design. However, most are not retrofitted to current California WUI Fire and Building Standards.<sup>11</sup> Key elements to ensuring that property is fire safe are routine and ongoing vegetation and structural maintenance.

A few properties are abandoned or have unmanaged stored items that attract trespassing and enhance the fire threat in the neighborhood. Some of these parcels have been brought to the attention of Los Angeles County.<sup>12</sup>

Municipal water supply for this unit is from Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.<sup>13</sup> A 200,000-gallon water storage tank is located in the neighborhood. Mandatory water conservation and enforcement measures were established in 2009. The district has one emergency 9,500-acre-foot back-up reservoir.<sup>14</sup>

Los Angeles County Fire Suppression Camp 8 Heliport is located near the intersection of Upper Rambla Pacifico and Las Flores Canyon Road.

### 14.2. Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Evacuations

Possible impediments to emergency ingress and egress include downed power lines, trees, landslides, poor road conditions, traffic collisions, and locked gates. Evacuation plans should address the current lack of southbound and westbound options and be coordinated with community emergency service providers. A few spots have the potential to be considered as evacuation areas in this unit. Camp 8, areas within Sea View Estates, and the many private tennis courts and swimming pools should be reviewed by local law enforcement and fire departments.

### 14.3 Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Community Meeting Summary

The Upper Rambla/Las Flores–Tuna Canyon community meeting was held at Los Angeles County Fire Suppression Camp 8 on October 20, 2009. Twenty residents attended.

The following assets at risk were identified at the community meeting. These can be seen on Map II.14-1 at the end of this document.

#### **FIGURE II.14-1. COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED ASSETS AT RISK**

- Camp 8
- Horse camp for handicapped children
- Power lines
- Sea View Estates
- Water tank



<sup>11</sup> State of California, Building Standards Commission, [www.bsc.ca.gov](http://www.bsc.ca.gov) (accessed February 8, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> W. Fujioka (May 13, 2008), Department of Public Works findings of the Building Rehabilitation Appeals Board in the unincorporated areas of Malibu (Supervisor District 3). Public notice.

<sup>13</sup> Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (2010), District Map [Data], [www.lvmwd.com/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=838](http://www.lvmwd.com/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=838)

<sup>14</sup> Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (2010), [www.lvmwd.com](http://www.lvmwd.com).

**14.2.1. Community-Identified Potential Projects**

The following items are community-identified projects from the community meeting. Residents were encouraged to “think big,” and not be concerned about project cost or property ownership for the project brainstorming process. Following the brainstorming, residents prioritized projects based on which were most realistic and most important. These projects can be located on Map II.14-1 at the end of this document.

***FIGURE II.14-2. UPPER RAMBLA/LAS FLORES – TUNA CANYON COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED PROJECTS***

IDENTIFIED ITEM DESCRIPTION	PROPOSED PROJECT CATEGORY	PRIORITY RANK
Replace cell tower – AT&T	Emergency Preparedness	1
Reopen Rambla Pacifico	Emergency Preparedness	1
Escape route access	Evacuation	2
Clearance along main county roads	Fuel Reduction	2
Organize communication tree (phone, email, etc.)	Emergency Preparedness	3
Install more water hydrants	Water	3
“No Smoking” signage	Education / Policy	4
Create Volunteer Fire Department	Fire Protection	4
Mark fire hydrants	Fire Protection / Equipment	4
Organize landing zones	Fire Protection	5
Form Fire Safe Council	Fire Safe Council	5
Community shaded fuelbreak	Fuel Reduction	5
Organize with fire department inspection patrol	Emergency Preparedness	
Oak (native) tree planting	Fuel Reduction	
Clearance on Piuma Road	Fuel Reduction	
Clearance on Scheuren Road	Fuel Reduction	
Clearance on Rambla Pacifico Road	Fuel Reduction	
Clearance on Las Flores Canyon Road	Fuel Reduction	
Clearance on Hume Bridge	Fuel Reduction	
Area hazard tree removal	Fuel Reduction	
Insurance synchronized with regulations	Policy	
Raze abandoned homes	Risk Reduction	

**14.3. Upper Rambla/Las Flores – Tuna Canyon Action Plan**

The following projects are the initial priorities for community action for the Upper Rambla/Las Flores–Tuna Canyon Planning Unit.

- Form a local Fire Safe Council (FSC) or join with nearby FSCs. This organizational structure will facilitate community preparedness for wildfire. Work with the California Fire Safe Council to create a FSC that will best accommodate and enable this area.
- Implement a hazard tree removal/thinning program through an FSC, local homeowner’s association (HOA), or other community organizations, in priority order:

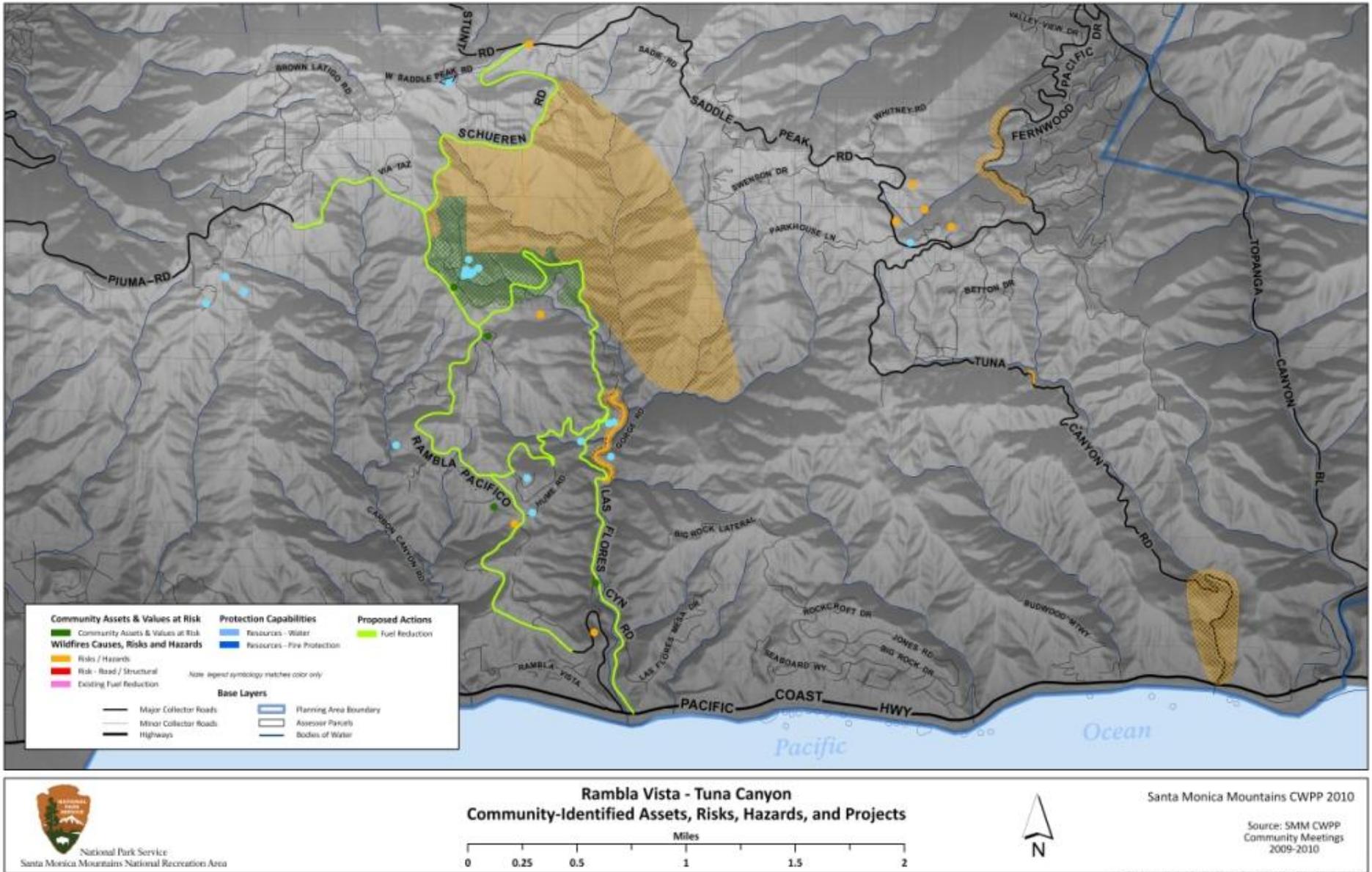
## PUBLIC DRAFT

- Along main evacuation routes, starting with Tuna Canyon, Piuma, Scheuren, Upper Rambla Pacifico, and Saddle Peak roads.
- Along the spur roads to main evacuation roads, including Hume Bridge, Gorge Road, and Live Oak Meadow/Chumash roads.
- Near homes, focusing on trees that threaten more than one home. This should start in the Live Oak Meadow/Chumash Road area.
- Trees in or near power lines.
- Work through HOAs and other neighborhood groups to educate residents on the need to keep ingress and egress/evacuation routes clear. This planning unit has some of the most problematic ingress/egress issues in the entire CWPP Planning Area. Residents need to understand the dangers involved in imprudent parking or long-term street storage of unused vehicles. Because natural disasters can strike at any time, key evacuation ingress/egress routes must be kept free of parked vehicles, especially trailers and other large objects that are difficult to move quickly. Trash cans and other items should be kept off the roadway and out of key turnout/passing areas.<sup>15</sup> A neighborhood-organizing project would include creating off-street parking where it is limited. Neighbors can work together to help each other stay in compliance.
- Ensure that at least one team from each homeowner's association or neighborhood undergoes Los Angeles County Fire Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. This is the vehicle to begin organizing locally for evacuation planning in cooperation with local law enforcement and the fire department. This is also where to develop local emergency communication efforts including phone trees, and to work with local government to explore replacing or upgrading the local AT&T cell phone tower.
- Work with law enforcement and Los Angeles County Fire Department through local HOAs and FSCs to develop a local evacuation plan. This is especially important for those areas above the Rambla Pacifico slide that would need to evacuate uphill on narrow, winding roads, before being able to get down and out the canyon. Efforts should be made to ensure that local gates are open or accessible during Red Flag conditions.
- Residents reduce urban fuels in the home ignition zone based on the Conservation Principles and Best Management Practices outlined in Chapters 1, 4, and 5 of this CWPP. Fuels maintenance should be a routine and ongoing practice for all homes and landscapes in the Santa Monica Mountains. This includes ensuring that structures are resistant to heat and embers, maintaining all vegetation "from the house out," and removing anything in this zone that might ignite and spread fire.
- Explore community purchase and installation of wildland-urban interface (WUI) building products to upgrade homes to current WUI building standards. All residents upgrade homes to current California WUI Fire and Building Standards.
- Work through a FSC or HOA to begin a local community education and preparedness campaign. Include community education on pool pumps, generators, and home fire-preparedness equipment. This can be done in cooperation with other area FSCs, Los Angeles County Fire Department, and the National Park Service.

---

<sup>15</sup> The law in Los Angeles County states that trash cans can only be on the street after 5 pm of the day preceding, and until 8 pm on the day of waste collection.

MAP II.14-1. UPPER RAMBLA/LAS FLORES – TUNA CANYON: COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED ASSETS, RISKS, HAZARDS, AND PROJECTS<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> This map prints best at 11x17. Visit to [www.forevergreenforestry.com/smmcwpp\\_pub.html](http://www.forevergreenforestry.com/smmcwpp_pub.html) to download a print version.