**Presentation Abstracts**

**CalVTP in Practice: Purisima Ridge Fuel Break Webinar**

**November 3, 2022**

**Rob Hazard:** Santa Barbara County Fire Vegetation Management Program

**Abstract:**

Wildfire prevention and mitigation is a critical component of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department mission. Wildfire is a natural process that occurs in virtually all vegetation types on a recurring basis. Much of the native vegetation in Santa Barbara County is fire adapted and is dependent on fire for regeneration. While the benefits of fire on the ecology is well researched, uncontrolled fire can have severe adverse impacts to society. Vegetation management is a critical component of the Department’s Wildfire Mitigation Program. Many different strategies are employed including prescribed fire, community defensible space, roadside treatments, and traditional ridgetop fuelbreaks. This brief presentation will provide a basic summary of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department Vegetation Management Program and introduce the Purisima Ridge Fuel Break Project, a strategic ridgetop fuelbreak in the Purisima Hills north of the City of Lompoc.

**Ann Marx:** Deciding to use the CalVTP PEIR

**Abstract:**

Utilizing the CalVTP program can provide a streamlined approach to CEQA review. With any CEQA review there are challenges that present themselves. Santa Barbara County Fire will summarize their experience in making the decision to use the CalVTP Programmatic EIR and the opportunities and constraints encountered for the Purisima Ridge Fuel Break Project.

**Dana Link-Herrera:** Developing the Project Specific Analysis

**Abstract:**

Dudek was contracted by Santa Barbara County Fire Department to prepare the project-specific analysis (PSA) under the Cal VTP Program EIR for the Lompoc Valley Fuels Reduction Project – Purisima Ridge Fuel Break. A PSA is a tiered CEQA document which tiers from the CalVTP Program EIR; CEQA allows for the use of tiered environmental documents to reduce time and costs in the review process by eliminating repetitive analyses of issues that were addressed in the program EIR. Because the CalVTP Program EIR was developed on a statewide scale, there is a need for some project-level analysis under the PSA to ensure projects are within the scope of the Program EIR. Understanding the Program EIR and how to approach a PSA can be daunting. By walking through the process of developing the PSA for the Purisima Ridge Fuel Break Projet, this presentation will cover common questions about the CalVTP such as: What does it mean to be “within the scope” of the Program EIR? What is a “Standard Project Requirement” and do I have to implement them? What do I do if I find that I am outside the scope of the Program EIR? When do I need to bring in resource specialists (e.g., geologists, archaeologists, biologists, etc.)?

**David Compton:** Agency Coordination for Biological Resources

**Abstract:**

Preparation of the project-specific analysis (PSA) for biological resources under the Cal VTP PEIR requires coordination with agencies responsible for resources that may occur within the project area. This will usually include coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and may also include coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service. The keys to agency coordination during the PSA process are preparation and early contact. It is important to understand the biological issues for a project, and the basic approach to addressing those issues, before contacting the agencies. But agencies will appreciate the opportunity to comment on a project before the process is completed, and in some cases may identify issues that the project biologist has not. The final form of the program to avoid and minimize impacts to biological resources will likely occur only after a period of open dialogue with agencies. Documentation of agency coordination, such as inclusion of a copy of email correspondence outlining agreed upon avoidance measures, will strengthen the analysis. In most cases, a project applicant will prefer to avoid any permitting process outside the PSA process, such as endangered species permitting. And, in this case, coordinating with agencies during preparation of the PSA checklist will ensure avoidance of take of listed species or impacts to other trust resources that are not consistent with the PEIR analysis.