

# Action 4:

## East-Side Habitat Management Zone

### Summary:

Recommend that EBRPD and EBMUD manage their lands in the Caldecott Corridor area and outside of fuel reduction zones in perpetuity to maintain and enhance its value as a wildlife corridor by protecting and restoring native vegetative, wildlife habitat, and natural ecosystem processes. Management alternatives with collateral benefits to reducing the risk of fire should be favored.

### Description:

Vegetation and habitat in much of this area is quite rich and productive and the natural physical and biological processes (“ecosystem processes”) with which the native flora and fauna have evolved are largely intact.

Threats now and in the future include disturbed soils, invasion of weedy non-native plant species, and suppression of natural disturbance. With careful management, these barriers to natural ecosystem processes should diminish over time.

As a first priority, invasive, weedy plant species such as eucalyptus, Monterey Pine, French broom, various thistles, and poison hemlock should be reduced or eliminated, and native vegetation physically suited for these locations should be encouraged to grow in their place. Some small stands of the non-native tree species (eucalyptus and Monterey Pine) may be retained as these plants do have unique aesthetic and habitat values. This action will have collateral benefits for reducing the risk

of fire. Disturbances to the soil should be strictly minimized and avoided whenever possible.

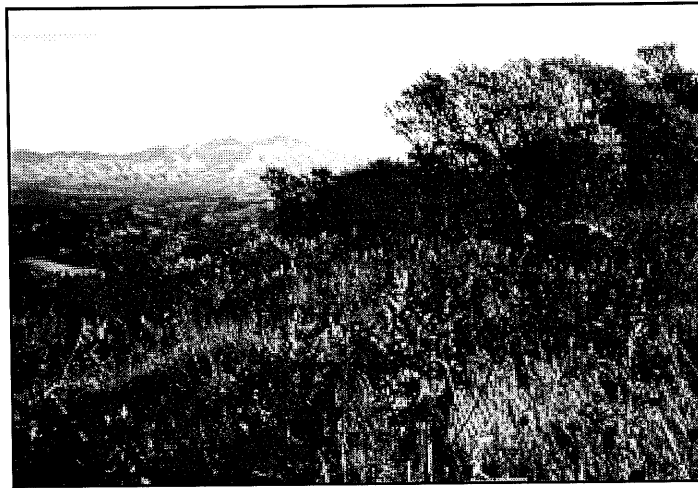
Over the long term, efforts to restore natural, periodic disturbance regimes should be considered to prevent large-scale senescence and disease and to promote habitat diversity. Maintaining high biological productivity and diversity are particularly desirable here as these are believed to be key factors in determining the number of individuals and species which use the Corridor. Such actions may have benefits collateral to controlling fire risks as senescent and diseased vegetation can be very

flammable. Possible management techniques include manual brush crushing, prescribed fire (though this latter technique may not yet be refined enough for safe use in this area), and other hand treatments. Care should be taken to maintain mid to late successional states, as these have moderate flammability, require much less management expense than maintaining earlier stages of succession, and carry fire much more slowly than

un-mowed grass or un-mowed grass and brush. Tree or brush snags are important ecologically as perching or nesting sites, and management actions to counter disease or senescence should not eliminate these or other valuable features.

### Implementation:

EBRPD and EBMUD are the agencies primarily responsible for implementing this recommendation. This action should receive lower priority than Actions 2 and 3, because these have more bearing on controlling the risk of fire to the residences on the ridgeline.



Annual grassland prairie on Mahonia Peak with characteristic bracken fern, Mt. Diablo in the background (J. Kopchik)

Volunteer labor may be essential if these tasks are to be performed soon, which is desirable to prevent further spread of invasive species. Habitat restoration grants to remove exotics or develop techniques for restoring disturbance regimes should be pursued. Public involvement in planning related to this action should also be continued. Please see the “Implementation Strategies” section for further information on this subject.

**Fiscal Impacts:**

Removal of shrubby or herbaceous invasives: \$1000 per acre per treatment where present (unless performed by volunteers).

Removal of eucalyptus and Monterey Pine: \$7500 per acre where present, though costs depend highly on accessibility of site and marketability of wood.

Funding options are discussed in detail in the “Implementation Strategy” section at the end of this document.

**Anticipated results:**

Maintain and enhance biological value of the Caldecott Corridor. Reduce the threat of fire to people and property.

**Cautions:**

Some of these actions are new ideas that have not been tested.