



TREE AND VEGETATION REMOVAL IN THE COASTAL ZONE

There are many instances when tree and vegetation removal is necessary including ensuring public health and safety, protecting existing and new structures such as maintaining defensible space requirements, preparing a site for development and improving habitat health and vigor. Tree and vegetation removal activities in the County's Coastal Zone must comply with the County's Local Coastal Program (LCP) to ensure that these activities comply with the California Coastal Act and the County's requirements.

When is a Coastal Development Permit Required

In some cases, Coastal Development Permit (CDP) approval may be required prior to undertaking removal activities. Activities that involve the removal or harvesting of "major vegetation" require CDP approval. The County's LCP defines "major vegetation" as:

- (1) Heritage trees (see Page 6 for a list of heritage trees);
- (2) Vegetation that is visually prominent and/or a significant part of the public viewshed;
- (3) Any vegetation that is a sensitive species as defined by the state or federal government as threatened, endangered or a species of special concern;
- (4) Vegetation that is located on a beach, sand dune or within fifty feet of the edge of a coastal bluff; and
- (5) Vegetation that is located in an environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA) or its buffer¹.

In some instances the removal of heritage trees, visually prominent vegetation or vegetation that is located in an ESHA buffer is exempt from CDP approval.² However, the removal of trees and vegetation located on beaches, sand dunes or within fifty feet of a coastal bluff, an ESHA and as otherwise described under Section 20.68.020(H) of the Marin County Coastal Zoning Code that does not constitute repair and maintenance consistent with Sections 20.68.050(3) and 20.68.060(K)(3)³, is considered an activity that is "non-exempt development" that requires CDP approval.

¹ The Marin County Coastal Zoning Code defines ESHAs as "Areas in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments. ESHAs include wetlands, coastal streams and riparian vegetation, and terrestrial ESHA.

² Subsections 20.68.050(A)(3), (5), (6), and (11) of the Marin County Coastal Zoning Code describe those instances when removal activities may qualify for exemption from the requirement to obtain a Coastal Development Permit.

³ Removal activities that constitute repair and maintenance to facilities that do not result in an addition to, or enlargement or expansion of the object of the repair may qualify for exemption from the requirement to obtain CDP approval (Section 20.68.050(3)) if the activities do not involve the permanent or temporary placement or removal of any form of solid material and do not involve the temporary or permanent presence of mechanized equipment or construction material (Section 20.68.060(K)(3)).

Sound Practices for Tree and Vegetation Removal



If removal activities do not require Coastal Development Permit approval, removal can occur without authorization from the County. However, the County recommends that you notify Planning staff of the removal project to verify that the activities do not require a CDP and in the event that public inquiry is received regarding the activities.




There are several guiding principles and best management practices one should employ when undertaking tree and vegetation removal activities including the following:



- (a) Tree removal activities should occur outside of the nesting season for birds. Generally, the nesting window extends from February 1 through August 15 therefore removal activities should occur between August 16 to January 31. If it is not possible to time removal activities outside of the nesting season, a nesting bird survey performed by a qualified biologist is recommended prior to commencing removal activities. If active bird nests are observed during the survey, removal activities should be delayed until the young have left the nest;
- (b) Removal should occur during dry weather to minimize chances for soil disturbance and compaction, and sedimentation into County wetlands, riparian areas, and waterways;
- (c) Prioritize the removal of fire-hazardous, non-native trees such as acacia, juniper and Monterey pines provided removal does not require a CDP. The removal of dead and diseased vegetation should also be prioritized. The Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) website contains several resources regarding wildlife fire prevention and Defensible Space practices (www.marinwildfire.org). Additional resources regarding pyrophytic (i.e., fire prone) tree and plant species are available from the local fire protection district;
- (d) When possible, removal of native vegetation should be minimized. When re-planting is proposed, plants and trees native to Marin County should be used whenever feasible. The Marin County Native Plant Society maintains a list of those species that are native to the County; this list can be found www.cnpsmarin.org under "plant lists". In addition, the UC Marin Master Gardener website contains useful information on how to choose the right plant given environmental conditions ([UC Marin Master Gardeners, "How to Choose Plants"](#));
- (e) Maintaining or improving native plant diversity and wildlife habitat should be considered. This includes maintaining large, downed wood and snags that provide wildlife habitat and incorporating refugia (e.g., sheltered areas for wildlife), consistent with achieving wildfire reduction objectives;
- (f) Take steps to prevent or reduce the spread of non-native invasive plants by using integrated pest management techniques including:
 - Prioritizing the removal of new infestations of invasive plants, plants at the edge of an existing infestation or infestations within high quality native habitat;
 - Sheet mulching or tarping are effective strategies in controlling non-native plant invasions. Both methods involve covering infested areas with heavy layers of cardboard or tarps to deprive plants of sunlight.
 - Treat tools and equipment used to remove or trim diseased trees and vegetation with appropriate disinfectants and anti-fungal treatments to prevent the spread of disease to neighboring, uninfected species; and
 - Invasive species such as English or Cape ivy should not be placed in compost areas or left on the ground following removal as these species can reproduce from cutting. Instead removed plants should be bagged and disposed of in a trash bin or at a landfill.

The California Invasive Plant Council's website (www.cal-ipc.org) contains additional information regarding invasive plant identification and removal strategies; and

(g) Below is a list of common invasive plants found in Marin County, as well as suggested native species to be planted in areas where invasives have been removed:

| Invasive Species | | Native Replacements |
|---|--|--|
|  | <p>Blackberry, Himalayan (<i>Rubus armeniacus</i>)</p> | <p>California blackberry, snowberry, flowering currant, cow parsnip, honeysuckle, ferns, thimbleberry, snowberry, woodland strawberry, twinberry, huckleberry, California rose and ninebark.</p> |
|  | <p>Broom, French (<i>Genista monspessulana</i>)</p> | <p>Hazelnut, creambush (ocean spray), flowering currant, toyon, coyote brush, elderberry, twinberry, huckleberry, deerweed, California rose and ninebark.</p> |

| Invasive Species | | Native Replacements |
|---|--|---|
|  | <p>Broom, Scotch (<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>)</p> | <p>Hazelnut (oceanspray), creambush, flowering currant, toyon, coyote brush, elderberry, twinberry, huckleberry, deerweed, California rose and ninebark</p> |
|  | <p>Ivy, English (<i>Hedera helix</i>)</p> | <p>California blackberry, sword fern, Dutchman's pipevine, false Solomon's seal, clematis, hairy honeysuckle, California rose</p> |
|  | <p>Ivy, Cape or German (<i>Delairea odorata</i>)</p> | <p>California blackberry, sword fern, Dutchman's pipevine, false Solomon's seal, clematis, hairy honeysuckle and California rose</p> |

| Invasive Species | | Native Replacements |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>Pampas grass (<i>Cortaderia selloana</i>)</p> | <p>Coyote brush, pink flowering currant, creambush (ocean spray), elderberry, cow parsnip, elk clover, huckleberry and bee plant</p> |
|  | <p>Forget-me-nots (<i>Myosotis latifolia</i>)</p> | <p>Wild ginger, sticky gum plant, yarrow tarweed, horsetail, lupine, Douglas iris, blue-eyed grass, miner's lettuce, clarkia, California poppy, monkey flower, bee plant and fringe cups</p> |

List of Heritage Trees in the Coastal Zone

| Common Name | Botanical Name | Heritage Size Diameter at Breast Height (dbh) |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Arroyo willow | <i>S. lasiolepis</i> | 18 inches |
| Big-leaf maple | <i>Acer macrophyllum</i> | 30 inches |
| Bishop pine | <i>Pinus muricata</i> | 30 inches |
| Blue oak | <i>Q. douglasii</i> | 18 inches |
| Box elder | <i>A. negundo var. californicum</i> | 30 inches |
| California bay | <i>Umbellularia californica</i> | 30 inches |
| California black oak | <i>Q. kelloggii</i> | 18 inches |
| California buckeye | <i>Aesculus californica</i> | 30 inches |
| Canyon live oak | <i>Q. chrysolepis</i> | 18 inches |
| Chaparral oak | <i>Q. wislizeni</i> | 18 inches |
| Coast live oak | <i>Quercus agrifolia</i> | 18 inches |
| Coast redwood | <i>Sequoia sempervirens</i> | 30 inches |
| Douglas-fir | <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> | 30 inches |
| Giant Chinquapin | <i>Castanopsis chrysophylla</i> | 30 inches |
| Hawthorn | <i>Crataegus douglasii</i> | 30 inches |
| Mountain- mahogany | <i>Cercocarpus betuloides</i> | 30 inches |
| Narrow leaved willow | <i>Salix exigua</i> | 18 inches |
| Oak | <i>Q. parvula var. shrevei</i> | 18 inches |
| Oregon ash | <i>Fraxinus latifolia</i> | 30 inches |
| Oregon oak | <i>Q. garryana</i> | 18 inches |
| Pacific madrone | <i>Arbutus menziesii</i> | 18 inches |
| Pacific yew | <i>Taxus brevifolia</i> | 30 inches |
| Red alder | <i>A. rubra</i> | 30 inches |
| Red elderberry | <i>Sambucus callicarpa</i> | 30 inches |
| Red willow | <i>S. laevigata</i> | 18 inches |
| Sargent cypress | <i>Cupressus sargentii</i> | 18 inches |
| Scoulier's willow | <i>S. scouleriana</i> | 18 inches |
| Service-berry | <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> | 30 inches |
| Shining willow | <i>S. lucida ssp. lasiandra</i> | 18 inches |
| Silk tassel | <i>Garrya elliptica</i> | 30 inches |
| Sitka willow | <i>S sitchensis</i> | 18 inches |
| Tanbark oak | <i>Lithocarpus densiflorus</i> | 30 inches |
| Valley oak | <i>Q. lobata</i> | 18 inches |
| Wax myrtle | <i>Myrica californica</i> | 30 inches |
| White alder | <i>Alnus rhombifolia</i> | 30 inches |