



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS TO PROVIDE:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES TO
THE SAN LORENZO VALLEY
WATER DISTRICT

FIRE/VEGETATION
MANAGEMENT
MAINTENANCE

RESPONSE DUE: 3:00 PM on
February 03, 2023

**San Lorenzo Valley Water
District 13060 Highway 9
Boulder Creek, CA
95006
(831) 338-2153**

I. INTRODUCTION

The San Lorenzo Valley Water District (SLVWD or District) is soliciting qualifications and fee sheets from qualified contractors to implement and maintain vegetation fuel reduction through the use of hand crews, heavy equipment, manual and mechanical methods, as well as limited grazing where appropriate annually on District owned lands. Vegetation management methods and recommendations are included as 'Attachment A; relevant portions of Chapter 4: Vegetation Treatment Methods and Section 5.2: Defensible Space and Fuel Reduction, and Material Upgrades'. Projects will occur within the SLVWD District Service Area (refer to Figure 1).

The work consists of wildfire management activities including vegetation management on SLVWD-owned properties, and around infrastructure to reduce the intensity of wildland fires.

Work generally includes:

- Mow annual grasses, weeds, and forbs to reduce overall height.
- Cut all grasses and weeds within the fenced area/facility developed area and around the outside of fence or developed area within 4 feet.
- Remove "ladder fuels" including pruning live and dead low hanging branches (below 12' height) and shreddy bark from below trees.
- Remove dead and downed materials, and logs less than 12-inches diameter.
- Removal of invasive seedlings and re-sprouts by hand. No herbicide use is permitted (unless SLVWD approved).
- Falling and disposal of small live trees up to 12-inches in diameter.
- Falling and disposal of dead trees.
- Protection of native plants and marked special features and trees protected under the Santa Cruz County tree ordinance
- Chip and distribute cut materials, or haul and dispose of materials off site.
- Rake and remove all leaves/dead/cut vegetation material from within fenced/developed area. Remove all leaves/dead/cut vegetation in a 4-foot-wide area around the outside of fence or developed area.
- Maintenance of existing District roads (unpaved native surface).

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

San Lorenzo Valley Water District is a water supplier established in 1941 and serves several communities within the 136 square-mile San Lorenzo River watershed. The District owns, operates, and maintains four permitted water systems divided into three service areas. Each service area provides supplies from separate water sources. The North Service Area includes the unincorporated communities of Boulder Creek, Brookdale, Ben Lomond and Lompico. The South Service Area encompasses portions of the City of Scotts Valley and adjacent unincorporated neighborhoods. The Mañana Woods subdivision became part of the South Service Area as a result of the District's annexation of the Mañana Woods Mutual Water Company in July 2006. The Felton Service Area was acquired by the District from California American Water in September 2008 and includes the town of Felton and adjacent unincorporated areas.

The District's legal boundaries encompass approximately 62 square miles (refer to Figure 1). Land uses include timber, State and regional parks, water supply watersheds, rural residential, low-density urban residential and commercial, quarries, agriculture, and other open space. Within these boundaries, the District's four service areas have a combined area of approximately 26 square miles and individual areas as follows: North Service Area (20.9 square miles) and Lompico (2.5 square miles), South Service Area (0.8 square mile), and Felton Service Area (2.2 square miles). Their individual water supply systems are referred to as the North, South, and Felton Systems. The District owns one contiguous piece of land of approximately 1,620 acres for water supply and watershed protection on Ben Lomond Mountain, 252 acres in the Felton/Fall Creek watershed, and another 325 acres in the Zayante Creek area.

The San Lorenzo River watershed supports a wide variety of natural plant communities, which in turn support a diverse range of wildlife species. Plant communities include redwood forests, chaparral, the rare sandhills, grassland, oak woodland, and riparian woodland. Many of these plant communities can be found on District-owned lands. Many of the plant species composing the sandhills community are disjunct coastal species, isolated in the sandhills miles from the coast. These disjunct coastal species often exert different morphologies from their coastal counterparts. The sandhills also contain forms of species that are common elsewhere in the state but have strikingly different forms or habits in the San Lorenzo River watershed. Sandhills chaparral communities have undergone the most dramatic shift in structure due to plant succession in the absence of fire, attributed to increased canopy closure. Invasive plants like broom and acacia are converting open canopy habitat into shrublands (McGraw, 2020). Canopy gaps important for maintaining plant diversity are likely also important for the unique sandhills fauna, which is impacted by canopy closure due to fire exclusion (SLVWD, 2009). Invasive and non-native species like European annual grasses and herbs are abundant in the sandhill habitats and are out competing native plants. The nearby Olympia quarry has contributed to the invasion of non-native plants. Woody invasive species, such as French broom, Portuguese broom, and silver wattle have a significant negative effect on the sandhill habitat and associated endemic plants and animals (McGraw, 2020).

On August 16, 2020, the CZU Lightning Complex (CZU Complex) began burning in Santa Cruz County. The wildfire spread eventually ended up burning over 86,000 acres, destroying hundreds of structures, and the majority of SLVWD lands west of the Highway 9 corridor. The fire resulted in direct damage to SLVWD infrastructure, immediate and potential delayed vegetation mortality, hazard trees, and created potential erosion issues.

III. WORK SCHEDULE

Work is anticipated to begin as early as March 2023. Prior to proceeding with work, Contractor shall submit a work schedule for approval by the District. Contractor shall provide sufficient personnel and equipment to maintain a steady pace to complete all requested work sites prior to the following Spring. Work periods will generally be limited to Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and/or in accordance with local equipment operating period limitations. No work will be scheduled on weekends and state holidays nor will work be performed on Red Flag Warning days.

IV. ALLOWABLE VEGETATION MANGEMENT METHODS

Vegetation management and removal will be accomplished using gas or electric powered mowing equipment (weed whackers), riding or tractor mowers, hand crew with chainsaws and chipping equipment, and pole saws or pruners. No herbicide use is permitted. Other machinery, such as masticator units, will be permitted only with permission of District and shall be listed in proposal.

V. CHIPPING OR DISPOSAL OF MATERIALS

Contractor will chip or remove all excess debris caused by the cutting or removal ladder fuels or dead and downed materials so there is insufficient fuel to sustain or allow the spread of fire. Material that is not chipped and spread to the satisfaction of the SLVWD representative will be re-processed. Chips that are to remain on site shall be spread through the project area with a depth no greater than 3 inches. No piles of chipped or slash materials will be permitted. Material not suitable for chipping will be raked, collected, removed from site and legally disposed of as green waste.

VI. RECORD KEEPING

Contractor will maintain accurate records of quantities of materials processed, by type and will cooperate with SLVWD representative in any audit of such quantities.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Contractor must protect all non-target plant materials, site improvements, structures, facilities, utilities, and natural or cultural areas from damage, both above and below ground. Any damages shall be reported immediately to a SLVWD representative.

Any damages caused by Contractor shall be corrected and/or paid for by the Contractor at no cost to the SLVWD.

Conduct all operations to avoid unacceptable damage to boles, roots and crowns of existing trees, seedlings and other vegetation.

Avoid buffer zones determined by SLVWD's representative to protect amphibians, birds, cultural sites or other specific areas of concern. Avoidance buffers may be identified before or during work activity.

- Protection of Biological Resources – Migratory Birds: Removal of vegetation may reveal active nests or nesting migratory birds. If previously unidentified nests or nesting activity is discovered Contractor will stop all work and notify the SLVWD's representative; work will not resume until further notice by SLVWD. A SLVWD representative will be responsible for nesting bird surveys and marking avoidance buffers, where needed.
- Protection of Biological Resources - California red legged frog, California giant salamander, and other special-status amphibians: The California red legged frog is a federally protected species that requires aquatic habitat, such as ponds, water bodies or riparian habitat, such as may be found near the project areas. The California giant salamander and Santa Cruz black salamander are protected species that may occur in leaf litter or under rocks in moist upland habitat and both have a low potential to occur on paved roadways during dispersal. Removal of dense vegetation may reveal standing water, springs, or seeps or amphibians. If previously unidentified areas with standing water, springs, or seeps are discovered or amphibians, Contractor will stop all work and notify the SLVWD's representative; work will not resume until further notice.
- Protection of Biological Resources – Other Special-Status Plants or Wildlife: Several other special-status plants and wildlife are known to occur on SLVWD lands. Any marked plant must be avoided and instructions provided by the

SLVWD representative followed to ensure that these species are not harmed or crushed during work. A SLVWD representative will be responsible for marking avoidance buffers for special-status plants or wildlife, where needed.

Additionally, if present, woodrat nests must be avoided. Nest must not be handled or run over with equipment as woodrats can have hantavirus. All staff working on the project must be able to identify a woodrat nest. Contractor is also responsible for protection against poison oak and other hazards and will maintain a health and safety plan for all workers.

- Protection of Cultural Resources: Removal of vegetation may reveal previously undiscovered cultural or historical resources, such as trash dumps, structures, prehistoric sites or other significant resources. If previously unidentified resources are discovered, Contractor will stop all work and notify the SLVWD's representative; work will not resume until further notice by SLVWD staff.

Retain duff and up to 1 inch of forest litter to reduce soil displacement and invasive plant establishment within the treatment areas. If necessary and as directed by the SLVWD's representative, apply erosion control measures, such as wattles, fiber rolls, erosion blankets, wood chips, and down logs where duff and 1 inch of forest litter have been removed during fuels management operations.

Equipment shall not be operated when ground conditions are such to cause erosion or rutting. All areas of ground disturbance in the project area that may result in soil erosion during the rainy season should be protected with appropriate erosion control measures before rain events. These areas will be determined by the SLVWD's Representative. Erosion control measures will be applied at the cost of the contractor. If contractor fails to complete appropriate seasonal erosion control work prior to any seasonal period of precipitation or runoff, the SLVWD may temporarily assume responsibility for the work and bill the contractor for associated costs or deduct such costs from payments owed the contractor. Any area of off-road vehicle travel must be pre-approved by the SLVWD Representative.

The Contractor shall refuel and repair equipment in a safe manner to protect against accidental spills. Limit refueling to specific and limited areas on a site as directed by the SLVWD's representative. Measures shall be taken to prevent, control, and clean-up spills. Clean-ups should be immediate, automatic and routine and performed by a trained staff member. Contact the local emergency response team agencies to report all minor or major spills.

Contractor shall not sweep, wash or blow soil, litter, chips, or other materials into creek or storm drains. Contractor shall not apply any pesticides except those granted an exemption, per the San Lorenzo Valley Water District Integrated Pest Management Policy (2020-2021). Any pesticide and quantity must be pre-approved for use the SLVWD representative.

VIII. CLEAN UP

At completion of project, Contractor will rehabilitate all and any portions of project site area that is/are affected by the work performed. Rehabilitation requirement includes but may not be limited to tire, equipment or track marks, collateral damage to trees and garbage or other project-generated non-vegetative debris left on site by workers.

IX. FIRE HAZARD AND PREVENTION

Contractor shall provide firefighting hand tools, fire extinguishers, and at least one 5-gallon backpack pump readily available on the work site and all personnel trained in their use. Contractor will be held responsible for any and all fire ignition(s) caused by the Contractor's employees, subcontractors, or equipment.

Equipment shall be equipped with spark arrestors. No open flame shall be permitted. The Contractor shall exercise a fire-safety due standard of care and take necessary precautions against fire hazards that may cause damage to construction work, structures, equipment, and any other public and private property, including grassland, brush and trees.

Work scheduling during critical fire weather shall be at the discretion of the SLVWD's Representative. No compensation will be made for stoppage due to fire conditions.

- X. As soon as feasible but no later than 15 minutes after initial discovery of a fire, Contractor shall notify SLVWD's representative of any fires in project area or along roads used by Contractor. Contractor's employees shall report all fires as soon as possible by calling 911 and notifying anyone in proximity of the fire.

XI. PERMITS AND FEES

Contractor shall pay for all permits and fees required for work under this Contract, including but not limited to all disposal fees.

XII. SOQ REQUIREMENTS

The SOQ shall not exceed 13 pages excluding resumes, cover letter, dividers, front and back covers. SOQ must use a font size of 11 or larger, and provided in a single document. Responses to this RFQ shall be in the following order and shall include:

1. Cover Letter: Include a one-page, dated cover letter indicating the contractor's understanding of and interest in the project and summarizing the key components addressed within the SOQ. This document shall be signed by a person legally authorized to represent and enter into contracts for the contractor. Please include name, address, telephone number, email and title for each of these persons.
2. Background: Provide a general description of your background and project qualifications, including years of business, and identify any contract or subcontract by the consultant which has been terminated, in default, or had claims made against it that resulted in litigation or arbitration in the last 5 years.
3. Experience: The SOQs shall describe examples of previous work involving fuel management, fire prevention, and implementation working for government agencies. Preference will be given to respondents that have experience working with water purveyors and implementing fire/vegetation fuel reduction work. If contractor has expertise in biological resources (e.g., nesting birds, rare plants) surveying and buffering to ensure avoidance, please include.
4. Staff Experience: Provide resumes describing the qualifications of key staff who will be working on these projects. Provide a list of similar projects and clients that your proposed Project Manager and other key staff have completed work for in the past seven years,

including their experience in working fuel reduction projects. Clearly link the staff and projects.

5. Sub contractor's Experience: Provide a list of all proposed subcontractors, their background and qualifications, point of contact, and degree of involvement.
6. Client References: Client references, including contact person and current telephone numbers. References should focus on projects in which the personnel listed had responsibilities.
7. Fee Schedule and Estimates: Provide fee schedule for as needed services within the full proposal. Fee schedule should include estimated costs for the following example projects (refer to Figure 2 for sample photos of vegetation growth and types present):
 - a. Vegetation management/fuels reduction out to 100 feet from edge of rural, forested roadway for 1,000 linear feet
 - b. Defensible space management out to 100 feet around a water tank or other infrastructure in rural, forested setting

XIII. CONTRACTOR SELECTION

Contractors will be invited to submit proposals based on the qualifications submitted for the work. The following weighted criteria will be used to evaluate SOQ's:

- a. 25% Experience of staff for work to be done
- b. 30% Understanding and approach to the work to be done
- c. 15% Experience of contractor with similar kinds of work
- d. 15% Contractor fee schedule and cost estimates
- e. 10% Overall clarity and presentation of SOQ
- f. 5% Contractor's Local Experience

XIV. SELECTION PROCESS

Contract negotiations will begin immediately with the first choice candidate after the evaluation process. If an agreement on scope and cost is not reached within thirty (30) working days, the next highest ranked candidate will be contacted and negotiations with that candidate will begin. This process will continue until an agreement is reached or it is decided to re-advertise.

If a clear choice is not evident, interviews will be scheduled with those semi-finalists of exceptional rating.

At this time, the District contemplates the use of a Time and Material Not to Exceed contract for the services requested. Negotiations will cover: scope of work, contract terms and conditions, office arrangements, attendance requirements and appropriateness of the proposed fee schedule.

XV. INSURANCE

The minimum amounts of coverage corresponding to the aforesaid categories of insurance per insurable event, shall be as follows:

- Insurance Category Minimum Limits Workers' Compensation statutory minimum
Employer's Liability \$1,000,000 per accident for bodily injury or disease

- Commercial General Liability \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 aggregate for bodily injury, personal injury and property damage
- Automobile Liability \$1,000,000 per accident for bodily injury and property damage (coverage required to the extent applicable to CONSULTANT's vehicle usage in performing services hereunder)
- Professional Liability \$1,000,000 per claim and \$2,000,000 aggregate

After negotiating a proposed agreement that is fair and reasonable the District Manager will present each contract to the District's Board for authorization to execute a contract with the responsive consultant.

XVI. SELECTION SCHEDULE

Work is anticipated to begin as early as March 2022 and may continue into the following year, depending on weather conditions (refer to Section III).

XVII. SPECIAL CONDITIONS /ATTACHMENTS

The following links to documents are included as attachments to provide background:

- [San Lorenzo Valley Water District Post-Fire Recovery, Critical Asset Hardening, Vegetation, and Fuels Management Plan. \(available May 21, 2021\)](#)
- San Lorenzo Valley Water District Watershed Management Plan, Part 1 Existing Conditions Report, Chapter 5 Fire Management._
<http://www.slvwd.com/Watershed.htm>
- San Lorenzo Valley Water District Watershed Management Plan, Part II: Goals, Objectives, and Policies, Chapter 5: Fire Management._
<http://www.slvwd.com/watershed/FINAL-VERSION-pt2.pdf>
- [San Lorenzo Valley Water District Integrated Pest Management Policy \(2020-2021\). https://www.slvwd.com/environmental](#)

XVIII. SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

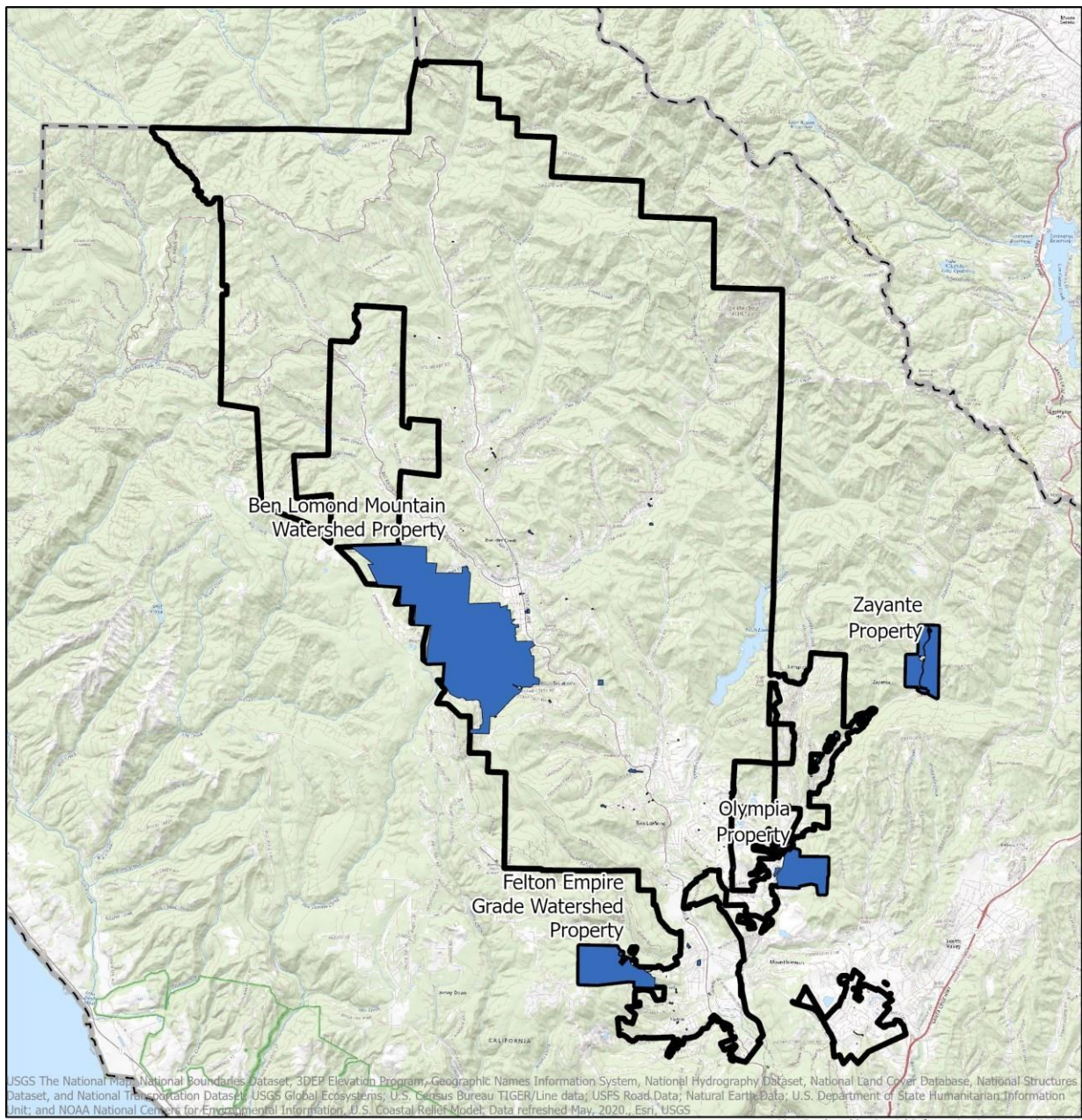
1. Submit one electronic copy of the SOQ in PDF format by email. The SOQ shall be signed by an individual, partner, officer or officers authorized to execute legal documents on behalf of the Consultant.
2. The SOQ must be received no later than **3:00 p.m.** local time, on or before **February 03, 2023** to Carly Blanchard at:

cblanchard@slvwd.com

Failure to comply with the requirements of this RFQ may result in disqualification.

Questions regarding this RFQ shall be submitted in writing to cblanchard@slvwd.com by January 30th, 2023. The District will not respond to questions submitted after January 30th, 2023.

Figure 1 San Lorenzo Valley Water District Service Area and Lands

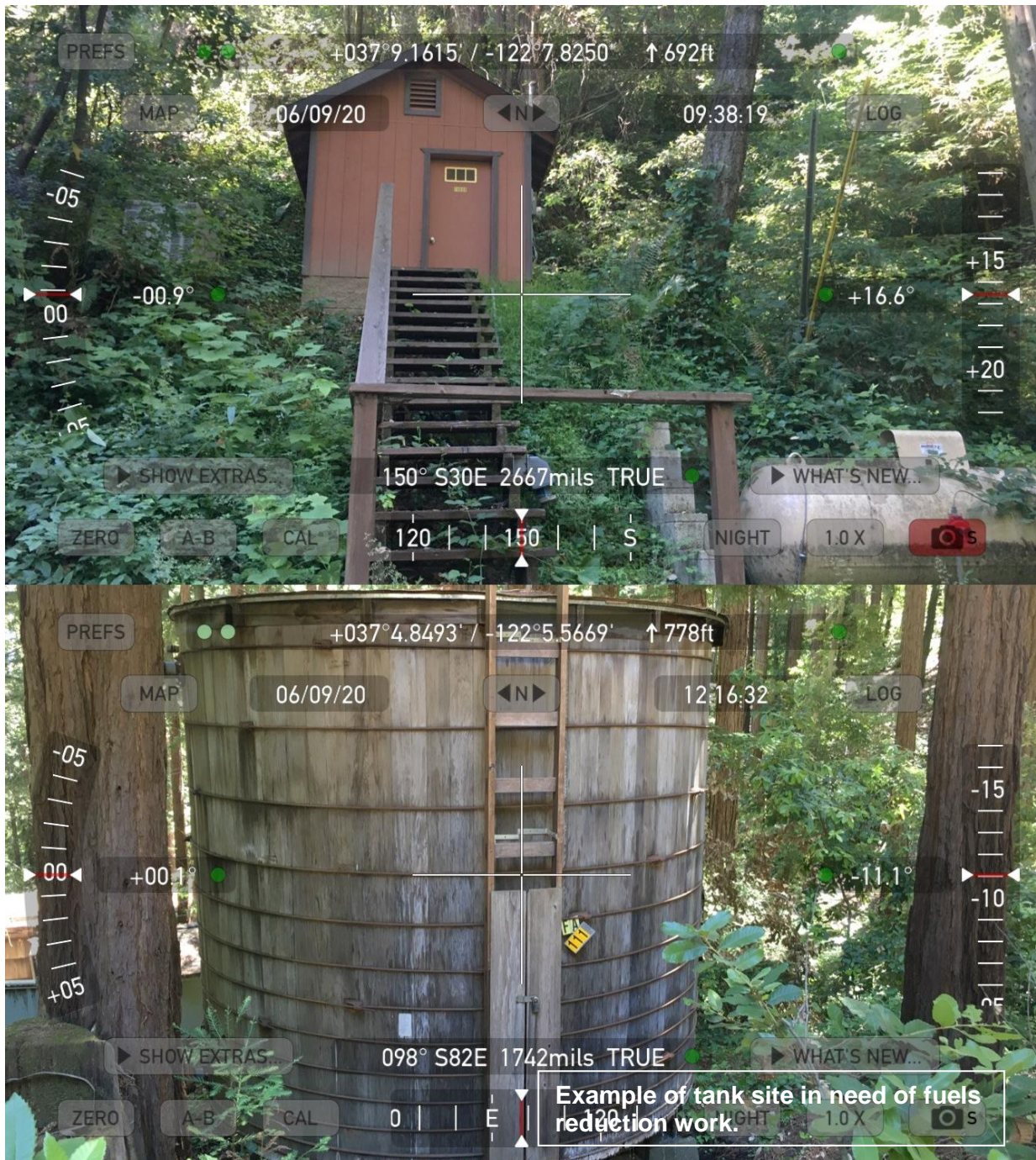


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0 1 2 3 Miles

Figure 2 **Examples of Vegetation on San Lorenzo Valley Water District Lands**





Example of maintaining fuel reduction around well site.