

# Wildfire Mitigation Protects 500 Lake County Homes

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**OAKLAND, Calif.** – North Coast Opportunities, Inc. (NCO), located in Lake County, received a \$22.2 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to create defensible space and harden 500 homes over a three-year period, which will save lives and reduce the severity of property damage from wildfires.

Defensible space helps keep the area around a home free of excess or dead vegetation like grasses, shrubs, trees, leaves and fallen pine needles. When defensible space is maintained, there is less flammable material near homes to ignite and provides firefighters space to defend personal property during a fire.

Home hardening updates homes with more fire-resistant materials, like replacing a wood shake or shingle roof with a Class A roof (e.g., asphalt-fiberglass composition shingles, clay or cementitious tiles), screening all vents and gaps around eaves with flame- and ember-resistant materials, using noncombustible siding (e.g., stucco, steel or fiber cement) and installing multi-pane windows with tempered glass.

Although the current wildfire risk is low, dry periods and drought in the wildland interface will present a serious ongoing threat. From 2016-2022, more than 30 Lake County wildfires destroyed homes and public infrastructure, disrupted essential services, and created dangerous burn scars susceptible to flash flooding and debris flows following moderate to heavy rainfall.

North Coast Opportunities will operate the Lake County Home Hardening Program, bringing nearly 10 years of experience in disaster recovery, mitigation, and education. The program will target one area within Lake County, the Kelseyville Riviera Community Association.

Deanna Fernweh, NCO's Home Hardening Program Manager said, "Our team has been working diligently to meet all the requirements to bring these funds to Lake



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County. With FEMA funding, we're excited to officially launch our program and start making homes safer, within our target community."

The \$22.2 million project includes a \$19.9 million grant from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), with the remaining \$2.2 million from non-federal sources.

Patty Bruder, NCO's Executive Director adds, "Like all NCO projects, we are focused on building a strong, local collaboration with Lake County, the Lake County Fire Protection District, and various partners around the county, to ensure this project's success."

Jessica Pyska, Lake County's District 5 Supervisor and current Board Chair said, "We are excited to continue this collaboration with NCO. Bringing this pilot project to Lake County will allow us to demonstrate community-level investments can make a huge difference. Replicable models like these can have tremendous value as we collectively face global climate-change."

NCO is currently seeking letters of interest from qualified vendors skilled in construction and defensible space to join the Home Hardening Program. To read the full Scope of Work and find more information, visit [www.ncohomehardening.org](http://www.ncohomehardening.org) or call 707-461-0760.

FEMA's HMGP helps states, territories, federally recognized tribes, local communities and certain private, non-profit organizations become more resilient to potential infrastructure damage and reduce future disaster costs. In the past 32 years, FEMA has invested more than \$1.4 billion to reduce disaster risk in California.

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*NCO is the Community Action Agency that serves Lake and Mendocino Counties, as well as parts of Humboldt, Sonoma, Del Norte, and Solano Counties. NCO reacts and adjusts to community needs, including disaster response and recovery. For more information visit [www.ncoinc.org](http://www.ncoinc.org) or call (707) 467-3200.*

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