



Nova Romero &lt;nromero@ci.carmel.ca.us&gt;

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## Fire risks and state mitigation requirements

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Linda L. Smith <lachmund@pacbell.net>  
To: Nova Romero <nromero@ci.carmel.ca.us>

Mon, May 5, 2025 at 11:16 AM

Dear Nova,

Would you please send this letter and attachment to the City Council for them to see before today's meeting and to include in the public record, and also please share it with the Forest and Beach Commissioners, City Forester, Public Works director and staff, City Administrator and Assistant, as well s the Planning Commission and Planning staff.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Linda L Smith

Dear Mayor and City Council,

I have been active in conservation and climate change issues for the majority of my life, being a 4th generation Carmelite with direct links to Carmel's origins as the unique Village in a Monterey Pine Forest, where residents cherished their Monterey pines and Oaks and native under-story habitat shrubs and all the life they support. Las Manzanitas is the name that had been given to this area before it was called Carmel. This completely unique town, by virtue of the vision of its illustrious founders, captured the imagination of cultured people and lovers of Nature the world over. This is our true heritage. It "has no prototype", as the great architect Nathaniel Owings put it. It is a one of a kind village, a blessing and a reality that is enshrined in our city documents, our General Plan, our LCP! And as such it is protected by the California Coastal Act. Carmel is not Pacific Grove. It is not Monterey.

For the past 30+ years, working with Monterey Pine Forest Watch, and having been directly involved in efforts to save and protect the Monterey Peninsula's endangered Native Monterey Pine Forest, it is distressing to see that this rare forest treasure has never been in greater danger than it is right now, thanks to draconian state mandates that can only be implemented in Carmel by destroying its very being. Defensible space requirements would completely preclude the planting of any Monterey pines or Coast live oaks, the very keystone trees of the native Monterey Pine Forest in which we live and which are the heart and soul of Carmel! Nor would it allow the planting of the majority of native shrub habitat that would grow more than 6 feet high. These state requirements are meant for true wild lands where parcels are large, not for 40 x 100 foot lots. And the state designations and mandates do not take into account the fact of fog on the Monterey Peninsula. Winter rains, fog and cool Summer temperatures protect us for much of the year. Climate scientists identify the Monterey Peninsula a refugia for species as the climate warms, because of cooler temperatures and fog created by upwellings from the cold deep Monterey Marine Canyon. UCB's Dr Axelrod stated that our native Monterey Pine Forest survived past climate warmings, especially because of this factor. And this is why there are so many endemic species here, species that exist nowhere else. It has been a refugia in the past.

From my research, even among experts there is plenty of disagreement about how to address risk generally. Marin's fire expert has pointed out a number of myths that are widespread that are causing hysteria about the supposed danger of trees. Other factors are much more important. And most fires are grass fires which are much more deadly because they move so fast. And the overwhelming majority of wildfires are started by humans. Carmel and the Monterey Peninsula need to look at other types of fire risk management as well. Closing businesses down during extreme fire risk weather, encouraging homeowners to water their trees and shrubs and soil to keep them hydrated, drone surveillance are some ideas that common sense tells us to encourage. I'm sure there are other such ideas.

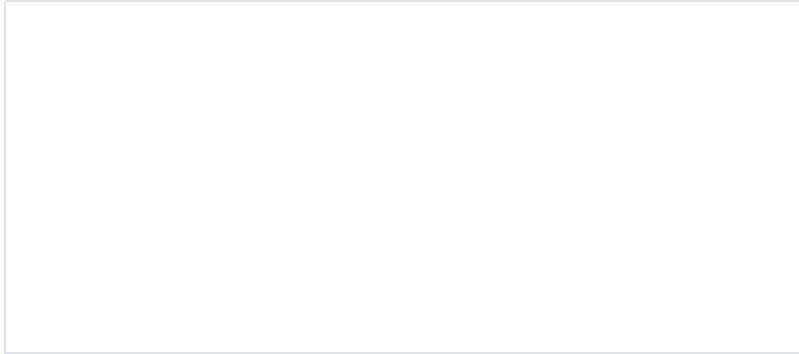
I think it's time that Carmel speaks up for itself and, while requiring common sense actions to abate risk, protects its natural and cultural environment and heritage and that of the surrounding native Monterey Pine Forest which is the character and essential ecosystem of our Peninsula.

Attached is a fascinating and helpful article by an experienced fire fighter who did experiments on the combustibility of California native plants. It turns out that most of them are highly fire resistant! What do you know...Evolution at work. It's time to learn about where we live and to work with Mother Nature for a change.

Sincerely,

Linda L Smith

[Leaf burn times of California native plants.](#)



**Leaf burn times of California native plants.**

Ignition time of leaves of some California native plants and garden plants. Native plant flammability.