

Rancho receives \$150,000 grant to reduce fire fuels

By Nick Baptista/ The Valley Springs News/ March 25, 2015

A project to help reduce the wildfire threat in Rancho Calaveras has received a \$150,000 grant.

The California department of Forestry and Fire Protection last week awarded more than \$9.5 million in grants aimed at reducing the level of wildfires due to the ongoing drought and a partnership between CalFire, Calaveras Consolidated Fire District and the Calaveras Fire Safe Council received a portion of the funding.

CalCo Fire Chief Jason Robitaille said the grant would be used to reduce the build up of fire fuels in the Calaveras River Canyon.

Much of the Rancho Calaveras subdivision is at risk based on the fuels and topography of the area, Robitaille said.

“The high number of grant applications we received underscores just how vested the citizens of California are in preparing for our state’s inevitable wildfires,” said Kim Pimlott, CalFire’s director and state forester. “We are looking forward to seeing ‘on the ground’ results these projects will yield.”

In all, 83 grants were awards for projects that contribute to fire prevention efforts around homes.

Robitaille credited Nick Casci, battalion chief for CalFire’s Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit, for applying for the grant. Casci is also working on an eventual presentation to Rancho Calaveras residents outlining the scope of the project.

A vegetation masticator could be used for a portion of the project. According to the National Fire Protection Association, a vegetation masticator is a specialized piece of heavy equipment that essentially grinds vegetative material. Like chipping, mastication provides the added benefit of returning the vegetative material back to the ground where it can act as a soil amendment or provide an erosion control mulch-like layer over the surface of the soil.