



air pollution control district
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Prescribed Burn Program Update

Board of Directors

May 21, 2026

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Executive Director / APCO

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Our Mission

To protect the people and the
environment of Santa Barbara County
from the effects of air pollution.

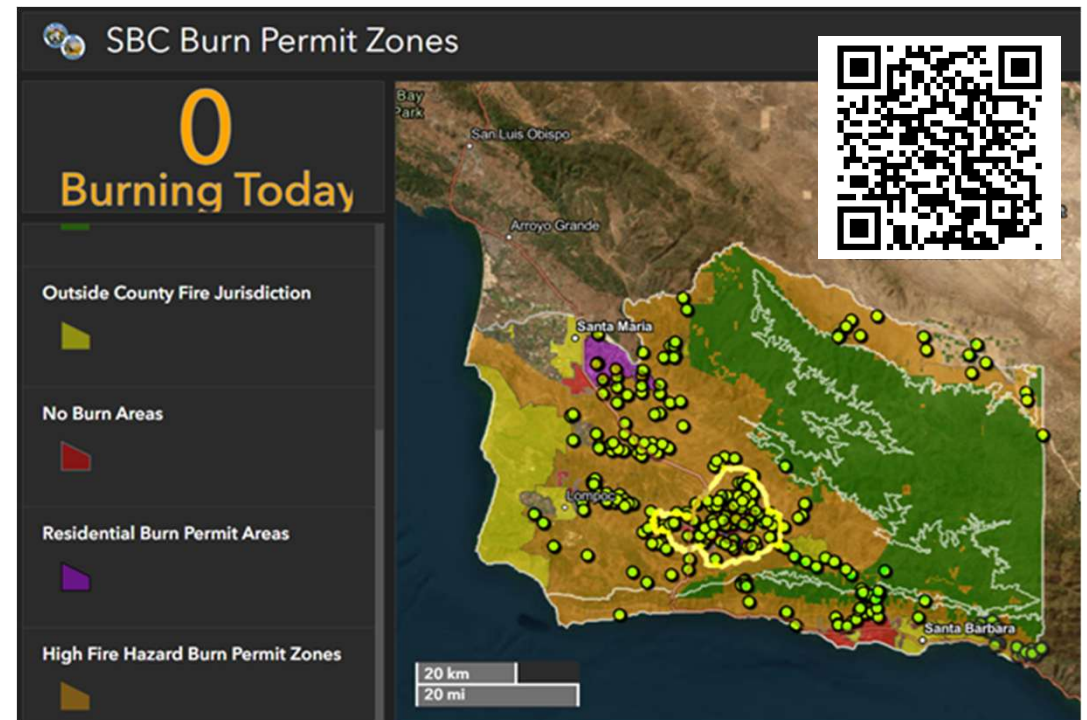




The District's Smoke Management Program minimizes smoke impacts from permitted and prescribed burns to communities in Santa Barbara County through implementation and enforcement of state law.

Santa Barbara County Fire Permit Burning

- **Three categories:**
 - Agricultural Burning
 - Fire Hazard Reduction Burning
 - Residential Dry Vegetation (Backyard) Burning
- **Permits for these burns are issued by Santa Barbara County Fire (SBC Fire)**



Permit Burning is Allowed on Local Burn Days

- If a burner has been issued a permit by SBC Fire, they are allowed to burn on a local burn day in their area
- The local burn day decisions are made by SBC Fire based on factors associated with fire danger



What is Prescribed Burning?



- Prescribed burning is the controlled application of fire to the land to reduce wildfire hazards, clear downed trees, control plant diseases, improve rangeland and wildlife habitats, and restore natural ecosystems.
- Prescribed burns are ignited under a specific set of environmental conditions that collectively constitute a “prescription.”

Three Types of Prescribed Burns

Pile Burns



Broadcast Burns



Air Curtain Incinerator (ACI) Burns



Who Conducts Prescribed Burning?

- **Prescribed burns are conducted by Land Managers including federal, state, local, or private entities.**
- **Throughout our region this includes:**
 - SBC Fire
 - The United States Forest Service (USFS)
 - National Park Service
 - Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB)
 - State Parks
 - University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB)
 - The Santa Barbara Cattlemen's Association.



The District's Smoke Management Program



Prescribed Burn Steps – Smoke Management Plans

Smoke Management Plans

Ignition Authorization
Requests

Smoke Impact Monitoring

Prescribed Burn Outreach

- The goal of a Smoke Management Plan (SMP) is to define the ideal prescription for conducting a successful burn while minimizing air quality impacts.
- SMPs include the following:
 - Burn Information
 - Day of Ignition Conditions
 - Identification of Smoke-Sensitive Areas
 - Smoke Mitigation Measures
 - Public Outreach Methods
 - Project Maps
 - Alternatives to Burning

Prescribed Burn Steps – Ignition Requests

Smoke Management Plans

Ignition Authorization
Requests

Smoke Impact Monitoring

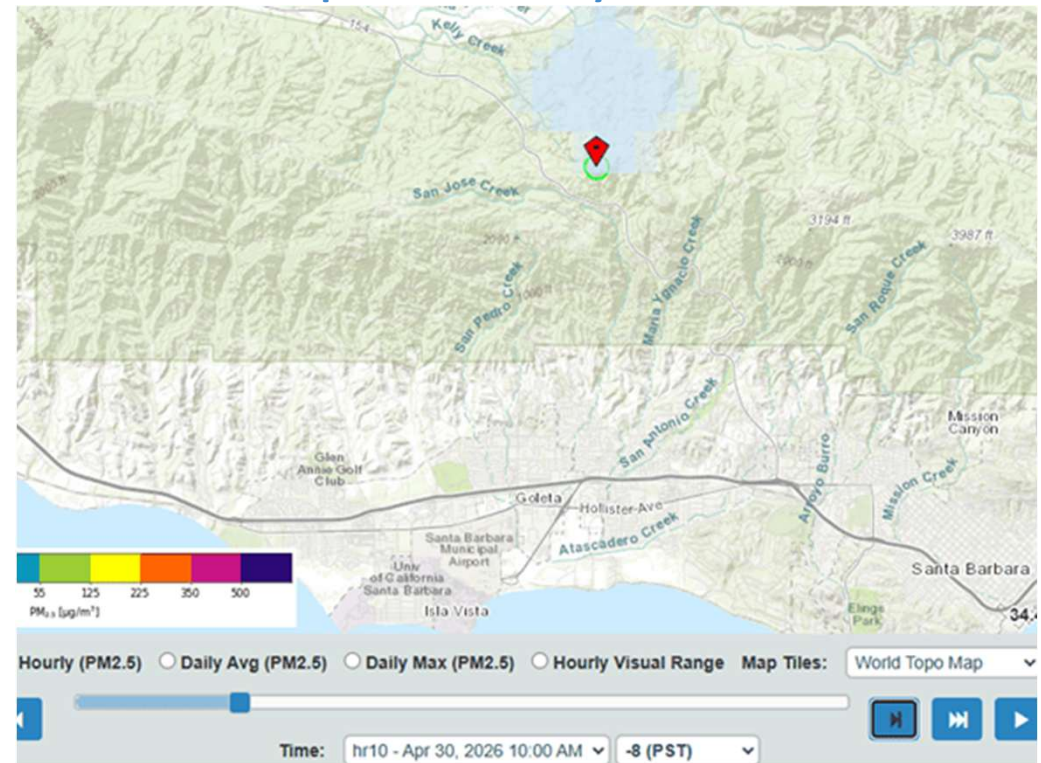
Prescribed Burn Outreach

- **Prior to burning, the Land Manager submits an Ignition Authorization Request in PFIRS for District approval.**
- **Prior to authorizing ignition, District staff do the following:**
 - Review the National Weather Service's (NWS) forecast and the District's Air Quality Forecast.
 - Generate a smoke model to predict cumulative impacts of smoke.
 - Discuss forecasted conditions with CARB and NWS.
 - Check the CARB Burn Day Forecast.

Approving Ignition Authorization Requests

- After reviewing all available information staff will decide whether to approve an Ignition Request.
- Over the past ten years, between April 2016 and April 2026, the District received 352 Ignition Requests. Of these requests, only 18 were denied by the District.

Example of a BlueSky Smoke Run



Prescribed Burn Steps – Monitoring

Smoke Management Plans

Ignition Authorization Requests

Smoke Impact Monitoring

Prescribed Burn Outreach

- After approving an SMP and receiving an Ignition Request, staff work to deploy a portable air quality monitor, called an E-BAM, near the prescribed burn, if deemed necessary.
- Once deployed the E-BAM's AQI readings will appear on the AirNow Fire and Smoke Map.



Monitoring Prescribed Burns

- For burns that occur near sensitive receptors, staff will be on site.
- If the District receives complaints from the public about a prescribed burn, staff contact the reporting party as quickly as possible.
- In the last 10 years, the District has only received eight complaints related to prescribed burns in Santa Barbara County.



Prescribed Burn Steps – Outreach

Smoke Management Plans

Ignition Authorization
Requests

Smoke Impact Monitoring

Prescribed Burn Outreach

- **Since 2018, the District has issued more than 193 prescribed burn notifications**
- **The District currently has approximately 2,350 subscribers to our prescribed burns email list and approximately 1,000 subscribers to the prescribed burns text message list.**
- **Anyone can sign up to receive future email and/or text message notifications about prescribed burns: www.OurAir.org/subscribe.**

Prescribed Burn Outreach Efforts

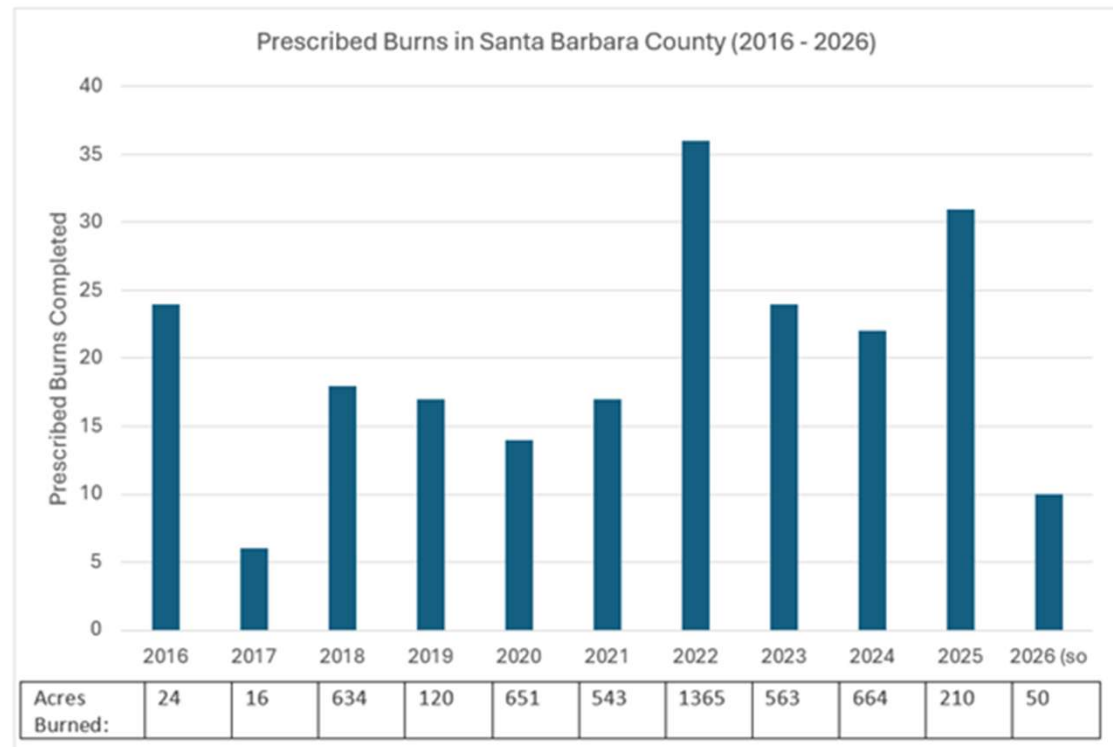


- Land Managers reach out to neighboring properties, such as schools and vineyards, prior to burning.
- Depending on the size of the burn and proximity to roadways, Land Managers may also use highway signage to share that a burn is taking place.
- Continuing in our efforts to keep the public well-informed about prescribed burns, the District is currently working with a vendor to create a Prescribed Burn Map.

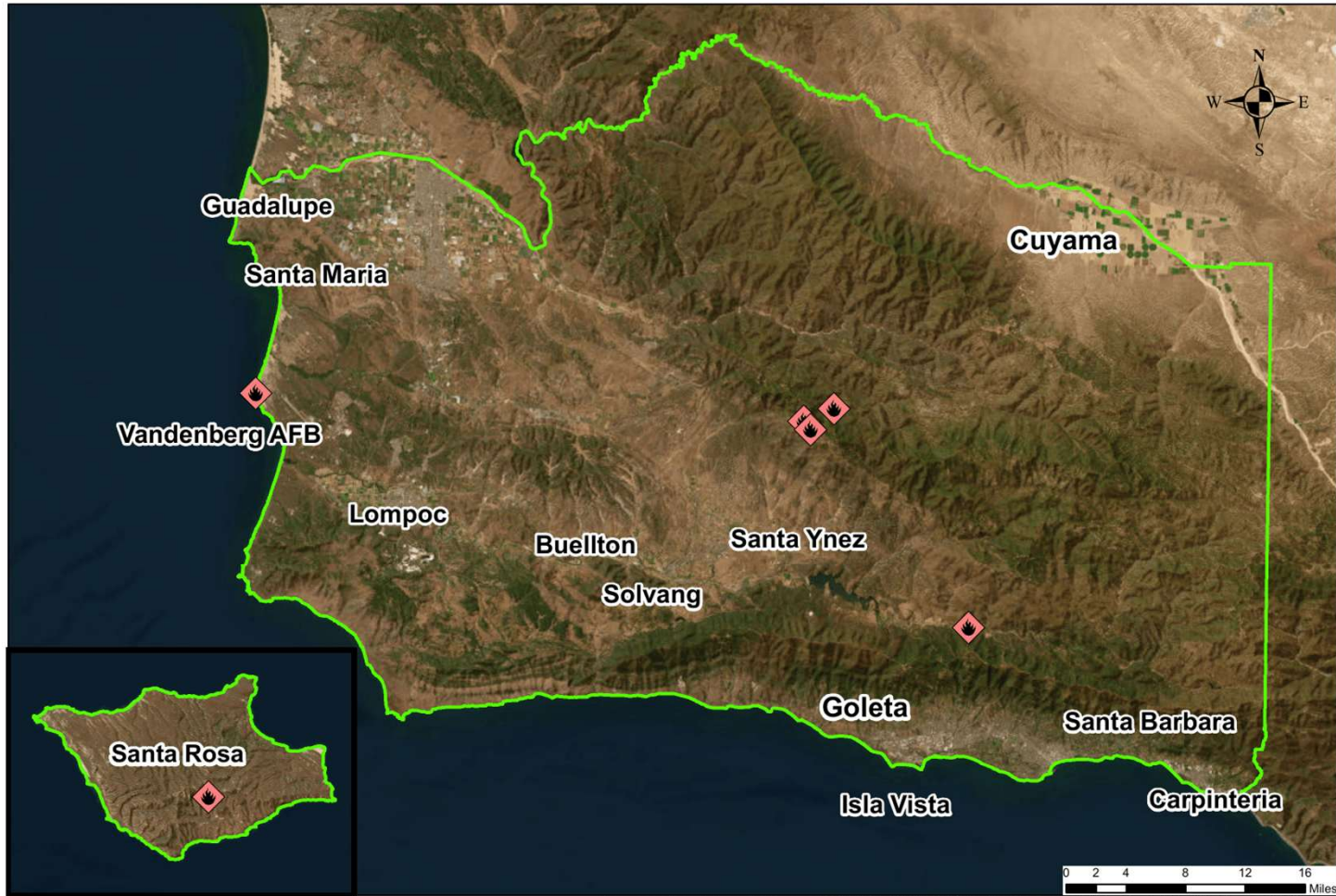
Challenges for Prescribed Burning

- In Santa Barbara County, Land Managers face various challenges in trying to accomplish prescribed burning, such as:

- Rugged terrain
- Limited resources to cover large swaths of land
- Public perception and smoke anxiety
- Meteorology



Prescribed Burns in Santa Barbara County (2016)



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