

Investing in Our Forests: North Bay Forest Improvement Program Opens Soon

By Monique Byro

The North Bay Forest Improvement Program (NBFIP) will soon be accepting applications from landowners in Napa, Lake, Sonoma, and Mendocino counties. This program helps property owners improve the health, resilience, and ecological sustainability of their forests. Participants receive technical guidance and funding support for projects that reduce wildfire risk, restore wildlife habitat, and enhance forest ecosystems.

NBFIP is a partnership between the Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) of Napa, Sonoma, Gold Ridge, and Mendocino counties, the Clear Lake Environmental Research Center (CLERC) of Lake County, and Conservation Works, which supports resource protection and community sustainability in northern California.

“We’re very excited to be a partner in this program,” said Lucas Patzek, Executive Director of the Napa RCD. “It will give local landowners an opportunity to boost forest health and wildfire resilience along with expert guidance and funding.”

Depending on the project type and location, eligible projects may receive up to 80% reimbursement, he added.

Successful Projects Already Underway

Supported projects have already restored hundreds of acres of forest and created defensible space across the North Bay, helping local landowners and communities prepare for future challenges.

“After the Glass Fire burned through our property, it left a lot of dead standing manzanita and trees,” said Richard Kavinoky of Monan’s Rill Community. “The North Bay Forest Improvement Program grant gave us the funds to hire labor to cut, pile, and burn all that vegetation. After creating 200 burn piles, the work is complete, and we’re much better protected from future wildfires coming from the east.”

Oona Heacock, Executive Director of Conservation Works, explained, “This program empowers local forestland owners to take real, proactive steps to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health.”

Through NBFIP, landowners gain access to expert forestry advice and cost-sharing assistance, making it easier to carry out practices such as thinning overgrown areas, removing dead or

diseased trees, and planting native vegetation. These improvements protect properties and communities from wildfire while supporting biodiversity and long-term forest health.

Landowners can create a new Forest Management Plan (FMP) or use an existing plan from the past five years. While having a plan is optional, it strengthens applications for implementation projects. Once a project is completed and approved, NBFIP reimburses a portion of eligible costs.

Application Dates and Next Steps

The next application window for Implementation Projects opens July 8 and closes August 5, 2026. The Napa Resource Conservation District (Napa RCD) will be holding a virtual application clinic on July 1 from 5-6 PM to answer questions about the application process.

For more information about the NBFIP program and to confirm eligibility, visit:

www.northbayforestimprovementprogram.com.

For more information or to register for the Napa RCD-hosted virtual application clinic, visit **naparcd.org/events/nbfip-application-clinic/**.

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Picture Credit: Napa RCD