

Fighting Wildland Fires, by Unearthing Dormant Native Seeds.

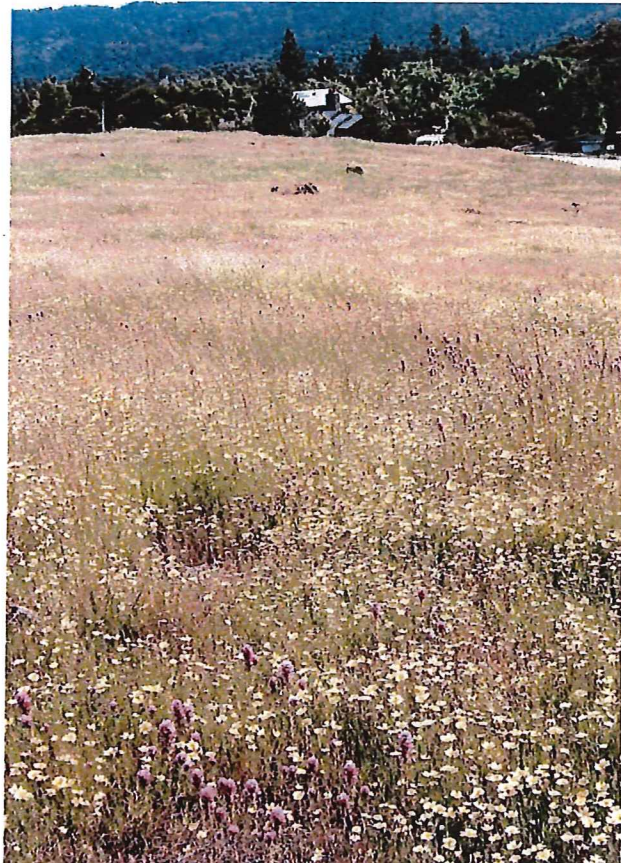
100-250 year old dormant native seeds are sleeping in the hills of the San Francisco Peninsula properties, waiting for us to properly mow the flammable weed grasses off them, so they can recover the land and protect us from wildfires.

Wild Oats are the tallest and most common weed grass in California, growing from 2-5 feet tall each year. The most common fire management plan, is to let them grow to full height, let them shed their seeds and turn brown, then mow them for the summer. You need to start mowing the weed grasses monthly, starting in February, while the seeds are still green.

If you wait until late spring to mow, there are at least four problems using that method—

- 1.) The single late mowing, allows a new crop of weed seeds to mature, to fight over again.**
- 2.) Mowing the weed grasses, does not decrease the amount of fuel-- vertical fuel is just laid it on the ground for the summer, that could still burn your home to the ground.**
- 3.) Every foot tall you allow the weed grasses to grow before you mow them, adds 1,000s of pound of fuel. Wild oats at one foot tall, add 1,000 pounds per acre, but if you allow it to grow two feet tall, that add 4,000 pounds, then every foot taller, adds another ton of fuel.**
- 4.) Mowing low can cut down the natives trying to sprout to replace the weeds, like California poppies and other wildflowers. Keep the mowing always at 6-8 inches high.**

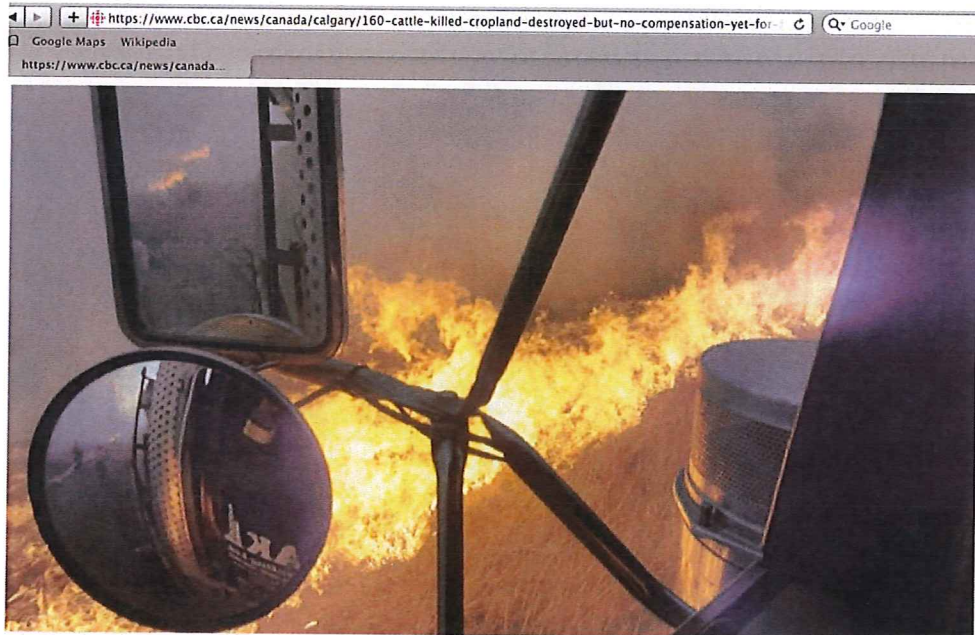
Below, (left) the beginning of a mowing project in Woodside, and then, three years later---



Kite Hill Open Space Preserve--at the Jane Drive gate, or across from 144 Alta Mesa.



BEFORE and AFTER in California's grasslands—Roadside vegetation shows how California's grasslands grew for eons--low growing, green in summer and very little fire fuel. Behind the fence are the weed grasses that fuel summer fires--As they grow, they produce herbicide-like chemicals, that stop the original low-fire-fuel natives from growing back. Natives shown are Valley Gumplants (*Grindelia*) and Dove weed or Turkey Mullein.



A grass fire captured from inside a vehicle on Sept. 11 near Bindloss, Alta. (Dwayne Turner)

Four potential solutions: 1.) **Convert** weed-grass areas back to local native grasses and wildflowers. 2.) **Sow** local native grass and wildflower seeds **after each fire**, to keep weed grasses from regrowing and make more fires. 3.) **Plant** Pseudomonas host plants, for more regular rainfall and fewer droughts. 4.) **Educate home-owners**, to cut the weed grasses earlier, monthly and higher, to help convert the weed grasses back to native cover.

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