

Santa Clara Valley Water District Fact Sheet

Preserving Trees for Healthy Watersheds

As steward of Santa Clara County's watersheds and hundreds of miles of streams, the Santa Clara Valley Water District maintains trees to preserve riparian habitats. Native trees and plants are critical to the long-term viability of stream habitats. Healthy trees rely on proper maintenance.

The district's tree-maintenance policy balances preservation of native plant life with the community's needs for flood protection, fire-prevention, safety and avoidance of property damage.

This fact sheet provides direction and guidance for maintenance of trees on water district "right-of-way" and easements. District right-of-way is defined as:

1. "Fee title" (district-owned) properties, which the district can manage consistent with federal, state and local laws, and ordinances,
2. Property the district has an exclusionary easement on such that the underlying owner is effectively excluded from actively using the property, or
3. Property where deed or other written agreement assigns tree-maintenance responsibilities to the district. The district also holds land rights in the form of easements.

How are trees on district right-of-way managed?

The district conducts an inspection program and relies on information from the community to identify and prioritize corrective maintenance for trees on its property. The district has the discretion to respond to and take corrective action — dependent on resource availability — for corrective pruning or removal of trees on properties where the district has right-of-way provided:

1. Trees or limbs are hazardous, as determined by an International Society of Arborists-certified tree specialist or other qualified district staff, and have the potential to cause personal injury or significant property damage,
2. Trees or limbs have the potential to impede floodwaters through a creek,



Trees are accessed for potential hazards.

3. Trees or limbs have the potential to be a public safety concern, such as obscuring traffic lines of sight or leaning precariously,
4. Trees or limbs have been identified for removal or trimming to comply with a city ordinance,
5. An invasive species is present, and/or
6. Trees are impeding access for inspection or maintenance of district facilities.

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Pollution hotline

To report illegal dumping of hazardous materials in or around reservoirs and creeks, please call
1-888-510-5151.

Who's responsible for trees on land where the district has an easement?

Typically, easements provide the district with the right (but not the obligation) to trim or remove trees on those properties. The district may, at its discretion, remove or trim trees for any purpose consistent with terms of the easement or, if the property is owned by the district, for any lawful purpose. The district will not provide tree maintenance on property owned by others on which the district has an easement, except under one or more of the six conditions noted earlier.

The district is not responsible for pruning or removing trees on private property for concerns, such as:

1. Causing a private or public nuisance (dropping leaves, seedling volunteers, insect pests, etc.),
2. Impacting aesthetics (blocking of views, shading, etc),
3. Overhanging on adjacent properties which does not create a hazard,
4. Line-of-sight issues not related to public safety, such as partial or complete blocking of business signs, etc.



Tree canopy is thinned for public safety.

Who is responsible for tree-maintenance on private property?

Private property owners are responsible for the maintenance of trees on their property even if the district has an easement. Property owners next to district right-of-way have the legal right to trim overhanging branches of trees located on district property. However, removal or pruning of trees on district property may not be performed without first contacting the water district.

Prior to doing any work on district property, homeowners may contact the district to determine whether a permit is required. Property owners may also be required to secure permits from regulatory agencies such as the California Department of Fish and Game. If entrance onto district property is necessary, an encroachment permit must be secured from the district. All applicable permits must be obtained prior to issuance of a district permit.

Fight West Nile Virus

Target the source. Dump standing water.

For more information, visit Santa Clara County Vector Control District's website at www.sccvector.org, or call the West Nile Virus Hotline at **1-800-314-2427**.



Contact us

On-line permit applications from the water district are available at www.valleywater.org/Business_Info_and_Permits, or by calling **(408) 265-2607**, ext. **2650**, during normal business hours.

For further information on the district's tree-maintenance policy, contact **Rick Austin** at **(408) 265-2607**, ext. **3861**, or raustin@valleywater.org.