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MEDIA RELEASE

Mike Garcia, Fire Chief
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South Laguna Fuel Modification Grant Begins

Laguna Beach, CA – The City of Laguna Beach announces the start of the South Laguna Fuel Modification Project which is funded through a grant provided by the State of California.

In 2019, the City under the leadership of Mayor Whalen, was successful in obtaining fuel modification funding as part of the California State Budget for 2020. AB109 was sponsored by Assemblywoman Petrie-Norris and included a \$1 Million grant for use in the South Laguna area. The grant, administered by the California Department of Natural Resources is known as the “South Laguna Fuel Modification Project”. The grant enables the City of Laguna Beach to complete fuel reduction treatment of 17.26 acres separated into two Fuel Modification Zones (FMZ’s); FMZ 20 (“South Laguna”) and FMZ 21 (“Sunset”) and will create a 100-foot wide buffer of fuel reduction adjacent to homes and businesses. These Fuel Modification Zones also protect Mission Hospital – Laguna Beach and the South Coast Water District Main Facility, both critical infrastructures. The project will occur over a three-year period, with the first phase – sponsorship of all required environmental study and permitting – being currently initiated.

This study period includes biological, archeological, geological and fire behavior studies which are expected to be completed by July, 2021. These studies are part of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) initial study of which results will be available for public review once complete. Public workshops will be scheduled in the spring of 2021 to provide additional information regarding the project and hear public concerns and comments. Reports and additional information will be posted to the City of Laguna Beach Website at www.lagunabeachcity.net, fire department page.

The completed project will tie in with existing fuel modification areas to the north and south, providing consistent community-wide wildfire protection. According to Fire Chief Mike Garcia,

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“With the loss of 441 structures due to wildfire in 1993, Laguna Beach has a long and tragic history of being impacted by wildland fire. By reducing the fuels adjacent to the homes, this project will help protect the citizens of Laguna Beach from fires threatening the City from the East. This project will also help protect the Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Parks from fires that may start in the City.”

