



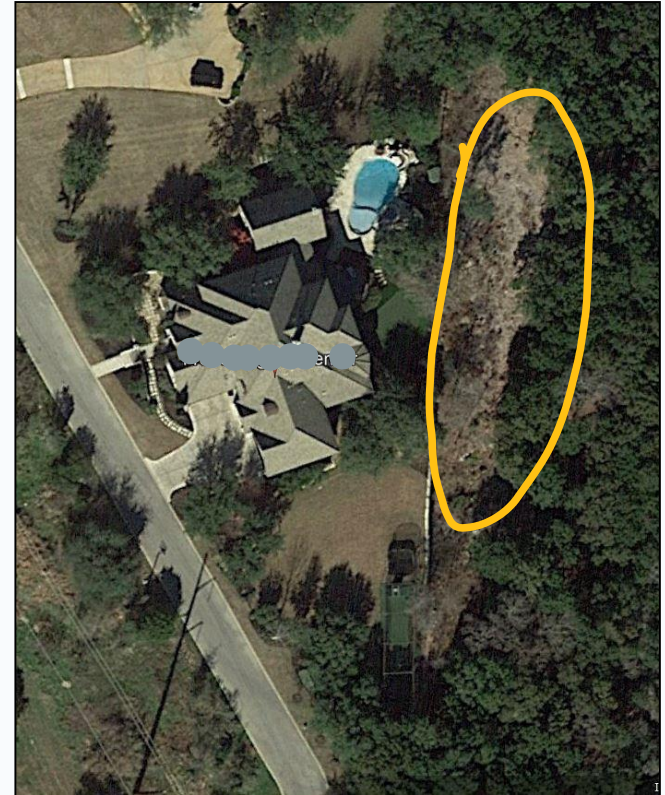
Wildfire Risk Reduction BCP Community Outreach

BCCP Coordinating Committee: November 13, 2020

Johanna Arendt, Travis County BCP Community Liaison

Outreach Goals

- **Reduce wildfire risk** around the preserve – protecting both the community and the BCP
- **Reduce illegal clearing** on the BCP
 - Damages important habitat
 - Often actually increases wildfire risk



Outreach Goals

- Convey BCP's commitment to reducing risk
- Use current scientific research to put local wildfire risk in perspective
- Help people focus their energies on most effective risk reduction strategies
- Foster community partnerships



Outreach Channels

- In-person presentations at community meetings
- Social media posts – FB, Instagram, Next Door
- Articles for community newsletters
- Information on website – more to come



What We Do

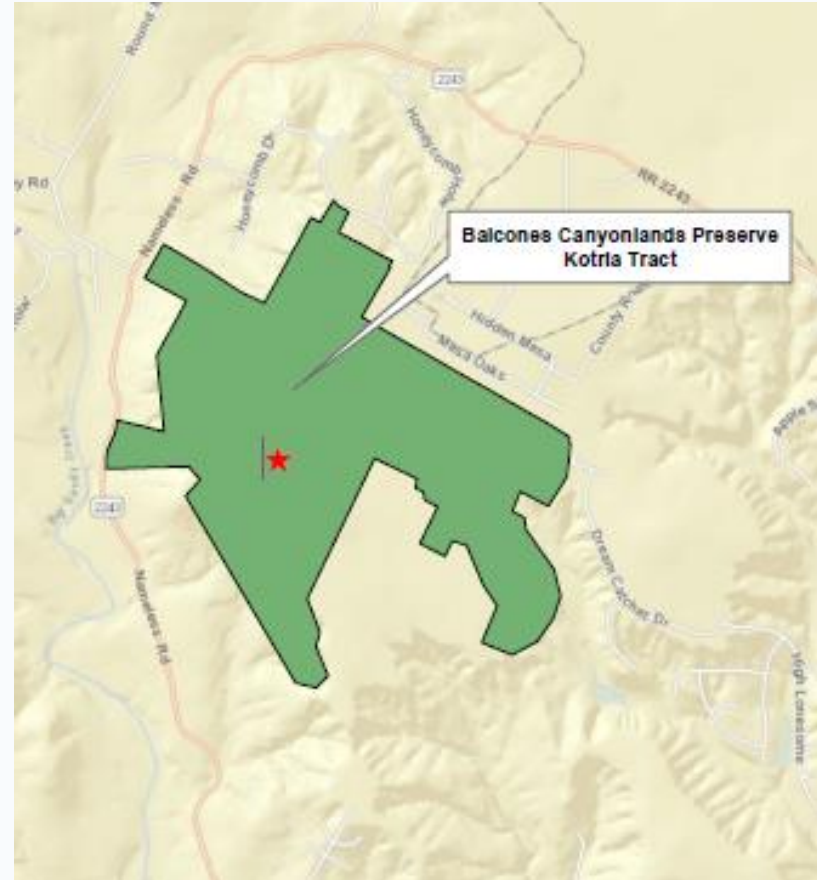


Primary focus is on the County BCP fuel mitigation program

- Shaded fuel breaks (majority) & prescribed burns
- Explain science behind risk reduction strategies

What We Do

- Notify neighbors: letters, emails, Next Door posts & newsletters; explain what's happening & why
- Answer wildfire questions on guided hikes and from volunteers, neighbors, emails, social media, etc.
- Correct common myths and misunderstandings



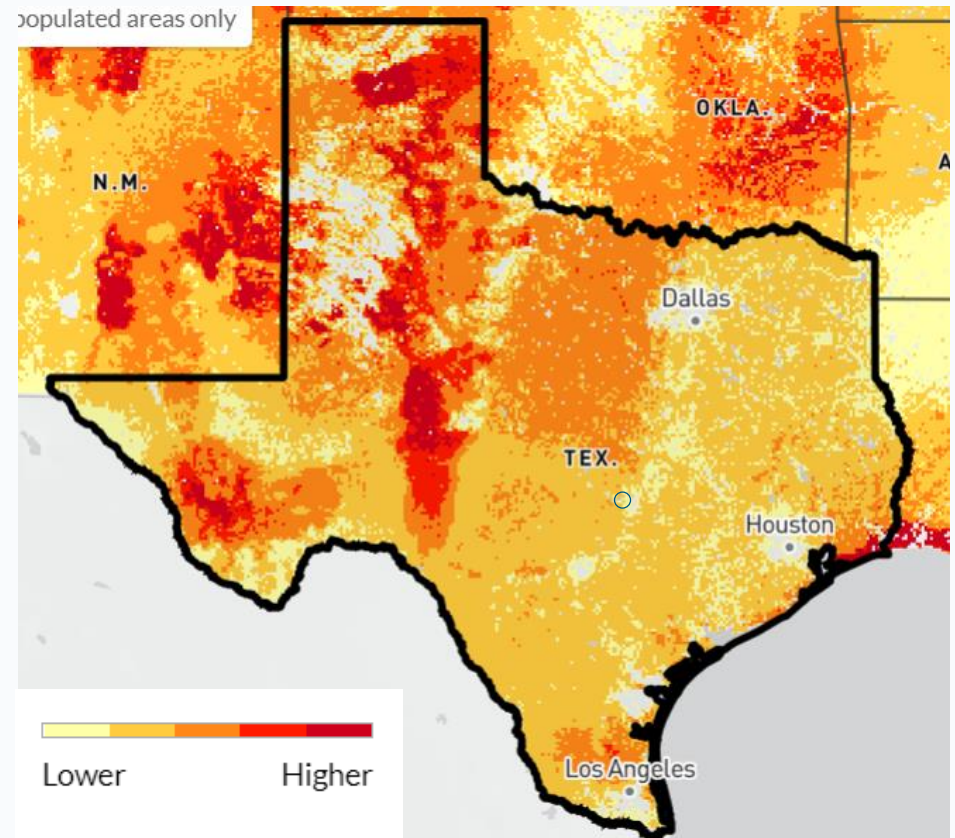
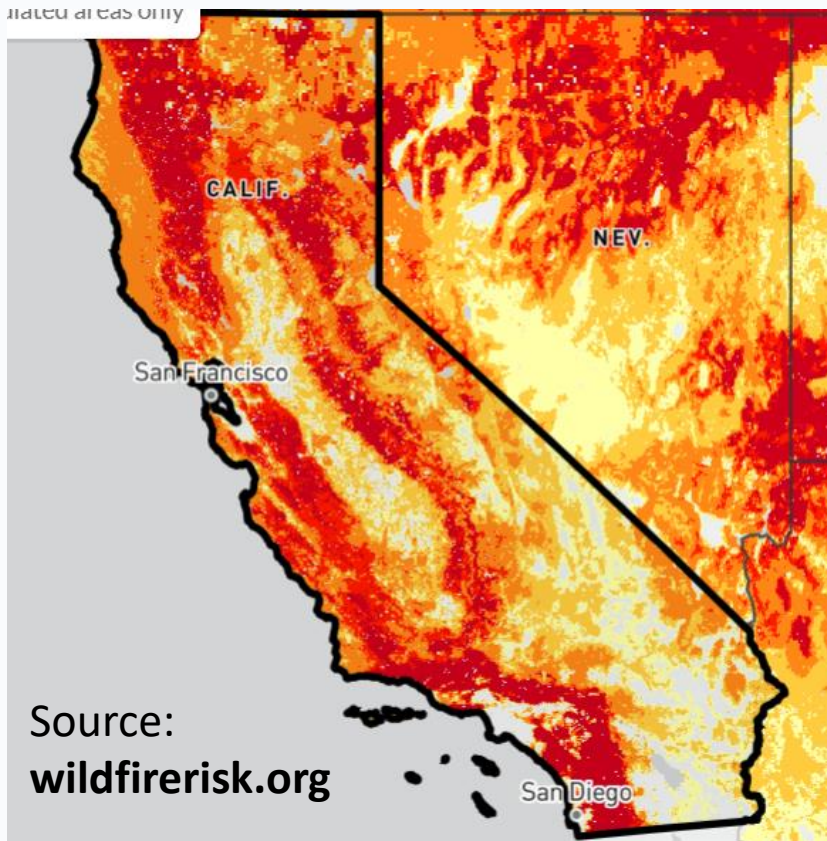
FAQs: BCP Wildfire Risk

Misconception: *Wildfire risk is constant throughout the year*

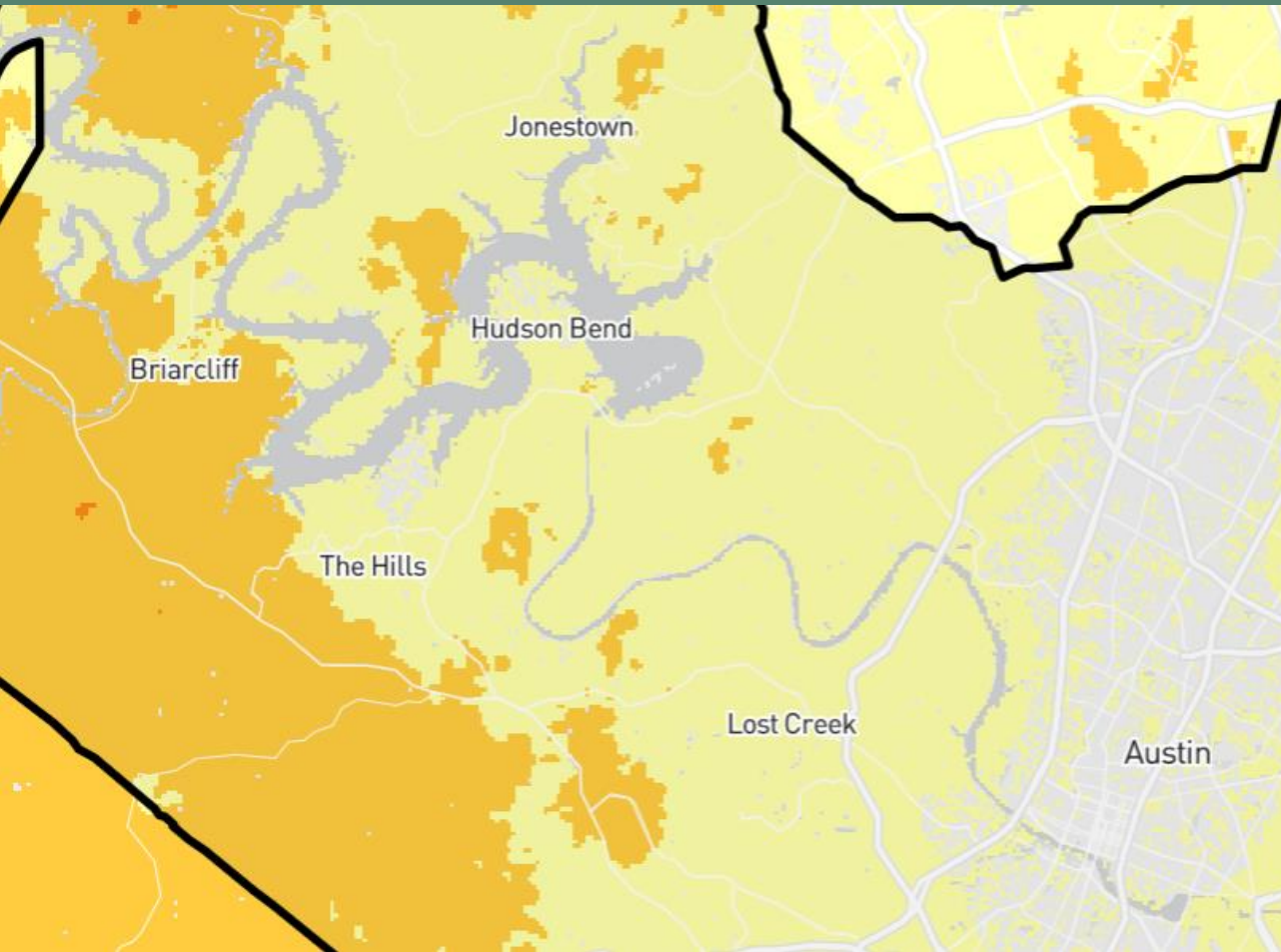
- Mature closed-canopy juniper-oak woodlands are considered to be low risk except during extreme conditions such as extended drought (like in 2011)
- There have been few fires on the BCP lands
 - 27 documented individual fires in 60 years
 - 85% burned less than 2 acres

FAQs: BCP Wildfire Risk

Misconception: our risk level is similar to California or Australia



FAQs: BCP Wildfire Risk

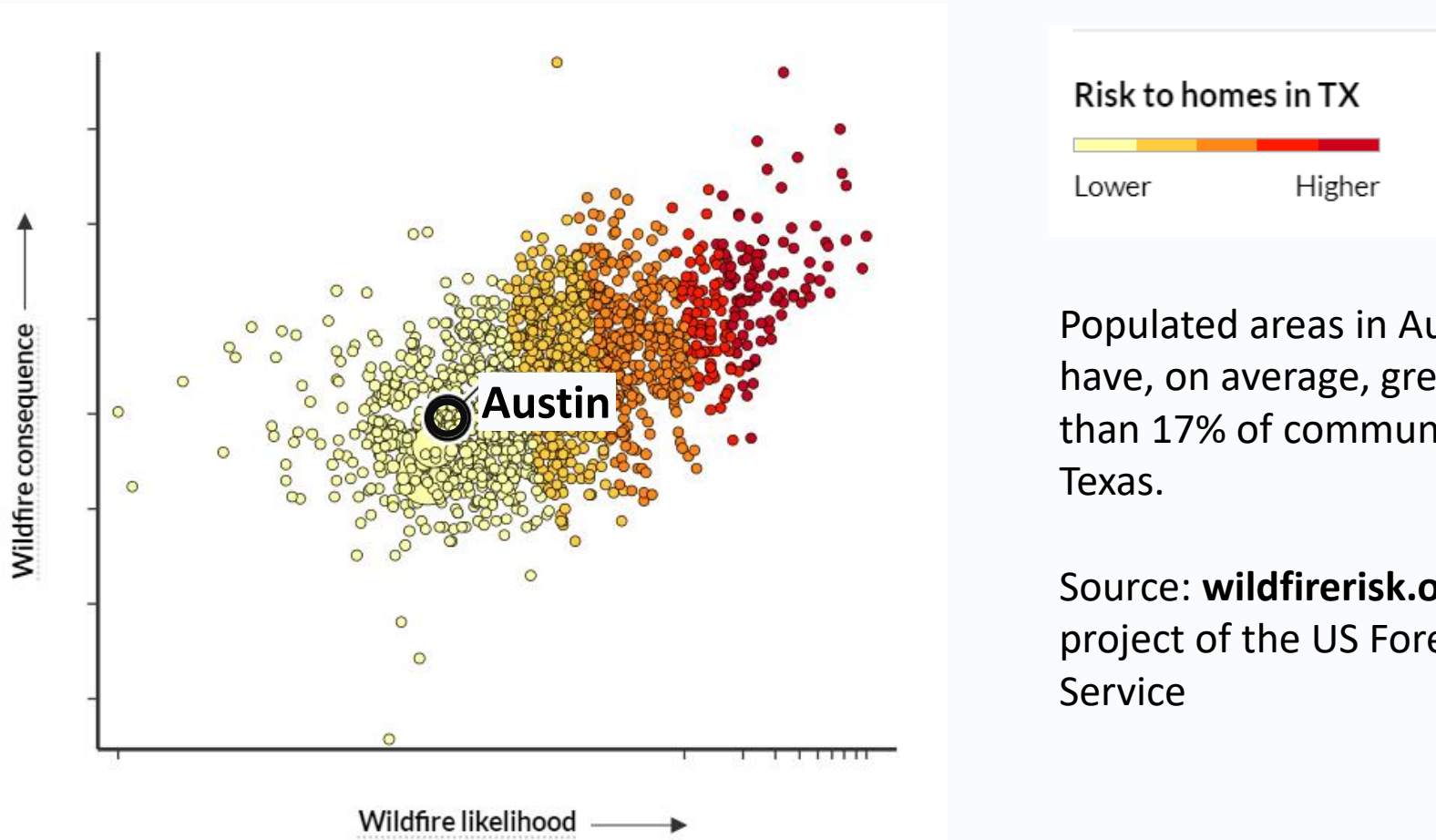


Risk to homes in TX



Source: **wildfirerisk.org**
a project of the US
Forest Service

FAQs: BCP Wildfire Risk



Populated areas in Austin have, on average, greater risk than 17% of communities in Texas.

Source: **wildfirerisk.org**, a project of the US Forest Service

FAQs: Ashe juniper (aka cedar)

Misconception: *Oils in Ashe junipers make them highly flammable*

- According to 2014 study from Baylor University:
 - “stands dominated with juniper should be considered a low fire risk”
 - Ashe junipers contain terpenes, which can be volatile, but not more than what is found in live oak, elm, walnut
- US Forest Service website: mature Ashe junipers in moderate to dense stands are resistant to fire
- Dry grasses are much more likely to ignite than trees

FAQs: How Wildfires Start

Misconception: lightning strikes are a major source

- More than 95% of wildfires are started by people or man-made infrastructure like power lines
- Public education is an important part of preventing fires
 - Social media posts about burn bans
 - Refer people to Travis County Fire Marshal's site for best practices for outdoor welding, grinding, etc.

FAQs: How to Protect Homes

Misconception: *vegetation near homes presents the greatest risk*

- 85-90% of structure fires are caused by embers, rather than approaching flames
- The best way to protect homes is by reducing places embers can ignite – by cleaning gutters, screening vents, removing wood/debris piles, replacing wooden fences & decks
- Outreach and education helps people identify the most effective ways to protect their homes

Source: Texas A&M Forest Service report “2011 Texas Wildfires”



This photo shows an example of structure-to-structure ignition. Note the unburned vegetation surrounding the home, which indicates ground fire intensity was low and points to ember intrusion as a probable factor in ignition.

FAQs: How to Protect Homes

Refer people to resources:

- ***Ready, Set, Go!*** (Central Texas- specific)
- Home assessments done by Travis County Fire Marshal's office, local fire entities, and Firewise committees
- County BCP website's section for preserve neighbors on reducing wildfire risk



Thank you!



Johanna Arendt
Community Liaison
Travis County BCP
Johanna.arendt@traviscountytx.gov

(512) 619-8936