

NEWS RELEASE

SAN LUIS OBISPO UNIT



BURNS PLANNED TO MANAGE INVASIVE SPECIES AND REDUCE WILDFIRE RISK

San Luis Obispo, CA — CAL FIRE San Luis Obispo Unit (SLU), in coordination with multiple partner agencies, will be conducting prescribed burns in California Valley beginning **May 26, 2026**, with operations continuing through **June 19, 2026**, weather and air quality conditions permitting.

The burns will take place in California Valley, adjacent to Fire Station 42, with smoke potentially visible throughout the area, including along Soda Lake Mountain Road, and Soda Lake Road. The public can expect periodic smoke impacts from late May through mid-June.

The burns are part of a coordinated effort between CAL FIRE, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (**CDFW**), Caltrans, the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (**SRT**), and the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (**APCD**). The primary objective is to manage the yellow star thistle, a highly invasive plant species that poses significant environmental, economic, and safety concerns.

Burning is a critical and effective method for managing this invasive species. By burning the plant just before it sets seed, crews can reduce its spread, exhaust the soil seed bank, and create favorable conditions for native grasses and vegetation to recover. Additionally, burning helps reduce the potential for wildfire ignition and spread by lowering available fuel on the landscape.

Personnel assigned to the project will include approximately 3 to 4 fire engines and 1 to 2 hand crews each day. All burning operations will be conducted in strict environmental guidelines and only on permissive burn days as determined by APCD.

The public is advised to use caution when traveling in the area, as fire equipment and personnel may be present along roadways. Residents and visitors may experience smoke during the burn window, but this is a planned and controlled operation.

