

Silverado, Blue Ridge, and Bond Fires Update

Background

Two wind-driven fires occurred in Orange County on October 26, 2020. The Silverado fire started in the morning near Santiago Canyon Road and Silverado Canyon Road in unincorporated Orange County and quickly spread toward Irvine. The Blue Ridge fire started in the afternoon near the Green River Golf Club and State Route 91 and quickly spread into Chino Hills State Park toward Yorba Linda burning in both San Bernardino and Orange counties. The Blue Ridge fire burned a total of 13,964 acres. The fires did not impact any of the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) preserves. However, three habitat restoration projects funded by OCTA were affected by the Silverado fire.

A third wind-driven fire occurred in Orange County late in the evening on December 2, 2020. The fire ignited in Silverado Canyon in unincorporated Orange County and spread west towards Irvine. The fire narrowly missed the OCTA EMP Silverado Chaparral Preserve. The West Loma Restoration Project, which had been previously impacted by the Silverado fire was once again impacted by the Bond fire. The three fires, together with the OCTA Preserves and restoration projects, have been mapped and are attached (Exhibit A through Exhibit C). A summary of the impacts is provided below.

Discussion

The Blue Ridge fire did not impact any of the OCTA Preserves or restoration projects. However, the October Silverado fire located in the eastern part of the County, burned approximately 12,466 acres and impacted three OCTA restoration projects. In addition, the Bond fire also located in the eastern part of the County, burned approximately 6,686 acres in December and impacted the OCTA funded West Loma and Bee Flat Canyon restoration projects. The West Loma and Bee Flat restoration projects were also previously impacted by the Silverado fire. The Silverado Chaparral Preserve (204 acres) was not far from where the Silverado fire ignited and again narrowly missed being burned by the Bond fire in December. The table below provides a breakdown of the impacts caused by these fires.

The Irvine Ranch Conservancy (IRC) has sponsored several OCTA restoration projects. Based on coordination and site visits with the IRC, three projects have been affected. These restoration projects include West Loma, Bee Flat Canyon, and Agua Chinon.

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The Bee Flat Canyon and Agua Chinon restoration areas are in different geographic locations but were funded together as one project by OCTA. The Bee Flat Canyon Restoration Project was just approved and accepted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Wildlife Agencies). OCTA staff highlighted this successful restoration project at the August 5, 2020 Environmental Oversight Committee (EOC) meeting.

The West Loma and Agua Chinon projects are in various stages of restoration and have not yet been signed off. Agua Chinon was anticipated to be signed off in 2021 (see the table below for more details).

IRC Restoration Projects Impacted by the Recent Fires

Name	Project Cost	Approximate Acreage	Acreage Burned Silverado Fire*	Acreage Burned Bond Fire*	Total Acreage Burned*
West Loma	\$1,322,800	62	0.8	26	26.8
Bee Flat Canyon and Agua Chinon	\$1,497,160	84	82.6	1.4	84
		6	6	0	6

*Acreage is estimated for impacts until the projects can be fully assessed by IRC staff.

In summary, none of the OCTA preserves were affected by the fires, but three OCTA-funded restoration projects were affected between the Silverado and Bond fires.

Next Steps

OCTA will continue to coordinate closely with the IRC and the Wildlife Agencies to discuss project needs and recommendations, as well as OCTA's commitments and obligations. Updates will be provided to the EOC.

Exhibit A: OCTA Preserves and Restoration Projects near Silverado Fire

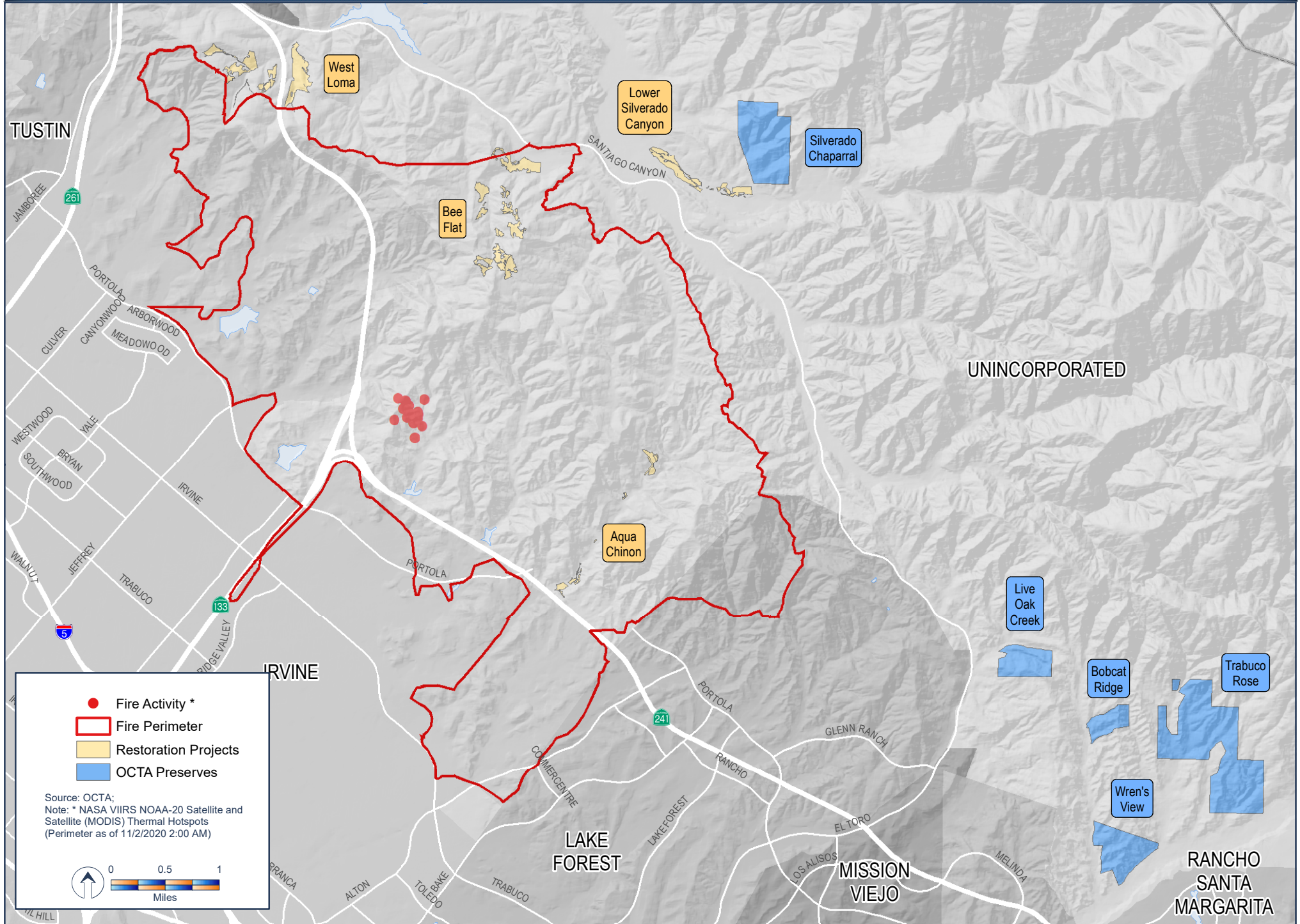


Exhibit B: OCTA Preserves and Restoration Projects near Blue Ridge Fire

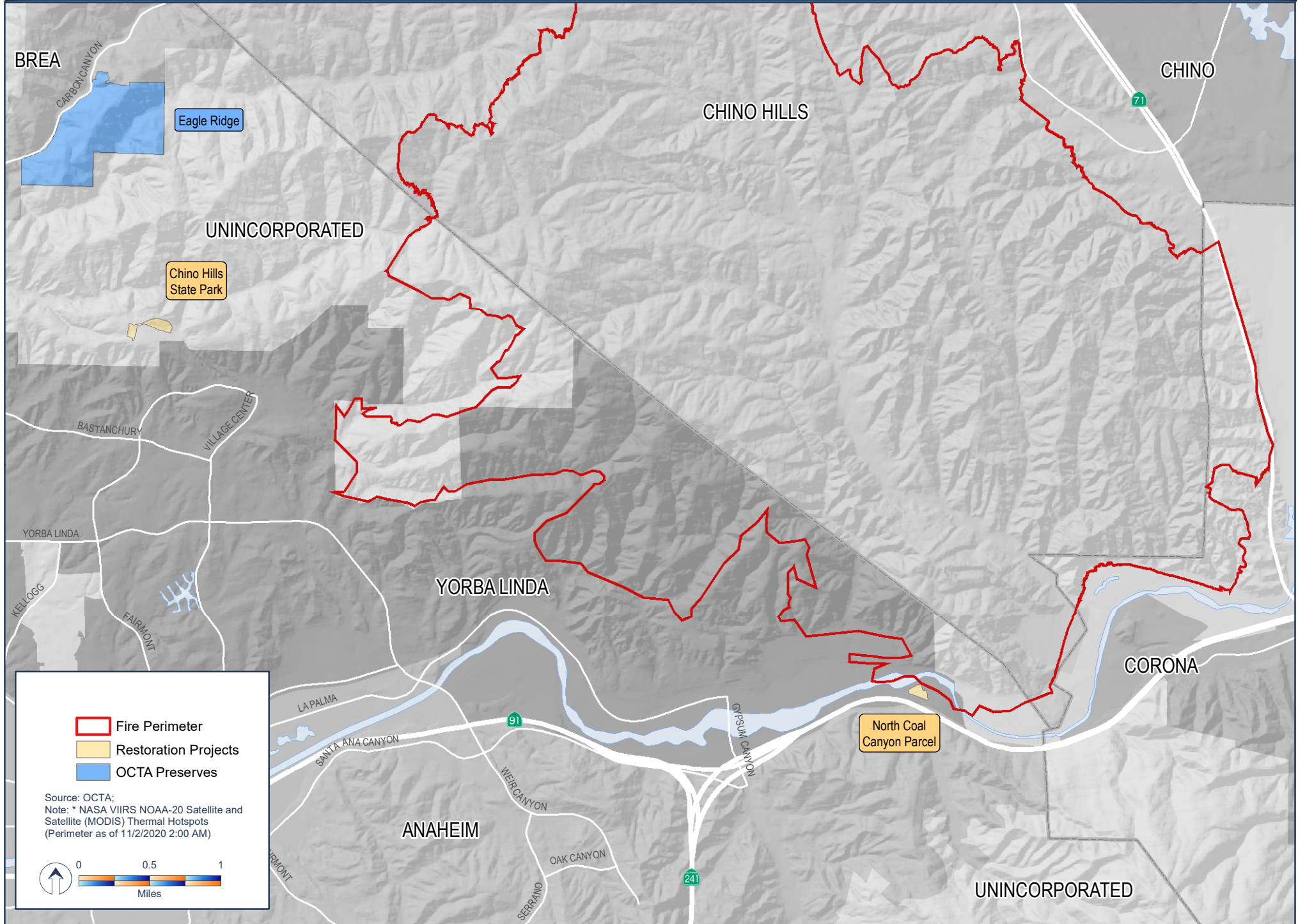


Exhibit C: OCTA Preserves and Restoration Projects Near Bond and Silverado Fires

