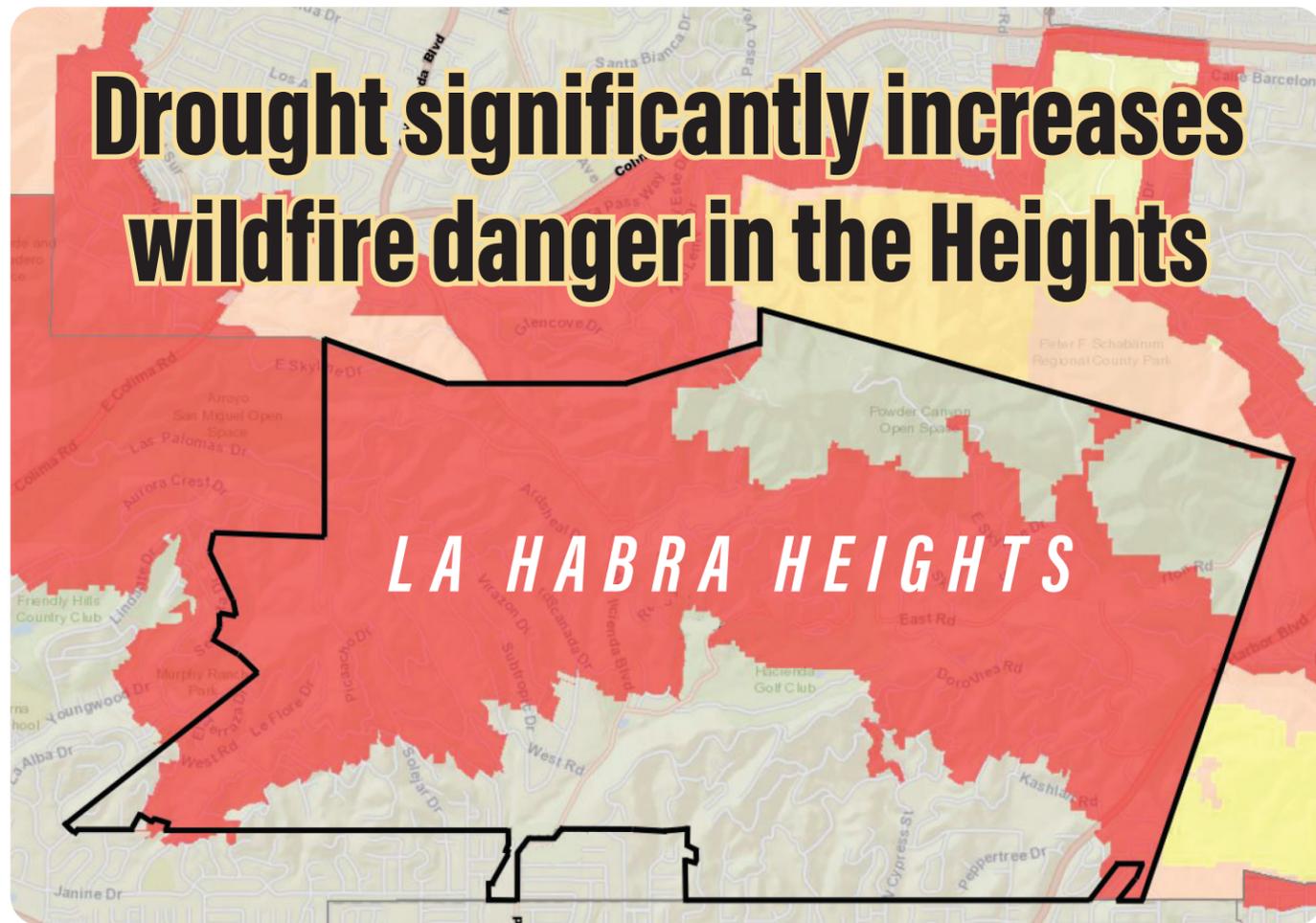


Drought significantly increases wildfire danger in the Heights



Last year's severe drought conditions contributed to the worst wildfire season in California history, which included five of the six largest fires in the state's history and more than 4.2 million scorched acres.

The drought *this* year is shaping up to be even worse—which is bad news for La Habra Heights, more than half of which has been designated by the state as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ—the area shown in red on the map above).

Although we had an unusually dry autumn in Southern California, winter rainfall in our area got off to a good start, and major rainstorms in late January brought hope of at last breaking the prolonged drought. But in the subsequent winter and spring months, precipitation levels were well below normal, and April was one of the driest on record.

Amanda Sheffield, an expert with the U.S. National Integrated Drought Information System, summed it up: "As California got further into the wet season, it became clear that the number of major storms, such as atmospheric rivers, needed to ameliorate the drought were not coming, and drought conditions and impacts across sectors intensified and expanded." She noted that for our last two wet seasons, a persistent ridge of high pressure in the central

and eastern Pacific has diverted most storms out of the state. Thus the current water year is quickly becoming SoCal's third driest ever.

If this keeps up, as predicted, all the green grasses, weeds and brush in our Heights hills won't stay green much longer—and when they start to dry out and turn yellow, fire danger here will escalate markedly because of the abundance of available fuel for any hungry spark. That's why it's so important to keep up with fuel elimination on your property. As Fire Chief Doug Graft keeps telling us: "Brush clearance is our best defense!"



Trees will also start to dry out and become fire dangers, especially eucalyptus (see page 8), pines and shaggy, untrimmed palms. If you can't trim all your trees yourself, call in professionals, including those who advertise in *Heights Life* (see pages 5, 11, 12 and 13).

Starting May 1, Fire Department inspectors will be out in force to examine all Heights properties for fire dangers. One way or another, properties that don't meet LHH brush-clearance requirements will be brought into compliance, even if it means citations, fines and bringing in outside contractors for which property owners will have to pay. *Please do your part and help keep our Heights safe!*