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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Team Rubicon USA, Mill Creek COPE (Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies), Healdsburg Fire Department and Northern Sonoma County Fire District JOINT PRESS RELEASE**

#### **"Team Rubicon is returning to the Healdsburg area of Sonoma County to assist with fire mitigation efforts."**

**HEALDSBURG, CA (Mar. 29, 2021)** – Team Rubicon, a veteran-led global disaster response organization, is returning to resume an operation to reduce hazard vegetation along strategic ridgelines to enhance protection from future wildfires within the community. Operations for this segment will begin on Friday, March 26 and last until Saturday, April 3, 2021. The efforts will help foster more fire-resilient coast redwood forests by reducing the unnaturally dense amount of dead tan oaks and other wildfire “ladder” fuels along two strategic ridgelines in the Mill Creek area.

Team Rubicon volunteers will assist in ongoing fire mitigation work by providing chainsaw operations to remove hazardous vegetation to predesignated chip or burn piles, along the Daniels Ridge area of Mill Creek, in coordination with local volunteer groups and authorities. The area of operation represents a portion of the larger Cloud Ridge shaded fuel break, a high priority area that could serve as a fire buffer and slow down zone as outlined in the recently updated Mill Creek Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

“As a Team Rubicon volunteer, myself and other Greyshirts are looking forward to helping the Mill Creek Community mitigate the damage from the recent Walbridge Fire, and hopefully help slow future wildfires. Our organization has been on the ground in the aftermath of disasters all over the world, so for us it’s great to be here helping this, our local community build resiliency against future disasters.” said Autrey James, Incident Commander.

The 55,000-acre Walbridge Fire west of Healdsburg burned over 90% (~17,700 acres) of the 20,000 acre Mill Creek Community forest lands in August 2020, and destroyed hundreds of homes and structures, “We are extremely grateful and fortunate to have Team Rubicon volunteers assist us in our efforts here” said Mill Creek COPE Leader Dan Grout, who is a wildlife biologist and someone whose Mill Creek home and ranch was incinerated in the Walbridge Fire blaze.

“Team Rubicon has come and touched the lives of those that have lost so much during these wildfires. The fuels reduction project will help firefighters during future wildfires. The reason this work could be started quickly was the Mill Creek COPE had a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in place prior to the Walbridge Fire. This area was an identified fuels reduction project by fire agencies and Mill Creek COPE. It takes coordination and buy in from

property owners, fire agencies and environmental groups. Team Rubicon shows up ready to work and are so positive. They work around the world helping others after they have given so much as our military veterans. We are so appreciative that they have come to Sonoma County. Team Rubicon is funded through donations.” said Linda Collister, Fire Marshal/Division Chief Healdsburg Fire Department

The area is part of the LNU Complex Fire which was a combination of numerous lightning-sparked fires. The 2020 LNU Complex Fires burned a total of 363,220 acres and is currently the fourth-largest wildfire in California’s recorded history. In 2018, the Mill Creek Community formed a COPE organization, (Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies) to be better prepared to prevent, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Recently, the Mill Creek COPE worked with local firefighting agencies to identify strategic shaded fuel breaks that will serve to reduce the risk of fire propagation and enable firefighters to control future wildfires more effectively in the community.

Through a robust and cutting-edge technology infrastructure, Team Rubicon volunteers efficiently help families back into their homes as quickly as possible, prioritizing aid to the most vulnerable among disaster-affected populations. Leveraging the skills and experience of military veterans in its disaster responses makes the organization’s teams uniquely effective. With each operation, Team Rubicon provides veterans the opportunity to continue their service to others in a meaningful way after re-entering civilian life. With Team Rubicon, many veterans find a renewed sense of community, identity, and purpose similar to what they felt while serving uniform.

### **About Team Rubicon**

*Team Rubicon serves communities by mobilizing veterans to continue their service by leveraging their skills and experience to help people prepare, respond, and recover from disasters and humanitarian crises. Founded following the Haiti earthquake in 2010, the organization has grown to over 138,000 volunteers across the United States and has launched over 790 operations both domestically and internationally. Amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, Team Rubicon has not only pivoted to be able to continue to deliver disaster response and rebuild services in core mission areas but has also expanded their scope of missions to meet community needs brought about by COVID. Visit [www.teamrubiconusa.org](http://www.teamrubiconusa.org) for more information.*

*To join or support Team Rubicon’s mission, visit <http://www.teamrubiconusa.org>.*

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