

**Santa Clara Unit
Strategic Fire Plan, 2011**

SECTION III: VALUES AT RISK

A: ASSETS AT RISK



The primary goal of wildland fire protection in the Santa Clara Unit is to safeguard the wide range of assets found within the unit from the effects of wildfire. The assets at risk are the public and private assets that the wildland fire protection system is created and funded to protect. The following have been identified as assets at risk from wildfires and delineates their economic and non-economic assets: people, structures, timber, watershed, wildlife, unique scenic and recreation areas, range, wildlife, and air quality.

The table below provides a description of the assets evaluated.

Asset at Risk	Public Issue Category	Location and ranking methodology
Fire-flood watersheds	Public safety Public welfare	Watersheds with a history of problems or proper conditions for future problems, ranked based on affected downstream population
Soil erosion	Environment	Watersheds ranked based on erosion potential
Water storage	Public welfare	Watershed area up to 20 miles upstream from water storage facility, ranked based on water value and dead storage capacity of facility
Water supply	Public health	Watershed area up to 20 miles upstream from water supply facility
Scenic	Public welfare	Four mile view shed around Scenic Highways and 1/4 mile view shed around Wild and Scenic Rivers, ranked based on potential impacts to vegetation types (tree versus non-tree types)
Timber	Public welfare	Timberlands ranked based on value/susceptibility to damage
Range	Public welfare	Rangeland ranked based on potential replacement feed cost by region/owner/vegetation type

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Air quality	Public health Environment Public welfare	Potential damages to health, materials, vegetation, and visibility; ranked based on vegetation type and air basin
Historic buildings	Public welfare	Historic buildings ranked based on fire susceptibility
Recreation	Public welfare	Unique recreation areas or areas with potential damage to facilities, ranked based on fire susceptibility
Structures	Public safety Public welfare	Ranked based on housing density and fire susceptibility
Non-game wildlife	Environment Public welfare	Critical habitats and species locations based on input from California Department of Fish and Game and other stakeholders
Game wildlife	Public welfare Environment	Critical habitats and species locations based on input from California Department of Fish and Game and other stakeholders
Infrastructure	Public safety Public welfare	Infrastructure for delivery of emergency and other critical services (e.g. repeater sites, transmission lines)
Ecosystem Health	Environment	Ranking based on vegetation type/fuel characteristics

An example of an asset at risk within the Santa Clara Unit is the Mt. Hamilton Observatory. This observatory dates back to the late 1800's in which an observatory was built at the top of Mount Hamilton, located east of San Jose. This observatory would grow throughout the years and now has 9 research grade telescopes located in the area. A large number of structures including residences and other support facilities exist at the observatory. Due to the location of Mount Hamilton, numerous radio and microwave towers have been erected over the years as well as Copernicus Fire Lookout which is staffed during periods of high fire danger.

Many factors are involved in target area and asset at risk identification, including political climate of the region and suppression cost reductions. By looking at the 'big picture' and identifying the assets at risk, Santa Clara Unit staff along with input from other agencies and the public can confidently protect these areas by prioritizing pre-fire projects.

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B: COMMUNITIES AT RISK

During the 2000 fire season wildfires burned millions of acres throughout the United States. These fires dramatically illustrated the threat to human lives and development. Under Executive Order, the National Fire Plan was created as a cooperative, long-term effort of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of the Interior and the National Association of State Foresters, to protect communities and restore ecological health on Federal lands.

A major component of the National Fire Plan was funding for projects designed to reduce fire risks to people and their property. A fundamental step in realizing this goal was the identification of areas that are at high risk of damage from wildfire. Federal fire managers authorized State Foresters to determine which communities were under significant risk from wildland fire on Federal lands.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection undertook the task of generating the state's list of communities at risk. With California's extensive Wildland-Urban Interface situation the list of communities extends beyond just those on Federal lands.

Three main factors were used to determine wildland fire threat to Wildland-Urban Interface areas of California.

- **Ranking Fuel Hazards:** ranking vegetation types by their potential fire behavior during a wildfire.
- **Assessing the Probability of Fire:** the annual likelihood that a large damaging wildfire would occur in a particular vegetation type.
- **Defining Areas of Suitable Housing Density that Would Create Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Protection Strategy Situations:** areas of intermingled wildland fuels and urban environments that are in the vicinity of fire threats.

The Communities at Risk list includes a total of 1,264 communities. Of those, 843 are adjacent to federal lands (U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Defense, etc.).

To help protect people and their property from potential catastrophic wildfire, the National Fire Plan directs funding to be provided for projects designed to reduce the fire risks to communities. A fundamental step in achieving this goal was the identification of communities that are at high risk of damage from wildfire. These high risk communities identified within the wildland-urban interface, the area where homes and wildlands intermix, were published in the Federal Register in 2001. At the request of Congress, the Federal Register notice only listed those communities neighboring federal lands.

The list represents the collaborative work of the 50 states and five federal agencies using a standardized process, whereby states were asked to submit all communities within their borders that met the criteria of a structure at high risk from wildfire.

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With California's extensive urban Wildland-Urban Interface situation, the list of communities extends beyond just those adjacent to Federal lands. There are 1,287 communities currently on the Communities at Risk List. The California State Forester (CAL FIRE Director) has assigned the role of managing the list to the California Fire Alliance.

Within Santa Clara Unit, there are 50 designated Communities at Risk. The following list contains all the Communities at Risk within the unit, year they were designated, and if the community is considered a Federal Threat (listed by county):

Contra Costa

- Alamo, 2001 (Federal Threat)
- Antioch, 2001
- Blackhawk, 2001
- Brentwood, 2001
- Clayton, 2001 (Federal Threat)
- Concord, 2001 (Federal Threat)
- Crockett, 2001
- Danville, 2001
- East Richmond Heights, 2001
- El Cerrito, 2001
- El Sobrante, 2001
- Hercules, 2001
- Kensington, 2001
- Lafayette, 2001
- Martinez, 2001
- Moraga, 2001
- Orinda, 2001
- Pinole, 2001
- Pittsburg, 2001
- Pleasant Hill, 2001
- Richmond, 2001
- Rodeo, 2001
- San Ramon, 2001
- Walnut Creek, 2001
- West Pittsburg, 2001

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Alameda

- Berkeley, 2001
- Castro Valley, 2001
- Dublin, 2001 (Federal Threat)
- Fairview, 2001
- Fremont, 2001
- Hayward, 2001
- Livermore, 2001
- Oakland, 2001
- Pleasanton, 2001 (Federal Threat)
- San Leandro, 2001
- Union City, 2001

Santa Clara

- Cupertino, 2001
- East Foothills, 2001
- Gilroy, 2001
- Lexington Hills, 2001
- Los Alto Hills, 2001
- Los Gatos, 2001
- Milpitas, 2001
- Monte Sereno, 2001
- Morgan Hill, 2001
- Palo Alto, 2001
- San Jose, 2001
- San Martin, 2001
- Saratoga, 2001
- Stanford, 2001