

VIII. PROJECTS

This portion of the Plan elaborates on projects, or what has been done “on the ground” prior to a wildfire to mitigate the loss from large and damaging wildfires. Projects are classified by battalions since the battalion level is the lowest field level supervisor. There are ten field battalions in the Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit (LNU) as illustrated in the figure below.

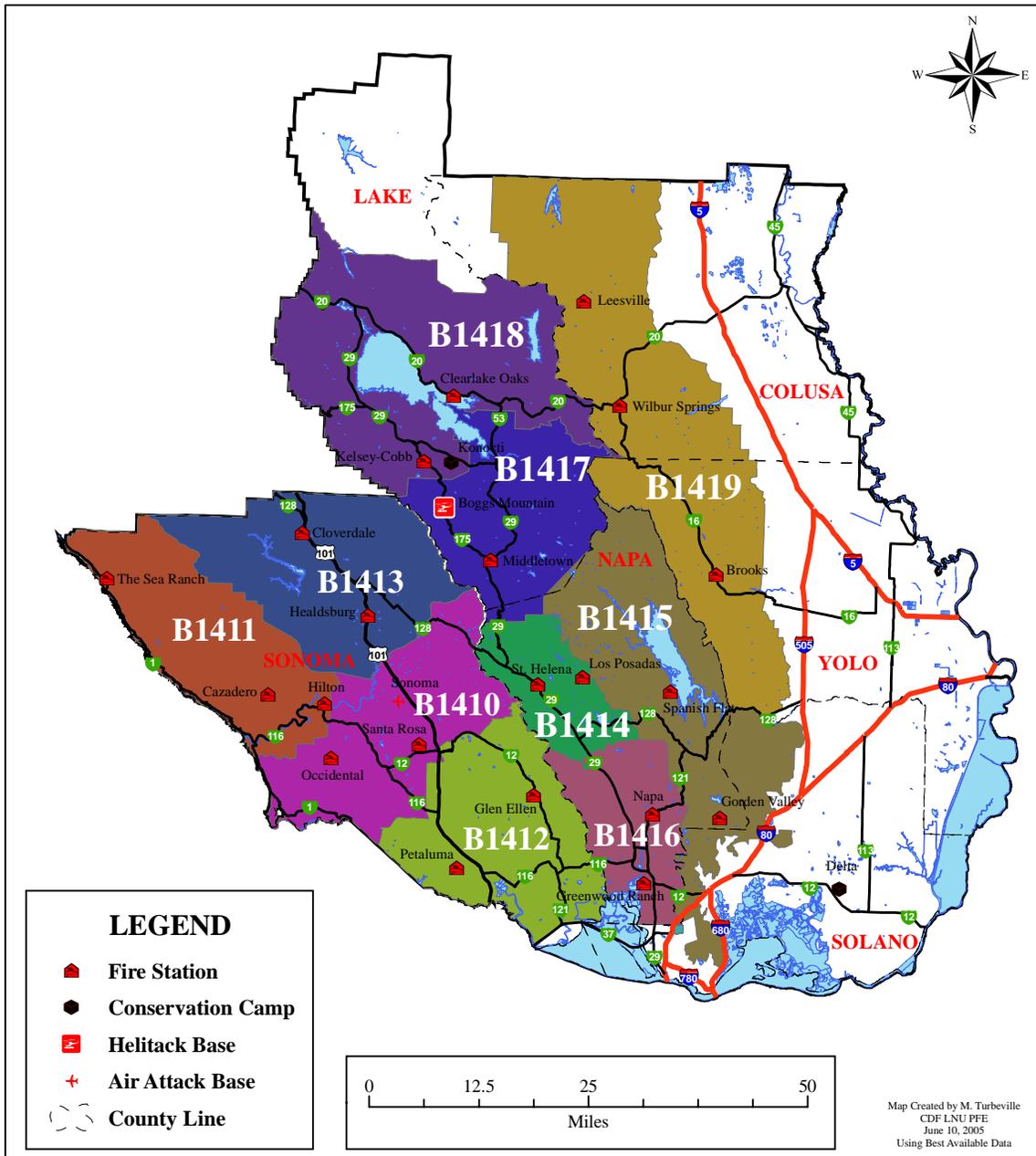


Figure 23: LNU Field Battalions

A. Battalion 1410 (Mike Mickelson)

Battalion 1410 spans from the Pacific Ocean to the top of Mt. Saint Helena running the width of Sonoma County, and an elevation difference of over 4,300 feet. The battalion is characterized by a LRA valley floor, the Santa Rosa plain, with SRA on both sides. There are many paid local government fire departments and the largest city in the Unit, Santa Rosa, is located within the battalion. There are three CDF fire engines, one at the Santa Rosa station and two at Occidental.

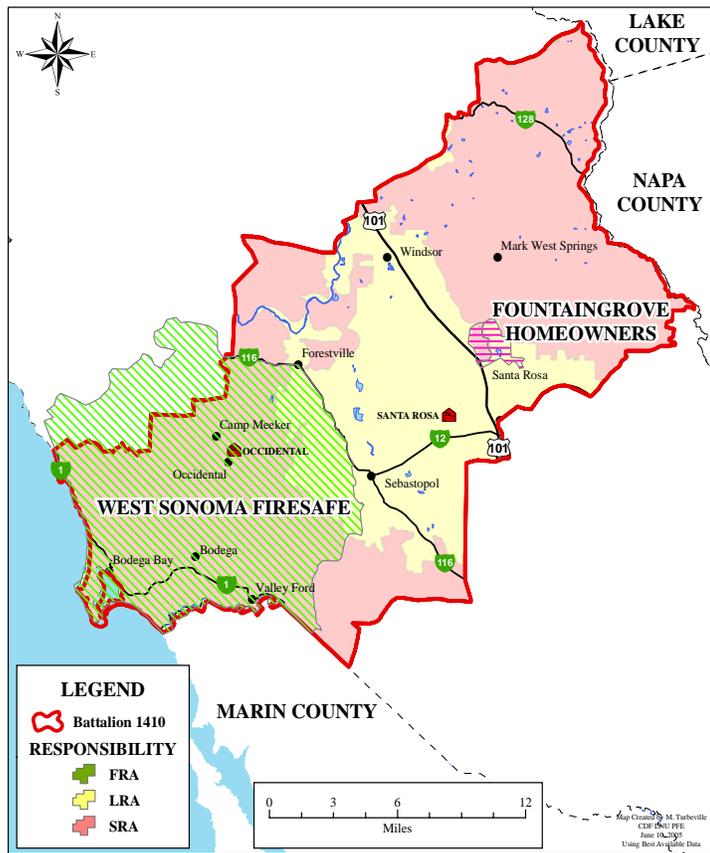


Figure 23: Battalion 1410

Every incident becomes multi-agency and often with structures being threatened. The perimeter of the 1964 Hanley fire when placed over the footprint of Santa Rosa City and the adjacent area encompasses over 1,000 structures.

Battalion Chief Mike Mickelson transferred into the battalion effective June 6th, 2005 following the retirement of Mike Foley.

1) Past Projects

In June of 2003, the West Sonoma Firesafe Council obtained a \$28,000 BLM Community Based Wildfire Prevention Program Grant. This Grant helped to solidify the formation of the Council and to address fuel reduction in the rural area of western Sonoma County surrounding the community of



Photo 19: Coleman Valley Shaded Fuelbreak

Occidental. The Council used the grant to provide a “free” chipper with operator to residents who cleared vegetation around their residence, a demonstration shaded fuelbreak along Coleman Valley Road, (Photo 19) and a community presentation by a fire ecologist. Chipping was done along Joy Road. (The Council area is defined by watersheds and Highway 116, and thus a portion of the Council is in Battalion 1411.)

Chief Foley had worked with the Foothill Homeowners’ Association to help them understand the risk of fire and the importance of defensible space. He also advised them on areas for fuels reduction and evacuation advice.

The Fountaingrove Homeowners’ Associations I and II held meetings with Chief Foley to address their concerns with wildfire. CDF responds to fires in the Fountaingrove area under a mutual threat zone (MTZ) agreement. The area is located adjacent to SRA, and has a high potential for significant dollar loss.



Photo 20: Example of the Urban Interface within and adjacent to the City of Santa Rosa

The City of Santa Rosa fire department published a fuel reduction plan for the wildland immediately adjacent to the city limits including Annadel State Park. The consultant focused on classifying the fuels and then recommending specific treatment methods. The treatments were then prioritized. It is to be seen if the City can follow through on any fuel reduction as proposed in the plan. There is the potential for the City to work with CDF to accomplish some of the fuel reduction.

2) Current Projects

There are no current projects in the West Sonoma Firesafe Council area. The Council was denied on their last grant request. FireSafe Sonoma, which encompasses the entire county, continues to hold meetings and work in support of projects.

Battalion 1410 personnel will work with the Rincon Valley Fire Protection District to complete LE-38 defensible space inspection in the rural area east of Santa Rosa near Calistoga Road during the 2005 fire season.

3) Future Projects and Priority Rankings

With the change in battalion chief, there are no proposed projects. It is anticipated that future projects will focus on areas identified as high risk/high hazard, support the West Sonoma FireSafe Council and the City of Santa Rosa.

B. Battalion 1411 (Deanna Baxman)

Battalion 1411 encompasses the northwestern edge of the Unit, and some of the most rural areas of Sonoma County. All of the battalion is SRA, 236,638 acres, with the exception of a few parcels of FRA in BLM's Austin Creek/Cazadero holdings, and the Kashia Indian Reservation. Russian River Fire Protection District is the only paid local government fire department, except for a CDF Schedule A program at The Sea Ranch. There are four CDF fire engines in the battalion, one at The Sea Ranch, another near the small community of Cazadero, and two just east of Rio Nido along Highway 116 at Hilton.

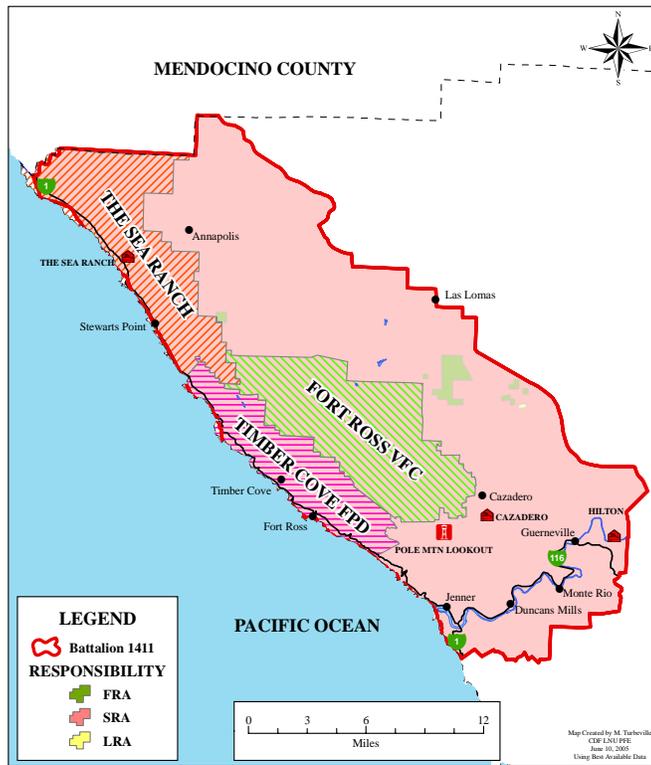


Figure 24: Battalion 1411

One of the previously mentioned wildfire corridors is located in Battalion 1411, along Highway 116, and the residents of the battalion are very aware of risk of wildfire. The Creighton Ridge fire of 1978 hasn't been forgotten.

Unique to the battalion is The Sea Ranch and Pole Mountain Lookout. The Sea Ranch was created in the late 1970s with the acquisition of 3,500 acres of land that was used as a sheep ranch. The result is a 2,300-parcel subdivision that has a well-organized association, The Sea Ranch Association (TSRA) that is very aware of the wildfire hazard. Pole Mountain Lookout is a privately funded lookout, possibly the only of its' kind in the state, with funds being raised from local communities. Pole Mountain is staffed daily throughout the fire season and is instrumental in the detection of local fires and provides weather observations.

1) Past Projects

Since 1983, the Unit has had a series of VMP projects in The Sea Ranch Area. CDF staff worked with the TSRA in development of their Fire Management Plan in 1990. Since that plan was adopted, the wildland-urban interface fire problem has evolved with the construction of more homes, an increase in understory fuels, the invasion of

grasslands by shrub species, and a decline in the health of non-native pine trees. TSRA hired a consultant and using their own Association funds have begun to implement fuel reduction projects. Emphasis is placed on the lands adjacent and grasslands west of Highway 1.

In the Timber Cove area, a fuel reduction project funded by BLM through the Community Based Wildfire Prevention Grants Program created a shaded fuelbreak along Ruoff Road between Highway 1 and Timber Cove Road. Ruoff Road transects an area of timbered wildland that has been developed. The road provides access to many homes, and was not passable to two-way traffic in many locations because of the narrow paving and encroaching vegetation. The

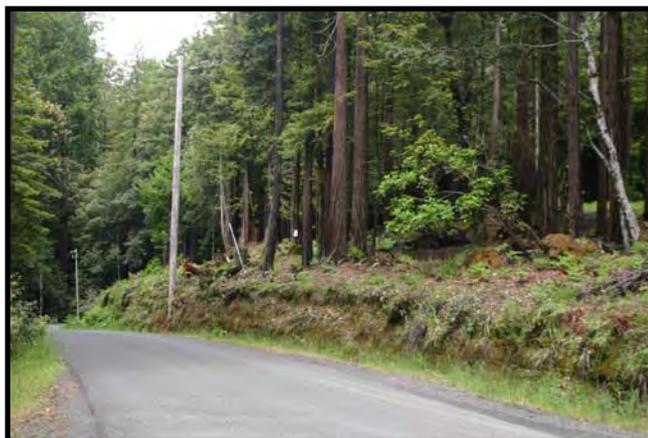


Photo 21: Ruoff Road Two Years After Shaded Fuelbreak Established

The fuelbreak will provide for evacuation, access for firefighting resources, and a possible “line” to halt a fire. The grant was sponsored through Fire Safe Sonoma, with staff support provided by CDF and the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services.



The Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company has been active in the reduction of fuel loading through coordinated chipping and formation of shaded fuelbreaks, through the same funding mechanism and administration as the Timber Cove area. A California Conservation Corps (CCC) crew was used in place of a private contractor to complete the work. The CCC crew worked with the residents to clear and chip several shaded fuelbreaks.

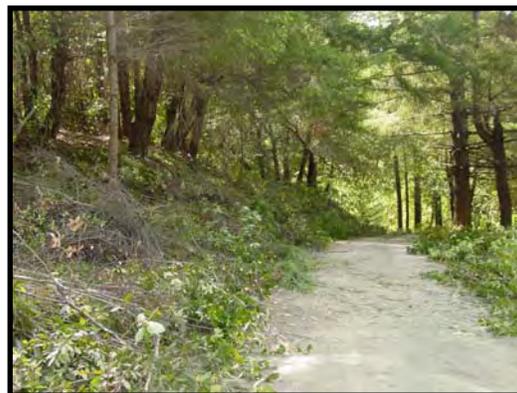


Photo 22: CCC Crew Working on one of Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company’s Shaded Fuelbreaks

2) Present Projects

The TSRA last updated their fire plan in November of 2002, and is currently working on updating it again. All funding is through a parcel assessment fee. Annually, the TSRA still coordinates fuel reduction through the use of mowing and grazing. CDF personnel assigned to The Sea Ranch fire station aggressively completes 500 to 1,600 LE-38 defensible space inspections each year.



Photo 23: Goats and Sheep Grazing at The Sea Ranch

Battalion 1411 personnel annually post fire prevention signs along the major roadway corridors, conduct LE-38 defensible space inspections in target areas, maintain a presence at large community events, and participate in many other forms of public education.

Battalion Chief Baxman conducts powerline and pole inspections annually in her battalion. She is also aware of several California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) projects within her battalion but has very little involvement in their administration since the projects are coordinated at CDF's Northern Region office.

3) Future Projects and Priority Rankings

The Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company has submitted another BLM grant for chipping of roadside vegetation along major corridors to create additional shaded fuelbreaks, distributing publications to inform residents about defensible space, funding for address signs, and providing a chipper for private driveways and areas adjacent to structures. A long-term goal is to create a regional CWPP.



Photo 24: Grazed Area Along Highway 1 in The Sea Ranch

Since the TSRA already has a well-established fuel reduction program, the possibility exists to expand it using grant monies. The Association has not explored this option, but has always relied upon funding through a parcel assessment.

Battalion 1411's priorities are to support the Fort Ross Volunteer Fire Company, whom have been included in this Plan, The Sea Ranch Association, and any other groups that actively bring forward projects to CDF.

C. Battalion 1412 (Roy Sprague)

Battalion 1412 encompasses southern Sonoma County; the Sonoma Valley and the Petaluma area, separated by Sonoma Mountain. Within the battalion are several full-time local government fire departments as well as volunteer based fire departments. There are two CDF fire stations, one just west of Petaluma staffed with one fire engine, and the other along Highway 12 south of Kenwood that houses two fire engines and a bulldozer.

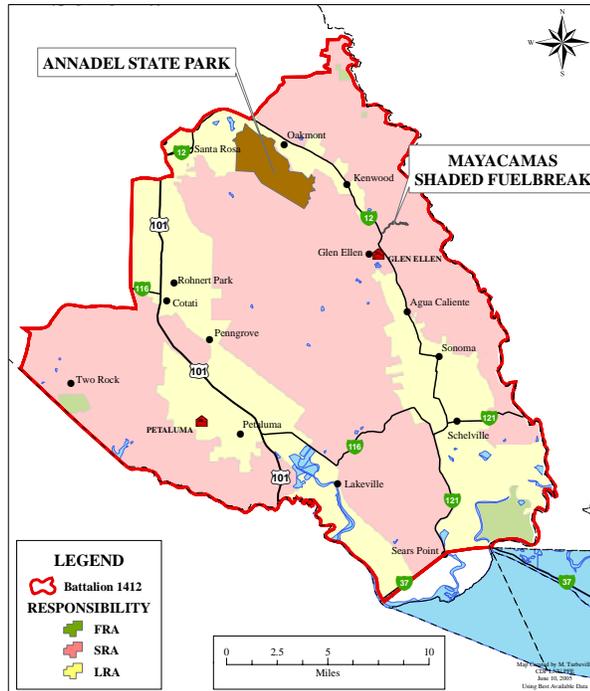


Figure 25: Battalion 1412

1) Past Projects

Past projects have been funded through BLM's Community Based Wildfire Prevention Grants Program using a variety of methods to get the actual work completed. Near Glen Ellen, a grant was sponsored through FireSafe Sonoma, to establish a safety corridor and a secondary ingress and egress route in a high hazard area adjacent to Annadel State Park. Another project, also sponsored by FireSafe Sonoma used Sonoma County work crews to clear roadways that had been overgrown by vegetation. And along five miles Trinity Road in the Mayacamas Mountains east of Glen Ellen, a shaded fuelbreak was created using CDF Fire Crews, residents, and county work crews. The Trinity Road fuelbreak was funded by the Forest Stewardship, a previous program similar to BLM's Community Based Wildfire Prevention Grant Program.

2) Present Projects

Present projects consist of small community events such as the one held on May 28th, 2005 for Lovall Valley residents. CDF apparatus and personnel also participate in other community events such as parades.

Each year, CDF commits fire prevention and suppression resources to large events at Infineon Raceway located near Sears Point along Highway 37. The Raceway holds several races during the summer months that attract over 100,000 spectators.

3) Future Projects and Priority Rankings

None are identified at the time of publication.

D. Battalion 1413 (Kim Thompson)

Northeastern Sonoma County, including the unique Geysers geothermal area, and the United State Army Corps' Lake Sonoma Project, are within Battalion 1413. Most of the battalion is very rural, with only two incorporated cities, Cloverdale and Healdsburg. The burn permit process generates over two hundred public contacts each year, giving Battalion 1413 personnel the opportunity to both educate and inform agricultural industry related personnel and residents about wildfires. The battalion stations are Healdsburg with two engines and a bulldozer, and Cloverdale staffed with two engines.

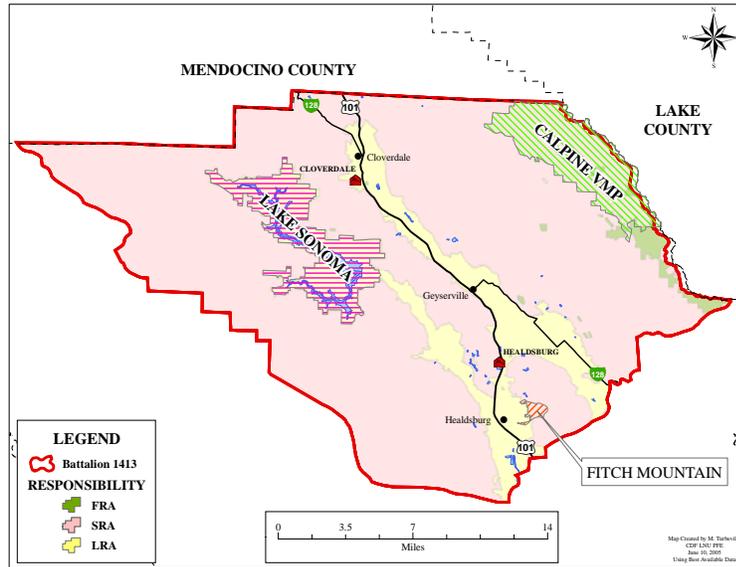


Figure 26: Battalion 1413

1) Past Projects

The battalion has been very busy with pre-fire management programs in the past ranging from vegetation management program (VMP) control burns at the remote Cooley Ranch north of Lake Sonoma to homeowners working with CDF and the local fire department to reduce fuels in the Fitch Mountain Area.

In 2000, the City of Healdsburg Fire Department contacted CDF for advice on its' growing wildland/urban interface fire hazard, particularly on the City's north and east flanks. This area compromises the steepest and highest elevations in the city, on Fitch Mountain, and area adjacent to it, which is SRA. Working with FireSafe Sonoma, Healdsburg Fire Department, and the Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services, a plan was developed for a multi-phase fire environment modification. Funding was secured through a Western Wildland Urban Interface Grant administered by the USDA Forest Service. During the summer of 2001 and 2002, this project was implemented with LE-38 defensible space inspections, a community chipper program, and the re-establishment of an alternative fire access road. California Conservation Corps (CCC) crews were also used.

Also in 2002, approximately 150 acres was burned on the CalPine VMP during with winter months.

In the Palomino Lakes subdivision, CDF and the Cloverdale Fire Protection District coordinated with the Palomino Homeowners' Association to reduce fuel loading. The Palomino Lakes subdivision has experienced damaging fires in the past. Private contractors were used to clear vegetation along roads, and chip over seventy-five cubic yards of vegetation. Along with the work, a community meeting was held.

At the Lake Sonoma Project, a VMP burn was completed in November of 2002 after more than fifteen years of planning. CDF maintains an agreement with the Army Corps for wildland fire protection. Each year under this agreement, a meeting is held to discuss the contract. Part of CDF's responsibility is to train the Army Corps' staff in



Photo 25: US Army Corps Lake Sonoma Project

wildland firefighting, discuss fire prevention issues, and pre-plan emergency response. Much of the lake's campgrounds are remote and access is only via a boat and/or fire roads. CDF fire crews are used to construct precautionary handlines around the campsites prior to fire season, and bulldozers and graders are used to maintain the fire roads on a rotating basis. A fire prevention display is kept at the visitors' center as well as a fire prevention sign and fire danger rating sign along the roadway leading to the lake's main access.

Battalion Chief Kim Thompson works closely with local government cooperators, annually holding a multi-agency drill that replicates a wildland-urban interface wildfire response. This event while providing training for CDF and local government personnel increases wildfire awareness and prevention in the community in which the drill is held. The image of a fire engine backed in a driveway, with fire fighters in full personnel protective equipment and fire hoses deployed generates discussion amongst homeowners and CDF. Additional benefits include area orientation and pre-planning for fire fighters, the opportunity for homeowners to approach fire fighters, and for personnel from different fire departments the opportunity to interact.

Battalion 1413 personnel also complete many LE-38 defensible space inspections. Each year a targeted area is defined for each station to complete inspections, using direct mailers asking for volunteer compliance or self-inspection. CDF personnel then complete follow-up work to ensure compliance. This LE-38 approach in conjunction with the aforementioned multi-agency drill bodes well for promoting the concept of defensible space.

2) Present Projects

Working with CalPine, a project is being drafted for VMP burning on the lands they control. Brush species will be targeted with the burning most likely to occur in the fall.

Personnel actively participate in community events, such as the Healdsburg Future Farms of America (FFA) parade held on Memorial Weekend of each year.



Photo 26: Battalion 1413 Fire Apparatus and Personnel in Healdsburg FFA Parade

3) Future Projects and Priority Rankings

In 2004, Assistant Chief Dana Cole, and Battalion Chief Kim Thompson met with CalPine representatives to complete a hazard assessment and provide recommendations regarding defensible space surrounding the many structures in the Geysers Geothermal Area. Collaboration with CalPine personnel is ongoing with additional structures being inspected in 2005.

Upcoming focus will be on the West Dry Creek Road area. BC Thompson is working on a presentation to the Dry Creek Valley Association and this year's multi-agency training will be held in this area. The West Dry Creek Road area has experienced a large damaging fire in 1959, the 2,041 acre Wine Creek Fire, and the 1972 Bradford Fire that burned 1,782 acres. Since then many more homes have been built in the area that was burned. The potential exists for a similar fire to occur under severe fire weather conditions.

E. Battalion 1414 (Mark Barclay)

Battalion 1414 covers northern Napa County from the small community of Rutherford to the top of Mt. St. Helena and east to Angwin. Highway 29 is the major traffic corridor through the battalion. Las Posadas State Forest is within the confines of the battalion, and there is a fire station on the forest property with one fire engine. Other CDF fire resources in the battalion are two CDF fire engines and a bulldozer at St. Helena, and a CDF staffed, county-owned fire engine at St. Helena.

Similar to Battalion 1413 personnel, many contacts with the public are generated through the burn permit process. Most of the Napa Valley floor, and some of the hillsides, are planted with grapevines. This industry has a heavy reliance on burning to dispose of agricultural trimmings.

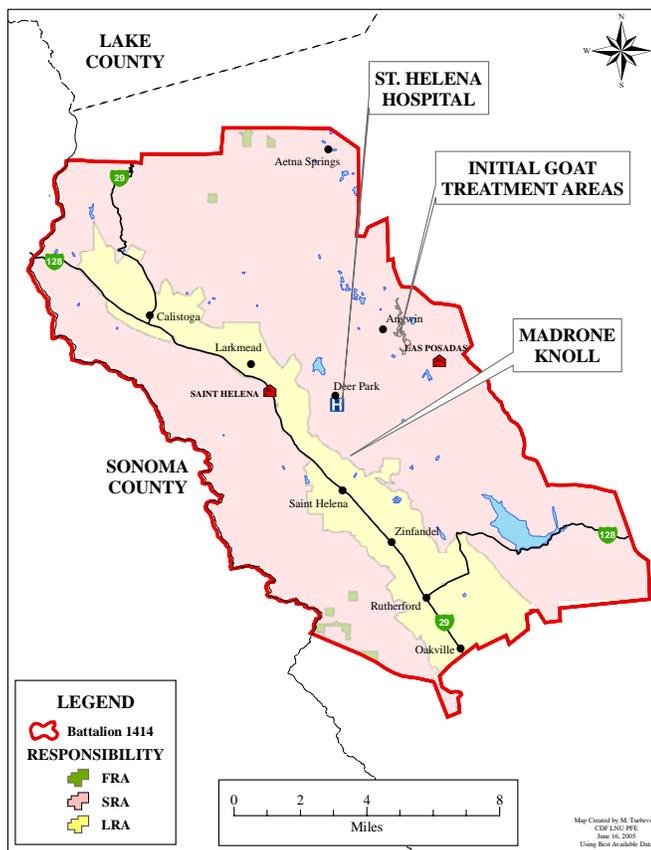


Figure 27: Battalion 1414

Battalion 1414, as well as battalions 1415 and 1416, oversees Napa County Fire Department volunteer fire companies. Assigned to Battalion 1414 are Deer Park, Angwin, and Rutherford. St. Helena and Calistoga cities also have their own organized fire departments and respond with CDF daily to incidents. All three battalions, except for the portion of Battalion 1415 in Solano County, are included in the Napa FIREWISE program, a cooperative effort between CDF, Napa City, Napa County, Resource Conservation District, and local FireSafe Councils.

1) Past Projects

A majority of past projects have been in the wildland-urban interface areas on the west aspect of the Napa County. There are two communities, Deer Park and Angwin, and many other clusters of homes in the wildland environment.

The Pacific Union College VMP (Rx North-049-LNU) was located in the wildland urban interface area just to the north and east of the town of Angwin. The project's objective was to reduce the flashy fuel accumulation near structures and other assets at risk while protecting timber and wildlife resources. The primary method to accomplish this objective was through manual and mechanical treatment using CDF Fire Crews from Konocti Conservation Camp. Fuels were removed manually and either chipped, piled and burned, or broadcast burned. Over one hundred acres were treated, including the Howell Mountain Road corridor.

St. Helena Hospital VMP (Rx North-051-LNU) was adjacent to the grounds of St. Helena Hospital, a steep hillside complex in the community of Deer Park. The objective of this project was to reduce the heavy brush fuel load that could contribute to a fast moving, high intensity wildfire that would endanger a major health care complex and the surrounding residential communities. Work was performed by CDF Fire Crews from Konocti Conservation Camp to prune trees, cut brush, and remove dead woody ground material. Removed fuels are chipped and spread onsite, or burned in small piles during the winter months. Eighty acres were treated.

Other recent VMPs include the Wildlake and Pickett on the slopes above the Napa Valley Floor.

The small neighborhood of Madrone Knolls which is located just off of and above Silverado Trail, has worked with CDF to establish a shaded fuelbreak using personnel from the Civilian Conservation Corps. The intent is to use periodic grazing with goats to maintain the shaded fuelbreak. Silverado Trail parallels Highway 29 on the east side of Napa Valley, and as such attracts motorists attempting to avoid traffic congestion on Highway 29. These motorists represent possible wildfire ignitions that would burn uphill into the Madrone Knolls area.

2) Present Projects

The most prominent present project is the use of goats to reduce fuel loading in the Angwin, Deer Park, and Madrone Knolls wildland-urban interface. Chief Mark Barclay secured a BLM grant of \$48,000 to make the project possible. Besides the use of goats, chipping, hand limbing, piling, and burning will be used.

Angwin and Deer Park are participating in the Napa County FIREWISE chipping program. Refer to Figure 30.

3) Future Projects and Priority Rankings

Future project priorities include the continuation or extension of the use of goats for fuel reduction, Napa FIREWISE chipping program, and the use of CDF Fire Crews to maintain and extend the interface clearance.

Chief Barclay would also like to place emphasis on the reduction of fuels in Los Pasadas State Forest due to its' current condition and proximity to structures.



Photo 27: Napa FIREWISE Chipping Program