

Executive Summary

The 2012 Riverside Unit Pre-Fire Management Plan strongly reflects the continuing State of Emergency that exists in the San Jacinto Mountains (Battalion 11). Unit personnel, including the Unit Chief, Deputy Chief – Central Operations, Bautista Division Chief, Pre-Fire Division Chief, Pre-Fire Battalion Chief, Pre-Fire Engineer, Unit foresters, and Riverside County Fire Department Office of Emergency Services are working diligently with the Mountain Area Safety Task Force (MAST) to come up with solutions to mitigate this problem. Although Pre-Fire activities continue in other parts of the county, the focus of our activities has been and must continue to be these communities and watersheds within the mountainous area until the unprecedented threat can be sufficiently mitigated.

In spite of the emphasis on the San Jacinto Mountain communities, Pre-Fire projects have also been planned and implemented on State Responsibility Area lands in and adjacent to the San Bernardino and Cleveland National Forest. Expansion of Pre-Fire work into the areas of Anza, Sage, Aguanga and the Elsinore Front Country has begun with a focus on evacuation routes and community defense projects. A number of cooperative projects have taken place with many more being planned. A continuing effort of treating fuels on Multi-species Preserves and other public lands within SRA has increased over the last two years; these projects are not proximal to any national forest.

Plan Concept and Process

The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection along with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) have drafted a comprehensive update of the Fire Plan for wildland fire protection in California. The planning process defines a level of service measurement, considers assets at risk, incorporates the cooperative interdependent relationships of wildland fire protection providers, provides for public stakeholder involvement, and creates a fiscal framework for policy analysis.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the Pre-Fire Management Plan is to reduce total government costs and citizen losses from wildland fires in the Riverside Unit by protecting assets at risk through focused pre-fire management prescriptions and increasing initial attack success. The Fire Plan has five strategic objectives:

- Create wildfire protection zones that reduce the risks to citizens and firefighters.
- Include all wildland, not just the state responsibility areas. Analysis will ultimately include all wildland fire service providers - federal, state, local government, and private. This is the long-term strategy. This plan is primarily focused on the CAL FIRE Direct Protection Area (DPA) of the Riverside Unit; however the current extreme fuel conditions existing in the San Jacinto Mountains require the Unit to include the State Responsibility Area (SRA) within U.S. Forest Service DPA.
- Identify and analyze key policy issues and develop recommendations for changes in public policy. Analysis will include alternatives to reduce total costs and/or increase fire protection system effectiveness.
- Describe the wildland fire protection system in fiscal terms. This can include all public/private expenditures and potential economic losses.
- Translate the analysis into public policy.

Fire Plan Framework

The five major objectives form the basis of an ongoing fire planning process to monitor and assess Riverside County's wildland fire environment. They include:

- Wildfire Protection Zones; these zones are buffers around the community to reduce citizen and firefighter risks from costly and damaging fires.
- Initial Attack Success; This measure can be used to assess the department's ability to provide an equal level of protection to lands of similar type, as required by Public Resources Code 4130. This measurement is the percentage of fires that are successfully controlled before unacceptable costs are incurred.
- Assets Protected; the assets addressed in the plan are citizen and firefighter safety, watersheds and water, timber, wildlife and habitat (including rare and endangered species), unique areas (scenic, cultural, and historic), recreation, range, structures, and air quality.
- Pre-fire Management; this is the process that assesses alternatives to protect assets from unacceptable risk of wildland fire damage. Project alternatives may include a combination of fuels reduction, ignition management, fire-safe engineering activities, and forest health improvement to protect public and private assets.
- Fiscal framework; this is a tool for assessing and monitoring the cost effectiveness of the wildland fire protection systems.

Pre-Fire Management Plan Applications

- Identify those areas of concentrated assets and high risk for state, federal, local officials and for the public
- Allow wildland fire service providers to create a more efficient fire protection system focusing on meaningful solutions for identified problem areas.
- Give citizens an opportunity to identify public and private assets. Then design and find funding to carry out projects to protect those assets.
- Identify, before fires start, where cost-effective pre-fire management investments can be made to reduce taxpayer costs and citizen losses from wildfire.
- Encourage an integrated intergovernmental approach to reducing costs and losses.
- Enable policy makers and the public to focus on what can be done to reduce future costs and losses from wildfires.