

STAKEHOLDER PROCESS-FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

The Tuolumne-Calaveras Fire Safe Council was formed in the mid 1990's and was the main stakeholder group used by TCU to collect and disseminate information vital to the Unit fire plan. This group's membership included people from government, industry, special interest groups and private individuals that were interested in promoting the fire safe message. Interest and participation in this council slowly declined in the late 1990's and TCU pre-fire management staff began seeking a way to revitalize the group. It was determined that the unit-wide council covered too large an area to focus on local issues and that forming several smaller councils would probably result in more active, productive, independent councils.

In 2001 TCU applied for and received a National Fire Plan Forest Service Dependent Rural Communities Grant from the Stanislaus National Forest to form four new fire safe councils, one on each of the four major east-west highway corridors in the Unit. The goal of this grant was for CDF to contract with a consultant who would coordinate the formation of the new fire safe councils. Mark Valle, of Corporate Visions, was awarded the contract in the fall of 2002 and the first meetings of the four councils were held in November. The Calaveras Foothills (Northern Calaveras County area), Sierra-Highway-4 (Southern Calaveras County area), Highway 108 (Northern Tuolumne County) and Yosemite Foothills (Southern Tuolumne County) Fire Safe Councils formed after the first meeting.

Upon completion of the Grant with Mark Valle on September 30, 2003, the Calaveras Foothills and Sierra Highway 4 Fire Safe Councils continued under volunteer members and an Executive Board without a coordinator. The two Councils shared information but duplicate services and competed for funding within the County. In December of 2003, a decision was made to merge the two Councils to avoid duplication and a decline in volunteer participation. The joint Boards voted to merge under the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council articles of incorporation and place the Sierra Highway 4 Fire Safe Council on an inactive status. The Calaveras Foothills now serves all of Calaveras County and the western portion of Alpine County.

The three fire safe councils are now becoming more active in developing fire safe plans, projects and educational activities within their geographic areas. Working cooperatively with these councils to identify, plan and implement projects is an important aspect of the TCU Pre-Fire Management Plan. Stakeholders in the fire safe councils also play an important part in validating fire plan data in their particular areas of experience and expertise.

Key issues that are important to the 3 councils in TCU include:

- Educate the public about the fire threat and the fire-safe measures.
- Reducing the fuel hazards that exist around their homes and communities.
- Recycle or burn yard debris to lessen landfill impacts.
- Develop Creative ways to make compliance with fire-safe regulations easier and more effective for property owners.
- Maintain an open communication line with and be the link between the general public and fire protection agencies.
- Be an active partner in creating comprehensive fire plans for the council's area of influence.

- Build community support for gaining additional funding, programs, and equipment in order to meet fire suppression and prevention needs in the local region.
- Monitor and support programs to ensure that the minimum legal requirements for preventative clearance and fire safety are met every year on all private properties, timberlands, and public lands within the council's area of influence.

The members of the original Tuolumne-Calaveras Fire Safe Council were very helpful in assessing the assets at risk in TCU. Water, power, county and local government agencies, private citizens, and many others provided valuable information to TCU pre-fire management staff. This combined Pre-Fire Management Plan/Community Wildfire Protection Plan has utilized Fire Safe Council member's expertise and input. Public participation in the Plan was obtained through a series of public meetings where comments and concerns could be voiced by citizens in Calaveras County, the US Forest Service area, and Western Alpine County.

The Calaveras Foothill FSC has taken several steps to maintain operations and improve wildfire safety in Calaveras and western Alpine Counties. Funding from Calaveras County is responsible for the Councils' continued operation. However, the FSC continues to have difficulty finding committed volunteers that will spend their time and talents to sustain the Council and develop the necessary plans and fund and implement projects in order to show improvements.