

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The history of wildfire in the San Mateo – Santa Cruz Unit can be dated back to Native Americans and later in the 1900's with slash and burn logging. Our knowledge of these fires is limited to verbal history and newspaper clippings. In the 1950's, the Division of Forestry began gathering data on large fires. Prior to the devastating wildfires of 2008 and 2009 large destructive wildfires were vague memories. Besides large fires in neighboring Units, Santa Cruz and San Mateo County have not seen much significant fire activity since the early 1960's. Until the Summit Fire of 2008, most residents had never experienced a destructive wildfire firsthand. The reasons for the lack of fire activity in the past 40 to 50 years can be argued; Weather, changes in the way we manage our forests, extended fire regimes, aggressive firefighting, and a multitude of others. Regardless the reason, the fact remains, wildfires will occur. What makes the present different from early part of this century is the number of people living in the wildland. In the past 30 years, scores of people have left the city and are living in the mountainous, more rural part of the counties, or the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). People living in the wilderness is nothing new, however, their increasing numbers has caused the fire service to change the way they do business. In the past, firefighters focused primarily on the fire; they are now faced with an ever increasing infrastructure of roads, structures, traffic and people. What has also changed is the fact there are not enough firefighters or fire apparatus to protect each and every home during a wildfire. Knowing this, it is the joint responsibility of the greater community and government to take preventative measures to make homes, neighborhoods, and the community more defensible from wildfire.

The 2010 strategic Fire Plan, developed collaboratively between the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), asks how we can we utilize and live with the risk of wildfire. The answer is through a vision, goals, and objectives.

Locally, there is a history of collaborative efforts between fire agencies and groups such as Fire Safe San Mateo, and communities like Las Cumbres, La Honda, Olive Springs and Bonny Doon. Efforts such as these have culminated in numerous fuel reduction projects and community education. More recently, the Unit has seen an unprecedented amount of pre-fire "grass roots" organization, including the formation of the Soquel, South Skyline, and Bonny Doon Fire Safe Councils. Also, with the assistance of the Resource Conservation District (RCD) through a grant from the United Fish and Wildlife Service, a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was developed with input from stakeholders throughout San Mateo and Santa Cruz Counties. In 2010, the Board of Supervisors for both San Mateo and Santa Cruz County adopted the 2010 San Mateo County – Santa Cruz County CWPP.

The Unit Strategic Fire Plan is a living document, to be updated annually with additional goals and objectives. This document is also meant to work in collaboration with the already completed 2010 San Mateo County - Santa Cruz County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Over time, we will be able to utilize measurement criteria to evaluate our accomplishments and their effectiveness.