

## **SECTION V: PRE- FIRE MANAGEMENT TACTICS**

### **DIVISION / BATTALION / PROGRAM PLANS**

#### ***Battalion 1: Carmel Battalion - Battalion 4611***

The Carmel Battalion is located in the North West corner of the San Benito / Monterey Unit. Encompassing more than 300 square miles it contains a diverse amount of topography and vegetation. To the west, the Pacific Ocean beaches rise into the steep Santa Lucia coastal mountains transitioning from Coastal Chaparral to Redwood canyons bordered on the ridges by Oak and Grass Woodlands. Inland, several north to south running valleys are bounded by the Sierra de Salinas Range to the east. The valley floors are predominantly Grass and Oak woodlands rising to thick Chaparral stands on the south facing slopes and hardwood forests on the east facing slopes. Throughout most of these valleys, residential development has occurred both on the ridges and the floors creating pockets of Urban Interface. The north is comprised of an area of ancient sand dunes hosting the West Coast's largest Maritime Chaparral community in the former Fort Ord area. Most of that land remains in a wild state and is considered State Responsibility Area (SRA). To the northwest, the Monterey Pine Forests of the Monterey Peninsula intermingle with a dense population of Urban Interface. And to the south, Battalion 1 borders the northern boundary of the vast Los Padres National Forest and Ventana Wilderness.

The weather patterns in Battalion 1, during the summer, may range from cool and foggy 60s near the coast to 100s in the upper reaches of the inland valleys. The normal summer northwest air flow generally carries the cool moist marine air inland by evening, somewhat moderating the fire risk at night in the valleys. A summer inversion often keeps the upper elevations warm and dry throughout the 24 hour cycle.

Fire history in Battalion 1 is varied. Many wildland fires have been started by lightning in inaccessible areas. Some of these have started on Federal lands and burned into SRA. Unattended controlled burns or campfires have historically contributed to damaging fires. Power line failures are also a common cause of fires due to the corrosive effects of the marine air on the lines.

Interspersed throughout the varied topography and vegetation, one will find the Battalion 1 values at risk. They include; large cattle ranches, exclusive gated communities, federal, state and local forests, parks and recreation areas, commercial / industrial developments, vineyards, and many urban interface communities.

To address the threat of fire in Battalion 1 and protect the values at risk, several approaches have been taken. Through the issuing of burning permits for campfires, agricultural and backyard burning, CAL FIRE personnel have been able to educate the public in the safe use of fire. Inspection of high voltage power lines is intended to mitigate their threats. The LE-100 Defensible Space inspection program conducted by CAL FIRE and our local government cooperators has targeted more than 1,000 homes each year and helped to educate residents to help themselves by properly clearing around their homes. The application of the Monterey County Fire Codes to new construction in Battalion 1 directs homeowners in the safest ways to build their homes. Fuel reduction programs involving mechanical means as well as controlled burns are being used to reduce fuel loads and create strategic fuel breaks to protect communities and maintain safe egress in case of fire. Preplans of hazardous areas have been prepared to facilitate the safest means to combat wildland fires.

Personnel in Battalion 1 work closely with the following organizations and agencies: Monterey County Fire Safe Council, Pebble Beach Company, Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District, Cachagua Fire Protection District, Cypress Fire Protection District, Carmel Highlands Fire Protection District, Pebble Beach Community Services District, Mid Coast Fire Brigade, Big Sur Fire Brigade, California Dept. of Fish and Game, California State Parks, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, Del Monte Forest Conservancy, United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Santa Lucia Preserve, Big Sur Land Trust, Monterey County and Hastings Preserve.

***Battalion 2: Peninsula Battalion (Schedule A – Contract Districts) –***

*Battalion 4612 – Pebble Beach CSD*

*Battalion 4618 – Cypress FPD & Carmel Highlands FPD*

*Battalion 4605 – Prevention & Planning*

Battalion 2 is comprised of three local government cooperative agreements or “Schedule A” contracts made up of Pebble Beach Community Services District (PBCSD), Cypress Fire Protection District and Carmel Highlands Fire Protection District.

The Pebble Beach area is entirely State Responsibility Area. Also referred to as the Del Monte Forest, this area has a closed cone coniferous forest with areas of chaparral and coastal scrub, as well as small remnants of coastal prairie in the common areas. There are homes all throughout the forested areas as well as many homes along all of the golf courses in the forest. The forest has a lot of small fires within the common forested areas near homes that pose a major threat to many high dollar homes. The Morse Fire in 1987, started by an illegal campfire, burned 160 acres and destroyed 31 structures causing an estimated damage of approximately \$18,000,000. Fire road signage, mapping and maintenance are a high priority in the district due to recreation and fire occurrences in the open spaces within the forest.

The Cypress FPD borders the southern end of Pebble Beach and wraps around the city of Carmel-by-the-Sea on the north, east and south, stretching from the beaches to approximately two miles east from the mouth of Carmel Valley and bordering Carmel Highlands FPD to the south. The lower part of the district to the east covers Hwy 68, Josselyn Canyon and the homes surrounding the Del Monte Golf Course. Cypress FPD is in both SRA and LRA with housing developments surrounded by wooded areas.

The Carmel Highlands FPD is the southern-most district in Battalion 2 with the northern border just south of the Carmel River down to Mal Paso Creek encompassing the wildland urban interface on the west facing slope. The district has many large homes under a tall canopy of closed cone coniferous forest with areas of chaparral and coastal scrub, as well as small remnants of coastal prairie in the common areas. Most of the district is rated as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

The three fire districts maintain good working relationships to collaborate on fuel reductions projects with several different agencies such as; Monterey Peninsula Regional Parks District, Pebble Beach Company, Cal Trans, PG&E, Homeowner associations and private homeowners.

Defensible space remains a very high priority in Battalion 2 due to the housing density within the wildland urban interface. The battalion has an aggressive LE-100 program employing Retired Annuitant Fire Captains to educate homeowners and to ensure compliance throughout the districts.

### ***Battalion 3: King City Battalion - Battalion 4613***

The King City Battalion starts from the Chualar area and encompasses both sides of the Salinas Valley down to San Ardo, ridge top to ridge top. This area includes the west entrance to the Pinnacles National Monument, Arroyo Seco, and many vineyards and cattle ranches, to name of few values at risk.

The weather patterns in Battalion 3 during the summer months range from the 70s and into the low 100 degree mark. The valley winds ranging from 10-25 mph, usually begin early afternoon and subside around sunset when the marine layer occasionally blows in to cool the valley temperatures.

The strong winds affect the early season fires pushing grass fires from a few hundred acres and into the thousands in the cattle grazing pastures of the eastern foothills. The steep terrain of the Arroyo Seco & southern end of Carmel Valley has driven some large wildland fires in the late summer/fall crossing borders into the LPF where access for firefighting equipment becomes very challenging.

Fire History shows that “*equipment use*” is a leading cause of ignitions and has resulted in a number of the large, damaging fires in Battalion 3. With this knowledge, the Unit has made educating ranchers and homeowners on the importance of spark arresters and mowing in cooler weather conditions a high priority. Large billboards signs are posted in the battalion stating to “mow before 10 a.m.” before the heat of the day. Statistics show that these efforts have been successful and ignitions have decreased. Debris burning and powerline caused fires are also among the frequent ignitions in Battalion 3. Prevention staff has been working with the utility company to upgrade powerline equipment to reduce the number of fires in the Unit. Battalion personnel continue to educate homeowners on laws of debris burning and how to safely burn brush piles in the non-peak fire season to reduce the amount of control burn escapes in the Unit.

#### ***Battalion 4: Bradley Battalion – Battalion 4614***

The Bradley Battalion starts south of San Ardo and continues south to the San Luis Obispo County line. This area includes Bryson-Hysperia with many homes in the wildland ranking this Battalion 4's top value at risk. Battalion 4 also encompasses the San Antonio Reservoir, a popular recreational area, the community of Parkfield and the Ft. Hunter Liggett Army Training Facility among many vineyards and cattle and hunting ranches.

Much like Battalion 3, the weather patterns in Battalion 4 during the summer months range from the 70s and into the low 100 degree mark. The valley winds in Bradley range from 10-25 mph and usually begin mid-afternoon and subside well after dark. In the Lockwood and Parkfield areas, the temperatures are very similar but get much less wind due to the topographical features. The terrain is predominately rolling hills with some areas of brush covered, steep slopes.

Similar to Battalion 3, fire history shows that "*equipment use*" is, by far, the leading cause of ignitions and has resulted in a number of the large, damaging fires in Battalion 4. By educating ranchers and homeowners on the importance of spark arresters and mowing in cooler weather conditions along with the large billboard signs, the Unit has seen a decrease in our ignitions.

The main Values in Battalion 4 are recreational areas, vineyards and rangelands.

### ***Battalion 5: Hollister Battalion – Battalion 4615***

The Hollister Battalion is located at the North East corner of the Unit in San Benito County, following the county line on both the East and the West down to the end of Cienega Road and East to South of Panoche and Antelope Valley. The West side (Gabilan Mountain Range) of the battalion is comprised steep terrain and heavy fuels up in the Fremont Peak area. The east side (Diablo Mountain Range) is predominately grasslands, home to many large cattle ranches and quickly transitions into steep rugged terrain. The fuels commonly encountered in Battalion 5 are grass, oak woodland, Chemise and Gray Pine.

Hollister Hills Recreational Area is near the Fremont Peak area and is frequented by off-road vehicles on California State Parks lands and is one of the values at risk. Other values include the wild land urban interface areas in San Juan Canyon, Cienega Road and Paicines as well as the infrastructure at Fremont Peak State Park and Mission San Juan Bautista.

The weather patterns in Battalion 5 during the summer months range from the high 70s and into the low 100 degree mark with the occasional late night, early morning marine influence bringing in the fog. The winds in the Hollister area range from 5-15 mph. The terrain is predominately rolling hills with some areas of brush covered, steep slopes.

Similar to Battalions 3 and 4, fire history shows that “*equipment use*” is the leading cause of ignitions and has resulted in a number of the large, damaging fires in Battalion 5. By educating ranchers and homeowners on the importance of spark arresters and mowing in cooler weather conditions along with the large billboard signs, the Unit has seen a decrease in ignitions. “*Debris burning*” also ranks among the highest sources of ignition of fires in Battalion 5. Fire department personnel make a concerted effort while writing burn permits and while out in the public, to educate residents on the laws of burn piles, what materials they can burn and safe ways to conduct their burn to not let it escape their control.

The main Values in Battalion 5 are recreational areas, vineyards and rangelands.

The main priorities in Battalion 5 are to educate the public that live in the wild land urban interface on how to be fire safe and to maintain fire roads that serve a crucial role in means of ingress and egress for both the public and fire equipment during a wildland fire.

Personnel in Battalion 5 work closely with members from the following organizations or agencies; the San Benito Fire Safe Council, BLM, California State Parks, and local ranchers.

## ***Battalion 6: Bear Valley Battalion – Battalion 4616***

The Bear Valley Battalion is located on the east side of the Unit in San Benito County, following the county line on the west and bordering the Fresno County line to the east extending to Priest Valley in the south. Clear Creek Recreational Area is also in the southern portion of Battalion 6. The west side (east side of Gabilan Mountain Range) of the battalion is comprised steep terrain and heavy fuels up near the Pinnacles National Monument area. The east side (Diablo Mountain Range) is predominately grasslands, home to many large cattle ranches and quickly transitions into steep rugged terrain. The fuels commonly encountered in Battalion 6 are grass, oak woodland, Chemise and Gray Pine.

The weather patterns in Battalion 6 during the summer months range from the high 70s and into the low 100 degree mark with little recovery overnight. The winds in the area range from 5-10 mph. The terrain varies from rolling hills transitioning into brush covered, steep slopes.

Similar to other battalions, fire history shows that “*equipment use*” is the leading cause of ignitions in Battalion 6. By educating ranchers and homeowners on the importance of spark arresters and mowing in cooler weather conditions along with the large billboard signs, the Unit has seen a decrease in ignitions. “*Debris burning*” also ranks among the highest sources of ignition of fires in Battalion 6. Fire department personnel make a concerted effort while writing burn permits and while out in the public, to educate residents on the laws of burn piles, what materials they can burn and safe ways to conduct their burn to not let it escape their control.

The main Values in Battalion 6 are the Pinnacles National Monument, Clear Creek Recreational Area, agriculture and large cattle ranches. Priorities are public education, hazard assessment, and fuel reduction.

Battalion 6 maintains a close working relationship with The Pinnacles National Park, The Bay Area Network Fire, BLM, and the local ranchers.

### ***Battalion 7: Aromas Battalion - Battalion 4617***

The Aromas Battalion is located at the north end of the Unit encompassing portions of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties. The battalion runs from the northern unit boundary over to Fremont Peak and down the Salinas Valley to just north of Chualar. The Aromas battalion is also home to the Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District which is 60 square miles of primarily residential structures with light commercial and agricultural occupancies and areas of wildland urban interface. In addition to the local population of approximately 6,000, the District experiences a constant increase to values at risk due to the major highways that traverse the District increasing the active population by hundreds of thousands per day. This exacerbates the issue of High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones throughout most of the District and the interface threats to local residents.

The fuels and topography defined in the battalion are gentle slopes of oak woodland varied with steep terrain and heavy fuels in other areas encompassing many housing developments throughout. The north county area has some heavily wooded areas of Eucalyptus groves posing a challenge to firefighters, as one of the groves has Hwy 101 running through the middle of it.

The weather patterns in Battalion 7 during the summer months range from the 60s and into the mid 80 degree mark with the marine layer moving in most evenings and burning off mid mornings. The winds in the area range from 5-10 mph.

Similar to other battalions, fire history shows that "*equipment use*" is the leading cause of ignitions in Battalion 7. By educating homeowners on the importance of spark arresters and mowing in cooler weather conditions along with the large billboard signs, the Unit has seen a decrease in ignitions. "*Debris burning*" also ranks among the highest sources of ignition of fires in Battalion 7. Fire department personnel make a concerted effort while writing burn permits and while out in the public, to educate residents on the laws of burn piles, what materials they can burn and safe ways to conduct their burn to not let it escape their control. Other leading causes of fires in Battalion 7 are roadside fires caused by exhaust carbon, blown tires and vehicles due to the heavy traffic on these highways.

The main Values in Battalion 7 are residential structures, agriculture, watershed and infrastructure.

**TRAINING DIVISION: Battalion 4607**

The San Benito-Monterey Unit Training Division has set several goals to improve firefighting operational efficiency and safety for the Unit.

These goals are but not limited to:

1. All BEU personnel attend Department of General Service Defensive Driver safety program.
2. Upon selection and placement of fuel moisture collection sites and ovens, those schedule B fire control personnel in each Division will be trained in collection and drying procedures of vegetation to assist the unit and region in determining potential fire behavior and wildland fire response levels.
3. All BEU personnel to attend annual Continuing Professional training to maintain firefighting skills and appropriate certifications. The intent is for personnel to meet 4032 and 4036 training requirements.
4. All BEU fire control personnel to attend "A" faller training
  - a. Selected personnel will be chosen to attend Class "B" faller training
  - b. Selected personnel will be chosen to attend Class "C" faller training
    - i. With a goal of having at least one Class "C" faller in each Division and Gabilan Camp.
5. All BEU Fire control personnel assigned to Helitack or Hollister air attack base attend the following training where applicable:
  - a. RT-372 Helicopter manager refresher training
  - b. RT 378 Air Attack Group Supervisor Training
  - c. Basic helicopter safety training
  - d. Short haul training
  - e. Air Base safety training
6. All BEU Fire Control personnel receive wildland firefighter safety and survival training
7. All BEU Battalion Chiefs and Fire Captains attend C -234 Intermediate Firing Operations class.
8. BEU personnel attend applicable training and qualify in Incident Command System (ICS) positions. The intent is to meet the unit's obligations to **Minimum ICS Qualified Personnel Matrix (7700) located in the 7000 handbook.**

## **GABILAN CONSERVATION CAMP** – Administered by Division 4603



Gabilan Conservation Camp is centrally located in Monterey County and the only camp servicing the CALFIRE San Benito-Monterey Unit. The facility is situated in the front of Soledad State Correctional Facility and the Salinas Valley State Prison on Hwy 101 between the cities of Soledad and Gonzales. The camp houses approximately 131 low-risk inmates under the direction of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and CAL FIRE. CALFIRE operates 6 Fire Crews and a Mobile Kitchen Unit (MKU) that are available to respond year round to a variety of “all risk” emergencies throughout the state such as; wildland fires, floods, rescues and other disasters.

In preparation of emergency response, Gabilan Camp has hosted the Gabilan Exercises for the past few decades. The Gabilan Exercise evaluates each inmate fire crew’s performance through arduous evolutions for the upcoming fire season.

In addition to emergency response, Gabilan Camp is heavily engaged in pre-fire management. Gabilan fire crews provide community service and hazard fuel reduction projects with the local, state and federal agencies within Santa Clara, Monterey, San Benito and San Luis Obispo counties.

Projects during the last years include; but not limited to,

- Federal Grant projects, Hollister Hills State Park, State Parks and Recreation, Monterey County Park, Laguna Seca Raceway, City of Monterey, City of Del Rey Oaks, Camp Roberts National Guard, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, Salinas Valley Fairgrounds, Salinas Airshow, San Benito County Park, San Benito County Historical Park, Monterey Peninsula College, Gonzales USD, Washington Union School, National Park Service and CALFIRE facilities.

Since the opening in 1986, Gabilan Conservation Camp has continued to be a valuable resource for the State of California and the citizens of San Benito and Monterey counties through conservation and the protection of life, property and natural resources.



**AIR ATTACK PROGRAM: Hollister Air Attack - Battalion 4608**

The Hollister Air Attack Base, established in 1962, is located along the central coast of California, 30 miles south of San Jose in the CDF San Benito-Monterey Unit. Hollister responds to an average of 350 calls per year. Staff at the base consists of one battalion chief, two fire captains, one fire apparatus engineer, and seven firefighters. The complement of aircraft located at Hollister includes one OV-10 Bronco and two S-2T air tankers. On average, the base pumps about 300,000 gallons of retardant a year. With the base's pumps, three loading pits and equipment, Hollister has a possible peak output of 60,000 gallons of retardant each day. The base provides initial attack for 3.1 million acres encompassing 11 counties; an area spanning north to Mt. Diablo, south to King City, east to Interstate 5 and west to the Pacific Ocean. This area includes the Los Padres National Forest.



### **HELITACK PROGRAM: Bear Valley Helitack**

The Bear Valley Helitack Base was established in 1987 and was located in the San Benito-Monterey Unit on Airline Highway in Bitter Water road area. The base was originally named Bitterwater Helitack Base and kept this name until 1992 when it was moved to the Bear Valley Fire Station in Paicines, changing the name to Bear Valley Helitack. Bear Valley responds to an average of 150 calls per year ranging from fires to rescues. In addition to responding to emergencies the helicopter conducts control burns and recon flights necessary to the state mission. On a daily basis, the crew of the Helitack Base consists of one pilot, two fire captains, five to six firefighters and an engineer. In addition to the helitack crew, there are two fire engines staffed at Bear Valley station. Bear Valley Helitack operates a UH-1H Super Huey helicopter. It is one of three ships that have a fixed tank rather than a bucket. The fixed tank can hold 325 gallons of water. The state has 11 helicopters with 9 helicopter bases, 2 helicopters are used as spares when maintenance is needed.



Also operated out of Bear Valley is the helitender, which serves as a support vehicle for the copter. The helitender contains 1,000 gallons of fuel, along with foam, backup tools, out-of-county bags, Meals Ready to Eat (MRE's) and many other items that are necessary to support the crew. Bear Valley provides coverage and protection from southwest Santa Clara to Interstate-5 in the Fresno-Kings Unit, down to Northern San Luis Obispo and all the way to the Pacific Ocean. As a state resource Bear Valley is also able to respond anywhere in the state.

CAL FIRE helitack crews consist of highly trained and experienced firefighters who are assigned to and respond to wildland fires and rescues aboard CAL FIRE helicopters. Once arriving on a fire incident, the crew, typically 5 to 6 firefighters along with a fire captain, are let off with firefighting hand tools and initiate fire suppression actions as the helicopter supports the helitack crew with water drops. Helitack crews also perform other helicopter support operations when not assigned to direct fire line operations such as establishing and staffing helibases conducting necessary operations and support.

