SECTION IV: PRE FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A: FIRE PREVENTION

Goals

The primary goal of the Unit's Prevention Bureau is to limit the number of negligently caused fires. Through training and experience we will increase company officer investigations to reduce the amount of undetermined fires reported in the Unit. The Fire Prevention Bureau will work closely with adjoining agencies to limit linkage blindness for serial arsonist activity.

Objectives

Build on and introduce new public information avenues focusing on LNU cause specific information to prevent ignitions i.e. equipment and debris burning.

Bi-lateral law enforcement and civil cost recovery levied on electrical utilities to encourage proper conductor maintenance thereby reducing ignitions.

By continuing to work towards all company officers being trained to the NWCG FI-210 standard, fewer wildland fires should be undetermined for a final cause allowing for even more accurate ignition problem identification for LNU.

Maintain memberships on Fire Investigation Task Forces within LNU to network with other agency investigators and to share intelligence on possible serial arson activity.

The ultimate goal is to reduce the number of ignitions.

The top five fire causes over the past 3 year average are:
1. Undetermined, 24%
2. Equipment, 15%
3. Miscellaneous, 12%
4. Playing with fire, 7%
5. Arson, 7%

The primary cause category for fires within the Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit is: Undetermined. This is based on a 96% LE-66 completion rate.

- ENGINEERING & STRUCTURE IGNITABILITY

One incomplete aspect of the previously discussed vegetative wildfire fuels analysis is the consideration of structures located within the wildland areas. To a wildfire, a structure is just another fuel. And as mentioned before, the only element of the three environmental elements that influence the behavior of wildfire that we, as humans, can change is fuel. If a structure is in the planning stages, design and construction material recommendations can be made to make the structure less prone to ignition by wildfire. However, if the structure is already built, the easiest factor to change may be to implement various fuel modifications around the structures in order to protect them from encroaching wildfires. Public Resources Code (PRC) 4291 addresses fuel modification and the concept of "defensible space." Defensible space can both be thought of for protecting a structure and also providing firefighters with a safe environment to position their fire apparatus and perform the necessary function to prevent the structure from igniting. Unfortunately, the proper building construction and defensible space cannot guarantee that the structure will survive all wildfire possibilities.

Structures Destroyed by Wildfire During 2004 Fire Season

Development in Hazardous Areas

Development in the wildland urban interface provides for a myriad of issues that must be and are addressed through development standards and land use planning. Land use planning must recognize the hazards and treat them as constraints in the planning process.

Communities plan to minimize these fire hazards by requiring elevated development standards within especially vulnerable areas. These standards include the requirement for fire resistive construction materials, development of adequate emergency access routes, access to fire suppression water supplies (fire hydrants or water tanks), and defensible space around structures. The implementation of these standards help minimize, but not entirely eliminate, the hazards from wildland fires.

Wildland Urban Concerns

Example of good address signing

Example of poor road signing

Example of poor, overgrown road access

Example of fire protection water storage

Example of locked gate access

Example of poor overgrown access

CAL FIRE uses an internal form referred to as “LE-100” (Law Enforcement form #100) to complete PRC 4291 defensible space inspections. Common terminology for CAL FIRE personnel is “LE-100 inspections” or “defensible space” inspections.

Additional information regarding defensible space, PRC 4291, and local ordinances is available at CAL FIRE fire stations, and CAL FIRE’s website (www.fire.ca.gov).

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

The Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit is very engaged in public information and education activities. The Unit is asked to report their monthly prevention activities. Doing so gives us a clear picture of activity in the field with regards to public information and education. The Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit dedicates an impressive amount of personnel hours towards information and education. These efforts are reported to the region monthly and reflected well on the Unit. The Unit participates annually in over 2,000 hours of public education activities, making an estimated 41,500 public contacts.

Every contact with a member of the public is an opportunity to educate. The importance of fire safety, whether the message is defensible space, exit drills in the home (E.D.I.T.H), changing smoke detector batteries, or dialing 9-1-1; these messages must be delivered to the public whenever possible.

Beginning in 2011 Unit personnel and a hand full of Volunteers-In-Prevention were instrumental in creating the Sonoma County Safety PALS troupe whose mission is to educate the youth of Sonoma County in life safety and fire prevention skills. This theatrical troupe is made up of multiple public agency personnel with a common goal to provide out reach to the youth of the community. Each year the Sonoma County Safety PALS will educate kindergarten through third graders with their fun and engaging life safety performances, twice a year, at different locations throughout the county.

Department wide, the new website, readyforwildfire.org has progressed the department's defensible space message. Everyone should be aware of this website and its benefits for educating the public on defensible space and general fire resistive building construction.

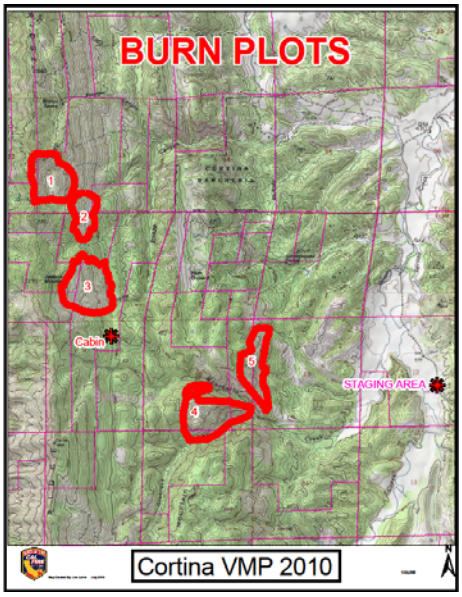
For the rural landowner, the Unit has created a defensible space mailer, to be delivered to an entire community, which provides information on creating and maintaining a defensible space around their structures. The information mailer also includes: creating a wildfire action plan, a self check-off list which directs the homeowner to focus on structure/property requirements to meet the State mandatory *Public Resource Code 4291* (defensible space around structures) and information to contact your nearest CAL FIRE station for additional information or education.

The Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit is situated a major media market. This gives our Unit additional opportunities to deliver our fire prevention messages. By placing road signs in high traffic areas, and increasing our personal interaction, we are able to serve the message to a large amount of the general population. The fire service makes contact with people on the worst day of their lives, what we teach them about fire safety can reduce the impact of that worst day, or help avoid it entirely.

B: VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

The Vegetation Management Program (VMP) is a cost-sharing program that focuses on the use of prescribed fire, and mechanical means, for addressing wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands. The use of prescribed fire mimics natural processes, restores fire to its historic role in wildland ecosystems, and provides significant fire hazard reduction benefits that enhance public and firefighter safety.

Currently LNU is working on one VMP project, the Cortina Ridge in Colusa County.



Cortina VMP

FUELS REDUCTION

LNU is actively conducting several fuels reduction projects throughout the Unit. These consist of shaded fuel breaks in areas identified in the communities at risk section of this plan (these areas are also identified in appendix A “High Priority Pre Fire Projects”).

SUPPRESSION REPAIR

After a damaging wildland fire the Unit will take every measure to assure the act of wildland fire suppression repair is completed. The objective of wildland fire suppression repair is to provide for prompt action following wildfire and associated fire suppression activities to minimize, to the extent practical:

1. Loss of soil and on-site productivity.
2. Discourage the spread of noxious weeds.
3. Deterioration of water quality and adverse change in runoff characteristics.

FOREST AND RANGE HEALTH

Unique to LNU, there are two State Forests managed by the Department on behalf of the public. Boggs Mountain Demonstration State Forest (BMDSF) is a 3,493-acre mixed conifer forest located in Lake County and Las Posadas Demonstration State Forest (LPDSF) is a 796-acre mixed conifer forest located in Napa County, which also incorporates the most eastern stand of redwood in California.

State Forests are working landscapes that are mandated to conduct research, demonstration, and education on sustainable forestry practices using active forest management, including periodic timber harvests. Management of the State Forests is required to protect values relating to recreation, watershed, wildlife, range and forage, fisheries, and aesthetic enjoyment. The concept of forest sustainability includes the protection of forest ecosystems, both terrestrial and aquatic. Important issues include stewardship of managed forestlands to maintain biodiversity and ecosystem functions thereby providing healthy forest and rangelands. Timber harvesting also significantly reduces the amount of fuel continuity on the State Forests through the removal of snags, providing shaded fuel breaks, burning slash debris, and restoring road systems to enable better egress and ingress for fire equipment and personnel.

BMDSF is managed as a working forest that facilitates research and demonstrates diverse timber management practices to private timberland owners and the public at large. BMDSF provides for healthy sustainable ecosystems as well as a financially viable timber management program. The Forest is managed over the long term for a dynamic mosaic of diverse habitats and high volume inventory.

LPDSF also provides for demonstration and research activities; however it is unique in the State Forest Program because merchantable timber harvesting is not allowed under the deed restriction and the Forest is not open to the public at large. Because of its diversity of terrain and ecosystem characteristics, the Forest provides for interesting research projects.

Fuel reduction projects are on going on both BMDSF and LPDSF. Such projects include vegetation management, broadcast burning, pre-commercial thinning, and the removal of dead, dying, and diseased trees. Both Forests have been impacted by forest pests such as western pine beetles, flat-headed woodborers, and annosus root disease. Treatment methods to reduce the brood material are practiced on both State Forests, such as lopping and scattering slash or burning slash to reduce the population of pine beetles.

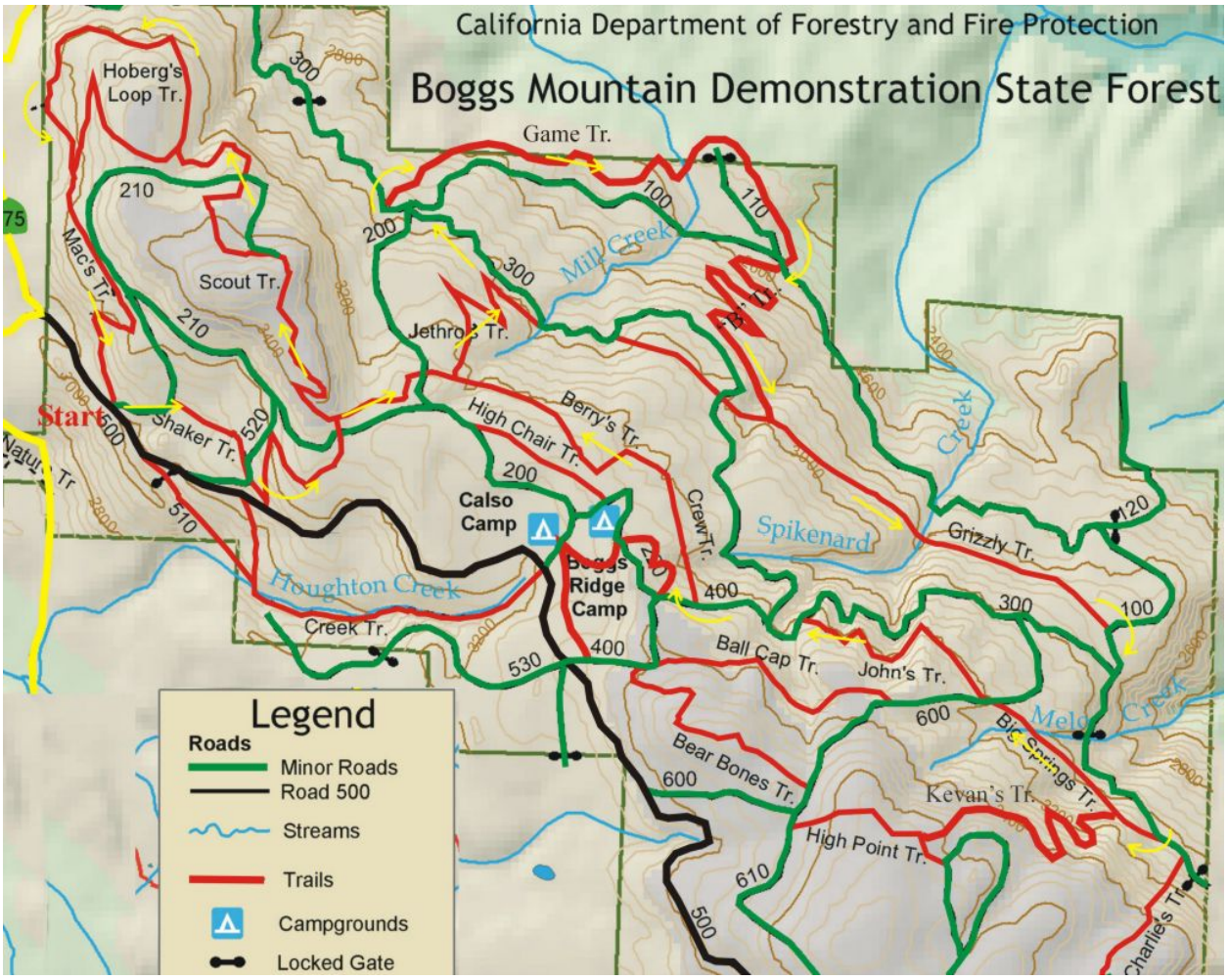
The objectives of such forest management include enhanced protection from wildfire impacts on the forestland resource and the developed interface lands of the rural residential communities adjacent to and near both State Forests. These objectives are accomplished through the reduction of flashy fuels, fuel accumulations, and fuel ladders that foster crown fires. The prescribed burning that occurs on the State Forests reduce ground fuels, reduce overgrown brush, and thin the understory to reduce vertical and horizontal continuity of fuels while protecting overstory conifers and hardwoods. The benefits of these low intensity fires include reducing the accumulation of hazardous fuels, enhancing wildlife habitat, control forest disease, provide new growth, and reducing the potential for catastrophic wildfires.

Outside of the State Forest Program, LNU is active in enforcing the Forest Practice Rules on private timberland where Timber Harvesting Plans (THPs) have been submitted. Most of the THP submitters are small non-industrial timberland managers and timber harvesting is common in Sonoma, Lake, and Napa Counties. While evaluating THPs in the field, the Forest Practice Inspector enforces the Public Resources Code and Forest Practice Rules, which provide protection for forest and rangelands. Such rules include provisions for the operation of fire causing equipment, use of hydrocarbon powered engines near forest, grass, or brush lands, and for the operation of chainsaws in the forest environment. The Forest Practice Rules provide specific protection to lakes and watercourses, wildlife, and plants through restrictions on silviculture methods, harvesting practices and erosion control, site preparation, hazard reduction, and fire protection.

Benefits from harvesting timber on private land are similar to those when harvesting timber on the State Forests, including the reduction of fuels, removing dead, dying or diseased trees, improving road networks, providing new growth by opening the stand to more sunlight, and controlling forest pests. A common forest disease found in Sonoma and Lake Counties is Sudden Oak Death. Many THPs are located within the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Zone of Infestation. As a result, each THP must identify feasible measures to mitigate adverse impacts from the timber operation. The Forest Practice

Inspector also enforces these measures. Treatments typically include inspection of equipment on the timber operation site, unprocessed saw logs do not leave the Zone of Infestation, and non-merchantable material remains on-site. Such measures also help reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfires.

The enforcement of the Forest Practice Rules and Public Resources Code on private timberlands and the active forest management on the two State Forests within LNU provide healthy forest ecosystems and rangelands found throughout the Unit. Maintaining the sustainability of the natural resources is the goal of the CAL FIRE Resource Management Program. The Department achieves this goal by demonstrating sound management practices on the State Forests, enforcing the California Forest Practice Act on all non-federal timberlands, providing research and educational outreach to the public on forest pests and pathogens, such as the Bark Beetle and Sudden Oak Death, and coordinating efforts for fuel reduction to reduce the risk of fire and improve the quality of California ecosystems.



Map of Boggs Mountain Trail System