

SECTION V: PRE FIRE MANAGEMENT TACTICS

A: DIVISION / BATTALION / PROGRAM PLANS

BATTALION I – Administered by Battalion 2511



Battalion I (East) lies in the northeast corner of Tehama County. The Battalion runs from the eastern foothills on the east side of the Sacramento Valley to the Lassen National Forest boundary on the east, and from the Butte County line in the south to the Shasta County line in the north.

Topography within Battalion I includes rolling foothills in the west to mountain terrain in the East; with predominate volcanic influence in geography. This area includes several major drainages, which run generally east to west, such as Deer Creek, Antelope Creek, Mill Creek, and Battle Creek. These drainages form steep canyons, which present substantial access problems and promote rapid fire spread.

Fuels within Battalion I consist of grass and oak-woodlands in the lower foothills with increasing brush, pine, and mixed conifer forests as the foothills rise to mountains in the east. These grass fuels in the foothills and canyons have historically carried fast spreading, wind driven, high intensity fires with a moderate to high resistance to control due to access problems.

Fires, such as the Manton Fire of 2005, occurring in the grass, oak-woodland, brush mix, and timber present the greatest resistance to control and, when they occur, account for the greatest damage to natural resources and structures. Lightning strikes, such as those that occurred in 2008, often cause multiple fires and are difficult to access in a timely fashion. These fires account for many of the Unit fires that exceed 200 acres in size.

Battalion I has developed priorities related to the strategic fire plan based values at risk, fire cause and location of ignition. LE 100 compliance and visible addressing is the first priority. The Battalion has had success with compliance. The second priority is to determine and improve areas to limit fire spread from remote areas and roadside fires. This is being accomplished by several fuel reduction and fuel break projects within the Battalion. The third priority is working with cooperators to ensure fire protection measures are in place and equipment is working properly. This is accomplished through education to limit the amount of powerline and equipment caused fires.

Collaborators within Battalion I include CAL FIRE, USFS, Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy, Manton Fire Safe Counsel, Tehama County Resource Conservation District, Timber Companies, Private Land Owners. Together, we have been able to access funding to complete or continue roadside fuel reduction projects along Lanes Valley Road and Highway 36, a fuel reduction project on Round Mountain and establish fuel breaks on Hazen Road C-Line, Hazen Forward Road and Little Giant Mill Road. Two 10,000 gallon water tanks have been purchased to be placed at strategic locations to protect communities or assets at risk.

Assets at risk within Battalion I include extensive timber, rangelands, watershed, associated fisheries, and several rural communities including hundreds of isolated structures. The communities of Paynes Creek, Manton, Ponderosa Sky Ranch, and Mineral have historically suffered damage to homes and property during periodic fires in these areas. Larger fires

(Lightning 2008, Manton, Campbell, Gun II, Barkley, and Finley) within the Battalion have caused widespread damage to communities, range lands and fisheries and cost millions of dollars to suppress.

To protect these assets, the need to educate and inspect defensible space requirements, maintain current fuel breaks and fuel reduction projects, and the development of new projects is imperative for the success in Battalion I. The Battalion will continue to educate the communities about defensible space, participate with government and private cooperators to maintain and develop new fuel reduction projects.



Photo of Battle Creek, located in Battalion I

BATTALION II – Administered by Battalion 2512



Battalion II lies primarily within the Sacramento Valley floor area of Tehama County and covers a large portion of Tehama County's Local Response Area (LRA). The Battalion consists of the communities of Bend, Antelope, Dairyville, Los Molinos, Tehama, Proberta, El Camino and Vina. The SRA area within the battalion transitions from the valley floor along the Interstate 5 corridor into the rolling hills and steep drainages in the Southeastern portions of Tehama County. Some of the more notable landmarks are the Deer Creek drainage and western portions of the Mill Creek drainage.

The predominate fuel type within the battalion is grass and oak woodland; however as the topography transitions into the steeper east side drainages, chaparral and other native brushes become extensive. As you transition into the far eastern portion of the battalion smaller stands of timber become evident. The battalion has a wide variety of fuel types that can challenge fire suppression efforts during the hot summer days.

Weather and access are big factors relating to fire spread within the battalion. It is not uncommon to have temperatures over 100°f, relative humidities in the low teens and strong North winds during summertime periods. On top of these challenges, access to most areas East of Highway 99E is extremely limited and slow due to very rocky, rugged conditions. The Campbell Fire burned 131,500 acres in 1990 and is one of the larger fires in California history. The fire burned in the foothills East of Vina and suppression efforts were hampered by hot and dry conditions and rugged, inaccessible terrain.

The most common fire causes within the battalion are equipment use/mechanical and debris pile escapes; however accidental human caused, arson, lightning and undetermined cause fires are not uncommon. A large percentage of the fires within the battalion occur along the heavily traveled roadways such as Interstate 5, State Highway 36 and State Highway 99.

The priorities for Battalion II are the continuation of the Interstate 5 fuel break project, continued education of the public on dooryard burning and burn pile regulations, risks and preventative measures, and LE-100 inspections. The Interstate 5 fuel break project has been instrumental in minimizing fire spread and limiting the threat to nearby residences when fires do occur. Emphasis on visible address markings will be focused on during LE-100 inspections as well as educating landowners of burn regulations.

There are multiple stakeholders within the battalion. They include The Nature Conservancy (TNC), U.S. Fish and wildlife, BLM, Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), USFS, USF&G, large land and cattle companies, ranchers and private landowners. Annual VMP burns are conducted with The Nature Conservancy to reduce fuel loading and eradicate noxious weeds. We work closely with the other agencies on strategic planning, fire prevention and incident mitigation through multiple agreements and MOU's. A 10,000 gallon water tank, used for fire suppression efforts, has been in place for years on Denny Land and Cattle property in the foothills East of Red Bluff.

The responsibility of the fire service is to protect life and property. A combination of aggressive initial attack firefighting using available Federal, State and Local Government resources and prevention and education activities are the keys to accomplishing our

responsibilities. Focus will continue on training fire fighting crews to the highest level and educating and informing the public on fire prevention measures.



Vina Plains located in Battalion II

BATTALION III – Administered by Battalion 2513



Battalion III lies in the northwest portion of Tehama County and includes the communities of Lake California, Bowman, Dibble Creek, R-Wildhorse Ranch, Ridgeway and Red Bank. Values at risk include a large number of residential and associated structures on large lot or ranchette settings.

Topography and fuels within the Battalion are consistently rolling hills with grass/oak woodland fuels changing to brush and pine further to the west. In the most westerly areas the rolling hills turn to mountains with the grass/brush/pine fuel type changing to a mixed conifer forest near the Mendocino National Forest Boundary. Access to the Battalion is varied with fair to good access existing in most of the eastern portion and fair to poor access existing in the west due to less development and steeper terrain.

The fire history of the Battalion indicates that lightning is the greatest single cause of fires. In spite of the higher number, lightning fires tend to be smaller in size and are normally associated with some precipitation. Next to lightning, vehicle use, equipment operations, including chainsaws, welding and mowing caused the most fires. Historic records show occasional occurrence of high intensity large fires in the transition area from rolling hills to mountain terrain with heavier fuel loading and poor access.

Priorities for Battalion III include, utilizing vegetation management practices to reduce and modify fuel loading. Work with CALTRANS and the Tehama County Road Department on roadside fuel modification projects. Identify, construct and maintain fuel break locations. Continue support of the Sunflower and Tedoc Mountain CRMP fuel break. Develop and improve water sources used for fire protection. Battalion III will continue to conduct residential fire safe inspections annually. Continue enforcement of the annual ban on debris burning. Focus law enforcement activities on debris burning, equipment violations and arson. Conduct power line inspections. Promote fire prevention education among the general public and at area schools.

There are multiple stakeholders in Battalion III. They include the Cottonwood Creek Watershed Group, Cottonwood Creek Watershed Fire Safe Council, Red Bank Landowners Group, Sunflower Coordinated Resource Management Plan, ranchers and individual property owners.

CAL FIRE has worked in cooperation with the Cottonwood Creek Watershed Group and R-Wildhorse Ranch to improve water sources for fire suppression in the R-Wildhorse Ranch back country and construct and improve the firebreak that encircles the R-Wildhorse Ranch structures. A 10,000 gallon water tank for fire suppression has been installed in the Quail Ridge area of Bowman.

Protection of life, property and resources in Battalion III is the highest priority. Aggressive initial fire attack, sound vegetation management practices, effective public education, code enforcement and cooperation among stakeholders is the key to accomplishing these goals.

BATTALION IV – Administered by Battalion 2514



Battalion IV encompasses the southern portion of Tehama County including the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) along the Interstate 5 corridor and all the State Responsibility Area (SRA) of Glenn County. The SRA boundary lies west of Interstate 5 to the Mendocino National Forest, south to the Glenn-Colusa County line and north to Elder Creek in Tehama County. Communities with the Battalion include Richfield, Corning, Rancho Tehama, Flournoy, Paskenta, Chrome, Grindstone Rancheria and Elk Creek. Outside of the larger communities, the population is dispersed through rural residences and ranchlands.

Predominate vegetation in the Battalion consists of grassland, oak-woodland mixture, and chaparral. Blue Oak and Live Oak are the dominant tree species with a mix of Foothill Pine in higher elevations. Manzanita and Chemise are the primary chaparral in the area with dense patches present on the slopes and ridges below the Mendocino National Forest. Large annual grass crops intermixing with the chaparral cause the greatest fire suppression hazard in regards to fuels in the battalion. The light fuels carry fire rapidly and is receptive to spotting activity. Likewise, grass is an exceptional carrier of fire into the brush and brush canopy depending on fuel height and thickness.

Common weather in the battalion consist of summer temperatures over 100 Fahrenheit, relative humidity in the low teens to single digit and strong north winds. Weather conditions are the number one factor in fire spread and fire activity in the Battalion. Along with the weather challenge, topography plays a role in the battalion for fire spread. The topography in the battalion consists of flat valley lands with a transition to rolling hills to step hills. There are narrow drainages on the Westside that feed seasonal streams, ponds and year round waterways. 2-Wheel and 4-wheel drive fire vehicles can achieve access to most of the battalion. There are numerous dirt ranch roads spread throughout the battalion that allow access to remote areas. With the mix of weather, topography and fuels, fires in the battalion can be fast moving and unpredictable.

Most common fire causes within the battalion are equipment use/mechanical and debris pile escape. Historically, fires in the State Responsibility Area (SRA) occur along traveled county roads, at rural ranchlands and within the larger populated Rancho Tehama community. Arson and accidental human cause fires are not uncommon in the area. Lighting levels on the west side of the battalion are another contributor to fire activity within the battalion.

Besides the communities and residences located in the battalion, other assets in the battalion are at risk from fire. A majority of the battalion is rural ranch land with both grazing and agricultural field and farmland. There is a high value placed on the annual grasses in the area due to livestock grazing. Likewise, the infrastructure on the ranch lands, such as barns, fences, feeders, and equipment are vital to the ranching operation. Also located in the battalion are the water reservoirs, Black Butte Lake and Stony Gorge. Both Black Butte and Stony Gorge provide summertime water and camping recreation to the public.

There are numerous stakeholders and agencies within the battalion that share a common interest regarding fire plans. The stakeholders and agencies include, Glenn County Resource Conservation District, large land and cattle companies, ranch owners, Rancho Tehama Owners

Association, US Army Corps of Engineers, BIA, US Fish and Wildlife, USFS, BLM, California State Parks and Glenn County Chiefs Association. We have multiple agreements and operating plans within the battalion that allow for fire prevention, cross agency training, strategic planning and incident mitigation.

Yearly projects in the battalion include road grading, fuel breaks, and fire safety training with the US Army Corps of Engineers at Black Butte Lake. In Glenn County, we conduct a fuel reduction burn along Highway 162 that creates a firebreak to the south of Highway 162. CAL FIRE was invited to be advisors for the development of the Western Glenn County Fire Council. Under the guidance of the Glenn County Resource Conservation District, the council will allow for fire agencies, public entities and landowners to develop measures to reduce fire threat. Moreover, the ability to identify possible areas of need in the rural areas of the county such as fuel breaks, updated road numbering and signs, preplanning, possible VMP's, water storage identification, prevention and public awareness are just a few of the objectives.

SALT CREEK CONSERVATION CAMP - Administered by D2504



Salt Creek Conservation Camp is located 38 miles west of Corning in the southwestern portion of Tehama County. The facility is situated in a protected basin of the Mendocino National Forest 9 miles southwest of the town of Paskenta. The Camp houses an average of 120 low risk inmates under the direction of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and CAL FIRE. The camp maintains six (6) fire crews that are capable of responding to a variety of “all-risk” emergencies; ranging from wildland fires, floods, rescues and other natural and man-caused disasters. In addition to emergency response, our crews provide community service project work with local agencies in Butte, Glenn and Tehama Counties.

2011 proved to be an unusually slow fire season statewide. The reduction in fire responses provided an added benefit to the residents of Tehama County by increasing the hours spent performing conservation work. Noteworthy projects during the last year include fire hazard reduction for the Sunflower CRMP and Interstate 5 corridor. Our crews also provided levee maintenance and restoration projects for Tehama Public Works; performing flood control within the Deer Creek and Elder Creek drainages. The City of Corning, Corning Jr. Rodeo, Corning Little League, Gerber School and Richfield School were also beneficiaries of conservation work performed by our crews within this past year. Our most extensive project within Tehama County involved constructing a 6 mile trail at Black Butte Lake for the Army Corps of Engineers. This trail which included several bridges and water crossings was intended to be used for public recreation following the inaugural Black Butte Triathlon.

In 2011, Salt Creek Conservation Camp recorded 41,736 hours on emergency incidents, and 211,612 hours of project work.

Since the opening in 1987, Salt Creek Conservation Camp has continued to be a valuable resource for the State of California and the citizens of Tehama County through conservation and the protection of life, property and natural resources.

ISHI CONSERVATION CAMP – Administered by D2503



Ishi Conservation Camp is one of three camps located in the CAL FIRE Tehama-Glenn Unit and the only camp servicing eastern Tehama County. Located 25 miles east of Red Bluff, the 100 man camp changed hands throughout the 1960's and 1970's until the California Department of Corrections entered a cooperative agreement with the California Department of Forestry in 1981. Since then, Ishi Camp has taken a multi-faceted approach in meeting CAL FIRE'S mission, goals and objectives.

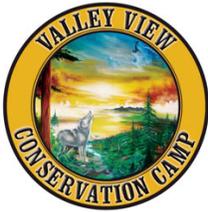
Emergency response is the top priority as the camp is staffed 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Although the camp does engage in flood fighting, snow removal, and storm clean-up, the primary mission is wildland fire suppression. Ishi crews are first due into southern Shasta County, western Lassen County, eastern Tehama County and northern Butte County for wildland fires. The five crew's average approximately 50,000 emergency man hours a year.

In preparation of emergency response, Ishi Camp has hosted the Ishi Exercises for the past 27 years. The Ishi training exercise evaluates the preparedness of nearly fifty Northern California inmate fire crews from most of the northern region fire camps.

In addition to emergency response, Ishi Camp is heavily engaged in pre-fire management by working with many of the stakeholders from local, state and federal jurisdictions by implementing fuel reduction projects. Projects range from working with the Tehama County Resource Conservation District reducing fuels through chipping projects to utilizing federal grants by working closely with the United States Forest Service in creating strategically placed shaded fuel breaks and water tanks used for fire suppression. Private land owners participate in these projects by providing assistance and funding for projects through the previously mentioned jurisdictions as well as the local Fire Safe Council and Water Shed Districts. The five Ishi Fire Crews averaged 160,000 man hours of project work a year. Approximately 80,000 of those hours were dedicated to fuel reduction projects within the Unit.

Lastly, Ishi Crews are part of an important resource used in the protection of natural resources. Ishi Camp partners with the Department of Fish and Game for the purpose of clearing local water sheds and protecting access points to wildlife areas. As with all camps, Ishi Crews are a major resource used for post-fire suppression by utilizing crews for reforestation planting, erosion control and fuel reduction.

VALLEY VIEW CONSERVATION CAMP – Administered by D2505



Located at Alder Springs in western Glenn County, Valley View Camp is in the Mendocino National Forest's summertime comfort zone of 4,500 ft. Partnered with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CAL FIRE operates 6 Fire Crews for incident response, 5 of which are project crews when no emergency need exists.

The range of Valley View's project locations extends to Glenn, Butte, and Colusa Counties. Sponsors within Glenn County include:

- Glenn County Road Department—road brushing and chipping to maintain clearances of rural county roads.
- US Fish and Wildlife Service—removal of unwanted vegetation and specifically the non-native and aggressive species of vegetation like arrunda.
- Cemetery Districts—grounds and facility maintenance for Elk Creek, German (Artois), and Butte City cemeteries.
- Levee Districts—removal of vegetation from levee banks for improved integrity and visibility of levee surfaces.
- US Forest Service (Mendocino National Forest)—assist in many aspects of timber management, including seedling protection, timber thinning projects, post-harvest clean-up, road brushing, and vegetation management burning. One current USFS project is the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) shaded fuelbreak project around Valley View Camp and the adjacent USFS Alder Springs Guard Station. This project is being completed in several phases due to the large scope—crews have removed brush and limbed up trees in the 200 ft proximity of the camp. They will assist in completing an understory burn past that area; and will assist to contain and patrol an additional helicopter-torched burn later in spring. This project will modify much of the surrounding vegetation and create a more fire-defensible area for the station and camp.

2011 Fire Man Hours: 49,547

2011 Project Man Hours: 174,829