

## **Executive Summary**

The increased fuel loading in our wild lands, coupled with the ever increasing urban interface population, creates a recipe for disaster. Increasing numbers of bug-killed trees, acres of brush, environmental restrictions, areas of unhealthy forests, and sources of ignition all contribute to large and damaging wildfires. In addition, our ground water resources are being substantially compromised as wild fires in the watersheds directly influence the quantity and quality of our water supplies.

In the past several years major wild fires have dominated the Western United States. The National Fire Management Plan was established as a source of funding for fire protection agencies to reduce fuel loading and to provide for public awareness programs to help educate homeowners in providing “Defensible Space” around their homes. Fuel reduction projects have taken a back seat to the education programs. Constraints placed on agencies in administering the funding sources have hampered the execution of these projects. Lengthy and sometimes costly, environmental impact reports, limited staffing levels for CDF and cooperating agencies, and budget restraints have also contributed to extended delays in planning and accomplishing pre-fire projects.

The past year has seen an increase in public awareness of fire prevention. The need for fuel reduction was again emphasized through the efforts of the Mariposa Fire Safe Council, the Eastern Madera Fire Safe Council, North Fork Mono Rancheria, the South West Inter-Face Project Team and the Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit’s fire prevention bureau. Every year educational inserts are included in the local newspapers, called “Living with Fire” and “In Harm’s Way” to educate the public of the continuing threat of wildfire to our local communities. The Fire Safe Councils, CDF, and the Sierra National Forest regularly provide presentations to communities at risk to wildfire. During these presentations the public is provided with information on how to reduce the threat to their communities both individually and collectively.

The South West Inter-Face Team (SWIFT) is a group of agencies working together to reduce the threat of wild fire in the southern Tuolumne & northern Mariposa county urban-wildland interface. There are approximately 132,000 acres located in the SWIFT area and to date over 40 miles of fuel break have been constructed and almost 13,000 acres of fuel treatment activities have been completed.

Three Fire Safe Councils are actively involved in educating the public in wildfire preparedness and fuel reduction projects. All three councils have obtained their non-profit status and have received well over \$750,000 through the National Fire Management Plan for education, planning and on-ground fuel reduction projects. The Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council has received a Proposition 40 grant for almost \$360,000 to construct a shaded fuel break in the Oakhurst area along Potter Ridge, which is located between Deadwood Mountain and Miami Mountain.

Cooperative planning continues with the Sierra National Forest Bass Lake Ranger District, to construct fuel breaks along National Forest lands which are adjacent to or would otherwise enhance SRA fuel break continuity.

Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) continues to integrate their power line clearance projects with CDF fuel reduction projects.

Other fuel reduction projects are being planned in “Target Areas” which will be discussed in depth later in the plan.

MMU is committed to the implementation of the Unit’s Fire Management Plan and will continually strive to utilize its resources to accomplish the goals and objectives within it.