

Recommendations For Wildfire Mitigation Measures in Nevada County

A plan to reduce total
government
costs and citizen losses from
wildfire

DRAFT

**GOAL: 1REDUCE FIRE SEVERITY AND INTENSITY THROUGH FUELS
MANAGEMENT Objectives**

- A. Improve public awareness and understanding that Nevada County lies within a fire-adapted ecosystem that historically relied upon fire to maintain the vegetative fuel accumulations. With fire no longer being an option for fuel management in communities, landowners need to take appropriate steps to mimic the natural processes of the past. We need to stress that there is a direct relationship between high fuel accumulations and high intensity, destructive wildland fire.
1. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the CDF, USFS, BLM and the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools, and other interested groups, work together to develop a school curriculum based upon the historic nature of the Sierran Forests and the role of cyclical historic fire as nature’s way of maintaining vegetative fuels accumulations.
 2. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the USFS and Nevada County Superintendent of Schools implement the concept of a School Forest within the Tahoe National Forest to provide students a laboratory in which to study and understand the dynamics of the Sierra Nevada forest.
 3. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the NRCS, CDF and Resource Conservation District jointly conduct seminars for landowners on proper stewardship techniques based upon fuel management prescriptions developed for this Plan.
 4. **Recommendation:** Create a Video Lending Library of videos focused on proper land stewardship, proper defensible space, fire prevention, disaster preparedness and application of the various fuel management prescriptions.
- B. Define the desired future fuel condition based upon the fuel conditions of the past.
- B.1 Develop prescription for defensible space fuel modification around structures.
5. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the following Fuel Management prescription (found in Appendix) as the foundation of an expanded ordinance for providing defensible space around structures.
- B.2 Develop prescription for defensible community-level fuel modifications on the wildland portion of all parcels up to 10 acres.
6. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt the following fuel management prescription as the foundation for a new ordinance for wildland fuels management on improved and vacant parcels in and adjacent to communities of ten acres or less.

- B.3. Develop a fuels management implementation strategy phasing in over 5 years, initially focusing on education and assistance. Ultimate implementation through education, assistance and enforcement.

7. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt as a fire risk reduction policy the following implementation timeline for education, assistance and compliance programs for fuels management ordinances recommended for adoption by this Plan.

Year 1 Public Education
Assistance Program
Enforcement of Defensible Space

Year 2 Public Education
Assistance Program
Enforcement of Defensible Space
Point of Sale enforcement for developed and undeveloped parcels
Enforcement at Building Permit Issuance

Year 3 Public Education
Assistance Program
Enforcement of Defensible Space
Point of Sale enforcement for developed and undeveloped parcels
Enforcement at Building Permit Issuance
General enforcement emphasized in High Hazard Severity Zones

Year 4 Continuation of year three

Year 5 Public Education Assistance Program Enforcement of Defensible Space Point of Sale enforcement for developed and undeveloped parcels Enforcement at Building Permit Issuance General enforcement emphasized in High Hazard Severity Zones General enforcement of landscape level fuel management on parcels 10 acres or less in all hazard areas

Subsequent Years
Continuation of Year 5

- B.4. Provide fuel management consulting service contacts for private property owners of parcels greater than 10 acres in size.

8. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that resource agencies (CDF, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Resource Conservation District, USFS, BLM) jointly develop guides for fuel management on large parcels. These guides must take into account variations based upon fuel

types, differing land management objectives and proximity to communities.

9. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Resource agencies provide training to fuels management contractors on the guides for fuel management on large parcels, and after successful completion of training, placed on a published hiring list.
10. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Resource agencies prepare and make available to the public a directory of Agency Advisors, Private Consultants and Fuels Management Companies to assist landowners in being proper stewards of their lands.

C. Develop, organize and fund, property owner assistance program.

11. **Recommendation:** In recognition of the relationship between fuel reduction and public safety, the FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors seek a permanent funding mechanism for the provision of chipper services or alternative services at a reduced rate and free fuels management advising services to the landowners of Nevada County. Funding for this program may be entirely or partially offset through grants, but the program is of such value that it should not be grant dependent.
12. **Recommendation:** Provide consulting services for private landowners for the restoration and rehabilitation of wildlands impacted by fire, insect, and disease.
13. **Recommendation:** Create Directory of Assistance of Programs for large landowners i.e. Vegetation Management Program, California Forest Improvement Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program.
14. **Recommendation:** Provide financial aid for community based fuel reduction to those landowners who can demonstrate financial need based upon established criteria and who are incapable of accomplishing the fuels management on their own.

**GOAL: 2 ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY AND IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF
MERCENCY SERVICES THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**
Objectives

A. Review and make recommendations regarding roads within the county for emergency ingress and egress.

A.1 Identify existing County maintained roads not meeting design standards for current or anticipated use as indicated by the General Plan.

15. **Recommendation:** The Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the County Office of Emergency Services, law enforcement and the fire services to identify county maintained roads not meeting design standards for current or anticipated ADT, and that those roads be prioritized for upgrading as funds become available.

- A.2 Ensure that private roads that are required as a condition of approval through the Subdivision Map Act are maintained to the design standard that they were originally required to be built to.
- 16. Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that a compliance program be put in place to ensure that private roads required as a condition of approval are maintained, over the long term, to the same standard that they were originally approved.
- A.3. Review private roads that have offers for dedication placed upon them and develop mechanisms for taking those of significant regional importance to public safety into the county maintained mileage program.
- 17. Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the DOT in cooperation with County OES, law enforcement and the fire services, conduct an analysis of private roads with offers of dedication on them and identify those of significant regional importance for safe ingress and egress. Once identified, those roads need to be prioritized for inclusion into the county maintained mileage program.
- 18. Recommendation:** The FPC recognizes the current funding issues related to adding new roads to the maintained mileage program and recommends that mechanisms be explored by which to fund bringing roads of regional importance under county maintenance.
- B. Develop a countywide rural fire protection water system that provides a cost effective, adequate water supply and seek adoption into county ordinance.
- 19. Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors, through the County Fire Marshal's Office, conduct a study for funding a countywide system of strategically located rural fire protection water storage tanks. It is further recommended that this study be funded with Title III funds. (Grant Funds to the County from the USFS under HR 2389) With the successful implementation of this program the FPC recommends the abandonment of the application of individual water storage tank requirements on single-family residences.
- 20. Recommendation:** Include inspection of required existing water storage facilities when inspecting for fuels management
- C. Develop an emergency public notification system and educate citizens and agencies on intent and use.
- 21. Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct the County OES to put in place an automated emergency public notification system which uses the phone system to distribute information to user identified zones. These zones can be identified and the message can be spontaneously constructed in response to each incident. Given that this system is not wildland fire specific, but has application on all types of incidents, the committee feels that it is

appropriate to purchase this system with Office of Homeland Security Grant funds. Once in place, the committee recommends that training on its application be given to all managers within public safety.

- D. Create a business environment that encourages the development of a sustainable fuels management industry that assists landowners in their fuels management efforts safely, economically and in a manner consistent with the adopted fuels management prescriptions.

- 22. Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the resource agencies in Nevada County jointly sponsor workshops for fuel reduction contractors that covers safe operations, the application of the fuel management prescriptions to various fuel types, and fire prevention in their operations. Those contractors attending the workshop would be placed on a resource list and made available to the public.

GOAL: 3 REDUCE RISK TO LIFE AND PROPERTY THROUGH NEW OR REVISED CODES, ORDINANCES AND COMPLIANCE PROGRAMS

Objectives:

- A. Review and revise, as needed, existing wildland fire related codes and ordinances to address the recognized hazards of building and living in the wildland urban interface.

- 23. Recommendation:** The FPC established a separate sub committee be established to review the existing Fire Safety Regulations in the Land Use and Development Code (LUDC), Chapters 16 and 17.

Note: This committee, made up of fire prevention officers, members of the Building, Planning and Transportation Department, and members of various interest groups within the county, met over a period of three months and prepared suggested changes to the Fire Safety Regulations. Their recommendations have been reviewed and approved by the full Fire Plan Committee. Those changes are displayed in Appendix XX.

- 24. Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors consider the recommended changes of Code Review Sub-Committee and move to adopt those changes into the LUDC Chapter 16 & 17.
- 25. Recommendation:** The FPC recognizes the continuing constraints that are being placed upon outdoor burning. The Committee recommends that green waste pickup, mulching or composting be the preferred alternative for leaf and pine needle disposal. Outdoor burning should be reserved as a priority for disposal of wildland fuels where no other options are

feasible.

26. **Recommendation:** Provide green waste pickup services county wide or in rural areas schedule community vegetative waste drop off days in those areas not receiving green waste pickup.
- B. Consider new fire safety Codes and Ordinances to meet the county’s fire safe needs.
27. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt an expanded defensible space ordinance and a community level defensible landscape ordinance in accordance with the recommended fuels management prescriptions developed under Goal #1 and to be implemented consistent with the implementation strategy found in Goal #1
28. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct that a review of the fire safety provisions of specific ordinances be conducted a maximum of five years after the implementation of the fuels management ordinances. The intent of the review is to evaluate whether or not significant fuels reduction has occurred that would allow reconsideration of prior regulations of restrictions based upon the risk being reduced in an area previously recognized as having significant wildland fire risk.
- C. Review and recommend improvement of “same practical effect” process for meeting the intent of the Fire Safety Regulations.
29. **Recommendation:** The FPC recognizes the value of the ‘same practical effect’ or ‘exception’ process for use when the letter of the law may not be practically applied, but the intent of the law may be achieved through application of other measures and suggests that this provision in the code be retained. However, the FPC suggests that the public be better informed on how to enter and use the process.

GOAL: 4 INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT TO PROMOTE PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE

Objectives:

- A. Utilize the Fire Safe Council and community and business associations, i.e. Nevada County Board of Realtors, within Nevada County for public education and assistance.
30. **Recommendation:** The FPC recognizes the value of the Fire Safe Council as significant contributor of providing fire safe education and information to the residents of the County and supports efforts to seek sustainable, long term funding in order to maintain their programs.
- B. Develop a template for a community/neighborhood fire safe plan.

31. **Recommendation:** The Fire Plan Committee has developed a Template for a Community Fire Safe Plan. It is the FPCs intent that this template be used by the various fire protection agencies within the county, in cooperation with the Fire Safe Council, to create community specific fire safe plans. These plans will address evacuation planning, specific high hazard project areas, neighborhood preparedness, safety zones and public education at the local level. It is the intent of the FPC that the community plan in tandem with the county plan will meet the requirement of the Disaster Management Act of 2000. The FPC seeks the support of the Board of Supervisors in this effort.
- C. Provide on-site consulting for landowners.
32. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the fire services, resource agencies, and the Fire Safe Council jointly publish a resource directory of public agency advisors, consulting services and private contractors available to the public for education, designing, or completing fuels management projects on private lands.
- D. Create incentives that encourage Voluntary Compliance
33. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Fire Marshal's Office continue to work with the insurance industry to obtain recognition of the fact that the landscape level fuel reduction ordinance, once in effect, will significantly reduce losses from wildland fire paid by insurers in Nevada County. And, that the reduction in risk should translate into lower premium costs to policyholders.
34. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that all agencies and organizations support the Fire Safe Council's effort to create a biomass reutilization center. It is hoped that this effort will result in a monetary value being placed upon removed vegetative fuels that will, at least in part, pay for their removal.
35. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors, in cooperation with the fire services and the Fire Safe Council, publicly recognize individual landowners and communities and public land managers for significant accomplishments in fuels management at the individual parcel level, the community level, and at the landscape level.
- E. Identify fuel reduction priorities for grant funded projects and public education.
36. **Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the fire services and the Fire Safe Council, based on information taken from the Community Fire Plans and the CDF's Nevada-Yuba-Placer Fire Management Plan, identify those areas within the county with significant potential for large and damaging wildfires and prioritize those for grant funded fire risk reduction projects.

- F. Provide a better understanding to the public and to the architectural and building industry about the benefits and material/design options available with ignition resistant building materials.

37. Recommendation: The FPC recommends that the fire agencies, the building industry and the building material industry cooperate on a high visibility educational effort on the benefits of using ignition resistant building materials and methods in the wildlands of Nevada County, And that this effort emphasize the architectural and appearance similarities between ignition resistant building materials and more readily combustible building materials.

GOAL: 5

INVOLVE FIRE AGENCIES, COUNTY DEPARTMENTS, AND PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND MANAGERS, AND THE FIRE SAFE COUNCIL IN COLLABORATING ON COUNTY-WIDE GOALS AND PLANS TO CONSISTENTLY AND EFFECIENTLY IMPLEMENT MITIGATION MEASURES

Objectives:

- A. Provide adequate resources to implement Fuels Modification Ordinance, Rural Fire Protection Water Supply System and County Chipper Assistance Program and other programs appropriate for countywide application.

38. Recommendation: The FPC recommends that the Board of Supervisors seek a source of funding for the appropriate staffing of the County Fire Marshal's Office to implement many of the recommendations of this Fire Plan that are most efficiently and effectively provided on a county wide basis. Those programs include the phased in implementation of the of the fuels management ordinances, the management of the county wide Rural Fire Protection Water Supply System, management of tax funded assistance programs for landowners, providing leadership in producing resource documents for the public and providing training to the fuels management industry.

- B. Create a collaborative process for integration of common goals, countywide, into each agency's fire prevention program.

39. Recommendation: The FPC recommends that the County Fire Marshal take a lead role in bringing together all agencies, non-profits, county departments and associations which have a statutory or general interest in fire risk reduction or protection of the environment from wildland fire with the intent of creating and maintaining a consistent message to the public regarding fire prevention and risk reduction requirements and activities.

- C. Public and private Lands – Collaborate with public land managers, open space districts, land trusts for wildland urban interface fuel management.

- 40. Recommendation:** The FPC recommends that the County Fire Marshal, in cooperation with the local fire agency, work with public land managers, which manage wildlands within and adjacent to communities and who may not have a statutory requirement for compliance with the County's Fire Safety Regulations. The focus of the effort is to see that the vegetative fuels on these lands are managed in a manner similar to that being proposed for private lands in this plan.
- D. Review the effectiveness of the fire plan in a minimum of five years and each five years thereafter.
- 41. Recommendation:** The Fire Plan Committee recommends that the County Fire Marshal report, in May of each year, to the Board of Supervisors on the progress being made towards full implementation of the Fire Plan. And, that every five years the Board of Supervisors reconvene the Fire Plan Committee for a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the fire plan.