

The Nature Reserve of Orange County (NROC).
Firesafe Councils and Alliances.
Water companies relying on watershed areas.
Electric companies concerned with power generation and distribution.
Railroads and other transportation entities traversing wildlands.
Communications companies with facilities sited on or traversing wildlands.
Agricultural commissions, boards, committees and associations.
Habitat conservation groups.
Groups and associations promoting various outdoor activities.
Historical societies.
Tourism and commerce promoting groups.
Petroleum / Natural Gas pipeline companies.

It is an objective of the Wildland Fire Management Plan that those who benefit from the protection of an asset should also share in the costs for protecting that asset. Asset stakeholders are encouraged to provide financial support for the projects that provide significant benefits to their assets at risk. Therefore, it will be necessary to develop a cost share formula that will identify multiple benefactors of a particular project.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue - The ecological processes, including wildland fire and other disturbance, and changing landscape conditions are often not integrated into management planning and decisions. With few exceptions, existing land management planning tends to be confined within individual agency or departmental jurisdiction boundaries. This is partly due to being directed by agency or departmental mission and policy and or simply based on the goals of a single program.

Recommendation - OCFA management planning must consider the risks, probabilities, and consequences of various management strategies of hazard mitigation, e.g., fire use vs. fire exclusion. In a responsive planning process, management decisions must be monitored, integrated and supported at each step.

OCFA management must understand and accept the need to integrate all forms of hazardous fuel reduction techniques, including the use of prescribed fire, into management plans and objectives. This integration must be reconciled with other societal goals, e.g., maintaining a healthy ecosystem, producing commodities, protecting air and water quality, and above all, the protection of human life and property.

OCFA management must recognize the importance of hazardous fuel reduction through the development of management plans that delineate a program of work to provide a safe environment in the wildlands. The plan will outline a course of action, that when accomplished, will provide for protection of life and property while reducing the potential devastating effects from an unplanned wildland fire.

OCFA management must work in unison with our stakeholders and encourage them to accept and understand to role of hazardous fuel reduction programs. We will encourage

stakeholders to either participate with OCFA as we work toward meeting our goals in the OCFA Wildland Fire Management Plan or to develop their own plans in which OCFA may enter into effective cooperative efforts to provide assistance. Either way, stakeholders will share in the opportunity and responsibility of protecting our communities.

Likewise, management needs to focus on protection goals to determine a success ratio of initial attack when responding to the unplanned wildland fire ignitions. The ratio should be indicative of levels at which the unplanned wildland fire is considered excessive or unacceptable either in final size (acres burned) or cost of suppression. Other factors for review can be added as required.

Issue - Several factors tend to constrain attempts, either prescribed fire or mechanical, to reduce hazardous fuels on a significant scale.

First, favoring the status quo often times impedes progress. Managers may feel the need to wait for certainties (scientific or otherwise) before taking action. Hesitation due to the devastating results of past failures, or a lack of new or better techniques, will hinder the manager and delay implementation.

Second, management plans may not be in place thus precluding managers from taking advantage of options presented by influencing factors.

A third constraining factor is the increasing human settlement that encroaches upon wildlands (wildland urban interface). Orange County history supports the concept that wildfire is an accepted way of life. In early times, wildland fire, under extreme conditions, would grow into an uncontrollable monster that would be influenced only by weather. With the small and scattered populations, humans often fell victim to wildfire. As populations grew, and continue to grow, the areas of wildlands are becoming fragmented, isolated and shrinking.

Smoke is yet another perceived factor that may affect managers' ability to use wildland fire on a large scale or frequency to restore and maintain fire-dependent ecosystems. Federal, State, County and local governments have developed standards (even though many are considered as constraints) that set air quality standards for pollutants that affect public health. There are many examples of fire agencies and local air quality authorities successfully working together to accomplish objectives, resolve conflicts and avoid violation of air quality standards.

Recommendation - First, OCFA management must continually review hazardous fuels reduction plans and must consider values to be protected, management objectives and environmental conditions.

Second, OCFA must embrace the concept that the threat is changing, from the wildland fire threatening humans, to the single- or multi-structure fire that escapes into the wildlands, thus destroying the shrinking wildlands, ecosystems and aesthetic values. OCFA must prepare to deal with providing a protection system that will be considered a "two-way street".

Third, OCFA must plan and implement actions in areas where planning has determined a wide range of appropriate management activities, treatments by use of fire or mechanical means, and that these opportunities should be implemented as safely and cost-effectively as possible to accomplish goals and objectives.

OCFA needs to be a leader in efforts to continue successful interagency conflict resolution to enhanced cooperation and understanding the roles of smoke management and to insure the use of planned wildland fire use in the future.

Issue - For many people, wildland fire remains a fearsome, destructive force that can and should be controlled at all costs. Smokey Bear's simple, time honored "only you" fire prevention message has been so successful that any complex talk about the healthy role of fire in the ecosystem is often lost or quickly squelched.

Another segment of the population feels that any type of disturbance to the ecosystem, either by fire, by hand or by mechanical means, is unwarranted. The concepts of letting nature run its course has repeatedly proven too costly both too the environment and populace.

Recommendation - OCFA must develop a comprehensive message is that clearly conveys the desired balance of avoiding wildland fires with adverse effects while simultaneously increasing the knowledge and use of prescribed fire for the protection of human life and property and the benefit of the ecology. Stated again, Orange County histories supports the fact that fire is a way of life, we must protect ourselves from the hazards of wildland fire and prevent losses to the optimum extent possible.

OCFA must periodically review this plan with stakeholders for additional input and a focused group of stakeholders potentially affected by or benefiting from specific pre-fire projects will be conducted for cost share determination.

OCFA must develop a cost-share formula to aid in the decision process and insure that funding sources are identified and acquired to support and insure that pre-fire projects will be implemented.