

Executive Summary

The 2005 Riverside Unit Pre-Fire Management Plan reflects the current State of Emergency that exists in the San Jacinto Mountains (Battalion 11) within the Unit. Personnel from the Pre-Fire Management Division, including the Unit Chief, Deputy Chief – Special Operations, Pre-Fire Division Chief, Battalion Chiefs, Pre-Fire Engineer, unit Foresters, VMP Co-Coordinator, and Riverside County Fire Department Pre-Fire Management personnel and, are working diligently with the Mountain Area Safety Task Force (MAST) to come up with solutions for this massive problem. Although Pre-Fire activities continue in other parts of the county through the shifting of resources, the focus of our activities has been and must continue to be these communities and watersheds within the mountainous area until the unprecedented threat can be sufficiently mitigated.

Plan Concept and Process

The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) have drafted a comprehensive update of the Fire Plan for wildland fire protection in California. The planning process defines a level of service measurement, considers assets at risk, incorporates the cooperative interdependent relationships of wildland fire protection providers, provides for public stakeholder involvement, and creates a fiscal framework for policy analysis.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the Pre-Fire Management Plan is to reduce total government costs and citizen losses from wildland fire in the Riverside Unit by protecting assets at risk through focused pre-fire management prescriptions and increasing initial attack success. The Fire Plan has five strategic objectives:

- ◆ Create wildfire protection zones that reduce the risks to citizens and firefighters.
- ◆ Include all wildland, not just the state responsibility areas. Analysis will ultimately include all wildland fire service providers - federal, state, local government, and private. This is the long-term strategy. This plan is primarily focused on the CDF Direct Protection Area (DPA) of the Riverside Unit, however the current extreme fuel conditions existing in the San Jacinto Mountains require the Unit to include the State Responsibility Area (SRA) within U.S. Forest Service DPA also.
- ◆ Identify and analyze key policy issues and develop recommendations for changes in public policy. Analysis will include alternatives to reduce total costs and/or increase fire protection system effectiveness.

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- ◆ Describe the wildland fire protection system in fiscal terms. This can include all public/private expenditures and potential economic losses.
- ◆ Translate the analysis into public policy.

Fire Plan Framework

The five major objectives form the basis of an ongoing fire planning process to monitor and assess Riverside County's wildland fire environment. They include:

- ◆ Wildfire Protection Zones. These zones are buffers around the community to reduce citizen and firefighter risks from costly and damaging fires.
- ◆ Initial Attack Success. This measure can be used to assess the department's ability to provide an equal level of protection to lands of similar type, as required by Public Resources Code 4130. This measurement is the percentage of fires that are successfully controlled before unacceptable costs are incurred.
- ◆ Assets Protected. The assets addressed in the plan are citizen and firefighter safety, watersheds and water, timber, wildlife and habitat (including rare and endangered species), unique areas (scenic, cultural, and historic), recreation, range, structures, and air quality.
- ◆ Pre-fire Management. This is the process that assesses alternatives to protect assets from unacceptable risk of wildland fire damage. Project alternatives may include a combination of fuels reduction, ignition management, fire-safe engineering activities, and forest health improvement to protect public and private assets.
- ◆ Fiscal framework. This is a tool for assessing and monitoring the cost-effectiveness of the wildland fire protection systems.

Pre-Fire Management Plan Applications

- Identify those areas of concentrated assets and high risk for state, federal, and local officials and for the public
- Allow wildland fire service providers to create a more efficient fire protection system focusing on meaningful solutions for identified problem areas.
- Give citizens an opportunity to identify public and private assets to design and carry out projects to protect those assets.
- Identify, before fires start, where cost-effective pre-fire management investments can be made to reduce taxpayer costs and citizen losses from wildfire.
- Encourage an integrated intergovernmental approach to reducing costs and losses.
- Enable policy makers and the public to focus on what can be done to reduce future costs and losses from wildfires.

Assessment Framework

The Pre-Fire Management Plan includes a framework for a systematic assessment of the existing levels of wildland protection services, identifies high-risk and high-value areas that are potential locations of costly and disastrous wild fires, ranks the areas in terms of priority needs, and prescribes what can be done to reduce the future costs and losses. This assessment system has four major components:

- Level of Service
- Assets at Risk
- Hazardous Fuels
- Severe Fire Weather

During the data collection and validation phase, input is solicited and invited from interested stakeholders as it pertains to assets at risk. Stakeholders may be other government agencies, private landowners, service groups, or homeowner associations. It is an objective of the Pre-Fire Management Plan that those who benefit from the protection of an asset should also share in costs for protecting that asset. Thus, asset stakeholders are encouraged to provide financial support for the projects that provide significant benefits to their assets at risk.