

Executive Summary

Cal Fire Madera-Mariposa-Merced Unit (MMU) has drafted a comprehensive update of the unit fire plan for wildland fire protection in Madera, Mariposa and Merced Counties. The MMU Unit Fire Management Plan documents wildland fire potential within the unit and acts as a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the three counties. The plan outlines MMU's operational structure. It includes stakeholder contributions, priorities, and identifies strategic targets for pre-fire solutions. This plan is a living document to be amended as new information is collected.

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.

Statement of Purpose

The goal of the Madera, Mariposa, Merced Unit is to reduce the loss of life, property, watershed values, and other assets at risk from wildfire through a focused pre-fire management program and increased initial attack success.

These goals are accomplished by the implementation of the following objectives:

1. Continue to provide operational training to field personnel that will support safe and successful suppression operations keeping fires less than 10 acres in size.
2. Continue to educate and enforce the Public Resource Code (PRC) 4291, 100 foot defensible space around structures.
3. Support project work and planning efforts that encourage fuel reduction projects in and around communities located in high fire severity zones.
4. The development of safe ingress and egress routes for emergency incidents. Continue to educate and enforce the Public Resource Code (PRC) 4291:
 - (1) Road standards for fire equipment access.
 - (2) Standards for signs identifying streets, roads, and buildings.
 - (3) Minimum private water supply reserves for emergency fire use.
 - (4) Fuel breaks and greenbelts.

5. Support the implementation and enforcement of the new 2008 Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Building Standards through the cooperation with local government planning departments.
6. Utilize prevention operations to reduce ignitions within the unit.
7. Educate the community on their role in the prevention of wildfire and support local Fire Safe Organizations.

This plan will utilize the five strategic objectives and Fire Plan Framework identified in the California Fire Plan and incorporates them into the planning and implementation process. The five objectives and framework components of the MMU Prefire Management Plan are as follows:

- **Wildfire Protection Zones:**
To create wildfire protection zones that reduces the risks to citizens and firefighters.
- **Initial Attack Success:**
To assess wildfire initial attack successes on lands of similar type. This is measured in terms of a percentage of fires that are successfully controlled before unacceptable costs and losses occur. The analyses can be used to determine the department and unit's level of service.
- **Assets Protected:**
The plan will establish a methodology for defining assets protected and their degree of risk from wildfire. The assets addressed in the plan are citizens and firefighter safety, structures, infrastructure, watersheds and water, timber, wildlife and habitat (including rare and endangered species), unique areas (scenic, cultural, and historic), recreation, range, and air quality. Stakeholders -- national, state and local, and private agencies, interest groups, etc. -- will be identified for each asset at risk from wildfire, enabling fire service managers and stakeholders to set priorities for prefire management project work.
- **Prefire Management Prescriptions:**
The prefire management aspect focuses alternatives to protect assets at risk. Projects include a combination of fuels reduction, ignition management, fire-safe engineering activities, and forest health. Prefire management prescriptions designed to protect these assets will also identify those who benefit and who should share in the project costs.
- **Fiscal Framework:**
The State Board of Forestry and Cal Fire are developing a fiscal framework for assessing and monitoring annual and long term changes in California's wildland fire protection systems. This plan will incorporate Prefire Workload Analyses into the plan in an attempt to provide meaningful data for developing future fiscal frameworks and public policies.

The Fire Plan Framework aspires to:

- Identify for state, federal, and local officials and for the public those areas of concentrated assets and high risk.
- Allow Cal Fire to create a more efficient fire protection system focused on meaningful solutions for identified problem areas.
- Give stakeholders an opportunity to identify, design and carry out projects to protect assets at risk.
- Identify, before fires start, where cost-effective prefire 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.

Fire Plan Target Area Successes

MMU's past fire plans put projects to paper, thus creating target areas for fuel reduction and shaded fuel breaks. Through the work of the Eastern Madera Fire Safe Council, the Mariposa Fire Safe Council, the Southwest Interface Team (SWIFT), the Natural Resource Conservation District's and other non-profit organizations these fire plans helped justify grant funds. Through these groups and our own Cal Fire personnel, we have a number of fuel reduction projects, either completed or in various levels of completion throughout the unit. Some of these successes include establishing shaded fuel breaks around the Oakhurst/Ahwahnee basins, the community of Ponderosa Basin, the community of Northfork and the community of Greely Hill.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans

In 2008 and 2009, Madera and Mariposa Counties completed Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). These plans were developed to identify and prioritize communities at risk within the particular counties. The writing of these plans was funded with various governmental grants. Two small communities in Mariposa County, Foresta and Yosemite West developed their own CWPP's as a result of grant funding from the National Park Service. Like the Unit Fire Plan, the CWPP's are living documents that require annual review and updates when appropriate. Internet links to these CWPP's are included in the MMU Fire Plan.

Summary

Increased development in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) has created more preventable fire ignitions. Prevention and education efforts must continue to concentrate on the reduction or elimination of preventable fire ignitions. Residents must provide and maintain a defensible space around their properties. Enforcement of current 100 foot defensible space laws around structures will greatly reduce losses due to wildfire. Public Resource Code enforcement for standards for fire equipment access, signs identifying roads, street addresses and buildings, minimum private water supply reserves for emergency fire use as well as use of fire resistant construction materials in new construction will also greatly contribute to reducing losses due to wildfire. Fuels along existing roadways should be maintained in order to ensure safe passage for both residents and firefighters during a wildfire. The development and maintenance of strategic fuel breaks throughout the unit should remain a top priority for all stakeholders. The strategic placement of Vegetation Management Projects (VMP), as well as fuel reduction to large tracts of forest land using the California Forest Improvement Program (CFIP) can help reduce loss in WUI areas as well as improve forest health. It is imperative that Cal Fire and our stakeholders continue to seek funding and methods to mitigate the current risk as well as any future risks.

It is important to reemphasize that the MMU Fire Plan is a working document, which will be evaluated on a yearly basis. Many achievements have been made as a result of the prefire planning process. Unit personnel as well as the public are able to refer to this document when creating prefire management projects, coordinating fire prevention activities and participating in inter-agency fuel management activities. The analysis results of this plan will be used to interpret the wildfire threat to stakeholders within MMU. Additionally, wildfire protection beneficiaries will be identified through analyses of the plan, which will allow the beneficiaries to plan and participate in prefire management. The creation and implementation of this plan is an essential part of the success in the fight against destructive wildfire in MMU.

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