

Introduction

In 2003, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) created new incentives for communities to engage in comprehensive pre-fire planning as it relates to the wildland affecting their communities. The HFRA legislation provides meaningful statutory incentives to the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to give consideration to the priorities of local communities as they develop and implement forest management and hazardous fuel reduction projects.

By maintaining a current Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), communities can help influence issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, structure protection – or all of the above. A CWPP was adopted by the Butte County Board of Supervisors on 01/10/2006 and then re-adopted on 02/10/2009. The Butte County Fire Safe Council took ownership of the CWPP on 11/05/2008 and is expected to publish an updated CWPP in 2010.

The Butte Unit Fire Plan will be a part of the CWPP incorporating the needed elements of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's *Fire Plan* for each unit within its essential make up.

The Fire Plan uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data to allow for comprehensive analysis of the fire hazard area. These factors include fire frequency (ignition workload), assets at risk, hazardous fuels (fuel rank) and historic fire weather (severe fire weather). The factors are evaluated and combined to create a score for success. The goal of the Fire Plan is to reduce destruction and associated costs from wildfire by protecting assets at risk through focused pre-fire management prescriptions.

The Fire Plan proponent continues, creating a framework as identified in the California Fire Plan. The Fire Plan framework components are a compilation of the following:

- Wildfire Protection Zones – To create wildfire protection zones that reduce risks to citizens and firefighters.
- Initial Attack Success – Assess the initial attack fire suppression successes of wildland fires on lands of similar vegetation 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 level of service.
- Assets Protected – The plan utilizes a methodology for defining assets protected and their degree of risk from wildfire. The assets at risk addressed in the plan are life safety (citizen and responder), watersheds and water quality, timber, wildlife and wildlife habitat (including rare and endangered species), rural communities, unique areas (scenic, cultural and historic), recreation, range, property in the form of structures, and air quality. Stakeholders for each of the assets at risk are identified; their input helps to guide the pre-fire decision making process of CAL FIRE and other fire service managers as well as that of local fire safe councils.
- Fire Management Prescriptions – Fire management prescriptions focus on alternative means of protecting assets at risk. Projects include but are not limited to land use planning and associated regulation, educational programs and public information, department infrastructure including fire stations and water systems,

fuels management and forest health. Pre-fire management prescriptions will also identify those who will benefit from such work and consequently those who should share in the project cost.

- Fiscal Framework – the State Board of Forestry and CAL FIRE are developing a fiscal framework for assessing and monitoring annual or long term changes in California’s wildland fire protection systems. This plan will incorporate pre-fire workload analyses (PWA), in an attempt to provide relevant data to guide in the development of the fiscal framework and public policy.

Applications of the Butte County Fire Plan include;

- Allow stakeholders, agency personnel, the private sector and public, to come together in a common forum with the focus of reducing the threat and impact of wildfire on the community.
- Identify communities at risk and wildfire hazard areas for local, state and federal officials and the public.
- To inform local officials about the risk of wildfire to communities. Identify improved building and development standards and work with local land use planners and policy makers to implement these standards through the County general plan.
- Identify, prioritize and implement community fuel reduction projects.
- Educate property owners about the risk of wildfire and how they can help protect their home and property.

The Butte Fire Plan will evaluate 10 years of previous data. Utilizing this data local Battalion Chiefs will better be able to direct the initiation of prescriptions that fit the specific needs of the communities. Once identified, those projects will enter the CWPP review committee process to gain prioritization for implementation.

The goal of this document is to provide a foundation from which communities can assume a cooperative part in the effort to improve fire and life safety. Through cooperative efforts of responsible fire agencies, fire safe councils, and County land use planners, work has begun to identify and improve fire safe regulations including pre-development standards, fire safe and evacuation planning, fuel hazard reduction and defensible space standards.