

## **Battalion Two Planning Area**

Including the Chico foothills, Lower Butte Creek Canyon, and the Communities of Cohasset, Forest Ranch, Butte Meadows/Jonesville, and the Hwy 32 corridor from the Chico city limits to the Tehama County line.

**CAL FIRE / Butte County Fire Dept. Battalion Chief Dan Summerville**  
**Cohasset Community Association – Bert Coffman & Jim Brobeck**  
**Forest Ranch Preservation Alliance**  
**Forest Ranch Fire Safe Council**  
**Butte Meadows/Jonesville Homeowners Association**  
**Sierra Pacific Industries**

### **Specific Fire Behavior Factors and Wildland Urban Interface Situation**

The following synopsis is intended to specify the fire behavior factors (fuels, topography and weather) and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) problems specific to the Cohasset Forest Ranch Ridge Fire Planning Area.

#### **Fuels:**

There is a wide range of vegetation types found within the Battalion 2 Planning area. The vegetation types range from grass, chaparral brush mix, oak –woodland, and timber.

Vegetation found within the communities of Cohasset and Forest Ranch is predominantly timber and associated brush. The timber type is primarily Ponderosa Pine/California Black Oak mix, with an under story chaparral brush component consisting primarily of Manzanita, Deerbrush, Ceanothus sp., Scotch Broom, and Poison Oak. Some areas of undeveloped lots or greenbelt areas have very dense brush which can affect fire behavior.

The community of Butte Meadows/Jonesville has a mixed conifer timber type. Species of conifer trees in the over story include Douglas-fir, Ponderosa Pine, Sugar Pine, White Fir and Incense Cedar. Hardwood trees in the under story include California Black Oak, Tanoak, Canyon Live Oak, Big leaf Maple and California Laurel. There is also an under story chaparral brush component consisting primarily of Manzanita, Deerbrush, Ceanothus sp., Scotch Broom, and Poison Oak.

Vegetation found in the Chico Foothills and Lower Butte Creek Canyon and canyons adjacent to communities such as Little Chico Creek and Big Chico Creek Canyons range from grass and brush to Oak Woodland. Some of the trees in this area include Gray Pine, Blue Oak, California Black Oak and California Laurel. Brush species include Toyon, Western Redbud, Poison Oak and Ceanothus Sp..

All these vegetation types provide fire control problems because of overstocked and overgrown conditions due to years of successful fire suppression. The potential for a large, fuel driven fire is very real when fuel moisture conditions are conducive to burning. Fire control will be very difficult due to high fire intensities leading to fire behavior problems such as long range spotting, high rates of spread and long flame

lengths. Direct attack will be impossible under these burning conditions for safety reasons. An indirect attack with a defensive approach is the most likely scenario for fire control.

### **Topography:**

Steep canyons and drainages are the dominant topographic feature in the Cohasset Forest Ranch Ridge Fire Planning Area. Typically these canyons/drainages have limited or no access for fire apparatus and have few options for control line placement which can allow fires to become well established and very resistive to control efforts.

### **Weather: (refer to pg 9)**

Lightning is cyclic throughout the county and is generally a minor occurrence, yet still cause for concern as lightning storms in the past have started numerous, damaging fires. A recent example of this occurred in August of 1999 when 47 fires started by lightning burned over 33,000 acres across Butte County, the majority of which burned in Battalion 2.

### **Wildland Urban Interface Situation:**

With the exception of the core area of the communities of Forest Ranch and Cohasset which are similar to a urban interface environment, the communities in the Cohasset Forest Ranch Ridge Fire Planning Area can be characterized as intermix areas. Residences are scattered amongst the wildlands, which makes the 100' clearance around structures vital, as these residences are not as densely located compared to a more urban interface environment. Protecting these structures are more challenging to protect due to a lack of resources. The Cohasset area also is faced with a 'one way in/ one way out' evacuation concern.

Steep inaccessible terrain combined with the previously mentioned light, flashy fuels at lower elevations and heavy fuel loading at higher elevations dominate the Fire Planning Area. Fires that start in this area immediately threaten high value/high risk exposures and are often complicated by the challenges of wildland urban interface firefighting.