

**ESPERANZA FIRE and BLM/CDF FUELS TREATMENTS**

In 2000, the BLM and CDF began working on a large-scale, interagency community fuel break to protect the communities of Poppet Flat, Rancho Encino, and the Silent Valley RV Club. The strategic placement of this fuels treatment project on both public and private lands protected the community from the Esperanza Fire and slowed the fire's progress. Federal and state agencies worked together across jurisdictional boundaries to complete an effective fire defense system around the communities. On the west side of the communities was a large area of chaparral between the homes and the fuel break. A prescribed burn was planned to reduce the fuel loading in this area. In 2005 the first unit was burned along with the fuel break north and west of town. The morning of October 26<sup>th</sup> the Esperanza Fire spread beyond Highway 243 and began to threaten the area. As the fire approached the community its progress was slowed by the fuel breaks and diverted by the prescribed fire. When the fire hit the prescribed burn it was diverted north around the community giving the residents the ability to remain in the community or "shelter in place" while the fire burned past. This saved people from needing to evacuate on Highway 243 through the fire in the area of Twin Pines and down hill to Banning. During the Esperanza Fire morning briefing the incident command team thanked those responsible for the fuels project and acknowledged its strategic importance in helping firefighters save the communities and allowing approximately 250 citizens to shelter in place. Approximately 140 homes and 500-600 RVs were spared from the fire. One mobile home was destroyed that was on the far west end of the community in an incomplete portion of the project and one unoccupied outbuilding was destroyed. The last figure is a map of the fire showing a large unburned island in the fire; this is the Poppet Flat area. The gratefulness of the local residents for their safety and their unburned homes makes this one of the most rewarding projects I have been involved with. With the growing population and development in Southern California interagency fuels projects such as this are crucial in protecting communities and resources.

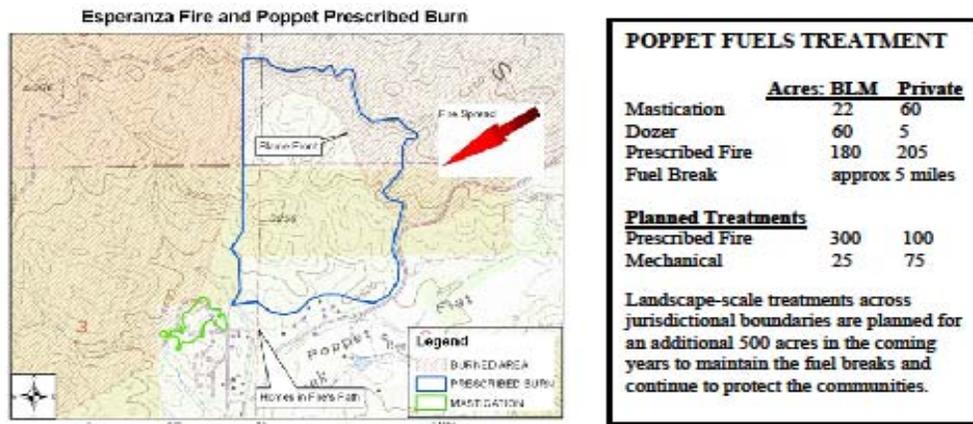


Figure 1 The map shows the direction of the fire's spread and the location of the most recent fuels treatments both mastication and prescribed burn



Figure 2 Mastication work at Poppet Flat



Figure 3 Fire stopped at treated area (foreground) behind homes



Figure 4 Treatment behind home

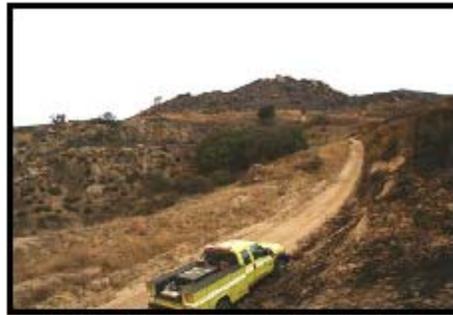


Figure 5 Edge of prescribed burn where Esperanza Fire stopped



Figure 6 and 7 Prescribed burn units that helped to divert the Esperanza Fire around the community

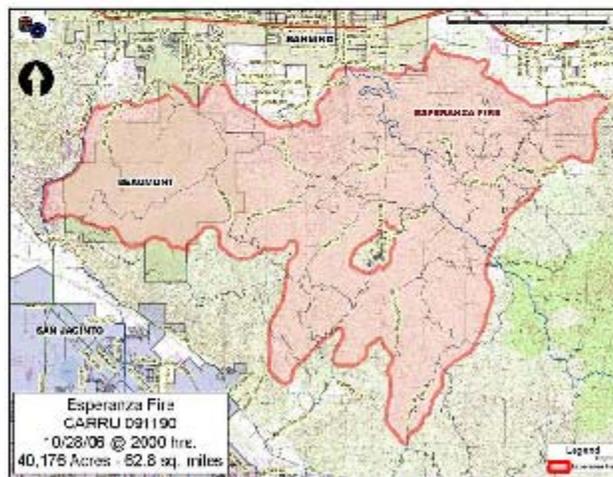


Figure 8 CDF's map of the incident showing the unburned "island" of Poppet Flat