

# 2025 Mendocino Unit Fire Plan



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*THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION SERVES AND  
SAFEGUARDS THE PEOPLE AND PROTECTS THE PROPERTY AND RESOURCES OF  
CALIFORNIA.*

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## UNIT STRATEGIC FIRE PLAN AMENDMENTS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Section Updated</u>	<u>Page Numbers Updated</u>	<u>Description of Update</u>	<u>Updated By</u>
4/25/2013	Table of Contents	lii	Updated TOC	Zimmermaker
5/21/2013	Section III A	13-14	Updated Values language	Zimmermaker
5/21/2013	Section V	36	Camp program	Zimmermaker
4/24/2013	Appendix A	37	Status of pre-fire projects	Zimmermaker
4/24/2013	Appendix B	41	Update of Brooktrails thinning project	Zimmermaker
4/24/2013	Appendix B	42	Update of Pieta VMP	Zimmermaker
4/25/2013	Appendix F	48	Ignition Management Plan	Zimmermaker
4/24/2013	Exhibits	60	Updated large fire history map	Zimmermaker
3/30/2014	Appendix A	37	Status of pre-fire projects	Zimmermaker
3/30/2014	Appendix B	42	Update of Mill Creek VMP	Zimmermaker
3/30/2014	Appendix B	44	Update of Shamrock VMP & Battalion 5 VMP's	Zimmermaker
3/30/2014	Appendix B	45	Addition of Folded Hills VMP	Zimmermaker
3/30/2014	Appendix F	48	Ignition Management Plan	Zimmermaker
3/30/2014	Exhibits	60	Updated large fire history map	Zimmermaker
1/04/2017	Appendix A	37	Pre-Fire Projects	Gunn
1/04/2017	Appendix C	39-50	Battalion Target Areas	Gunn
1/04/2017	Appendix F	53-57	Ignition Management Plan	Gunn
4/02/2017	Exhibits: Maps	63	Fire History Map	Gunn
5/08/2018	Appendix A	38-39	Pre-Fire Projects	Kitchens
5/08/2018	Appendix C	42-49	Battalion Target Areas	Kitchens
5/10/2018	Appendix F	52-57	Ignition Management Plan	Kitchens
5/09/2018	Appendix D	50	Local Fire Safe Councils	Kitchens
4/22/2019	Cover Page	i	Cover Page Updated	Massucco
4/22/2019	Table of Contents	iii	Updated Table of Contents	Massucco
4/22/2019	Executive Summary	2	Update Executive Summary	Massucco
4/24/2019	Unit Overview	3	Minor Revisions & Update	Massucco
4/24/2019	Local Fire Departments	6	New dept. language added	Massucco
4/25/2019	Pre-Fire Management Strategies	16	History of Large Fires Updated	Massucco
4/25/2019	Pre-Fire Management Tactics	21	Battalions/Program language Updated	Massucco
4/25/2019	Appendix A – Pre-Fire Projects	36	Updated for Relevance/Accuracy	Massucco
4/30/2019	Appendix C – Target Areas	38	Updated for Relevance/Accuracy	Massucco
2/15/2022	Pre-Fire Mgt. Strategies	47	Added Pre-Fire Planning Section	Vallerga
3/06/2022	Programs	27	Added Chamberlain Creek Fire Center	Vallerga
3/06/2022	Programs	28	Updated Parlin Fork	Vallerga

## CALFIRE Mendocino Unit 2025 Fire Plan

<u>Date</u>	<u>Section Updated</u>	<u>Page Numbers Updated</u>	<u>Description of Update</u>	<u>Updated By</u>
3/06/2022	Program	29-30	Added CCC & CAANG Crews	Vallerga
3/25/2022	Fire History	12	Updated 2021 Statistics	Vallerga
3/25/2022	Fire Ignitions	15	Updated 2021 Statistics	Vallerga
4/27/2022	Table of Contents	5-7	Updated Table of Contents	Vallerga
4/27/2022	Cover Page	i	Updated Cover Page	Vallerga
4/27/2022	Appendix C	74-78	Added New Maps	Vallerga
3/27/2022	Pre-Fire Mgt. Tactics	51-69	Updated Battalion Projects	Vallerga
3/27/2022	Appendix A	72	Updated Unit Projects	Vallerga
3/17/2023	Cover Page	i	Updated Cover Page	Holmes
4/17/2023	Unit Overview	12	Updated Fire History	Holmes
4/17/2023	Unit Overview	13-14	Updated Fire History Charts	Holmes
4/17/2023	Fire Plan Signatures	4	Update Personnel	Holmes
4/24/2023	Ignition History	15-19	Update Statistics	Holmes
4/24/2023	Population	19	Update Statistics	Holmes
4/24/2023	Unit Description	20	Update Personnel Count	Holmes
4/24/2023	Unit Resources	21	Update Graphs	Holmes
4/24/2023	Air Operations	25	Update Info	Holmes
4/24/2023	Resource Management	30-33	Update Resource Management	Holmes
4/25/2023	MEU Fuels Crew	29-30	Update MEU Fuels Crew	Holmes
4/25/2023	Unit Values	39-41	Update Unit Values	Holmes
4/25/2023	Fire Prevention	44-47	Updated Prevention	Holmes
4/25/2023	Battalions 1-6	49-69	Updated all Battalion info	Holmes
4/25/2023	Maps	76	Update FHSZ	Holmes
5/03/2023	MCFSC	36-37	Update MCFSC Description	Holmes
3/27/2024	Cover Page	1-2	Update Picture	Holmes
3/27/2024	Signature Page	5	Update Unit Chief	Holmes
4/08/2024	Fire History	12	Update graph	Holmes
4/08/2024	Ignition History	12	Update to 2023 Stats	Holmes
4/08/2024	Training	21	Add Programs	Holmes
4/09/2024	ECC, Batt 8	22-24	Update Section	Holmes
4/09/2024	MCFSC	35	Update Section	Holmes
4/10/2024	Batt 1, Batt 2	45-52	Update Sections	Holmes
4/10/2024	Batt 3, 4, 5	52-61	Update Sections	Holmes
4/10/2024	Unit Description	10	Update Section	Holmes
4/10/2024	Batt 6	64-66	Update Section	Holmes
4/15/2024	MCFSC	35	Update Section	Holmes
4/17/2024	Fire Crews	28-30	Update Fire crews sections	Holmes
4/17/2024	Current Projects	72	Update Projects to Current	Holmes
4/17/2024	Past Projects	73	Update Projects to Current	Holmes

## CALFIRE Mendocino Unit 2025 Fire Plan

<u>Date</u>	<u>Section Updated</u>	<u>Page Numbers Updated</u>	<u>Description of Update</u>	<u>Updated By</u>
4/23/2024	Table of Contents	7-8	Insert and Update	Holmes
4/23/2024	Pre-Fire Planning	47	Update Numbers to 2023 stats	Holmes
4/24/2023	Executive Summary	10	Update Section	Holmes
4/29/2024	Batt 1-6	50-74	Update Sections	Holmes
4/09/2025	Signature Page	6	Added VMP Program signatures	Holmes
4/17/2025	Appendix C	93-97	Added LRA FHSZ Maps	Holmes
4/17/2025	Training	23	Unified tone, Corrected Formatting	Holmes
4/17/2025	ECC	24	Streamlined descriptions	Holmes
4/17/2025	Battalion 8 – Aviation	26	Improved flow and ensured clarity on aircraft operations.	Holmes
4/17/2025	Chamberlain Creek Fire Center	28	Re-worded for clarity and consistency.	Holmes
4/17/2025	Parlin Fork Conservation Camp	28	Reorganized sentences and removed redundancy.	Holmes
4/28/2025	California Conservation Corps	29	Clarified funding and structure details.	Holmes
4/28/2025	Howard Forest Fuels Reduction Crew	30-31	Clarified program goals and contributions.	Holmes
4/28/2025	Resource Management	32-34	Ensured technical terminology was consistent.	Holmes
4/28/2025	Jackson Demonstration State Forest	35-45	Rephrased for readability and flow.	Holmes
4/28/2025	Mendocino County Fire Safe Council	48	Unified language, reorganized for clarity, fixed typos	Holmes
4/28/2025	Unit Values	50	Condensed phrases refined technical descriptions.	Holmes
4/29/2025	Communities at Risk	51	Updated formatting for consistency.	Holmes
4/29/2025	Overview (Pre-Fire Management Strategies)	52	Clarified introductory language, adjusted structure for flow.	Holmes
4/29/2025	Fire Prevention	53	Unified tense clarified program roles and responsibilities.	Holmes
4/29/2025	Pre-Fire Engineering	54	Refined technical terminology, improved sentence clarity.	Holmes
4/29/2025	Pre-Fire Planning	54	Streamlined language, standardized terminology, clarified goals.	Holmes
4/29/2025	Information & Education	57-58	Polished narrative tone, improved grammar and flow.	Holmes
4/29/2025	Legislative Updates and Impacts on Mendocino County	52-53	Inserted new section summarizing SB 1101 and SB 310 legislative impacts	Holmes
5/19/2025	Battalion 1	59-60	Re-word for clarity	Holmes
5/19/2025	Cover Page	1	Update Cover page	Holmes

# Unit Strategic Fire Plan developed for Mendocino Unit:


This Plan:

- Was collaboratively developed. Interested parties, Federal, State, City, and County agencies within the Unit have been consulted and listed in the plan.
- Identifies and prioritizes pre-fire and post fire management strategies and tactics meant to reduce the loss of values at risk within the Unit.
- Is intended for use as a planning and assessment tool only. It is the responsibility of those implementing the projects to ensure that all environmental compliance and permitting processes are met as necessary.

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Brandon Gunn  
Unit Chief


5/21/2025

Date

DocuSigned by:  
  
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Chris Holmes  
Pre-Fire Engineer


5/21/2025

Date

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Chris Vallerga  
VMP Deputy Chief

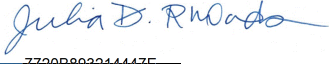
5/21/2025

Date

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Kevin Ryan  
VMP Battalion Chief

5/21/2025

Date

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Julie Rhoads  
VMP Forester

5/21/2025

Date

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## SECTION I- UNIT OVERVIEW

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The development of the 2025 Mendocino Unit Strategic Fire Plan focuses on fire suppression capabilities and proposed pre-fire projects resulting in reduced costs and losses during periods of severe fire weather. These projects, once completed, result in substantially lower levels of losses to the environment and human infrastructure. Each area will need to adapt to an increase in population in the Wildland Urban Interface area, which results in greater risks of fires and increased demand on CAL FIRE resources. This plan, through collaboration, will result in a more resilient landscape and increased strategic preparedness.

The success of any plan is reliant on common goals and objectives. The Mendocino Unit's plan focuses on goals set forth in the 2024 Strategic Fire Plan for California. The goals are intended to enhance the protection of lives, property, and natural resources from wildland fire.

1. Identify and evaluate wildland fire hazards and recognize life, property, and natural resource assets at risk, including watershed, habitat, social and other values of functioning ecosystems. Facilitate the collaborative development and sharing of all analyses and data collection across all ownerships for consistency in type and kind.
2. Promote and support local land use planning processes as they relate to: (a) protection of life, property, and natural resources from risks associated with wildland fire, and (b) individual landowner objectives and responsibilities.
3. Support and participate in the collaborative development and implementation of local, county, and regional plans that address fire protection and landowner objectives.
4. Increase fire prevention awareness, knowledge and actions implemented by individuals and communities to reduce human loss, property damage, and impacts to natural resources from wildland fires.
5. Integrate fire and fuels management practices with landowner/land manager priorities across all ownerships and jurisdictions.
6. Determine the level of resources necessary to effectively identify, plan and implement fire prevention using adaptive management strategies.
7. Determine the level of fire suppression resources necessary to protect the values and assets at risk identified during planning processes.
8. Implement post-fire assessments and programs for the protection of life, property, and natural resource recovery.

Through the development, implementation, and ongoing reassessment of this Plan's goals and objectives, the Mendocino Unit will be ready and steadfast in its ability to provide

leadership in pre-fire management planning and in protecting the citizens of Mendocino County from destructive wildfires.

*Brandon Gunn*  
*Unit Chief, Mendocino Unit*

## UNIT GOALS

The primary goal of the Mendocino Unit Fire Plan is to reduce the overall costs and losses from wildland fires within the Mendocino Unit. This is achieved by protecting assets at risk through targeted pre-fire management strategies and enhancing initial attack success.

To ensure the effectiveness of the Unit Fire Plan, it must align with the goals outlined in the Strategic Fire Plan for California, which include the following:

- Identify and assess wildland fire hazards while recognizing key assets at risk—such as lives, property, watersheds, habitats, and other ecological, social, and cultural values. Promote collaborative collection, analysis, and sharing data across all land ownerships to ensure consistency in type and quality.
- Support land use planning efforts that address:
  - (a) The protection of life, property, and natural resources from wildland fire risks.
  - (b) The goals and responsibilities of individual landowners.
- Engage in collaborative planning and implementation of local, county, and regional efforts that support fire protection and land management objectives.
- Promote cultural burning practices and the use of beneficial fire across Mendocino County. Encourage and support private landowner interest in prescribed fire as a land management tool.
- Increase fire prevention awareness and education to help individuals and communities reduce the risk of human casualties, property loss, and damage to natural resources.
- Integrate fire and fuels management strategies with the priorities of landowners and land managers across all jurisdictions.
- Assess the resources needed to effectively plan and implement fire prevention efforts using adaptive management techniques.

- Evaluate fire suppression resource requirements to ensure adequate protection of identified values and assets at risk.
- Conduct post-fire assessments and implement recovery programs to support the restoration of life safety, property, and natural resources.

## UNIT DESCRIPTION

Mendocino County is in California's north coast region, bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Sonoma County to the south, Lake County to the southeast and east, Glenn and Tehama Counties to the east and northeast, Trinity County to the north and east, and Humboldt County to the north. The borders with Glenn and Tehama Counties are completely within the Mendocino National Forest in the county's northeastern portion.

## TOPOGRAPHY

Within an area of 3,510 square miles, Mendocino County's elevation runs from sea level at the ocean to 6,954 feet atop Anthony Peak, near the Tehama County border. Inland from 129 miles of magnificent coastline, the environment is as varied as the terrain. World-class vineyards thrive in the southern valleys and stands of redwood and Douglas-fir trees tower down from the Pacific Coast Range. Numerous mountain peaks over 6,000 feet grace the northeastern portion of the county and bear snow caps until early summer. Oak woodlands on rolling hills are scattered throughout the county.

The county is characterized by steep slopes, with the main ridges oriented north-northwest to south-southeast. Rivers and streams are abundant, some flowing year-round and others drying up in the summer. The mighty Eel River drains to the north and the Russian River to the south. The river's west of the first divides inland from the coast, just west of the Highway 101 corridor, drain basically east to west, to the ocean. These include, from south to north, the Gualala River North Fork, plus the Garcia, Navarro, Albion, Big, Noyo, and Ten Mile Rivers. The Russian River provides water to an estimated 600,000 people in Sonoma and Marin Counties.

The county's mountains and hills are interspersed with nine distinct valleys:

1. Potter Valley in the east-central portion
2. Round Valley to the northeast, with Covelo in its center
3. Leggett Valley in the north, with the communities of Leggett and Piercy
4. Long Valley south of Leggett, with Laytonville at its center
5. Little Lake Valley in the county's center, surrounding the City of Willits
6. Redwood Valley, just north of the Ukiah Valley
7. Ukiah Valley in the south-central area, with the City of Ukiah at its center

8. Anderson Valley in the central-western portion, including the towns of Yorkville, Boonville, Philo
9. Navarro Sanel Valley in the south, with the community of Hopland

<sup>1</sup> Figures derived from 2020 CAL FIRE GIS information.

## CLIMATE

Mendocino County enjoys a Mediterranean climate, with dry summers during which typically no rain falls from early June to late October. The weather can vary greatly on the same day in different parts of the county. An average summer day may find the coastal areas at 60 degrees and inland temperatures at 90 to 105 degrees Fahrenheit. The warmer the Sacramento Valley becomes, the deeper fog intrudes from the ocean up the coastal drainages, and the windier the inland valleys become. Diverse microclimates benefit from having four seasons and 40 to 100 inches of annual rainfall, depending on the location, elevation, and weather patterns. The declared fire season in Mendocino County typically lasts from early June to mid or late October.

## VEGETATION

Vegetative fuel types in the county consist of grass, oak woodlands, brush, mixed chaparral, timber, and to a lesser extent, cut-over slash. Few areas of Mendocino County have not been harvested for timber in the past. Brush is usually composed of chamise on the south and west facing slopes and mixed chaparral on the north and east facing slopes. Mendocino County has seen very few large wildfires in the past several decades, resulting in a massive build-up of wildland fuels ready to burn. In 2017, Mendocino County suffered the greatest modern disaster as a result of a wildland fire in Redwood Valley. Hundreds of structures were consumed by the fire as well several lives lost, trying to escape the blaze.



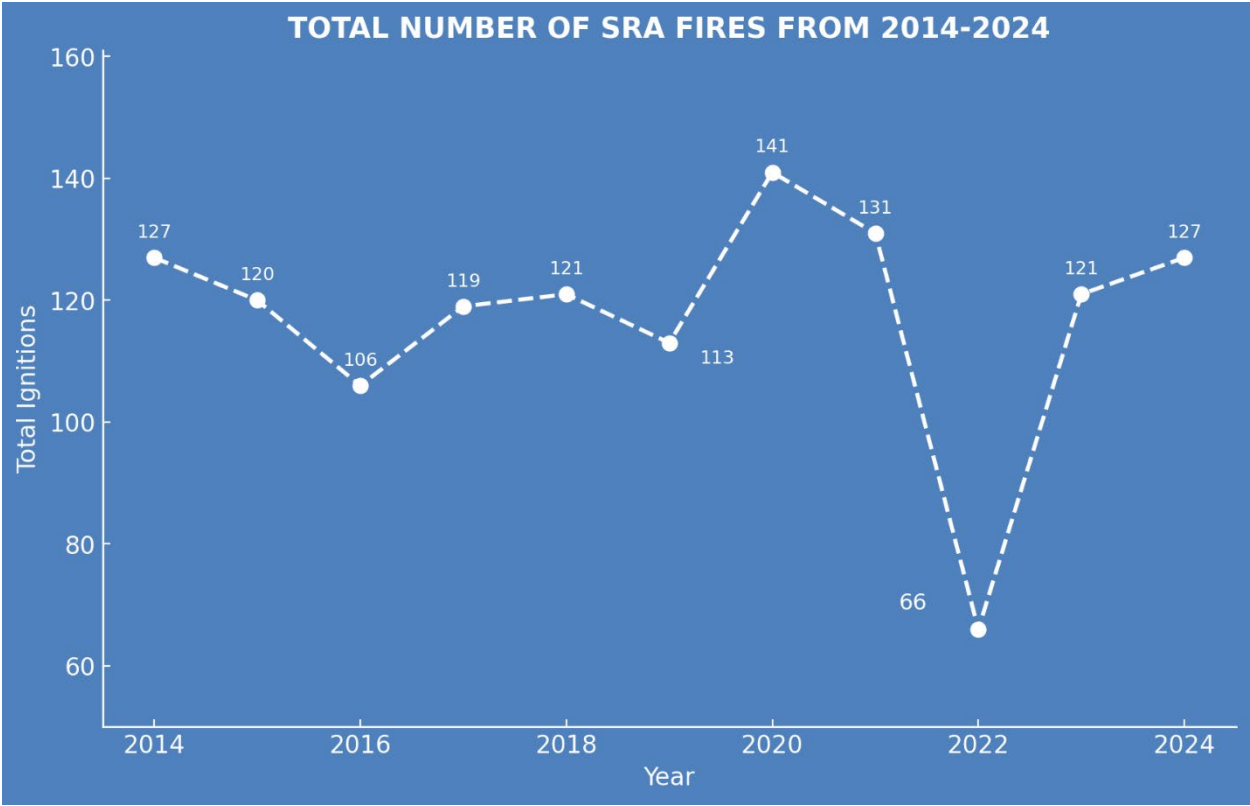
*Vegetation typical within the Mendocino Unit*

# FIRE HISTORY

In 2017, Mendocino County experienced one of its most devastating wildfires in modern history. The Redwood Complex Fire began in Potter Valley and, driven by extreme conditions, quickly burned into Redwood Valley. The fire consumed hundreds of structures and tragically resulted in several fatalities as residents attempted to evacuate.

In 2018, the Mendocino Complex Fire ignited, burning across four counties — Mendocino, Lake, Colusa, and Glenn. At the time, it became the largest wildfire in California's recorded history, burning nearly 460,000 acres, destroying numerous structures, and causing one firefighter fatality.

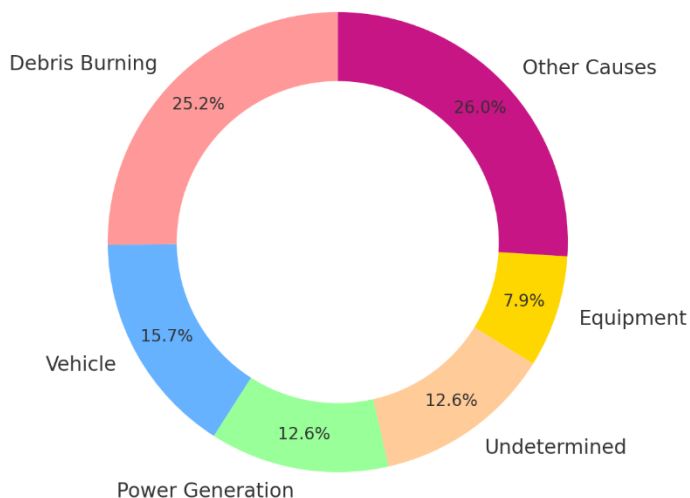
In 2020, the August Complex Fire was ignited by 38 separate lightning strikes within the Mendocino National Forest. The fire eventually merged into a massive event, burning over 1 million acres across seven counties. The August Complex remains the largest wildfire in California history, covering an area larger than the combined size of Rhode Island and Washington, D.C.



## IGNITION HISTORY

### 2024 Ignitions

2024 Ignition Causes



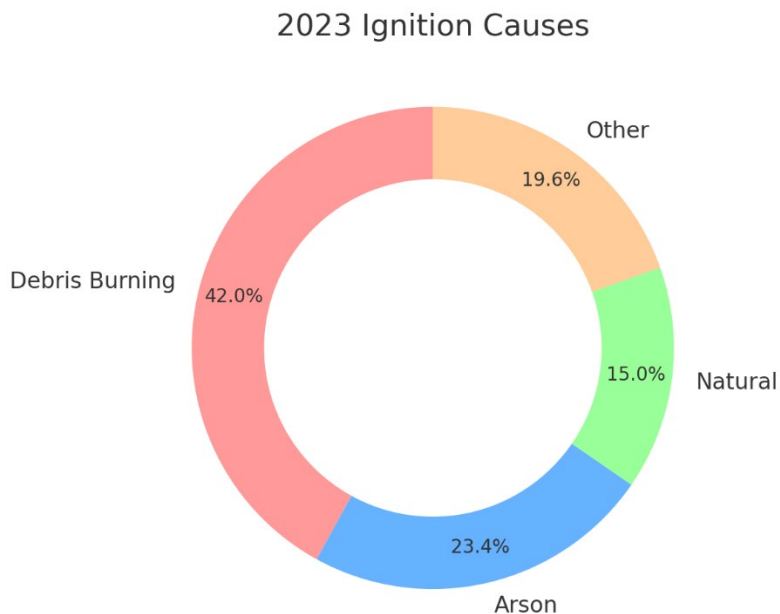
- MEU responded to 127 wildland fires within its Direct Protection Area (DPA) in 2024.
- Fires burned approximately 484.46 acres, an increase compared to 2023.

#### Top Causes of 2024 Fires:

- Debris Burning: 32 fires
- Vehicle: 20 fires
- Power Generation: 16 fires
- Undetermined: 16 fires
- Equipment: 10 fires

#### Primary Causes (by percentage):

- Debris Burning (25%)
- Vehicle (16%)
- Power Generation (13%)

**2023 Ignitions**

- MEU responded to 117 wildland fires within its Direct Protection Area (DPA), a 64.8% increase over 2022.
- Fires burned approximately 139.5 acres, a decrease from 277 acres burned in 2022.

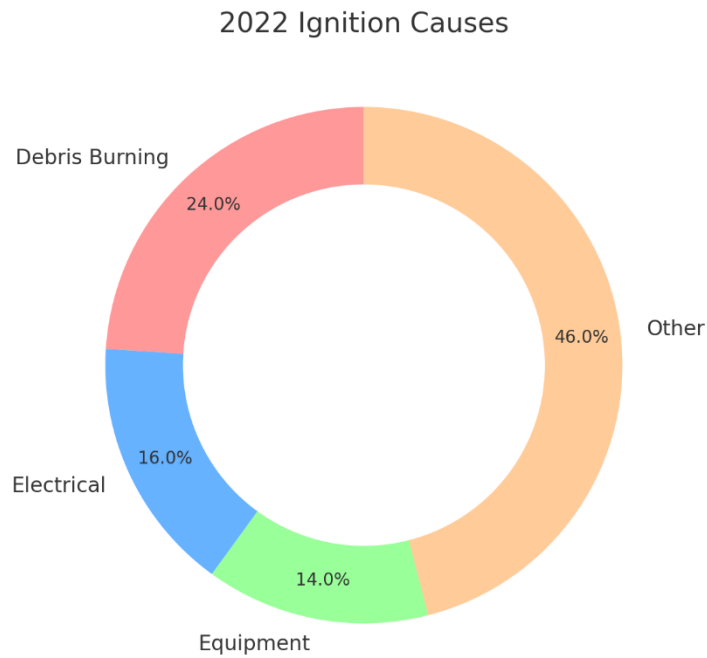
**Top 5 Largest 2023 Fires:**

- Cameu-9853 (1-10 Fire): 57 acres, lightning-caused.
- Golden Fire: 11.54 acres, vehicle-caused.
- Ice Fire: 6.01 acres, equipment-caused.
- Concow Fire: 5.75 acres.
- Owens Fire: 5.31 acres, debris burning.

**Primary Causes:**

- Debris Burning (42%)
- Arson (23.4%)
- Natural Causes (15%)

## 2022 Ignitions



- 71 wildland fires within MEU DPA.
- Approximately 277 acres burned.

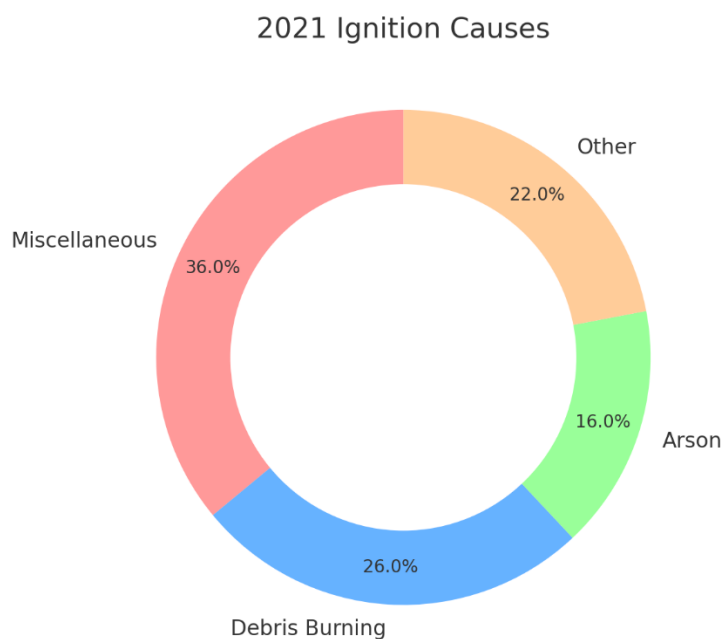
### Top 5 Largest 2022 Fires:

- Walker Fire: 124 acres, vehicle-caused.
- Bell Fire: 42.9 acres, metal grinding.
- Owens Fire: 36.2 acres, electrical cause.
- Nome Fire: 17 acres, electrical cause.
- Meadow Fire: 18 acres, equipment-caused.

### Primary Causes:

- Debris Burning (24%)
- Electrical (16%)
- Equipment (14%)

## 2021 Ignitions



- 139 wildland fires within MEU DPA.
- Approximately 437 acres burned.

### Top 5 Largest 2021 Fires:

- Turnout Fire: 200 acres, debris burning.
- Bell Fire: 50 acres, undetermined cause.
- Kirk Fire: 23 acres, miscellaneous cause.
- Circle Fire: 20 acres, debris burning.
- Tomki Fire: 18 acres, undetermined cause.

### Significant LRA Fires:

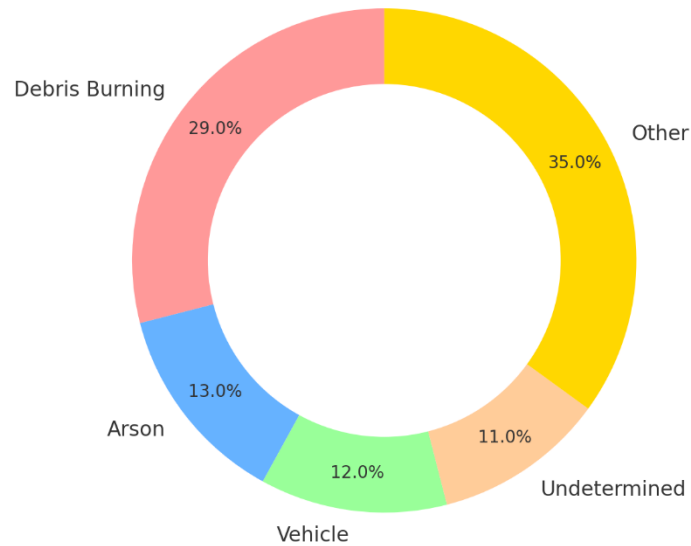
- Hopkins Fire: 257 acres (Calpella)
- Broiler Fire: 79.5 acres (Redwood Valley)

### Primary Causes:

- Other/Miscellaneous (36%)
- Debris Burning (26%)
- Arson (16%)

**2020 Ignitions**

2020 Ignition Causes



- 151 wildland fires within MEU DPA.
- Approximately 142,000 acres burned (primarily due to August Complex).

**Top 5 Largest 2020 Fires:**

- August Complex West Zone: 1,032,648 acres, lightning-caused.
- Oak Fire: 1,100 acres, structure into vegetation.
- Creek Fire: 820 acres, vehicle-caused.
- Mina Fire: 170 acres, campfire-caused.
- Vineyard Fire: 150 acres, equipment-caused.

**Primary Causes:**

- Debris Burning (29%)
- Arson (13%)
- Vehicle (12%)

## POPULATION

The population of Mendocino County is currently estimated at approximately 88,000, with an overall density of approximately 25 persons per square mile. A slight increase in population occurs during harvest seasons. Workers come to Mendocino County from all over the world, lured by making money in the local cannabis industry. Most residents live in and around the valleys along Highway 101, which winds through the county from south-southeast to the north-northwest for 106 miles. Other population centers include the dozen or so communities along Highway 1, which travels the coast from the county's south end until it turns inland about 30 miles north of Fort Bragg and joins Highway 101 at Leggett. These towns are, from south to north, Gualala, Anchor Bay, Point Arena, Manchester, Irish Beach, Elk, Albion, Little River, Mendocino, Caspar, Fort Bragg, Cleone, Westport, and Rockport.

The county includes four incorporated cities: Ukiah, Willits, Fort Bragg, and Point Arena. The rest of the county's local governments are special districts of various kinds, including community service districts, fire districts, water districts, and others established to provide specific services.

Wildland subdivisions and continuous areas of Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) are predominant around the population centers, and these are likely to increase in size and number. Recent and upcoming improvements on Highway 101 make Mendocino County more and more attractive to persons desiring a rural lifestyle while commuting to work in Santa Rosa and even the San Francisco Bay Area.

One of the county's largest employers is agriculture, especially considering the trickle-down effect on other businesses dependent on agriculture. Commercial fishing is important to the coastal communities, especially Fort Bragg. Cottage industries, tourism, and recreation, along with the timber industry, round out the commercial character of the county. Light and heavy industry is in place, but inroads have been slow due to space, transportation, and environmental concerns. Governmental and nonprofit organizations are also large employers. Ukiah, the county seat, offers hundreds of jobs relative to government and public services, contains the county's largest concentration of medical and legal services, and hosts an ever-increasing number of large retail stores, motels and hotels, and restaurants.

Land use in Mendocino County includes agriculture (predominantly wine grapes and pears), timber production (Douglas-fir, coast redwood, ponderosa pine, sugar pine, and hardwoods), livestock production, and recreation. Cultivation of marijuana, either illegally or now legally (due to the compassionate use proposition Prop 215 and SB420), is prevalent throughout the county and contributes to the local economy. It at times presents a hindrance to fire safety efforts, due to the growers' desires to conceal their locations.

<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau. (2022, July 1). Quick Facts- Mendocino County. Retrieved from United States Census Bureau:  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/mendocinocountycalifornia/POP060210#POP060210>.

## UNIT PREPAREDNESS AND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

The Unit is geographically divided into six battalions. Suppression resources during fire season include approximately 190 career personnel and approximately another 179 seasonal personnel, up to 214 with augmented staffing, on duty around the clock, staffing 10 fire stations, 16 engines, 5 bulldozers, and other equipment. A typical engine company consists of one Captain or Fire Apparatus Engineer and two or three firefighters. In addition, two 15-man California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation crews, housed at Parlin Fork Conservation Camp, and two 12-man minimum Fire Fighter Hand Crews housed at Chamberlain Creek. Chamberlain Creek was one of eight of the state's 43 conservation camps that was part of Governor Newsom's 2020-21 state budget, which called for the camps to be consolidated by the end of December 2020. These Fire Crews provide hand line construction, mop-up, post-fire patrols, and assist with fire line suppression repair. Due to a California court mandate the total number of fire crews available was reduced in recent years. This reduction brought the Mendocino Unit from 10 fire crews, down to 4. This reduction has had a major impact on our available resources to successfully staff fires within the unit, as well as send fire crews out to assist the rest of the state.

The Helitack Base located at Howard Forest is the home of the Sikorsky S70i Black Hawk helicopter, a recent transition from the Bell UH-1H "Super Huey" which serves multiple purposes, primarily initial attack on wildfires. For years the copter assigned to MEU has gone by Copter 101 but because of the current transition, the call sign is now Howard Forest Helitack, and the helicopter will be identified by whichever helicopter is in rotation due to statewide maintenance scheduling. The Black Hawk has 1 full time mechanic, carries 1 pilot, 2 Captains, 1 Fire Apparatus Engineer, 5-6 firefighters, a 1000-gallon fixed tank and a fixed hoist which drops the responses time for hoisting operations down significantly. Full deployment of the helicopter involves dropping off one captain and the firefighters at the fire scene, then the helicopter transitions to water operations and due to the fixed tank can drop water in varying coverage levels not unlike our Air Tankers, assists ground firefighting resources by slowing and/or extinguishing the advancing fire spread. The Unit is home to the Ukiah Air Attack Base which provides 7-day coverage during the daylight hours of fire season. Tankers 90 and 91 are Grumman S2T turboprop air tankers, each with a capacity of 1,200 gallons of fire retardant. Air Attack 110, the Unit's North American Rockwell turboprop OV-10 Bronco command plane, carries a pilot and the Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS) who is responsible for air space coordination and aerial

fire suppression activities from an orbit above the fire. The base, located inland in the hot and dry Ukiah Valley, has the advantage of rarely being impacted by fog, unlike its neighboring bases in Rohnerville and Santa Rosa, which are quite subject to coastal weather influences.

All Unit aircraft provide rapid initial attack and are especially valuable in the county's remote areas where steep terrain and narrow, winding roads greatly increase ground response times. In such situations, aircraft are often at scene and applying water or retardant before engines and dozers arrive, cooling the fire and giving ground resources a needed boost. Aircraft also provide "eyes in the sky" for those on the ground, noting spot fires and giving other direction from their vantage point. Additional eyes are provided by the Mendocino County Cooperative Aerial Fire Patrol during fire season. Since 1950, the COOP Air Patrol has supplied a small aircraft to fly over the county to look for undetected fires by spotting smokes. CAL FIRE works very closely with the Patrol and provides direction to its pilot.

CAL FIRE dispatch levels during fire season are affected primarily by weather conditions. During a period of high dispatch, any fire in, or threatening, wildland vegetation causes immediate dispatch of two Battalion Chiefs, the command aircraft, both air tankers, one helicopter, five engines, two dozers, and two hand crews. Local Fire Department resources respond according to their locations, frequently assisting each other across district boundaries.

Battalion I	B1111	Battalion II	B1112
Covelo Station	E1151	Howard Forest Station	E1152
	E1161		E1172
	T1141		T1142
	D1141		D1142
Battalion III	B1113	Battalion IV	B1114
Ukiah Station	E1153	Laytonville Station	E1154
	E1183		E1184
	T1143	Leggett Station	E1164
	D1143		E1174
Hopland Station	E1173		
Battalion V	B1115	Battalion V	B1115
Boonville Station	E1155	Boonville Station	E1155
	E1165		E1165
	T1145		T1145
	D1145		D1145
Point Arena Station	E1175	Point Arena Station	E1175

Mendocino Unit Operational Facilities	
Schedule B Fire Stations	10
Air Attack Base	1
Helitack Base	1
Conservation Camp	1
Fire Center	1
Mendocino Unit Operational Equipment	
CAL FIRE Type III Engines- Frontline	16
CAL FIRE Type III Engines- Reserve	4
CAL FIRE Type III Engines- Camp	2
CAL FIRE Bulldozers	5
CAL FIRE OV-10 Air Attack Aircraft	1
CAL FIRE S-2 Air Tankers	2
CAL FIRE UH-1 Helicopter	1
CAL FIRE CDCR Hand crews	2
CAL FIRE CCC Hand crews	1
CAL FIRE Firefighter Hand crews	4

MENDOCINO UNIT PROGRAMS

TRAINING

The Mendocino Unit Training Battalion provides training, education, and certification of Mendocino Unit personnel. The Training Battalion is focused on providing and maintaining the highest quality of emergency service training available to best serve the citizens of California. The priority of the Mendocino Training Staff is to provide training for Mendocino Unit employees through instructional programs that target operational efficiency with an emphasis on safe operating procedures in all aspects of fire and emergency operations. The Training Battalion facilitates and ensures coordination for the unit-wide training plan, match training courses with approved employee training requests, and maintains a central location for current training records of all employees.

The Training Battalion staff is comprised of a Battalion Chief and two Fire Captains. During non- peak staffing, additional employees may be assigned to the Training Battalion. The staff continually strives to provide creative, cost effective, innovative training. The goal of the Training Battalion is to provide effective all-hazard training with an emphasis on employee safety. The seven day a week state-funded operations listed below are divided into seventeen separate program areas.

Administrative and Office staff

- Battalion Chiefs
- Company Officers
- Firefighters

- Forestry Technicians
- Training
- Emergency Command Center
- Howard Forest Helitack
- Fire Prevention
- Automotive Fleet Maintenance
- Pre-fire Engineering
- Joint Apprenticeship Committee (JAC) Program
- Vegetation Management
- Emergency Medical Services
- Hazardous Materials Responses
- Fire Safe Councils
- Joint-Agency Operations
- Ukiah Air Attack Base
- California Conservation Corps (CCC)
- California National Guard (CNA)

## EMERGENCY COMMAND CENTER

Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) dispatching is provided to those Fire Departments and ambulance providers of Mendocino County who are signatory to the Operational Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of November 1994. Coastal Valley Emergency Medical Services has designated the ECC as Mendocino County's air ambulance coordination center. The CAL FIRE Howard Forest ECC is a secondary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for Mendocino County. The CAL FIRE Expanded Dispatch is the OES Fire Rescue Coordination Center for Mendocino County.

CAL FIRE provides Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD). EMD provides for a caller to respond to a standardized questioning format to help determine the type of resources required to appropriately assist the caller. EMD also directs the dispatcher to provide pre-arrival instructions to assist the patient once the emergency response has been dispatched.

To assist in achieving the goal of a 60 second dispatch time frame of receipt of call to dispatch of resources, the Mendocino Unit has installed Automatic Vehicle Locating (AVL) system in the emergency response equipment and is has integrated AVL with Ukiah Fire and Medstar Ambulance. AVL reduces the time dispatchers need to find the appropriate resource, in turn decreasing response times and ensuring the closest appropriate resource is responding.

All emergency, non-emergency and administrative calls for service are logged into the Altaris Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) program. All key entries are automatically time

stamped by the CAD program for accuracy. All entries that require a field response of any type are logged as incidents and administrative functions such as Fire Department announcements are logged in as events and do not generate an incident number.

All CAD data is available on a web-based password protected program called Crystal reports, it is available to any agency or cooperator who does business with the dispatch center. All users of this service will be restricted to access records that originate in the Mendocino Unit. This program has pre-built reports that the user can access. Any new reports must be requested through the Dispatch Center Manager with specifics of the information requested.

### Staffing

CAL FIRE is staffed to provide 24 hours per day, seven days a week dispatching service. Staffing levels for the ECC are a minimum of 1 fully qualified Fire Captain and 2 fully qualified Communications Operators or a combination of each totaling 3 employees per day. During fire season, when the CAL FIRE fixed wing aircraft are on Contract (normally, 6/15 through 10/15), the ECC is staffed with a minimum of 2 qualified Fire Captain and 2 qualified Communications Operators or a combination of each totaling 4 employees per day. The State funds 1 Battalion Chief, 5 Fire Captains, 1 Communications Supervisor and 2 Communications Operator positions, and the 2 dispatching contracts fund 7 Communications Operator positions.

The ECC Manager is a CAL FIRE Battalion Chief. This person is responsible for all ECC operations and personnel and coordination with Mendocino County Dispatch contract. The Battalion Chief is the primary contact for the Coastal Valley EMS coordinator for any changes in EMS dispatch policy or procedures.

### Facilities

The CALFIRE MEU ECC infrastructure consists of two buildings that house the dispatch center and the expanded dispatch/dorms along with all the radio and telephone equipment. These two buildings together allow handling of the normal daily activities and, if necessary, open an expanded dispatch to manage larger incidents. A 100 KW generator is also on site to automatically provide emergency power if necessary.

The ECC can provide all dispatching services on multiple frequencies. Fire and EMS are simultaneously dispatched using the Mendocino County dispatching frequencies. In the event we need to evacuate the ECC, CALFIRE has Altaris CAD and the Vesta 911 phone system available on a laptop computer and cell phones that can be used remotely along with a mobile radio for a short duration operation. CAL FIRE has access to a Mobile Communications Center for a backup Emergency Command Center, if needed for a long duration event, which is generally available within four hours.

Local Agencies Dispatched Pursuant by Contract:

- Albion Fire
- Anderson Valley Fire
- Brooktrails Fire

- Comptche Fire
- Covelo Fire and Ambulance
- Elk Fire and Ambulance
- Fort Bragg Fire
- Hopland Fire
- Laytonville Fire and Ambulance
- Leggett Valley Fire
- Little Lake Fire Protection District
- Mendocino Fire
- Piercy Fire
- Potter Valley Fire
- Redwood Coast Fire
- Redwood Valley Fire
- Ridgewood Ranch Fire
- South Coast Fire
- Ukiah Valley Fire
- Westport Fire

Additionally, the following agencies are dispatched by Howard Forest:

- Anderson Valley Ambulance
- Fort Bragg Ambulance
- MEDSTAR Ambulance
- Redwood Empire Hazardous Materials Response Team (REHIT).

## BATTALION 8 - AVIATION

The CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit (MEU) Aviation Program consists of the Ukiah Air Attack Base which was established in 1958 and the Howard Forest Helitack Base which was established in 1982. The MEU Aviation Program serves the communities of Mendocino, Lake, Sonoma, and Trinity counties. The Mendocino National Forests is also served by the Aviation Program as it is in the Initial Attack zone of influence. These aircraft and personnel also serve California, and its citizens, when emergencies expand and require additional resources.

The Ukiah Air Attack Base is in the community of Ukiah at the Ukiah Municipal Airport (UKI). The base has three firefighting aircraft assigned from June 1st thru October 31. The aircraft assigned are an OV-10 Bronco (Air Attack 110) and two Grumman S- 2T Air Tankers (Tankers 90 and 91). The OV-10 is utilized as an aerial platform to transport an Air Tactical Group Supervisor (Battalion Chief or Fire Captain) whose duties are to safely control the airspace above wildland incidents and direct firefighting aircraft in fire suppression. The S- 2T carries 1200 gallons of fire retardant. When dropped from the belly of the aircraft, it assists ground firefighting resources by slowing and/or extinguishing fire spread.

The Howard Forest Helitack Base is in the community of Willits on the compound of the Mendocino Unit Headquarters, at the top of the Ridgewood Summit. CAL FIRE is currently transitioning from the Bell UH-1H Super Huey to the Sikorsky S70i FireHawk helicopter. Howard Forest Helitack has completed the transition to the S70i and will be adding the ability to conduct nighttime flying and firefighting using night vision goggles during 2024. The S70i is equipped with a glass cockpit, 1000-gallon fixed tank, snorkel, and fixed hoist. It can be filled with water by using its snorkel and pump to suck water up while in a hover or can be ground filled by a fire engine or water tender. For years the copter assigned to MEU has gone by Copter 101. Due to the fleet transition and routine maintenance, the call sign will vary. All rotary winged aircraft have changed to a 600 series number. The primary use of the helicopter is for initial attack to suppress new wildland fires and rescue firefighters that may become injured during fire suppression operations. During the fire season, the helicopter assigned to Howard Forest Helitack is staffed with one pilot, two Fire Captains, an Operations Supervisor (any rank) and five Firefighters daily. Starting in 2023, the helicopter is dispatched to all water and medical rescue calls in the county. The helicopter can also be used for mass casualty evacuation, medical transport, vegetative management via the use of fire, crew shuttles, and internal gear transport.

Started in 2021, our Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) have become a relatively large and technologically advanced addition to our fleet in MEU. We started with one DJI M2EA rotor-wing UAS and one pilot. We now have three aircraft, five pilots, and another two aircraft hopefully delivered closer to summer. These small aircraft can fly in almost all conditions, have audio and video recording and approximately 20 minutes of flight time per battery. The optical and infrared cameras quickly and accurately allow the pilot and observers find new fires, people that are lost or trying to evade the police at night, conduct forest or VMP surveys, and locate vehicles or people that are off a roadway.

The use of these aircraft on emergency incidents, allows for a quick initial attack response to areas that can take hours for ground resources to make access, such as rural and little to no access areas. Additionally, these aircraft play an extremely important role in supporting CAL FIRE's Fire Protection Objective to keep 95% of California wildland fires to 10 acres or less.

CAL FIRE and the Mendocino Unit's Aviation Program have a positive financial contribution to the County and local businesses. Maintaining the bases, personnel, vehicles, and aircraft is costly and the local businesses and vendors are utilized for services and supplies. The City of Ukiah and Ukiah Airport directly benefit with landing and fuel flow fees that can range from 15 to 30 thousand dollars per year.

## CHAMBERLAIN CREEK FIRE CENTER

Chamberlain Creek Fire Center is in Jackson Demonstration State Forest 17 miles east of Fort Bragg in Mendocino County. In October 2020, CAL FIRE and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation announced the depopulation of inmates at eight of the state's 43 conservation camps, Chamberlain Creek Conservation Camp being one of them. The consolidation was part of Governor Newsom's 2020-21 state budget, which called for the camps to be consolidated by the end of December 2020. CAL FIRE repurposed the camp into a fire center in 2021 and currently operates 2 fire crews. Each fire crew has a Fire Captain, a Fire Apparatus Engineer, and a minimum of 13 Firefighter I's. The Firefighter 1 fire crews are typically staffed from Mid-March through Mid-December and provide frontline fire response to the State of California, as well as fire prevention projects in Mendocino County.

The fire crews are engaged in federal, state, and local community projects which include hazard fuel reduction, vegetation management burns, reforestation and other projects supporting the public good.

## PARLIN FORK CONSERVATION CAMP

Parlin Fork Conservation Camp was established on August 8th, 1949.<sup>1</sup> It is the second oldest Conservation Camp in California, and the oldest Camp in the Northern Region. Parlin Fork is located on State Highway 20, approximately 7 miles east of Fort Bragg. The camp is situated within the boundaries of Jackson Demonstration State Forest.

The camp is operated jointly by CAL FIRE and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). During the early 1970's, the camp was operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons before returning to a joint agency operation with CDCR. Originally, the camp was designed to hold 80 inmates, and staff 4 Fire Crews. During its peak, Parlin Fork had the capacity to house 100 inmates and operate 5 Fire Crews. Currently, the camp population fluctuates between 40 to 50 inmates, and there are 2 operational Fire Crews staffed.

Parlin Fork Fire Crews respond to wildland fires, as well as other emergencies, such as floods and rescues. When not engaged in emergency work, the Parlin Fork Fire Crews work on community-based projects for non-profit entities such as Fire Safe Councils, local government entities, or cooperating State agencies. Typical project work includes vegetation management, fuel breaks and trail improvements. Other projects include construction, painting, and general clean-up.

Acres treated vary by project and stakeholder needs and desires. As recognized by the fire

plan, inmate labor for fuel reduction projects provides good training for firefighting crews and defensible space around valuable assets and infrastructure at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer.

Typical Fire Crew staffing consists of one CAL FIRE Fire Captain (Range B), and between 12 to 17 inmate firefighters.

## CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS

CAL FIRE has recognized that with a declining inmate population, there would be a significant reduction in available inmate fire fighters statewide. This personnel shortage translated in a reduction of available Fire Crews for fire and other emergency responses, as well as community-based fire prevention projects. To offset the fire crew shortages resulting from a declining inmate population, other means to staff crews were needed. As part of Governor Newsom's 2021-22 budget, \$142,800,000, with an additional \$124,000,000, was allocated to the General Fund for the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and CAL FIRE to create 30 new Fire Crews.<sup>1</sup> Of the 30 Fire Crews, 16 would consist of CAL FIRE seasonal Firefighter-I's and the remaining 14 crews would be comprised of CCC members.<sup>2</sup>

For the period of July 1, 2021, thru June 30, 2024, there will be total of 18 year-round CAL FIRE/ CCC Fire Crews, with an additional 6 crews being seasonal.<sup>3</sup> Currently, the Mendocino Unit has one seasonal CAL FIRE/CCC Fire Crew that is based out of Ukiah. In FY 2022-23, the Mendocino Unit will staff 2 year-round CAL FIRE/CCC Fire Crews that will be operational and be based out of the Chamberlain Creek Fire Center. The CAL FIRE/CCC Fire Crews are comprised of 1 CAL FIRE Fire Captain, 1 CCC Conservation Conservationist One, and a minimum of 12, and no more than 17 CCC Corps Members.<sup>4</sup>

CAL FIRE/CCC Fire crews assigned to the Mendocino Unit, when not on emergency incidents, will be assigned to various work projects within the Unit. These projects will focus on fuels reduction, forest health, prescribed fire, and other community related work.<sup>5</sup>

In 2023-24 the CAL FIRE/CCC Fire Crew was housed at the CCC facility in the City of Ukiah. There are plans for a new CCC facility near the town of Willits in Spring of 2025. The Mendocino Unit has had multiple Corps Members apply for FFI jobs within MEU with great success.

Department of Finance. 2021. *Emergency Response*. May. Accessed March 18, 2022. <https://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2021-22/pdf/Enacted/BudgetSummary/EmergencyResponse.pdf>.

State of California. 2021. *Standard Agreement- 7CA05410*. Contract, Sacramento: Department of General Services.

## CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD CREW

Starting in July of 2021, the California Army National Guard began to form Fire Crews to assist CAL FIRE with fire suppression activities throughout the state. These crews are comprised of 345 California Army National Guard soldiers, forming a total 13 additional crews. These crews will be trained at a minimum to a NWCG Type II Fire Crew standard.

The Mendocino Unit currently has one California Army National Guard crew. A typical crew consists of a CAL FIRE Fire Captain, and between 15 to 24 Guard soldiers. These crews are available 5 days a week to respond to emergencies.

The Mendocino Unit has had multiple soldiers apply for FFI and FAE jobs within MEU with great success.

For FY 2022-23, the Governor's office is proposing to add \$68,600,000 to the General Fund, with an additional \$81,300,000 ongoing, for the funding of an additional 33 positions to convert 16 existing seasonal CCC crews and California National Guard crews to year-round availability, as well as add an additional 20 permanent Fire Crews statewide.<sup>1</sup>

**\*The above proposal has not taken effect as of 1/1/2025\***

### Bibliography

Department of Finance. 2022. *Emergency Response*. January. Accessed March 17, 2022. <https://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2022-23/pdf/BudgetSummary/EmergencyResponse.pdf>.

## HOWARD FOREST FUELS REDUCTION CREW

In Fiscal Year 2018, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) submitted a Budget Change Proposal (BCP) titled "Forest Carbon Plan Implementation." In this BCP, CAL FIRE was provided 26.8 million dollars for seventy-eight positions. These positions would be used to form six Region Fuels Reduction Crews (FRC) that would be dedicated to prescribed fire and fuels reduction management. Three of these crews were allocated to the Northern Region.

In January 2019, it was determined that an additional four crews would be added statewide

for a total of ten crews and one hundred and thirty positions. The crews were originally designated as Region Resources. In the first year, the crews collaborated directly with the personnel of the hosting Unit on designated Fuels Reduction Projects. The way they reduce the fuel loading in the project areas include prescribed burning, hand and mechanical fuel reduction, fire planning and fire prevention education, with an emphasis on improving public health and safety while reducing wildfire potential to California communities and forests.

By January 2020, the Region Fuels Reduction Crew assigned to the Howard Forest Station was transferred administratively to the Mendocino Unit. At the core, the Fuels Reduction Crew is comprised of a Fire Captain (Range A), Fire Apparatus Engineer, Forestry Assistant II, Equipment Operator II, and nine Forestry Technicians. Crews consist of seasoned firefighters looking to diversify their experience, and newly hired personnel looking to enter the Department.

The Fire Captain is the crew supervisor and in charge of the daily management of the crew. During absences of the Fire Captain, the Forestry Assistant II or the Fire Apparatus Engineer will be the acting crew supervisor. The Equipment Operator II is responsible for operation and maintenance of the heavy equipment and chippers assigned to each crew. Forestry Technicians do the actual fuels reduction operations, and are responsible for all tool maintenance, facility maintenance, and operate support vehicles to support fuels reduction projects.

In 2022 the Fuels Crew was committed to the Bridges, Howard Forest Compound, and various Jackson Demonstration State Forest VMP's. Fuel reduction was focused on the access road of the Golden Rule Church, Cahto Peak Road, and the Laughlin Repeater Access Road. CEQA is complete for the Brushy Mountain VTP and Hopland Research Education Center (HREC). West and East Hills Ukiah VTP will be outsourced to Mendocino Fire Safe Council via grant funding allowing CAL FIRE to continue to maintain the project. Brooktrails Fire and REDI have identified areas of Brooktrails and Sherwood Road for fuel reduction and access/egress that CAL FIRE will be assisting.

Having a dedicated resource focused solely on fuel reduction, has aided our Unit in being successful in reducing hazardous fuels and improving life safety for the citizens of Mendocino County. It is essential for all citizens to work together to mitigate hazardous fuels, but the Fuels Reduction Crew resources are just the start of a needed precedent for CAL FIRE's future.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### Environmental Review

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires public agencies to consider actions on projects that may directly or indirectly result in a physical change in the environment. When CAL FIRE funds, approves, permits, facilitates or carries out a project as lead agency it is obligated to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to comply with CEQA by preparing a thorough environmental review. This review is conducted by a Resource Management representative in the Forester classification or Environmental Scientist assigned as the Unit Environmental Coordinator.

Review conducted by the Environmental Coordinator ensures that the statutory responsibilities of MEU are addressed in the project planning phase. Examples of CAL FIRE projects in MEU include building & structure construction, repairs, replacement, acquisition, maintenance & fire hazard clearance, fuel reduction projects such as shaded fuel breaks, prescribed burns & timber felling for the purpose of firefighter training.

The unit level review may include but is not necessarily limited to:

- Prepare a project description for project size/extent, magnitude, treatment type, equipment uses, & impact potential.
- Review the environmental setting and identify sensitive areas such as wetlands, watercourses, riparian zones, old growth wildlife trees, public use & aesthetics.
- Conduct database searches of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), Archaeological Information Centers, unit & statewide fire plans, applicable Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) and VMPs.
- Contact & review project with CAL FIRE specialists who may include an archaeologist, hydrologist, geologist, soil specialist, and/or forest pathologist as necessary.
- Inspect project site (to include appropriate surveys).
- Discuss project proposals with landowners, neighbors, Native Americans, & private/agency professionals familiar with the site, resource, or treatment.

Once the review is completed, the necessary documents are filed with Sacramento Environmental Protection staff. The minimum unit review includes a CNDDB run, archaeological review with a CAL FIRE archaeologist, and on-site evaluation of landscape-level impacts. For projects that fall into a CEQA exempt category, a Notice of Exemption (NOE) and Environmental Review Report Form (ERRF) are submitted for review, approval and filing at the State Clearing house for a 35-day notice period.

For projects that do not fall into a CEQA exempt category, a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration and Notice of Completion are submitted if there are no significant impacts or if potential impacts are mitigated to a level of less than significant. An initial study/environmental checklist is added to the review process. These projects are

submitted for review & filing at the State Clearinghouse for a 30-day comment period. Following the end of the comment period, public comment is reviewed, and appropriate additional mitigation measures may be incorporated into the project. A Notice of Determination is filed with the State Clearinghouse along with appropriate fees.

### **Fire Suppression Repair (FSR)**

CAL FIRE has authority to conduct fire suppression repairs during emergency incidents on State Responsibility Areas (SRA) under the Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 4675 & 4676. Repair work may be necessary in locations where fire suppression damage has occurred. Fire suppression damage includes impacts to resources and property caused by firefighting efforts, including but not limited to potential erosion from dozer & hand-constructed lines, road opening and watercourse crossings. The primary objective of fire suppression repair is to mitigate fire suppression-caused damage to as close to pre-fire conditions as is reasonably possible. This is done by minimizing sediment delivery to watercourses, mitigating slope conditions to pre-fire drainage patterns, removing fire suppression-related debris, restoring berms, barriers, repairing gates & fence lines removed for fire control access, and implementing appropriate mitigation measures (in consultation with a CAL FIRE archaeologist) to protect cultural and/or historic resource sites.

MEU personnel, including Forestry Assistant and Forester classifications, serve as Fire Suppression Repair Technical Specialists (RESP) assigned to wildfire incidents. They assess FSR needs through field identification, mapping and site description, developing a task list that includes equipment needs & equipment time commitments keyed to a map. FSR needs are reported to the Plans Section for inclusion in the Incident Action Plan. For complex repairs, the RESP will request assistance from cooperators, including property owners and timberland company representatives. For additional input, they may also consult with environmental specialists, such as the California Geological Survey (CGS) engineering geologists.

### **California Geological Survey Participation in Post-Fire Assessment**

At the request and with the funding from emergency response agencies (CAL FIRE and CALEMA), the California Geological Survey (CGS) can perform site-specific post-fire assessment of geologic conditions and slope stability that may affect public safety and high-value features (for example homes, roads, public buildings, transmission lines). CGS can also provide support as directed to post-fire watershed rehabilitation where geologic expertise is needed.

Wildfires adversely impact slope stability by removing the mechanical support of hillslope materials provided by vegetation and increase the potential for runoff by removing vegetation that would otherwise intercept rainfall. Structures down slope of burned watersheds may be in positions affected by significant in-channel floods, hyper concentrated floods, debris torrents, and debris flows initiated by rain events following

wildfires.

The California Geological Survey inspections can be used to assist in identifying high-value sites within and down slope from burn areas that may be at risk from post-fire debris flows and other geologic hazards. Sites determined to have a potential risk to lives or property are ranked as high, moderate, or low, and possible mitigation measures are identified where appropriate. The resultant information is tabulated, keyed to a base map, and provided to Federal, State, and local emergency response agencies to be used to develop post-fire emergency response plans.

### **CAL FIRE Archaeology**

Archaeological sites in Mendocino County include prehistoric Indian village sites, petroglyphs, midden deposits, human burial grounds, hunting blinds, and bedrock milling sites. Historic sites include buildings and structures of historical significance as well as wagon roads, trails, and cemeteries. CAL FIRE archaeologists are assigned to fires primarily when Incident Command Teams are assigned, but also on smaller fires on, or adjacent to, tribal lands, on fires where archaeological sites may be impacted, or when the Unit requires archaeological expertise in dealing with cultural resource issues. They identify and mitigate the protection of fragile, non-renewable archaeological, historical, and other types of cultural resources whenever feasible.

Having an archaeologist assigned to a fire enables CAL FIRE to get site information disseminated to those in the Plans Section and out on the lines in order to protect sites. This may include providing detailed site information to fire protection personnel or flagging areas on the ground for equipment exclusion. In this manner, site protection measures may be incorporated into the incident action plan without hindering or delaying emergency response operations.

## JACKSON DEMONSTRATION STATE FOREST

### Forest Overview

Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) is the largest forest in the Demonstration State Forest system, owned and managed by CAL FIRE as an actively managed working forest for public benefit under state law and Board of Forestry policy. Spanning 48,652 acres of coast redwood forest, JDSF straddles Highway 20 between Fort Bragg and Willits. JDSF headquarters are co-located with the CAL FIRE Fort Bragg Fire Station in downtown Fort Bragg. JDSF shares borders with large industrial timberlands, California State Parks, private inholdings, and numerous small landowners. Wildland Urban Intermix (WUI) communities are scattered along its western boundary.

JDSF's management objectives include sustainable timber harvesting, conducting research and demonstration projects, and providing quality recreation while conserving watersheds, wildlife habitats, fisheries, and scenic values. The forest is open to the public for activities such as day use, camping, hunting, mountain biking, hiking, mushroom gathering, and horseback riding.

Facilities on JDSF include the Woodlands Fire Station, Parlin Fork Conservation Camp, Chamberlain Creek Fire Center, residences at Whiskey Springs and Camp 20, the historic Little Red School House, research infrastructure in the Caspar Experimental Watershed, the Forest Learning Center, and campground infrastructure. Conservation Camp and Fuels Crews conduct road brushing on JDSF roads to maintain administrative, public, and emergency access throughout the forest. Vegetation removal is targeted to reduce fuel loading adjacent to high use and strategic roads and around the State facilities.

JDSF has a Mediterranean climate, with mild, wet winters and cool, dry summers. Summer fog is a key climatic feature, extending inland up to 20 miles at night before retreating toward the coast by afternoon. Air temperature is heavily influenced by the presence and extent of this coastal fog belt.

The landscape is generally characterized by moderate to high relief, with gentler slopes in the western watersheds and steeper terrain to the east near the crest of the Mendocino Coast Range. Elevations range from under 100 feet in stream valleys along JDSF's western edge to a high of 2,092 feet in the southeast corner. Redwood and Douglas-fir are dominant species in the forest, with components of grand fir, western hemlock, tanoak, madrone, and bay laurel. Other vegetation types include hardwood stands, pygmy forest, Bishop pine/cypress, and alder. Grasslands and brush cover less than 1% of JDSF.

The coastal redwood forest ecosystem has adapted to a natural fire regime influenced by lightning and Indigenous land management practices before European contact. Today, the

primary ignition risks come from the urban interface to the west and public activities such as Highway 20 traffic, campfires, firearms use, firewood collection, and fireworks. Additional potential sources include logging equipment and the 60 kV PG&E transmission line running parallel to Highway 20 between Willits and Fort Bragg.

### **Forest General Plan 2026 New Vision**

#### **CAL FIRE's Management of Demonstration State Forests**

CAL FIRE oversees 14 Demonstration State Forests, which together cover approximately 85,000 acres. The largest of these is Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF), a 48,652-acre forest in Mendocino County. Located between Fort Bragg and Willits, JDSF is a mix of redwood and Douglas-fir trees. These forests serve as a resource for research and demonstration on natural resource management, while also offering opportunities for public recreation, providing wildlife habitat, and protecting watersheds.

#### **Management Policies and Oversight**

CAL FIRE manages these forests according to policies and management plans approved by the Board. Additionally, CAL FIRE receives ongoing guidance from a public committee, the Jackson Advisory Group (JAG), which is made up of 10 members. This group meets four to six times per year, in compliance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act (Government Code §11120 – 11132). The JAG is an advisory body to CAL FIRE and the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to provide advice/recommendations relevant to the periodic review of the JDSF Forest Management Plan.

#### **The Forest Management Plan**

The Forest Management Plan provides a comprehensive approach to managing JDSF. It brings together current knowledge about the forest's resources, outlines the desired future state of the forest, and offers guidance for reaching those goals. The plan also emphasizes future research and demonstration activities. Key areas addressed in the plan include:

- Research and demonstration on natural resource management
- Sustainable forestry operations
- Monitoring and research
- Road management
- Recreational opportunities for the public
- Wildlife habitat protection and restoration
- Plan Review and Updates

The current Forest Management Plan was last reviewed and approved by the Board in 2016, and it is set to remain in effect for 10 years. However, in response to emerging needs, both CAL FIRE and the Board requested an accelerated review of the plan on May 2, 2022. Following this, on August 19, 2022, the California Natural Resources Agency and CAL FIRE introduced a new, updated management vision for JDSF—referred to as the New Vision. This vision was developed with significant input from Tribal Leaders, redwood conservation biologists, and public stakeholders. The New Vision focuses on several primary objectives

for the forest:

- Sustainable forest management, including focus on climate science and restoration ecology.
- Ongoing research and demonstration efforts
- Expanded public recreation opportunities
- Improved Tribal access and co-management of the forest

## **Roads and Recreation**

### **Roads**

Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) covers a vast area with approximately 450 miles of roads, which are crucial for forest management, access to recreation, and fire prevention activities. Maintaining these roads is an essential part of managing the forest and ensuring safe, efficient access for both public and operational purposes.

In the winter of 2025, JDSF initiated a significant project by putting out a bid for a contract to masticate 30 miles of forest road. Mastication is a vegetation management technique that involves using specialized machinery to chop and grind vegetation, such as brush, small trees, and shrubs. This treatment not only helps improve access to roads but also reduces fuel loads, which is an important step in mitigating wildfire risk in the forest. By clearing the roads, JDSF aims to enhance firebreaks, reduce fire hazards, and make it easier for emergency responders to reach areas of the forest quickly if needed.

Alongside the contracted work, in 2025, as part of the Mendocino Unit's Fuels Reduction efforts, CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit Heavy Fire Equipment Operators and the Fuels Reduction Crew will be hard at work on roads that were not included in the contract. Their focus will be on clearing additional areas of overgrown vegetation, ensuring that these roads also remain accessible and safe. This work will involve clearing vegetation, such as overhanging branches, brush, and other growth that could impede road use or contribute to fire hazards.

The combined efforts of these projects will contribute significantly to the forest's overall fire resilience. By reducing vegetation along roadways and clearing fire-prone areas, JDSF is proactively managing fuel loads and enhancing safety for both the public and firefighters. These efforts will also improve access to various parts of the forest, supporting both recreation and management activities year-round.

### **Recreation**

JDSF offers a wide range of recreational activities, many of which are either free or low-cost, making it an accessible destination for nature enthusiasts of all kinds. The forest provides opportunities for visitors to enjoy the outdoors in various ways, whether for a peaceful day trip or a longer stay.

Recreational activities available at JDSF include camping, hiking, biking, horseback riding, swimming, and mushroom collecting. There are also opportunities for hunting and picnicking, providing options for both active adventure seekers and those looking to relax

and enjoy the natural surroundings.

For camping, seasonal campsites are available from mid-May through September, depending on weather conditions, offering a chance for visitors to stay overnight and fully immerse themselves in the forest environment. The campgrounds provide a perfect base for exploring the forest, whether by foot or bike, and offer easy access to hiking trails, wildlife viewing, and other activities.

JDSF is home to 48 miles of sanctioned trails, making it an ideal location for both beginner and experienced outdoor adventurers. These trails cater to various interests, from peaceful walks through dense redwood groves to more challenging routes suited for biking or horseback riding. The trails are carefully maintained, and some may offer scenic overlooks, allowing visitors to experience the beauty of the forest from different perspectives.

While the forest remains largely open to the public, some areas may be **temporarily closed** for safety reasons. This is typically done to protect visitors during specific forest management activities or when there are conditions that could pose risks, such as high fire danger or ongoing maintenance work. These closures are typically short-term and intended to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone.

With its variety of outdoor activities and the opportunity to enjoy nature in a peaceful setting, Jackson Demonstration State Forest is a valuable recreational resource for residents and visitors alike.

### **Timber Sales Program**

Timber harvesting can play a crucial role in reducing fuel loads in forests, which helps decrease the risk and intensity of wildfires. By selectively removing dying, diseased or overcrowded trees, as well as thinning dense forest stands, timber harvesting reduces the amount of combustible material on the forest floor and in the canopy. This creates healthier forests by improving tree growth, increasing biodiversity, and reducing the overall fuel that can ignite and spread wildfires. Additionally, these practices can help restore the natural fire regime of some ecosystems, which relies on periodic fires to maintain ecological balance. Ultimately, well-managed timber harvesting can contribute to both wildlife and prevention and the sustainability of forest resources.

### **Research, Demonstration, and Education**

Much of the redwood timber region is either privately owned or under State or National Park jurisdiction, which makes Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) unique in being able to demonstrate a working multi-use forest. The Caspar Creek Experimental Watershed Study was established in 1961 as a cooperative effort between the CAL FIRE and the Pacific Southwest Research Station (PSW). The Caspar Creek study has evolved from a simple paired watershed study into one of the most comprehensive and detailed investigations of its kind.

Jackson provides a unique living laboratory in a coastal redwood forest where environmental scientists, foresters, and researchers can study the effects of various forest management techniques. These ‘demonstrations’ provide important data to private forest landowners that help them with their management decisions. Road abandonment for improved instream habitat, forest thinning to increase forest resilience to fire, and regeneration studies are a few examples of some of the demonstrations landowners can learn from at JDSF. Within the past 15 years, the scope of forest research has expanded to include biological resources found within the forest environment. Multiple collaborative research and demonstration projects are in progress on the effectiveness of various fuel reduction treatments.

### **Forest Fire Protection**

JDSF has developed a Fire Protection and Pre-Attack Plan. and available on the JDSF website. The Fire Protection Plan establishes a strategic network of shaded fuel breaks and provides guidance for prescribed burning. The plan includes up to 87 miles of shaded fuel breaks on mainline ridges, which may also coincide with other facilities such as Forest roads, property lines, highways, and utility transmission right-of-way. These fuel reduction projects (e.g., slash removal or reduction in continuity and/or density/height) are intended to limit the size and severity of wildfires and protect neighboring WUI areas.

Prescribed fire and fuel treatments will be utilized to address fuel build up associated with timber management and may be used in conjunction with potential research projects. Slash from timber operations will be treated as required for hazard reduction adjacent to JDSF roads and facilities. Routine roadside vegetation management will be used to maintain 35 miles of critical ingress/egress roads for initial attack fire suppression access and evacuation throughout the network of Forest roads.

The Pre-Attack Plan is intended as a reference for initial attack responders in the event of a wildfire. The plan covers communication, access to JDSF, locations for helicopter landing zones, water resources, population concentrations, and evacuation routes. The included map book is also available as a georeferenced pdf.

Currently, JDSF has five shaded fuel break projects and one emergency ingress/egress road project with completed CEQA review and permitting. Two additional fuel reduction projects and two Timber Harvest Plans which include fuel reduction are planned for submission in 2025.

### **Recently Completed Projects**

- The Chamberlain Confluence Timber Harvest Plan (THP) included 18 acres of shaded fuel break along 0.9 miles of Road 1000. This was completed in 2021.
- A Utility Exemption and shaded fuel break removed danger trees and small fuels Along

the PG&E transmission right-of-way between Bunker Gulch in 2021. Outside the danger tree removal project between Bunker Gulch and James Creek, the width of fuel reduction will be increased for a total project area of 228 acres. This project was delayed in 2020 and scheduled to start in summer 2021.

- The Parlin 17 THP included 200 acres of shaded fuel break. The fuel break runs along Road 330 for 3.6 miles from the intersection at Road 300 to the north and east to the intersection of Road 336. Subsequent broadcast burns were conducted in 2021 and 2022. This area continues to be studied for fire effects, fuel loading, and burn model comparisons.
- FFM: The California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) helps reduce wildfire risks by speeding up the approval process for vegetation treatments. Wildfires in California are worsening due to climate change, drought, and extreme weather. There's little guidance on managing forests in the redwood region, where wildfires were rare until recently. We need better tools to manage these forests and reduce future fire damage.

Some coastal forests are becoming too dense, which increases wildfire risk. These forests need thinning to reduce fuel and create more space between trees. Research is needed to understand how fire behaves in redwood forests and how different treatments, like burning or cutting, can reduce fire damage.

The Fire Fuels Mitigation (FFM) project will test five treatments on 470 acres of land to reduce fuel buildup and make the forest more fire-resistant. The treatments will include manual, mechanical, and burning methods, with tracking of how the forest changes before and after treatments.

A study will also look at how these treatments affect wildlife, such as birds and bats. Acoustic monitors and cameras will track wildlife before and after treatments to see how species change over time.

The entire project is taking place in Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF), which is used for forest management research and education. There are still many gaps in our understanding of how forest ecosystems work and how management activities affect them. This project is part of a research study to test how different fuel treatments can reduce wildfire risk and greenhouse gases in the redwood region. It's funded through CAL FIRE's Forest Health Research Grants.

- Acorn Grove: The Acorn Grove Prescribed Burn is located on Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) in Mendocino County, California. The burn area covers five acres and is mainly made up of mature tanoak trees, with some redwoods and Douglas firs. The understory is mostly open, with tanoak sprouts and other small brush.

This burn is part of a cultural burning practice, which has been used for centuries by Indigenous people to manage forests and landscapes. Cultural burning promotes the

health of the land by reducing fuel buildup, encouraging the growth of fire-adapted plants, and restoring balance to ecosystems. The practice supports the gathering of non-commercial forest products, such as tanoak acorns, which are an important food source in Indigenous traditions. The prescribed burn also helps maintain healthy habitats for wildlife and enhances cultural practices tied to the land.

The prescribed burn will use both broadcast burning and manual labor to remove leaf litter, forest debris, shrubs, and downed trees. The burn will occur annually, as needed, to support a healthy tanoak forest and continue cultural practices. Small piles of debris (less than 4ft x 4ft x 4ft) may be created away from trees to help manage fuel buildup. Trees under 12 inches in diameter may be cut down or removed to promote forest health. These trees will be either scattered across the site or piled for burning.

All work will be done manually, using hand tools or small power tools, to prepare the area for the burn. About 90% of the area is surrounded by existing roads (Forest Roads 310, 310A, and 310A2), which will act as fire control lines. The remaining 10% of the area (around 150 feet) will be cleared by hand or wet-line, depending on conditions at the time of ignition. Minor manual work with tools or chainsaws may be needed to help control the burn line.

### **Planned Projects**

- **Red Tail THP Prescribed Fire Units:** This project will use prescribed fire to reduce fuel and help manage grasslands and forests, creating a mix of burned areas and patches of unburned vegetation. The Red Tail THP prescribed fire project is located in a forest with Douglas-fir, mixed hardwoods, ponderosa pine, redwoods, oaks, grassy areas, and shrubs. Ponderosa pines and Douglas-firs are dying due to bark beetle infestations and drought.

To keep these areas safe, vegetation management is needed every year. This helps reduce fire risks around buildings and removes trees or parts of trees that could be a fire hazard. The fuel reduction activities also serve as training opportunities for firefighters. They learn skills like chainsaw operation, setting controlled fires, creating fire lines, and performing mop-up operations. Tools used for fuel reduction include hand crews, chainsaws, pole saws, woodchippers, heavy equipment, and prescribed burning.

Some live trees, up to 10 inches in diameter, may be removed to improve spacing and forest health. Dead and dying trees larger than 10 inches may also be removed. This project focuses on long-term fuel reduction and removing dangerous trees.

The prescribed burning will be done carefully, with specific goals and under conditions that mimic natural wildfires. These conditions will help control the burn and minimize negative impacts on air quality and wildlife. The fire will reduce fuel buildup and encourage the recovery of the ecosystem.

**Fuel Reduction:** By burning excess vegetation and dead trees, prescribed fires lower the chance of larger, uncontrolled wildfires in the future. This reduces the amount of fuel that could feed a catastrophic wildfire.

**Ecosystem Health:** Fire is a natural part of many ecosystems, including forests and grasslands. Prescribed burns help return fire to the landscape, improving soil quality, plant growth, and overall forest health. Certain plants and trees are adapted to fire and benefit from it.

**Wildlife Habitat:** Prescribed burns help create a mix of burned and unburned areas, which provides diverse habitats for different species. Some animals thrive in areas with fresh new growth, while others need unburned patches for shelter.

**Training for Firefighters:** Prescribed burns also serve as a valuable training tool for firefighters. They get hands-on experience in controlled fire operations and suppression techniques, improving their skills for real wildfire events.

**Safety and Risk Reduction:** Regular prescribed fires and fuel management around buildings reduce the risk of dangerous wildfires that could endanger property and human lives. It also helps manage the spread of pests like bark beetles that are harming trees.

- Thompson Gulch:

The Thompson Gulch Vegetation Treatment Project aims to improve forest health and provide benefits for the watershed. The goals of the project are to:

- Reduce fuel buildup from the 2015 timber harvest, particularly smaller fuels.
- Reintroduce fire to the area to promote a healthy, mature forest.
- Create a diverse forest that can handle future natural disturbances and changing climate conditions.
- Support ongoing and future research and demonstration projects.

The treatment methods will include creating fuel breaks and restoring the ecosystem. Activities will involve both manual and mechanical work, prescribed burning (pile and broadcast), and herbicide use.

Through partnerships with local organizations, agencies, and researchers, this project aligns with JDSF's focus on research and demonstration. The location is easily accessible for private landowners, students, professionals, and other stakeholders.

Ecological restoration aims to bring fire back to the landscape, similar to natural fire processes and Indigenous burning practices before European settlement. This project area is within the Late Seral Development designation for JDSF, where the goal is to quickly promote "old-growth" forest characteristics and store carbon long-term. Reintroducing fire will improve habitat quality, encourage the growth of older forest features (like snags and hollows), and reduce the excess fuel buildup caused by fire suppression. This will create a

more fire-resilient and stable forest.

The burn plan will include measures to protect special trees from fire damage in Units A and B. The goal of prescribed burning is to reduce and rearrange forest fuels, creating more space between the ground and aerial fuels. While some fir trees and smaller redwoods may be damaged by the fire, the overall result will be a more fire-tolerant ecosystem.

Fuel breaks are areas where vegetation is removed and maintained to reduce wildfire risks. These breaks also provide space for fire responders to safely work. This project will create shaded fuel breaks in specific areas, including along County Road 408, which is part of the larger JDSF Forest Protection Plan. The 2015 timber harvest has already reduced tree canopy in some areas, making it easier to create fuel breaks along this road.

Prescribed burning will be used to reduce fuel from the 2015 timber harvest and create part of the County Road 408 Shaded Fuel Break. Up to 138 acres will be treated with fire. If needed, 14 acres along County Road 408 will be pretreated with manual and mechanical methods to clear smaller trees and vegetation. The fuel break will average about 100 feet wide along the road, on its west side. All burning will follow prescribed fire regulations and require permits from the Mendocino County Air Quality Management District, along with a smoke management plan.

- **AMEX:** The AMEX THP (Timber Harvest Plan) is scheduled to begin in 2026, marking the start of a significant environmental management project aimed at improving forest health and resilience. Spanning approximately 300 acres, the project will focus on selective single tree thinning to reduce overcrowding and promote the growth of healthier, more robust trees. In addition to this, fire will be reintroduced as a vital tool in the landscape, utilizing controlled burns to help reduce excess vegetation, minimize the risk of larger wildfires, and restore fire-dependent ecosystems that have been suppressed over time. This combination of thinning and fire management will enhance biodiversity, improve water retention, and support the long-term sustainability of the forest.
- **The Three Chop Ridge Shaded Fuel Break Project:** The Three Chop Ridge Shaded Fuel Break Project is located along the northern property line, stretching across Road 1000, which lies between the Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF), Mendocino Redwood Company, LLC., and several smaller, private landowners. This area serves as a critical boundary between different landholdings, making the creation of a fuel break essential for both fire prevention and landscape management.

Spanning an impressive 6 miles and covering approximately 320 acres, this project aims to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires by creating a shaded fuel break along the ridge. Fuel breaks are strategically cleared areas of vegetation designed to slow the spread of wildfires, providing firefighters with more manageable areas to control and contain fires. In this case, the shaded fuel break will help reduce fire intensity and improve fire suppression efforts along the boundary of the forest, helping to protect not

only the JDSF but also neighboring private lands and communities.

The implementation of this project is dependent on the availability of Heavy Fire Equipment Operators (HFEOs) and hand crews, or other alternative funding sources. These crews will work together to clear vegetation, including brush and trees, along the designated area. The project will involve a combination of manual labor, mechanical treatments, and possibly prescribed burning to ensure the vegetation is adequately managed to create a defensible space.

Once completed, the shaded fuel break will serve as an effective barrier against the rapid spread of wildfires, especially during high fire-risk seasons. Additionally, it will also provide a safer environment for fire crews to work, offering critical access points and strategic locations for controlling fire behavior. By creating this buffer zone, the project not only protects the forest and surrounding areas but also contributes to broader efforts to promote wildfire resilience across the region.

In summary, the Three Chop Ridge Shaded Fuel Break Project is an essential fire prevention initiative that brings together multiple landowners and agencies, aimed at enhancing fire safety, reducing fuel loads, and ultimately safeguarding both public and private lands from the destructive impact of wildfires. Once the necessary resources and funding are secured, this project will play a pivotal role in the ongoing efforts to protect the region from future fire hazards.

- The James Creek THP was approved in xx and includes 91 acres of shaded fuel break over 1.75 miles on Road 230, connecting with Road 1000.
- The Caspar 500 THP was approved in 2019 and covers approximately 26 acres of shaded fuel break, ranging from 100 to 200 feet in width, located on the south side of Road 500. Since logging operations were halted, the project plan will now be converted into a California Vegetation Treatment Program (Cal VTP) project. This conversion will enable CAL FIRE to reintroduce fire to the landscape, helping to restore the ecosystem and improve fire resilience in the area

### **Projects in development**

- Road 408, 409 & 720 Fuel Break: A fuel break along County Road 408, Road 409 and Road 720 are planned to span along Road 408 from the intersection Highway 20 to Road 760, Road 409 from intersection of Rd 408 to vicinity of Russian Gulch State Park and along Road 720 between the intersection of Rd 408 and Rd 700 near the Woodlands Campground. Roads 408 and 409 run along one of the more prominent ridge roads within Jackson Demonstration State Forest and acts as a common place for public recreation which will act as a part of this project. The fuel break is planned to be roughly 400 ft wide or 200 ft from the center of the road on each side. This project will align with JDSF and the Units goals for VMP projects that improve recreational

opportunities. Fire Berry

- **Jughandle Restoration:** In 2024, JDSF staff met with representatives from CA State Parks, UC Cooperative Extension, and a CAL FIRE Forest Pathologist to discuss the preliminary goals and project boundaries for the Jughandle Restoration & Research Project. During this collaborative meeting, participants conducted a field trip to assess the current conditions within the Pygmy and Redwood/Bishop Pine Forests, focusing on the ecological health and challenges within these forest ecosystems. The discussions included evaluating possible research questions, methodologies, and objectives that could be addressed throughout the course of the project.

The project aims to restore and enhance forest health in these unique ecosystems while addressing important scientific questions regarding forest management. An integral part of this restoration involves the use of prescribed fire to help reintroduce fire as a natural ecological process that has historically shaped these landscapes. Prescribed fire plays a critical role in the restoration process by reducing fuel loads, improving biodiversity, and enhancing forest resilience to future wildfires.

- Future THPs will assess and include language for site preparation and broadcast burning.



## SECTION II: COLLABORATION

### LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Mendocino County owes very much to its local fire agencies, many of which are staffed completely by volunteers and whose personnel are often the first to arrive at wildland fires and other emergencies. Most of these agencies are in Fire Protection Districts (FPDs) or Community Services Districts (CSDs) which are governed by elected boards of directors and have authority to levy taxes to support their work. The Local Departments Map (located within the Exhibits Section) shows the locations and boundaries of these districts. Areas adjacent to a district but not included in it are referred to as the agency's "sphere of influence." Although they pay no taxes or fees, people in these areas still receive services, because the County's emergency responders never refuse to help someone in need. However, such situations can become very frustrating to cash-strapped departments and can be a source of irritation to those who pay their share for emergency services. Most departments supplement their tax base income with at least one major fundraiser a year – usually barbeques with live music, which are well-supported, and extremely popular social events.

Fires in wildlands, structures, vehicles, dumpsters, and similar situations account for only 10% to 20% of the calls to which local agencies respond. Medical aid calls are by far the majority – an average of 80% for most departments – followed by traffic accidents and other rescue situations. Consequently, county firefighters undergo training in medical response, extricating patients from vehicles, responding to hazardous materials incidents, and a variety of other emergency skills – thus the common term "Fire-Rescue." A high percentage of volunteers are First Responders or Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), both of which require significant training. Fire departments on the coast are often called to assist in cliff rescues and other water-related emergencies and have equipment and volunteers to meet that need.

Firefighter training or "drill" in most of the county's departments involves one night a week plus additional trainings on weekends. Firefighters often train with other departments, especially on training burns, in which abandoned buildings or wildland fields are burned for training purposes. Some firefighters travel out of county to obtain training and certification in specialized fields. In addition, trainings are brought into the county.

Mendocino County has an extraordinarily strong and effective mutual aid system, among all agencies and for all types of emergency response. Local fire departments are quick to assist each other and CAL FIRE, and vice versa, most often within the mutual aid zones, but beyond those as needed. On wildfires, CAL FIRE and local firefighters, paid and volunteer, work side by side as equals, all in yellow Nomex fire resistant clothing and barely distinguishable from each other in appearance and skill. On medical aid calls, local

fire departments, local ambulance services, CAL FIRE, and CALSTAR or REACH emergency transport helicopters all work as one team.

## **MENDOCINO COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL**

### **MENDOCINO COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL**

CAL FIRE and the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council (MCFSC) aim to expand their already significant collaboration over the coming years.

MCFSC's base programs to increase local wildfire mitigation efforts include providing free community chipper days, free defensible space assistance for income-eligible seniors and persons with disabilities, free comprehensive home hardening and defensible space assessments, free access to automated local phone tree/emergency communications systems, making reflective address signs, and providing a wide spectrum of community education including a video series on home hardening (<https://firesafemendocino.org/homehardening/>) and a monthly local audio news stories about wildfire prevention activities throughout the county (<https://www.firesafemendocino.org/our-blog>).

In 2024 MCFSC collaborated with the UC Hopland Research Extension Center to support wider deployment of fire science and wildfire preparedness education in Mendocino schools. In 2025 this program will serve over 800 students. Other collaborative projects currently in development include a native plant re-seeding post treatment program, a home hardening public service announcement poster campaign in collaboration with Yana Valachovic with the University of California Cooperative Extension and collaborations with the California Conservation Corps to host a popular Women's Chainsaw Class and implement fuel reduction projects with two successfully completed jobs on Elkhorn Road in Yorkville and Pine Ridge Road in Ukiah.

MCFSC has also managed a series of road clearing/fuel break creation projects aimed at corridors on which ingress and egress may be particularly critical in a wildfire situation. Starting in 2020-21 substantial projects were managed by the MCFSC on both the eastern and western ends of the Ukiah Valley and in Brooktrails. In 2022 MCFSC managed projects in Brooktrails and in a portion of Orr Springs Road. In 2023-2024 MCFSC has been providing road clearing in Yorkville, the Ridgewood and Pine Mountain neighborhoods in Willits, Cherry Creek, along Dos Rios Road, and throughout Greenfield Ranch. In 2025 MCFSC will be working on an ingress/egress projects along Bell Springs Road, McNab Ranch Road and partnering with another non-profit to work in the Spyrock area. MCFSC has also supported 7 neighborhood fire safe councils in PG&E funded fuel reduction projects across the county including: Black Bart Trail Firewise, Wildwood Fire Safe Council, Bell Springs Fire Safe Council, Westport Fire Safe Council, Leggett Fire Safe Council, Albion Little River Fire Safe Council and Holmes Ranch Fire Safe Council. MCFSC and CAL FIRE have also collaborated on projects to implement fuel reduction throughout the Shafer Ranch Road area and in the Vista Del Lago Road area. MCFSC is also managing projects to obtain CEQA clearance so that a wide range of other projects will

be “shovel ready” when resources become available. CAL FIRE and MCFSC intend to continue identifying key ingress/egress routes throughout the county that would benefit from CAL FIRE and MCFSC collaboration in implementing treatment.

MCFSC will continue to work to help bring resources and facilitate community involvement to implement MEU Priority Projects along with the many needed projects identified the Mendocino County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. CAL FIRE, MCFSC and other agencies are also collaborating to identify and map completed, in process, and needed wildfire mitigation projects throughout Mendocino County. The MCFSC manages a comprehensive map of Mendocino County wildfire mitigation efforts that can be accessed at <https://www.firesafemendocino.org/project-tracker-map>. This tracking tool is being incorporated into the County of Mendocino’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan 2025 update.

A priority for MCFSC in 2024 and going forward, is to work with CAL FIRE to accelerate support and hopefully increase funding for programs that can help with retrofitting projects to improve home hardening. An additional priority for MCFSC in 2025 and going forward is to support the Mendocino County Prescribed Burn Association in accelerating the scale and pace of beneficial burning in the county. With help from the Grizzly Corps Program MCFSC has been able to support a staff person dedicated to advancing these activities.

Perhaps most important of all, MCFSC is helping organize neighborhoods countywide to do their own volunteer work to increase local wildfire readiness through the creation of Neighborhood Fire Safe Councils (NFSCs) and Firewise Communities. NFSCs have grown substantially in recent years from 18 prior to 2020 to more than 70 in 2025. A map of existing Firewise Communities is at <https://www.firesafemendocino.org/nfsc>. MCFSC is working closely with these NFSCs to attain their certification as Firewise Communities. In 2024 MCFSC was awarded a Community Wildfire Defense Grant to activate the formation of Firewise Communities in Mendocino County. Since 2024, Mendocino has gone from 4 Firewise Communities to 12 and counting. A map of existing Firewise Communities is at <https://www.firesafemendocino.org/existing-firewise-communities>

In 2024 MCFSC developed a community work day program to help NFSCs and Firewise Communities tackle small fuel reduction projects as a group with support from MCFSC’s fuels crew. MCFSC hosted 3 community work days in 2024 with more expected in 2025. NFSCs and local fire departments can also participate in MCFSC’s unique micro grant program which funded 10 wildfire mitigation projects through the county in 2022, 16 projects in 2023, 17 projects in process for 2024 and is expected to accomplish even more in 2025. See <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ead5690f80dd41e69a6b04cc8c508f84> for a report on 2022 grant awards and <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/47add6db3caf41238715f7bc0838db3d> for a report on 2023 grant awards. With the Community Wildfire Defense Grant funding MCFSC expects to start a similar micro grant program for Firewise Communities.

Finally, as has always been the case in the past, CAL FIRE and MCFSC will continue to collaborate on the effort to provide widespread community education and communication throughout Mendocino County focusing on home hardening, the creation of defensible space, and CAL FIRE's Ready, Set, Go information. <https://firesafemendocino.org/mcfsc-radio-hour/>.

## SECTION III: VALUES AT RISK

### UNIT VALUES

Mendocino Unit has a wide range of both natural and man-made assets at risk to wildfires. Fires threaten the natural environment as well as commercial and residential property. It is CAL FIRE's mission to protect lives, property, and natural resources. Mendocino Unit will always prioritize citizen and first responder's safety above all else. The property we protect includes, private homes, commercial businesses, essential utilities and telecommunications infrastructure, recreational areas, historical buildings, and culturally significant sites. The resources we protect include, rangeland, watershed, agricultural lands, and commercial timber. The Unit is dedicated to protecting these assets from the devastating effects of wildfires and other disasters.

Population dynamics in California has resulted in rapid development in the outlying fringe of metropolitan areas and in rural areas with attractive recreational and aesthetic amenities, especially forests. This demographic change is increasing the size of the wildland-urban interface (WUI), defined as the area where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland. The WUI is where wildfire poses the biggest risk to human lives and structures. The expansion of the WUI in recent decades has significant implications for wildfire management and impact. The WUI creates an environment in which fire can move readily between structures and vegetation fuels. Its expansion has increased the likelihood that wildfires will threaten structures and people. The increase in fire activity correlates with population increase in the wildland areas.

Mendocino County has a long history of producing agricultural resources which make up much of the diverse landscape and contribute to the local economy. These resources include, timberlands, vineyard lands, marijuana cultivation, and cattle grazing lands. Much of the State Responsibility Area (SRA) within Mendocino Unit includes private and State timberlands. Mendocino is home of CAL FIRE's Jackson Demonstration State Forest which is 48,652 acres and composed of primarily Coastal Redwoods and Douglas Fir timber. Grape growers and marijuana cultivation are found in various locations throughout Mendocino, mostly located in open grassland areas. The grass covered flats and steep terrain throughout Mendocino is also utilized for grazeland to raise dairy and beef cattle. All of these natural resource lands bring enormous value and are vital to the land management industries as well as the economic stability of the County. CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit is dedicated to the protection of these resources.

## COMMUNITIES AT RISK

To help protect people and their property from potential catastrophic wildfire, the National Fire Plan directs funding to be provided for projects designed to reduce the fire risks to communities. A fundamental step in achieving this goal was the identification of communities that are at high risk of damage from wildfire. These high-risk communities identified within the wildland-urban interface, the area where homes and wildlands intermix, were published in the Federal Register in 2001. At the request of Congress, the Federal Register notice only listed those communities neighboring federal lands. The list represented the collaborative work of the 50 states and five federal agencies using a standardized process, whereby states were asked to submit all communities within their borders that met the criteria of a structure at high risk from wildfire.

The following Communities at Risk are within the CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit's boundaries:

Albion	Mendocino	2001	Leggett	Mendocino	2001
Anchor Bay	Mendocino	2001	Little River	Mendocino	2001
Boonville	Mendocino	2001	Longvale	Mendocino	2001
Brooktrails	Mendocino	2001	Manchester	Mendocino	2001
Calpella	Mendocino	2001	Manchester Rancheria (Iverson Indian		
Rancheria)	Mendocino	2001			
Camp Rest	Mendocino	2001	Mendocino	Mendocino	2001
Caspar	Mendocino	2001	Navarro	Mendocino	2001
Cleone	Mendocino	2001	Northspur	Mendocino	2001
Comptche	Mendocino	2001	Philo	Mendocino	2001
Covelo	Mendocino	2001	Piercy	Mendocino	2001
Coyote Valley Indian Reservation	Mendocino	2001	2001	Point Arena	
	Mendocino	2001			
Cummings	Mendocino	2001	Pomo	Mendocino	2001
Dos Rios	Mendocino	2001	Potter Valley	Mendocino	2001
El Roble	Mendocino	2001	Redwood Valley		
	Mendocino	2001			
Elk (Greenwood)		Mendocino	2001	Regina Heights	
	Mendocino	2001			
Fort Bragg	Mendocino	2001	Talmage	Mendocino	2001
Gualala	Mendocino	2001	The Forks	Mendocino	2001
Hopland	Mendocino	2001	Ukiah	Mendocino	2001
Inglenook	Mendocino	2001	Vichy Springs	Mendocino	2001
Laytonville	Mendocino	2001	Westport	Mendocino	2001
			Willits	Mendocino	2001

## SECTION IV: PRE-FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

### OVERVIEW

The Wildland Urban Interface presents major concerns for fire prevention. Many homes are in hazardous locations either in ignorance of, or in disregard for, fire prevention practices. Strict enforcement of California Public Resources Codes 4290 and 4291 will be necessary to correct the errors of past residential and commercial developments. Fire loss reductions must be gained through better fire safe planning, with participation by all political bodies and stakeholders.

The Fire Prevention Program of the CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit, including the Fire Prevention Bureau and Pre-Fire Planning, attempts to address the actual problems encountered and to plan for anticipated changes. Unit prevention efforts include fair exhibits, burn and 4290 permit procedures, fire patrols, news media releases, public service announcements and outreach, school programs, structure and dooryard premises inspections, and membership in the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council. Fire prevention programs are coordinated to the greatest extent possible with Local Fire Departments.

Each area of the Mendocino Unit, to a greater or lesser extent, will need to adapt to the ever-increasing population moving into and recreating in the wildland areas of the County, posing greater risks of fires and even greater expectations for all CAL FIRE response services. Through development, implementation, and ongoing reassessment of this Plan's priorities, the Mendocino Unit will be ready and steadfast in its ability to provide leadership in pre-fire management planning and in protecting the citizens of Mendocino County from destructive wildfires.

### Legislative Updates and Impacts on Mendocino County

#### ***Senate Bill (SB) 1101 - Enhancing Prescribed Fire Capabilities***

Senate Bill 1101 significantly enhances the flexibility and efficiency of prescribed fire operations managed by CAL-FIRE. By exempting CAL-FIRE from certain state contracting and bidding requirements specifically for logistical support related to large-scale prescribed burns, SB 1101 streamlines the administrative processes, enabling quicker mobilization and implementation of prescribed burns.

Additionally, by January 1, 2026, CAL-FIRE will develop detailed maps identifying strategic wildfire management and prescribed fire delineation zones. Beginning July 1, 2025, CAL-FIRE is required to annually produce wildfire severity maps, providing Mendocino County officials and residents critical data to better assess and mitigate wildfire risks. These efforts support proactive fire management, ecological restoration, and improved community safety.

**Senate Bill (SB) 310 - Supporting Cultural Burning Practices**

Senate Bill 310 recognizes and supports the sovereignty of federally recognized California Native American tribes in managing cultural burns. This legislation empowers local tribes in Mendocino County by allowing them to enter agreements with state and local entities that exempt them from specific regulatory requirements, thus facilitating the use of cultural burns on ancestral lands.

The bill clarifies liability protections for prescribed and cultural burns, provided that certain conditions, including qualified supervision and compliance with air quality regulations, are met. This change is expected to encourage more frequent use of cultural burning practices, which can reduce wildfire risks and improve ecological health across Mendocino County. SB 310 also promotes enhanced collaboration between tribes and local government agencies, creating opportunities for integrated and culturally informed fire management strategies.

**Summary of Impacts for Mendocino County**

Together, SB 1101 and SB 310 position Mendocino County for improved wildfire management through enhanced prescribed and cultural burning practices. The legislative changes facilitate quicker, more responsive fire management actions, promote cultural practices beneficial to ecosystem resilience, and strengthen partnerships between local governments and tribal entities. These developments represent substantial progress toward a proactive, collaborative approach to wildfire risk reduction and community safety in Mendocino County.

**FIRE PREVENTION**

MEU's Fire Prevention Bureau staffs active law enforcement personnel to enforce state fire and forest laws.

CAL FIRE Law Enforcement officers are trained and certified in accordance with the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST). MEU's officers are busy year-round investigating fire causes, interviewing witnesses, issuing citations, and patrolling the largest state forest (Jackson Demonstration State Forest) in the state of California. Additionally, law enforcement staff aid when requested by Local Fire and Law Enforcement Agencies in arson, bomb, fireworks investigations, and disposal of explosives. The Mendocino Unit's investigators have a very successful conviction rate.

## PRE-FIRE ENGINEERING

In the early 1980's, the California legislature adopted "Fire Safe" regulations in response to devastating fires on California's wildlands. California, because of its unique combination of vegetation, topography, climate, and population, has one of the most severe wildfire problems in the world. Rugged terrain and highly flammable vegetation make the foothills and mountains of California especially unsafe for residential development unless adequate fire safety measures are taken. A fire hazard severity classification system based on fire weather, fuel loading, and slope has been developed as a basis for identifying fire hazard in the State Responsibility Areas (SRA) where CAL FIRE has the primary responsibility for wildfire protection. To help aid in successful protection CAL FIRE plays an active role in the development of Fire Safe regulations. These regulations provide direction and set standards for construction of adequate ingress and egress routes, water systems, land use planning and zoning to help guide development within the SRA.

The intent of the Fire Safe program is to minimize the loss of lives, structures, and resources due to uncontrolled wildfires. The Fire Safe program places some of the responsibility of fire protection on the homeowner and/or builder/developer. The responsibility is the concept of defensible space planning and incorporating basic fire protection measures into the home or development as it is built. Each home, subdivision, and development constructed in the SRA should have adequate emergency equipment access, building, street, and address identification, and a reasonable water supply for suppression needs built into their designs. Residents and planners within the SRA should understand the importance of planning for fire protection, the need for ongoing and proper clearance of flammable vegetation around structure (PRC 4291), and the benefits of greenbelts, fuel breaks, and controlled burns in and around structures and developments.

## PRE-FIRE PLANNING

The Mendocino Unit Pre-Fire Planning Division is an extension of the Unit's Fire Prevention Bureau. the Mendocino Unit's Pre-Fire Planning Division focuses on five main components:

1. Public Resources Code 4290- SRA/VHFHSZ Fire Safe Regulation Plan Reviews & Inspections
2. Public Resources Code 4290.5- Existing Subdivision Reviews
3. Public Recourses Code 4291- Defensible Space Inspections
4. Assembly Bill 38 Inspections/Real Estate Inspections

## 5. Public Resources Code 4292 & 4293- Powerline Inspections

### **History**

The Pre-Fire Planning Division was created in FY 20/21 in response to the increasing amount of construction that was taking place within the State Responsibility Area of Mendocino County. With the allocation of an additional Fire Captain (Range A) position, the Unit established a position whose focus was that of reviewing building permit plans and conducting inspections on completed construction projects to ensure conformance to all applicable state fire and forestry laws. Prior to this, all Public Resources Code 4290/ SRA-VHFHSZ Fire Safe Regulation plan reviews and inspections were undertaken by the Unit's Pre-Fire Engineer.

### **Public Resources Code 4290 & the SRA/VHFHSZ Fire Safe Regulations**

Enacted by legislation passed 1987, Public Resources Code 4290 established the framework for developing fire safe construction within the State Responsibility Areas (SRA) of California. This framework identified the categories of roadways, addresses and road signage, emergency water supplies and defensible space as being a critical part of fire resiliency within the Wildland/Urban Interface environment.

In 2019, legislation was passed to amend Public Resources Code 4290 with the intent of preserving undeveloped ridgelines to reduce fire risks and improve fire protection.

Public Resources Code 4290 also mandated the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to establish specific regulations and criteria for each of the above-mentioned categories.

### **Public Resources Code 4291**

Public Resources Code 4291 requires that any person who owns, leases, controls, operates or maintains a building in, on, or adjacent to any mountainous areas, as well as brush, forest, shrub covered lands, maintains an area of defensible space. The defensible space area is typically a minimum of 100' around all sides of buildings.

### **Defensible Space Zones**

Zones 1 and 2 currently make up the 100 feet of defensible space required by law. Assembly Bill 3074, passed into law in 2020, requires a third zone for defensible space. This law requires the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop the regulation for a new ember-resistant zone (Zone 0) within 0 to 5 feet of the home by January 1, 2023. The intensity of wildfire fuel management varies within the 100-foot perimeter of the home, with more intense fuels' reduction occurring closer to your home. Start at the home and work your way out to 100 feet or to your property line, whichever is closer.

## **Defensible Space Inspections**

The CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit was allocated four (4) Defensible Space Inspectors for FY 23/24. Due to the Units location, recruitment for these positions can be difficult. In FY 23/24, the Mendocino Unit was not able to hire Forestry Aide- Defensible Space Inspectors.

## **Assembly Bill 38 Inspections (Real Estate Inspections)**

Assembly Bill 38 (AB 38), which Governor Newsom signed into law in 2019, went into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. AB 38 mandated CAL FIRE conduct defensible space compliance inspections upon request for the sale of real property in the State Responsibility Area, as well as High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. AB 38 provided the Unit with funding for one Forestry Technician to conduct these inspections within Mendocino County.

## **2024 Inspection Totals**

In 2024, the Pre-Fire Planning Division reviewed approximately 146 SRA/VHFHSZ State Fire Safe Regulation applications for projects in Mendocino County. In addition to these plan reviews, roughly 75 final inspections were conducted by Pre-Fire Planning staff.

The Mendocino Unit also conducted 3,063 Defensible Space Inspections in 2024. Of these inspections, 2,581 were found to comply with Public Resources Code 4291 requirements, while 223 were non-compliant and 259 were uninspected.

From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, the CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit processed and conducted 220 AB 38 inspections.

## **Public Resources Code 4290.5**

Beginning on January 1, 2020, all existing subdivisions without a secondary means of egress that are located within the State Responsibility Area, or a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone were to be identified and have recommendations made to make them more fire resistive.

In 2021, the Mendocino Unit Pre-Fire Engineering and Planning sections, working with the Mendocino County GIS office, were able to establish that there are 76 existing subdivisions in Mendocino County. Most of these subdivisions fall under the criteria set in Public Resources Code 4290.5.

**NOTICE OF DEFENSIBLE SPACE INSPECTION**

A fire abatement department may inspect your property for fire hazards. You are hereby notified to contact the abatement department within 10 days of the inspection to schedule a re-inspection if a citation was issued.

Inspector Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Inspector No. \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Citations: \_\_\_\_\_

**Zone 1: Within 30 feet of all structures or to the property line (Refer to illustrations below):**

- Remove all branches within 10 feet of any chimney or stovepipe outlet, pursuant to PRC § 430(a)(2) and 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- Remove leaves, needles or other vegetation on roofs, gutters, decks, porches, balconies, etc. pursuant to PRC § 430(a)(4) and 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(4).
- Remove all dead and dying trees, branches and shrubs, or other plants adjacent to or overhanging buildings, pursuant to PRC § 430(a)(2) and 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- Remove all dead and dying grasses, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, weeds and seedlings, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- Remove or separate flammable ground cover and shrubs, pursuant to PRC § 430(a)(2) and 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- Remove flammable vegetation and items that could catch fire which are adjacent to, or below, combustible decks, balconies, and stairs, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- Relocate exposed combustible material outside of Zone 1 unless completely covered in a fire-resistant material, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).

**Zone 2: Within 30-100 feet of all structures or to the property line (Refer to illustrations below):**

- Cut annual grasses and forbs down to a maximum height of 4 inches, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- Remove trees in accordance with the Fire Department or CalFire Tree Canopy Guidelines (see back), pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- All exposed vegetation must have a minimum of 10 feet clearance above to any structure, in all directions, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- Dead and dying shrubs, vines, trees and other plants shall be removed, unless surface clear, normally consisting of bare stems or needles, twigs, bark, cones, and other materials, shall be permitted to a maximum height of 2 meters, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).

**Defensible and Reduced Fuel Zone: Within 100 feet of all structures or to the property line (Refer to illustrations below):**

- Logs or stumps embedded in the soil must be removed or isolated from other vegetation, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).

**Other Requirements:**

- Outbuildings and 1000 Gallon Fuel Storage Tanks shall have 10 feet of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional 10 feet around their exterior, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- Address numbers shall be displayed in contrasting color, 10" min. size and visible from the street or access road, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).
- 1000 Gallon Fuel Storage Tanks shall have 10 feet of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional 10 feet around their exterior, pursuant to 14 CCR § 1306.03(a)(2).

**KNOW THE LAW BE FIRE SMART**

100 feet of Defensible Space is required under the Public Resources Code (PRC), AB 680, California Building Code Chapter 13 (California Building Code). This code requires property owners to maintain defensible space around their buildings to reduce the risk of wildfire damage. For more information, please visit the CAL FIRE website at [www.calfire.ca.gov](http://www.calfire.ca.gov).

PRC § 4301. The Department or its duly authorized agent shall enforce the state Forest and Fire Code. The Department may require all property owners, except the owners of buildings, to maintain the state Forest and Fire Code, for the purpose of maintaining compliance with such laws.

LE-100a Form used for Defensible Space Inspections

## INFORMATION & EDUCATION

The CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit (MEU) is committed to providing comprehensive fire information and education to the public. Through a variety of outreach methods, we ensure that fire prevention awareness reaches individuals of all ages. Fire information and education is delivered through school programs, community events, press releases, media outreach, social media engagement, and direct homeowner education.

The program utilizes multiple platforms to inform and educate the public on wildfire prevention and preparedness:

- **School Programs & Classroom Education** – Fire safety presentations tailored for students, providing interactive and age-appropriate instruction.
- **Community Events & Public Engagement** – Participation in events such as the Mendocino County Fair, where we offer demonstrations, safety exhibits, and educational materials.
- **Social Media Outreach** – Distribution of press releases, social media posting through Facebook and Instagram, along with radio and television public service announcements to enhance fire prevention messaging.

- Homeowner Outreach – One-on-one education efforts with wildland homeowners to promote defensible space compliance and wildfire preparedness strategies.

As part of its fire prevention efforts we incorporate Captain Cal, in fire safety information and education. Captain Cal is utilized at public events and within school programs to engage young audiences in learning essential fire prevention practices. While primarily focused on educating children, CAL FIRE's Fire Prevention Specialists also provide educational materials designed for teachers, educators, and the general public.

The Volunteers in Prevention (VIP) Program is a vital component of our public outreach efforts. This program engages community members and public service groups in to assist in reducing human-caused wildfires. Volunteers participate in a range of activities, including:

- Public Education & Outreach – Providing fire safety education to thousands of children and adults through fairs, school programs, and community events.
- Fuels Reduction Projects – Assisting with vegetation management efforts to mitigate wildfire risk.
- Media & Public Information Support – Helping inform the public during wildfire incidents by assisting with media coordination and distributing safety messages.

#### **24/7 Public Information Officer Coverage**

To ensure timely and accurate dissemination of fire-related information we now provide 24 hours a day, seven days a week Public Information Officer (PIO) coverage. This dedicated team is responsible for:

- Keeping the public informed on emergency incidents, fire conditions, and safety updates.
- Providing real-time information via social media, press releases, and media briefings.
- Keeping the public informed on non-emergency incidents such as Prescribed fire, burn ban status, public events, and informational classes

We remain dedicated to ensuring that fire information and education is a year-round priority. Through collaborative efforts with the community, local organizations, and volunteers, the MEU continues to strengthen wildfire prevention strategies and protect lives, property, and natural resources.

## SECTION V: PRE-FIRE MANAGEMENT TACTICS

### BATTALION 1- COVELO

CAL FIRE's Mendocino Unit Battalion 1 is in the northeast corner of Mendocino County. Within the Battalion is the town of Covelo, centered in Round Valley population of 2500. Outside of the valley floor the population is approximately 2000 people. The Round Valley floor is predominantly Local Responsibility Area (LRA) and fire protection is the responsibility of the Covelo Fire Protection District (CFPD), although CAL FIRE responds to all calls in the district through an automatic mutual aid agreement. Federal Responsibility Area (FRA) represents the Eastern edge through the Battalion. Humboldt Del-Norte Unit (HUU) represents the Northern edge at the County line just North of the Northfork of Eel River.

The economy is mainly supported by cattle ranchers, timber harvest projects, and marijuana. The climate is Mediterranean in type, and vegetation is oak woodlands changing to conifer timberlands in the higher elevations.

The USFS, CAL FIRE, CFPD, and the Fire Safe Council have determined that the entire Covelo battalion is an at-risk WUI area, with several specific areas having greater hazards. To address the fire problem in the Covelo Battalion without looking at the LRA fire causes would not produce a true evaluation. More than 70 percent of the fires in the Battalion occur within one square mile within the LRA. Arson is the leading cause of fire in the Battalion. The County Sheriff's Office and CAL FIRE work cooperatively to investigate and incarcerate arsonists. Local, state, and federal fire cooperators as well as the Sheriff's Office continue to educate in the schools and community in hopes of reducing arson and accidentally caused fires.

The Covelo community has recently formed the Round Valley Prescribed Burn Association. The goal of the burn association is to use fire as a tool to manage the landscape for fire prevention. The PBA is also actively participating with tribal members on tribal lands to reintroduce cultural fire practices. Battalion 1 intends to support and assist the PBA.

Historically: The "Fire Defense Plan" prepared for the Round Valley Indian Tribes (RVIT) by CAL FIRE in May 1992 is intended to be an integral part of land management planning on the Tribal lands. It identifies several fuel breaks and VIP projects that can mitigate hazards and risks impacting the Battalion and the Covelo community. With the increasing likelihood of wildfires on the west side of the valley, it is imperative that a maintained fuel break exists on the ridge west of Round Valley. As was noted above, CAL FIRE constructed a fuel break there, known as the Little Valley fuel break. This break is an extension of one completed by the RVIT crews and provides direct protection to the 100 homes below it.

Continuing northwest from Little Valley, another fuel break, known by the name “Pink,” was developed in the plan. This break will minimize the risk of uncontrolled fires becoming large and damaging on both the west side of Round Valley and the eastside of Poonkinney Ridge. RVIT received a tribal wildfire resilience grant in 2023. This grant supports fire planning to reduce the threat to Tribal lives and Tribal land in Round Valley. The grant also supports progress toward the long-term goal of returning prescribed and cultural burning to the Round Valley Indian Tribes. This grant seeks to address the common problem that landscape-scale and strategic fire resilience projects are often unattainable because of a lack of funding for pre-project analysis and a lack of internal implementation capacity. Specific deliverables include a feasibility analysis and prioritization of fire resilience projects, a Fuels Management and Prescribed Fire Plan, a Fire Atlas that supports decision-making during fire suppression, a categorical exclusion for fuels reduction, and PPE and fire training for the Round Valley Indian Tribes’ Department of Natural Resources staff. Work has been initiated by RVIT on these Historical Fuel Breaks.

Currently: On Private and Tribal lands, a fuel break is under construction down Murphy Ridge from Mina Road to Highway 162 on the North side of the valley. A Forest Health Grant was awarded to treat a previously installed fuel break from the 2020 August Complex. Phase 1 of the project is almost complete, and preparation of phase 2 is in preparation.

## **Battalion 1 Target areas**

### **EAST PROJECT**

*Currently in environmental review*

#### ***Capistran Ranch***

Located East of Round Valley. The ranch separates SRA from FRA and is notorious for lightning strikes annually. The idea is to develop a fire break from the Middle Fork of the Eel River to the Forest Service (M-1) Road at the tip of Etsel Ridge. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase public safety, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.

### **COVELO SOUTH PROJECT**

*Currently in environmental review*

The Covelo South Project, located at the southern end of the Covelo Valley, will span from inspiration point on Highway 162, to the confluence of the Middle Fork Eel River and Elk Creek. This grant funded landscape project will span 5 miles through the Lunardi, Christfort, Carley and Schneider ranches. The project with local landowners will utilize prescribed fire, and some mechanical means, to address wildland fire fuel hazards and

other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase public safety, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.

***Christfort***

Located between the Carley and Lunardi ranches. Establishing a firebreak long term will develop a protection for Round Valley to the South of the valley floor. The project with local landowners will utilize prescribed fire, and some mechanical means, to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase public safety, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.

***Carley***

Located south of Covelo in the Middle Fork Eel River watershed the Carley VMP is a grant project with local landowners that will utilize prescribed fire, and some mechanical means, to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase public safety, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.

***Schneider***

Located between the Carley ranch and the Middle Fork of Eel River. This project ties all four landowners in covering at least 5 miles from the Middle Fork Eel River to Inspiration Point and US Highway 162. It's also a grant project with local landowners that will utilize prescribed fire, and some mechanical means, to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase public safety, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.

## BATTALION 2- WILLITS

State Highway 101 bisects CAL FIRE's Mendocino Unit Battalion 2, with predominately Redwood and Douglas-Fir Forest to the west and mixed pine forest, brush, and grassland to the east. Highway 20 goes west from Willits to Fort Bragg for approximately 13 miles within the Battalion. The eastern border of the Battalion is the Mendocino National Forest's Covelo and Upper Lake Districts.

One CAL FIRE Station, Howard Forest, co-located with the Mendocino Unit Headquarters, provides the initial ground attack fire protection for Battalion 2. Howard Forest Helitack Base is located at this facility and is administered by the Battalion Chief assigned to Ukiah Air Attack.

The Brooktrails Township is an unincorporated community located immediately northwest of the City of Willits and its subdivisions are some of the densest wildland/urban interface developments in Mendocino County. The limited access, steep slopes, roads, and dwellings interspersed with undeveloped, overgrown parcels surrounded by a natural greenbelt environment, offer the potential for expensive and large losses to wildland fire.

The unincorporated community is subject to Public Resources Code 4290 requirements for new development. This steep and wooded area was noted as being the first community in the United States to blend a four-square mile redwood and mixed growth forest Conservation Park with a fully improved residential subdivision. The conservation park is now called the Brooktrails Redwood Park and is locally referred to as the "Greenbelt." The park covers 2,300 acres that border a large portion of the lots in the subdivision. The Brooktrails Township is comprised of multiple subdivisions. Three main areas, Brooktrails, Sylvandale, and Spring Creek, are the most heavily populated.

In the event of a large fire in or threatening the Brooktrails subdivisions, the residents and responding agencies could face many problems. Residents evacuating down steep and narrow roads could impede responding fire apparatus, causing road blockage and long response times for fire personnel. Evacuation concerns are compounded by the fact that the narrow, winding Sherwood Road is the only paved major access road and escape route from Brooktrails, Sylvandale, and Spring Creek.

The Little Lake Valley is a grassy oak woodlands landscape that transitions into brush towards the east, then to timber at the higher elevations. There are many structures intermixed in the area and especially in the Pine Mountain Subdivision. It has similar features outlined in the Brooktrails scenario, steep winding roads that provide adequate access during normal conditions but would be hard pressed to accommodate residents

evacuating and fire resources entering the area, especially the transport/dozer units responding.

The Battalion overlays Willits, the only incorporated city, several unincorporated communities of various sizes, two high schools, and five grade schools. Miles of overhead power lines, a continuing source of vegetation fire starts, accompany ongoing building in the wildland.

Area logging is decreasing due to the economy, environmental concerns, and changes in ownership/management goals and strategies. Current harvest plans are mixed between small and large acreage. With fewer logging operations, the cumulative fire hazard from logging slash buildup increases only slightly annually in comparison to the buildup created during past boom logging eras. However, multiple small and large landowners use an herbicide to reduce the population of small Oak trees within their ownership. This process is termed “Hack and Squirt”. Over a 5–10-year period the Oak trees breakdown thereby increasing fire loading on the forest floor while opening the forest canopy. Due to strong regulation and enforcement, threat of fire starts in the remote backcountry from logging operations is reduced. However, a dramatic increase in legal and clandestine marijuana production does increase the fire potential in the remote areas.

The saving grace for the area inland of California’s north coastal strip is the seasonal onshore marine push which usually keeps overnight relative humidity high during normal patterns. Interior high pressure regularly develops over Mendocino County and creates critical burning conditions. When interior high-pressure conditions develop, producing hot, dry north/northeast offshore winds, there is abundant potential for severe fires in the Willits area. These critical weather patterns typically develop four to five times each fire season. Each pattern usually builds and dissipates within several days.

Fire is widely recognized as a natural part of the California environment. Ecologically, studies have demonstrated wildlife’s dependence on, and rapid recovery from, vegetation fires without funds being expended for regeneration. Much of the Willits Battalion would benefit from prescribed burning. Prescribed fires are far less costly than an uncontrolled fire burning through a developed community that will be costly to rebuild. The efficient burning of wildland tracts would provide an effective reduction of fuel loading in high, very high, and extreme fire hazard severity zones.

MEU Battalion II has multiple, active Fire Safe Councils and Firewise Communities; Pine Mountain Firewise, Sherwood Firewise, String Creek/Tartar Canyon FSC and Ridgewood FSC. There are several more beginning to operate. These councils operate under the umbrella of the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council.

There have been several grant projects in Battalion 2, the three major projects have been: the Brooktrails Shaded Fuel Break, the Firco Road project (which serves as an access road starting at the old mill site north of Willits and ending in Brooktrails near the Airport that

provides access for fire-fighting equipment) and the Pine Mountain Brush Chipping Project. These operations are managed by the Mendocino Fire Safe Council and CAL FIRE.

## **Battalion 2 Target Areas**

### **Fuels**

#### ***Brushy Mountain VMP***

Located south of Dos Rios and east of Willits in both the Middle Fork Eel River and Eel River watersheds, the Brushy Mountain VMP is a cost sharing project with local landowners that will utilize prescribed fire, and some mechanical means, to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase public safety, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.

#### ***Willits Fuel Reduction***

This densely populated area is a Wildland Urban Interface area with narrow roads and difficult ingress/egress. Currently Brooktrails only has one road in and out of the community. The area consists of steep terrain covered in a mix of grasslands, conifer, mature brush and timberlands. The fire hazard reduction will be accomplished by removing understory fuels, brush, small trees along both sides of various roads, and VMP prescribed burns where appropriate. This will open a crucial secondary access for this densely populated urban interface area in the County. The primary goal of the project will be to improve roadways for safe evacuation routes. A second goal is to create primary, secondary, and tertiary control lines in the event of a major wildfire coming from the community of Brooktrails or from Highway 101. This project has a direct impact to the communities of Brooktrails, Pine Mountain, and the Willits Valley.

#### ***Brooktrails Fuels Reduction***

The Brooktrails Township Community Services District is a general law, multi-purpose community services special district formed in 1975. Brooktrails maintains a Golf Course and 2300-acre greenbelt. Brooktrails Township, in cooperation with CAL FIRE, is currently thinning various strategic areas throughout the district to reduce the threat of large, damaging fires and promote forest health. The 8.2-mile-long roadside fuel reduction project starting at Timber Rd. and progressing all the way down to Willits has been completed. This will serve as a valuable shaded fuel break and an area for suppression forces to anchor into should a fire come from the west. Fuels reduction work around the 1st, 2nd, 3rd gate and Middle Road are in the planning stages.

*\*This project has multiple grants pending for roadside fuel reduction and home hardening.*

#### ***Howard Forest / Golden Gate / Green Gate Fuel Reduction***

The Howard Forest Fuels Reduction project(s) located south of Willits at the Mendocino

CAL FIRE Headquarters, is an ongoing shaded fuel break and fuels reduction project on roughly 129 acres that is strategically located to prevent damage to critical infrastructure, establish alternate escape routes for employees, remove hazard trees from the acquired property, and provide training opportunities for CAL FIRE employees and their cooperators.

### ***Mendocino Railway / Skunk Train Fuel Reduction***

This fuels reduction project parallels the Skunk Train Railroad west of Willits. This has been an aggressive project creating a shaded fuel break and removal of fuels near the railroad right of way. There were several fires along the railroad in 2018. Track maintenance personnel have been aggressive with their fuels maintenance as we have not had a significant fire on the tracks since 2018.

*\*This project is on going. Use of herbicides and mechanical fuel reduction is continuous.*

### ***Golden Rule Roadside Fuel Reduction***

The Golden Rule FRP reduced the fuel loading along the only entrance and exit to the Golden Rule Trailer Park and Golden Rule Church Association. It was completed in the Spring of 2022 and is now in maintenance status.

## **Infrastructure**

### ***Laughlin Peak FRP***

The Laughlin Peak FRP is in maintenance status and is worked on occasionally as the need arises.

## **Wildfire Prevention Grants**

### ***Ridgewood Road Roadside Fuel Reduction***

This FRP serves to reduce the fuel loading along the length of Ridgewood Road and will tie into the Pine Mountain Fuel Break.

Sherwood Valley Tribe Prevention Plan

The grant money allows the Sherwood Valley Tribe to prepare a Fire Prevention Plan for their tribal land that sits just west of Willits and is in the State Responsibility area.

*\*This project is essentially the part of the Pine Mountain project below.*

### ***Sherwood Rancheria/Ranch Roadside Fuel Reduction***

This FRP serves to reduce the fuel loading on the west side of the Rancheria where it touches up against a timber fuel model and roadside fuel reduction within the tribal areas.

### ***Sherwood Corridor Ingress/Egress Roadside Fuel Reduction***

Phase I consists of fuels reduction work along Timberline Road and Blue Lake Road. Phase II consists of fuels reduction work along Sherwood Road, Spring Creek, Primrose, and Ridge Roads.

***Ridgewood Neighborhood Fuel Reduction***

*MCFSC completed roadside clearing for ingress/egress along the many roads of the Ridgewood neighborhood including: Black Bart Drive, Ridgeview Road, Blackhawk Drive, Walker Lake Road, Williams Ranch Road, Lakeshore Drive, Westview Road, Buckhorn Road and Muir Mill Road. Project treated approximately 130 acres and was completed in 2024.*

***String Creek/Tartar Canyon NFSC Roadside Clearing***

MCFSC completed roadside clearing for ingress/egress along approximately 3.5 miles of String Creek Road consisting of 22 acres in 2024.

**Mendocino County Fire Safe Council / CAL FIRE Cooperative Projects*****Pine Mountain Fuel Break***

This is a joint venture to conduct maintenance on the fire break along the powerlines behind the Willits watershed that were put in during the Mendocino Complex in 2017, maintenance on the Pine Mountain Shaded Fuel Break from 2019, and extending the shaded fuel break all the way to Tomki Road to create another ingress/egress route for civilians and first responders. Willits Watershed Road will be included as work in the area. Monitoring the need for maintenance and developing a maintenance plan will ensure this important network of protections for the communities of both Willits and Redwood Valley. With a Wildfire Prevention Grant, MCFSC is implementing roadside fuel reduction along sections of Ridgewood Road, deep into the subdivision to improve ingress/egress, as well as parts of Lakewood Road, Chinquapin Road, Old Boy Scout Road, Bear Canyon Road, Redwood Creek Road and Mariposa Creek Road. Pine Mountain has been identified by the Board of Forestry's Subdivision Review program and recommendations include improving second access and installing reflective address/road/evacuation signs. Battalion 2 will continue to work with MCFSC and Pine Mountain Firewise on these actions.

***Shafer Ranch Road FRP***

This is a joint venture to reduce fuel loading around the approximate 7 miles in the Shafer Ranch Road Association using crews, fallers, and chippers.

*\*Work was completed in 2024*

**Pre-Fire Plans and Fire Inspections**

Pre-fire plans are in the development stage for the Brooktrails/Sylvandale/Spring Creek, Ridgewood, Pine Mountain, and String Creek/Tartar Canyon areas. Battalion 2 personnel will be working closely and diligently with our GIS Specialists, Brooktrails and Little Lake Fire Departments, and the Fire Safe Councils that have influence in the areas, to complete these in 2025 and 2026. CAL FIRE employees will be out in the community conducting LE-100 (clearance) inspections per Public Resource Code 4291. We will strive to complete 50 inspections per week. This year our priority areas will be Pine Mountain, Blackbart/Blackhawk area, and Shimmins Ridge.

## BATTALION 3 - UKIAH

Battalion 3 is a very diverse portion of Mendocino County. It encompasses various vegetative fuel types consisting primarily of oak woodlands, brush, and mixed conifer stands. The Ukiah Valley, in Battalion 3, contains the densest population centers in Mendocino County, including the City of Ukiah and surrounding communities. A significant portion of the Battalion 3 population lives in the rural communities, considered in the urban-interface zone, outside formal service districts.

The Battalion borders Sonoma County to the south and Lake County to the east. It extends west almost to the community of Comptche and north past the community of Redwood Valley. The Battalion has multiple state highways located within the boundaries that are major thoroughfares in the county. Highway 101 travels north/south through the entire battalion and connects Mendocino County with Sonoma County. Highway 20 travels east/west and connects Potter Valley and portions of Redwood Valley with the Ukiah Valley. Highway 20 also connects Mendocino County with Lake County. Highway 175 travels east/west and links the southern part of the battalion to Lake County in the community of Hopland. Highway 253 connects the Ukiah Valley with Anderson Valley to the west.

Two Schedule B Fire Stations provide fire protection for the SRA in Battalion 3. Hopland Fire Station covers the southern half of the Battalion, which consists of one fire engine staffed with a three-person crew. The station is located on Highway 101, approximately two miles north of Hopland. Ukiah Fire Station is staffed with two fire engines staffed with a three-person crew each and one bulldozer, covering the northern half of the battalion. The station is at the corner of North State Street and Hensley Creek Road.

CAL FIRE provides cooperative emergency services through various aid agreements to many fire departments or districts in Battalion 3. Local and federal governments that provide fire and medical services within Battalion 3: Ukiah Valley Fire Authority, Hopland Volunteer Fire Department, Potter Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Redwood Valley/Calpella Fire District, and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service. Battalion 3 works cooperatively with other public service agencies, including California Highway Patrol, Mendocino County Sheriff's Office, Ukiah Police Department, Ukiah Ambulance Service, Redwood Empire Hazardous Incident Team (REHIT), Tribal police agencies, Caltrans, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Several popular recreation and tourist locations within Battalion 3 attract visitors to the Ukiah valley. These include Lake Mendocino, Cow Mountain Recreation Area, Montgomery Woods State Park, the Russian River, Eel River, numerous wineries, and the Mendocino National Forest. CAL FIRE provides direct protection to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lake Mendocino Recreation Area, BLM's Cow Mountain and Red Mountain Recreation

## Areas.

Battalion 3 emphasizes building/maintaining cooperative relationships to benefit the public and fire prevention education/activities. The scope of prevention activities in Battalion 3 includes participation in school programs emphasizing home and fire safety, actively working with the Local Fire Safe Councils, public education and safety programs, and defensible space compliance inspections.

MEU Battalion 3 has multiple active Fire Safe Councils and Firewise Communities; McNab FSC, Felize Creek FSC, Russian River Estates FSC, Robinson Creek Road FSC, Ukiah Western Hills FSC, Pine Ridge Road FSC, Mariposa FSC, Lower Deerwood FSC, Upper Deerwood Firewise, El Dorado FSC, Vista Del Lago FSC, Black Bart Trail Firewise and Greenfield Ranch Association FSC. There are several more beginning to operate. These councils operate under the umbrella of the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council.

## **Battalion 3 Target Areas:**

### ***Ukiah Valley Fuels Reduction Project***

In response to the Governor's demand for fuel reduction, the CAL FIRE Mendocino Unit submitted this project due to its significant impact to a major community. This project is community-based with multiple components. Success on this project relies on private landowners adhering to PRC4291, increasing defensible space around their homes, and participating in the community fuel reduction mission. In addition to community involvement, fuel breaks along the wildland-urban interface, fire breaks along ridgetops, and prescribed burns.

The Ukiah Fuels Reduction Project will remove understory fuels, brush, small trees along both sides of various roads, create ridgetop fire breaks, and conduct VMP prescribed burns where appropriate. This project has the potential to reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires while increasing public safety. Fire control lines constructed with crews and dozers will be established on ridgelines. Shaded fuel breaks will be built at the base of Cow Mountain, where numerous significant first have occurred historically. A helitorch and hand drip-torches will be used to create fuel breaks along ridge tops and mosaic burns on the south and west-facing slopes.

*\*This project has been completed and is currently in the CEQA process for the maintenance aspect of the project.*

### ***Ukiah Valley Westside Fuel Reduction Project***

The Westside Project is a comprehensive plan to protect the community of Ukiah Valley from a catastrophic fire on the west side of the community of Ukiah from Highway 253 to Mendocino College. The primary goals are to create or maintain shaded fuel breaks along existing roads to aid in fire control, improve ingress of firefighters and egress or evacuation of the public, create and maintain fire breaks in advantageous locations along the west hills to provide access and assist in fire control, reduce the hazardous fuel load with

controlled burning managed through a vegetation management program (VMP), create and maintain a shaded fuel break along the western hill of Ukiah Valley in the urban-wildland interface, conduct fire safety planning and public education outreach to bring attention to the inherent risk and threat of fires to the community, conduct inspections, provide direction and prioritize hazard mitigation efforts. Fire control lines constructed with crews and dozers will be established on ridgelines. A helitorch and hand drip-torches will be used to create fuel breaks along ridge tops and mosaic burns on the south and west-facing slopes.

*\*This project has been completed and is currently in the CEQA process for the maintenance aspect of the project.*

### **Highway 101 Fuels Reduction Project**

The primary objective of this VMP is to reduce fuels immediately adjacent to the highway that increase the risks of roadside starts. This project has the potential to reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires while increasing public safety. This project also can reduce the risk of a destructive fire to approximately 500 structures, several thousands of acres of valuable rangeland, timber, and vineyards. A fire control line will be constructed starting at North State Street and Highway 101 in Redwood Valley with crews and will end at the top of Ridgewood Grade at the CALFIRE Mendocino Unit Headquarters. The control will be established within the Caltrans right of way (ROW) along the fence line on the east side of the highway, and Caltrans is scheduled soon to begin a shaded fuel break between the edge of the road and fence line. In addition to the control line, burning would occur from Nelson Ranch Road in the center median (until it terminates at North State St. in Redwood Valley) and on both sides of the highway with a maximum distance of forty feet off the edge of the road. Burning would terminate at the top of Ridgewood Grade at the CALFIRE Mendocino Unit Headquarters. It would not occur along the flat portions or the downhill side of the road unless it were of strategic value.

*\*This project has been approved and should occur late spring or early summer of 2025.*

### **United States Army Corp. of Engineers (USACOE)**

There are two primary objectives with this VMP. The first objective is to burn all vegetative material from the face of the Coyote Dam. The dam must be void of all vegetative matter to conduct the annual geological survey and required earthquake inspection of the dam structure. The second objective is to re-establish the control lines on the east and south side of the USACOE property. The goal is to re-establish a control line along existing roads, create and maintain shaded fuel breaks along existing roads to aid in fire control, and improve the ingress/egress of firefighters along those sides of the lake. This project will also allow us to create fire breaks in advantageous locations along the east side of the lake in the event of a wildfire threatening the eastside of the Ukiah Valley and allowing control lines to prevent the unwanted spread of fire from entering or leaving USACOE property.

*\*The second objective was completed late spring of 2023 with maintenance occurring when necessary.*

**Mill Creek Fuels Reduction Project**

The primary objectives of this VMP have been to reduce fuel loading and improve wildlife habitat on chamise and mixed-chaparral slopes. A helitorch and hand drip-torches have been used to create fuel breaks along ridge tops and mosaic burns on the south and west-facing slopes. Several units of this VMP have been successfully burned North Cow Located east of Ukiah Valley and part of the northern Russian River watershed. This VMP will now focus on a mechanical clearing along the road to address wildland fire fuel hazards on State, and Federal Responsibility Area lands to help reduce large damaging fires. The primary goal is to create and maintain a shaded fuel break along the existing road to aid in fire control, improve ingress of firefighters, and egress or evacuation of the public. This VMP will go along with focused defensible space inspections and other fuels reduction projects adjoining this project.

*\*This project has been approved by MCDOT, and work should begin in a timely manner.*

**Vista Del Lago Fuels Reduction Project**

The primary goal of this VMP is to create and maintain a shaded fuel break along the Vista Del Lago and King Ranch Road system to aid in fire control, improve ingress of firefighters, and egress or evacuation of the public. This VMP will go along with focused defensible space inspections and other fuels reduction projects adjoining this project.

*\*The NOE was approved by MCFSC. CAL FIRE VMP equipment went through and MCFSC is following up to finish with their crews, paid for by wildfire prevention grant.*

**Greenfield Ranch Fuels Reduction Project**

The primary goal of this VMP is to create and maintain a shaded fuel break along the Greenfield Ranch Road system to aid in fire control, improve ingress of firefighters, and egress or evacuation of the public. This VMP will go along with focused defensible space inspections and other fuels reduction projects adjoining this project.

**El Dorado Fuels Reduction Project**

This is a fuels reduction project in El Dorado Estates east of Ukiah. The fire hazard reduction has been accomplished by creating a shaded fuel break from Redemeyer Road to Fawnwood Drive along the south side of the community. The shaded fuel break included vegetation thinning, understory reduction, and removal of the ladder fuels. The area consists of steep terrain covered in grasslands, conifer, and mature brush.

*\*This project has been completed and is currently in the CEQA process for the maintenance aspect of the project.*

**HREC Fuels Reduction Project**

Located east of Hopland and part of the Russian River watershed, the HREC VMP is a project with the University of California Extension Office that will utilize prescribed fire and some mechanical means, to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State and Federal Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase public safety, expand and maintain water quality and quantity in a

managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in the incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.

### ***Redwood Valley Fuels Reduction Projects***

Identify fuels reduction projects in and around the community of Redwood Valley. Projects identified will accomplish this by removing understory fuels, brush, small trees along both sides of various roads, constructing and maintaining fire breaks, and conducting VMP prescribed burns where appropriate. Projects will potentially reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires while increasing public safety. The fire hazard reduction will include a shaded fuel break along roads to improve the ingress of emergency responders and egress of residents. Fire control lines constructed with crews and dozers will be established on ridges around Redwood Valley. The shaded fuel break included vegetation thinning, understory reduction, and removal of the ladder fuels. The area consists of steep terrain covered in grasslands, conifer, and mature brush. One area identified in Redwood Valley is the Black Bart community and Road B. Black Bart Trail Firewise and MCFSC have implemented smaller scale fuel reduction projects to clear brush. Road B is an important ingress/egress route for Black Bart and other Redwood Valley residents. Clearing brush and ladder fuel would benefit access for those roads and communities.

### ***Hopland Fuels Reduction Projects***

Identify fuels reduction projects in and around the community of Hopland. Projects identified will accomplish this by removing understory fuels, brush, small trees along both sides of various roads, creating fire breaks, and conducting VMP prescribed burns where appropriate. Projects have the potential to reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires while increasing public safety. The fire hazard reduction will include a shaded fuel break along roads to improve the ingress of emergency responders and egress of residents. Fire control lines constructed with crews and dozers will be established on ridges around Hopland. The shaded fuel break included vegetation thinning, understory reduction, and removal of the ladder fuels. The area consists of steep terrain covered in grasslands, conifer, and mature brush.

### ***Potter Valley Fuels Reduction Projects***

Identify fuels reduction projects in and around the community of Potter Valley. Projects identified will accomplish this by removing understory fuels, brush, small trees along both sides of various roads, constructing and maintaining fire breaks, and conducting VMP prescribed burns where appropriate. Projects have the potential to reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires while increasing public safety. The fire hazard reduction will include a shaded fuel break along roads to improve the ingress of emergency responders and egress of residents. Fire control lines constructed with crews and dozers will be established on ridges around Potter Valley. The shaded fuel break included vegetation thinning, understory reduction, and removal of the ladder fuels. The area

consists of steep terrain covered in grasslands, conifer, and mature brush.

### **Battalion 3 Additional Areas of Interest:**

#### ***Pine Ridge Road and Low Gap Road Ingress/Egress***

MCFSC partnered with the CCCs to complete roadside clearing along the first few miles of Pine Ridge Road. Pine Ridge Road is located behind Ukiah's Western Hills and roadside clearing would assist with ingress/egress for that community and serve as an additional control line further protecting the City of Ukiah. Low Gap Road starts at the base of Ukiah's Western Hills where crucial County infrastructure like the Emergency Operations Center and the Sheriff's Department are located. These facilities are high priorities for protection. Treating Low Gap Rd. up to the Mendocino Redwood Company's Low Gap Forest Health Grant project would benefit the City of Ukiah's wildfire protection and enhance the mitigation investment already being made in that key area.

#### ***Hopland Shaded Fuel Break***

An environmental review for a proposed 1.72 linear mile shaded fuel break (SFB) west of the town of Hopland is in process through the County of Mendocino. The SFB will start at Legions Hall on Feliz Creek Road near the intersection with Highway 101 in the south and terminate at Hewlett Sturtevant Road in the North, just west of the intersection with Highway 101. The SFB will be approximately 300 feet wide, totaling 63.14 acres of fuel reduction. Battalion 3 supports implementation once the review is completed. This SFB is described in the 2020 Hopland Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

#### ***Old River Road Ingress/Egress***

The County of Mendocino has identified Old River Road as a key alternative route to connect the community of Hopland with the community of Talmage, near Ukiah. This 14-mile road runs parallel to Highway 101 and requires treatment to ensure its value as a potential control line and evacuation route.

#### ***Orr Springs/Comptche Ukiah Road Ingress/Egress***

MCFSC has completed 4.5 miles of roadside clearing on a segment of Orr Springs/Comptche Ukiah Road. The County of Mendocino has funding to complete an additional two segments, implementation is pending. 12 miles of this road remain untreated, including dense sections near the town of Comptche and Montgomery Woods State Park. Connecting the different treatment areas would create a major east-west ingress/egress route and a strategic control line.

## **BATTALION 4 - LAYTONVILLE**

CAL FIRE's Mendocino Unit Battalion 4 encompasses the northwest portion of Mendocino County. The Battalion has two major highway corridors: State Highway 1 runs through the

northwest corner of the Battalion, where it intersects U.S. Highway 101; and Highway 101 runs the entire length of the Battalion, a distance of 42 miles.

CAL FIRE operates two fire stations within the Battalion, at Laytonville and Leggett. Year-round fire protection in the Battalion is provided by four volunteer departments: Long Valley (Laytonville), Leggett Valley, Piercy, and Whale Gulch. The Whale Gulch Fire Department is located within Mendocino County but is dispatched by the CAL FIRE Humboldt-Del Norte Unit because the road to its location is in Humboldt County.

The Battalion includes eight communities of various sizes. Several private camps are occupied primarily during the summer months. The State Parks System operates two campground facilities, one of which is classified as a wilderness park, plus three other day use areas. The Nature Conservancy has a large holding known as the Coast Range Preserve in the Branscomb area. There are several BLM holdings in the Battalion, most of which require modified suppression action plans.

The western portion of the battalion consists of some large timber company holdings that encompass approximately 75,000 acres. With the reduction of active logging and the decline of broadcast burning, the fuel loading has increased in the area due to the natural forest succession. Roads on the timber company lands have been abandoned and/or decommissioned which can lead to access difficulties. Although logging is decreasing, the fire threat relative to logging remains, due to the buildup of logging slash and the lack of access to the slash-covered areas due to road closures. In 2008, there were approximately 22 lightning caused fires in Battalion 4, the road closures on logging company properties created access issues for fire suppression resources.

Causes of the fires within Battalion 4 range from accidental equipment use to arson. Fires caused by debris burning are a significant problem in Battalion 4. An increased effort by Battalion personnel to inform the public of debris burning regulations will be used to reduce these fires. Fires caused by equipment use are also a problem. Battalion personnel conduct public education on this subject, but such fires will probably continue due to the large amount of outdoor equipment use in the Battalion. Fires caused by the railroad have ceased because the railroad is not operating due to winter storm damage several years ago. If the railroad is again put in service, a fire prevention and inspection program will need to be implemented. An additional concern in the battalion is the number of marijuana growing operations which are accounting for a large number of the fires in the battalion.

The outlook for Battalion 4 is for increased tourist traffic and more rural subdivisions. As these subdivisions expand, they bring with them the increased population in the rural areas creating an increase in wildland, structure, vehicle, and debris fires, requiring greater public awareness of fire hazards.

The larger WUI areas within the Battalion include Bear Pen subdivision, Cooks Valley, Pepperwood Springs subdivision, Ebert Lane, Camp Saint Michael, Bell Springs Road,

Cherry Creek subdivision, Twin Pines Ranch, Black Oak Ranch, Spy Rock Road area, Wilderness Lodge, Ten Mile Creek, Fox Rock Road, and Mulligan Lane.

Currently each Local Fire Department and CAL FIRE station's personnel conduct separate and joint fire prevention education programs at local schools, road association meetings, and community events. During these education programs, strong emphasis will now be placed on the identified target areas. Funding is needed for local and state fire departments to provide up-to-date educational materials to the public.

In cooperation with the Mendocino Fire Safe Council, several WUI areas have identified the need for fire road access clearance and fuel reduction/shaded fuel breaks. In each of these locations, overgrown brush and young saplings cause a safety hazard for both fire crews trying to enter the area and residents trying to leave in a wildfire emergency. For each evacuation route listed here, projects need to be instituted to create shaded fuel breaks extending 50 feet on both sides of the roads, by removing understory brush and trimming up trees to remove ladder fuels.

- Spy Rock Road (including Registered Guest Road, Iron Peak Road, and Blue Rock Road) is inhabited by approximately 2,000 people living in various types of homes.
- Ten Mile Creek has approximately 200 residents.
- Bear Pen subdivision contains 18 homes.
- Ebert Lane is a narrow road accessing 11 homes; its vegetation includes not only brush and saplings but also timber.
- Pepperwood Springs subdivision has approximately 20 homes.
- Cherry Creek subdivision, which currently contains about 30 homes.
- Mulligan Lane contains areas of brush that need to be removed.
- Bell Springs Road, a major artery, has many heavily overgrown areas on the lower portion of the road.

The lack of home addresses and road signage is a huge problem throughout Battalion 4. This is due in part to the vast amount of marijuana cultivation by persons who wish their addresses to be unknown. During public education programs, the benefits of proper addressing and road signage for both fire and medical emergencies will be strongly emphasized. Battalion personnel conducted an extensive PRC 4291 inspection campaign to try to gain compliance and acceptance to fire safe planning.

Two sets of fire prevention signs remind the public of their fire prevention obligation and burning regulations. Each time a burn permit is issued, a fire prevention message is presented. Battalion personnel will continue Public Resources Code section 4291 and 4492 inspections of structures and power lines in each community.

MEU Battalion IV has multiple active Fire Safe Councils; Bell Springs FSC, Black Oak Ranch FSC, Blue Rock FSC, Cherry Creek FSC, Spy Rock Ready FSC, Ten Mile Creek FSC, Fox Rock Road FSC, Wildwood FSC, Woodman Creek FSC, Leggett Valley FSC and Whale Gulch FSC. There are several more beginning to operate. These councils operate under the

umbrella of the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council.

## **Battalion 4 Target Areas**

### ***Shamrock***

This is a historic VMP that was reinstated late in 2023. The project is southeast of Laytonville, the Shamrock VMP is a cost sharing project with local landowners that will utilize prescribed fire, and some mechanical means, to address wildland fire fuel hazards and other resource management issues on State and Federal Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase public safety, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.

### ***Cahto Reservation Fuel Break***

This fuels reduction project will reduce the amount of vegetation and increase defensible space within and around the perimeter of the reservation. Most of the work to be done with mastication. Areas with difficult access will require the use of hand crews, pile burning and chippers.

### ***Branscomb Road***

This fuels reduction right of way clearance is a project with the county of Mendocino Road Department. The project is ongoing every couple of years to reduce fuel loading along the roadway. Branscomb road is a main artery road in northern Mendocino connecting the town of Laytonville to Hwy 1 on the coast. The ongoing fuels reduction of this project proved useful in providing unimpeded access to the north side of the Lodge Fire in 2014. MCFSC is coordinating with Mendocino County to complete roadside clearing starting at Laytonville as funding will allow. Westport Fire Safe Council is actively seeking funding for roadside clearing on Branscomb Road starting at Westport.

### ***County OES Grant Projects***

There are two fuels reduction roadside clearance projects funded through Mendocino County OES. The Dos Rios project was completed in early 2024. Treatment spanned the length of Dos Rios from Laytonville to Highway 162. Bell Springs Road is another target area identified by County OES and the Laytonville FD for treatment starting at highway 101 for an estimated 4 miles through the densest, steepest, and most populated section of Bell Springs Road.

### ***The North Mendocino Forest Health Collaborative***

There are two fuels reduction roadside clearance projects funded through The North Mendocino Forest Health Collaborative. The North Coast Resource Conservation Project is funded for roadside clearance project that runs along Highway 1 from Leggett to Hails

Grove. The project will increase and add to the existing right of way clearance that is in place from Cal Trans. The second is the Red Mountain fuels reduction Project. This project is primarily on BLM land. This project will establish fuel breaks around Red Mountain and improve access to the area.

### **Battalion 4 Additional Areas of Interest:**

#### ***Spy Rock Community Road Network***

The Spy Rock community includes Registered Guest Road, Blue Rock Road, Iron Peak Road, Simmerly Road/Simmerly Ranch Road, Stivers Road, Wildwood Road and Crestview Road is home to hundreds of residents and its road network is heavily overgrown. The Spy Rock and Stivers subdivisions have been identified by the Board of Forestry as one-way-in-out communities. Clearing, especially along the first several miles of Spy Rock will create better ingress/egress for these communities. MCFSC and Laytonville FD have worked to create more wildfire-awareness within these communities and several neighborhood fire safe councils are developing and implementing projects to increase resiliency and the safety of first responders and residents.

#### ***Leggett Valley Fire Protection District Fuels Reduction***

Leggett Valley FPD has identified multiple roads in their response area that are densely overgrown. Leggett Valley FPD is planning 30 miles of shaded fuel breaks along these key roads to protect residents and first responders. Once treated, these roads have the potential to also serve as control lines to protect Leggett.

Battalion 4 Current Grant Projects:

#### ***Spy Rock Safe Access project***

Improving ingress and egress safety, reducing wildfire risk and aid in fire suppression activities through fuel reduction treatments along Spy Rock Road, Iron Peak and Simmerly Roads, all of which are in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Spy Rock Rd lays just north of Laytonville and is a single access road for approximately 2000 people in approximately 500 structures. Untouched by wildfire for fifty years it's stocked with significantly overstocked ladder and brush fuels. Mendocino County Fire Safe Council in with Ethos Environmental will remove approximately 130 acres of overstocked fuels along 10.5 miles of central access roads. The project area contains mixed conifer, oak woodlands and grasslands with dense understory of woody shrubs. Vegetation will be thinned within the road right-of-way, terrain and fire patterns determining depth of removal up to 50' from roads edge. Hand crews will remove small trees, brush and surface fuels, improving tree spacing to decrease the spread of crown fires. Ladder fuels on larger trees will be removed to 10 feet. Hazard trees dangerous to roadway, people, or infrastructure will be dropped. Slash will be chipped or lop and scattered. Three community FSC's with Ethos Environmental and MCFSC will hold community meetings to increase understanding, the importance and simplicity of ongoing maintenance and fire-hardening to ensure the continued effectiveness of these defensible spaces.

***Leggett Valley Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project***

The Leggett Valley Fire Protection District (LVFPD) in northern Mendocino County proposes to remove hazardous vegetation along approximately 30 miles/200 acres of private roads and driveways serving around 300 habitable structures in the district. The purpose of this fuel reduction project is to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, reduce the rate of spread of fire, create safe ingress and egress, and reduce the forest fuel load along roadways. The area has not burned in the last half-century and fuel loading in the area poses a potentially serious threat for a devastating wildfire. The Leggett Fire Protection District includes the communities of Leggett, South Leggett, Cummings, Foster Creek, and Hales Grove. The permanent population is approximately 350 people in 54 square miles.

**BATTALION 5 - BOONVILLE**

Battalion 5 is the largest in Mendocino, with Two major highways within the Battalion bringing tourist traffic from the Bay Area to the north coast: State Highway 128 forms the northern boundary of the Battalion, and State Highway 1 defines the western boundary. Vegetation within the Battalion varies from dense redwood/Douglas-fir forests to grassy oak woodlands. The Battalion includes one city, Point Arena, and nine communities of various sizes: Gualala, Anchor Bay, Irish Beach, Manchester, Elk, Yorkville, Boonville, Philo, and Navarro. Battalion 5 fire protection for the Battalion is provided by two Stations: Boonville and Point Arena. Additionally, four local government departments -- South Coast Fire Protection District, Redwood Coast Fire Department, Anderson Valley Fire Department, and Elk Volunteer Fire Department -- provide structure protection for their communities, as well as mutual aid to CAL FIRE for wildland fire protection. Redwood Coast Fire Department provides protection for the City of Point Arena and the communities of Manchester and Irish Beach.

The Battalion has one lookout, Cold Springs, which was closed in 1994 but has been intermittently reopened during periods of high fire danger and lightning storms. Cold Springs Lookout is listed in the National Historic Lookout Registry and has been identified in CAL FIRE's Management Plan for Historic Preservation.

The outlook is for increased tourist traffic and rural housing in single increments and small subdivisions. As the minor subdivisions expand, an increasing fire problem will exist in both the prevention and suppression of fires. Logging, which formerly provided the area's major economic resource, has been decreasing. However, future fire control problems remain a concern, as areas that are logged have an increase in logging slash and possibly a lack of access due to road closures. Areas where logging is not occurring may have a higher density of live and/or dead vegetation as well as an increase in poor or limited access. The Battalion's overall fire hazard potential will likely increase due to increases in tourism, traffic, off-road recreation, camping, and rural subdivision development in the

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Vineyard conversions are still occurring, primarily within the oak woodlands. These conversions create greenbelts (fire fuel breaks) on the valley floor, along the lower slopes surrounding the valley, and now reaching the upper ridges.

Battalion 5 fire prevention activities include:

- Display and information booth at the Mendocino County Fair and Apple Show
- Participate in the Mendocino County Fair parade.
- Participate in school programs with Smokey Bear emphasizing fire and home safety.
- LE-100 inspections of residences and inspections of power lines
- Roadside Fire Prevention signs
- Burn permits issued in person with awareness and safety training given to permittees.
- Joint educational outreach efforts with Fire Safe Council

MEU Battalion 5 has multiple active Fire Safe Councils; Comptche FSC, Elk FSC, Navarro Area FSC, Holmes Ranch Rd FSC, Point Arena FSC and Yorkville FSC. There are several more beginning to operate. These councils operate under the umbrella of the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council.

## **Battalion 5 Target Areas**

### ***Folded Hills***

This completed VMP, located south of Yorkville in the upper Navarro River watershed, was a cost sharing project with local landowners that utilized prescribed fire, and some mechanical means to address wildland fire hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project was projected to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences. Much of this project has been completed and continues to be in the maintenance phase.

### ***Bridges Ranch***

This VMP located south of Yorkville in the upper Navarro River watershed is a cost sharing project with local landowners that utilized prescribed fire, and some mechanical means to address wildland fire hazards and other resource management issues on State Responsibility Area lands. This Vegetation Management Project has the potential to help reduce the number and intensity of large damaging fires, increase and maintain water quality and quantity in a managed watershed, protect and improve soil productivity, establish and maintain desired plant communities, improve air quality over the long term, improve forage and browse for livestock, and provide training for personnel in incident

organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences. While still active, most of the units identified on this VMP were burned in the springs of 2021 and 2022. As of 2025 some units are currently being assessed for burning again later in 2025 or in 2026.

### ***Rancho Navarro Subdivision***

CAL FIRE in cooperation with the Rancho Navarro Road Association participated in a fire hazard reduction project in the Rancho Navarro Subdivision. The project location is accessed from both Flynn Creek Road to the Northwest and from Masonite Road to the Southeast. This densely populated area is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area with narrow roads and difficult ingress/egress. The area consists of steep terrain covered in a mix of grasslands, conifer, and mature brush. The fire hazard reduction was accomplished by removing understory fuels, brush, and small trees along both sides of various roadways serving the subdivision. The primary goal of the project was to improve roadways for use as safe evacuation routes. A second goal was to create primary or secondary control lines in the event of a major wildfire. Much of this project has been completed and continues to be in the maintenance phase.

### ***Holmes Ranch Subdivision***

CAL FIRE in cooperation with the Holmes Ranch Road Association has finished over 2 miles of fuels reduction along Holmes Ranch and Smith Hills Roads in the Holmes Ranch Subdivision. This densely populated area is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area and has narrow roads with difficult ingress/egress. The area consists of steep terrain covered in a mix of grasslands, conifer, and mature brush. The fuels reduction was accomplished by removing understory fuels, brush, and small trees along both sides of Smith Hills Road and Holmes Ranch Road. The method of treatment consisted of roadside thinning with chainsaws, chipping and/or burning of the hazardous debris and mechanical mastication with machinery. The primary goal of the project has been to provide safer access and egress in the event of a wildfire. A second goal was to create primary or secondary control lines in the event of a major wildfire. This project remains in the maintenance phase.

### ***Cold Springs***

Tree-thinning project immediately surrounding the Cold Springs Lookout. The primary objective is the removal of hazardous trees directly impacting 2 miles of energized power lines which supply critical communication infrastructure. A secondary benefit is the reduction of forest fire fuels. This will be done by creating a shaded fuel break that will include vegetation thinning, understory reduction and removal of the ladder fuels. The area consists of steep terrain covered in a mix of conifer and mature brush. This project would reduce the threat of fire spread in and around power line infrastructure as well as reduce the potential fire impacts to adjoining properties. The project is located west of the community of Philo and accessed off Signal Ridge Road.

### ***Nash Mill Road***

CAL FIRE in cooperation with the Nash Mill Road Association is actively participating in a

fire hazard/ fuels reduction project in the Nash Mill Road Subdivision. The project location is accessed from Highway 128 between the communities of Philo and Navarro. This densely populated area, which encompasses approximately 13 miles of road infrastructure, is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area with narrow and difficult ingress/egress. The area consists of steep terrain covered in a mix of grasslands, conifer, and mature brush. The fire hazard reduction will be accomplished by removing understory fuels, brush, and small trees along both sides of various roadways serving the subdivision. The primary goal of the project will be to improve roadways for use as safe evacuation routes. A second goal is to create primary or secondary control lines in the event of a major wildfire.

### ***Elkhorn Road***

CAL FIRE in cooperation with the County of Mendocino is planning a fire hazard reduction project on Elkhorn Road. The project location is accessed from Highway 128 just East of the town of Yorkville. This densely populated area is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area with narrow roads and difficult ingress/egress. The area consists of moderate to steep terrain covered in a mix of conifer forest and mature brush. The fire hazard/ fuels reduction will focus on removing understory fuels, brush, and small trees along both sides of the main roadway serving multiple property owners. This will be accomplished using chainsaws, roadside chipping, pile burning and mechanical mastication. The primary goal of the project will be to improve the roadway for use as a safe evacuation route. A second goal is to create primary or secondary control lines in the event of a major wildfire. Due to commitment times of state resources on existing projects, this project was accomplished by private contractors through a grant process through the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council.

### ***Yorkville Ranch Road***

CAL FIRE in cooperation with the Yorkville Ranch Road Association is actively planning a fire hazard reduction project on Yorkville Ranch Road. The project location is accessed from Highway 128 just West of the town of Yorkville. This densely populated area is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area with narrow roads and difficult ingress/egress. The area consists of moderate to steep terrain covered in a mix of grasslands, conifer forest and mature brush. The fire hazard/ fuels reduction will focus on removing understory fuels, brush, and small trees along both sides of the main roadway serving multiple property owners. This will be accomplished using chainsaws, roadside chipping, pile burning and mechanical mastication. The primary goal of the project will be to improve the roadway for use as a safe evacuation route. A second goal is to create primary or secondary control lines in the event of a major wildfire. Work is projected to start on this project in the Spring of 2025.

### ***Philo/ Greenwood Road***

CAL FIRE in cooperation with the County of Mendocino and Elk CSD planned a fire hazard reduction project on the Philo/ Greenwood Road. The project location is accessed from Highway 128 just West of the town of Philo as well as Highway One just South of the town

of Elk. The county road is a well-travelled road and serves as a main connecting route between the coast and Anderson Valley. This densely populated area is a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area with narrow roads and difficult ingress/egress. The project also included portions of Signal Ridge Rd, which is accessed from Philo/ Greenwood Road, and portions of Cameron Road, which connects Philo/ Greenwood Road to State Highway 1. The area consists of moderate to steep terrain covered in a mix of conifer forest, hardwoods, and mature brush. The fire hazard/ fuels reduction will focus on removing understory fuels, brush, and small trees along both sides of the main roadway serving multiple property owners. This was accomplished using chainsaws, roadside chipping, pile burning and mechanical mastication. The primary goal of the project was to improve the roadway for use as a safe evacuation route. A second goal was to create primary or secondary control lines in the event of a major wildfire. Elk CSD completed Phase I of fuel reduction along Philo Greenwood Road and has increased the safety of this key ingress/egress route. Phase II involves extending the roadside clearing area to at least 50-ft from the road edge to create a better control line along this essential evacuation route.

### ***Residential Chipping Program***

This program serves all communities and residential areas within Battalion 5. The program encourages landowners to participate in fuels reduction projects, create defensible space, and help minimize the threat of wildfire on private property. Residents are educated and given guidelines on how to integrate into the chipping program while removing hazardous vegetative material safely and efficiently from their property. Once hazardous material is assembled, chipping arrangements are made upon request by individual or multiple homeowners.

## **Battalion 5 Additional Areas of Interest:**

### ***South Coast***

The South Coast of Mendocino, from Manchester to Gualala, is a unique and diverse community. It is home to both high- and low-income residents, retired seniors, and young working families. The terrain and fire risk are also diverse. While homes directly along the coastline are less at risk, many full-time residents live farther inland along densely overgrown roads that extend deep into timberland. Iverson Road, Old Stage Road, and Fish Rock Road have been identified as priorities for treatment by the South Coast Fire Department and would serve as control lines for the town of Gualala and surrounding residences.

### ***Anderson Valley Communities***

In past years, CAL FIRE has implemented fuel reduction along access roads in several populated subdivisions including Rancho Navarro, Holmes Ranch and Nash Mill. Monitoring the need for maintenance and developing a maintenance plan will ensure the future of this important network of protections for Anderson Valley.

## BATTALION 6 - FORT BRAGG

Battalion 6 has two major highways which bring tourist traffic to the north coast. State Highway 1 spans the entire west section of the battalion along the coast and intersects with State Highway 20, then continues north and intersects with US Highway 101 at Leggett. Highway 20 connects Highway 1 to Highway 101 and links the cities of Fort Bragg and Willits.

Geographically, the battalion boundaries are as follows: starting at the northwest corner from the Pacific Ocean near the town of Rockport, it runs south along the coast to the Navarro River at Highway 1 and Highway 128. It then runs east along the river and Highway 128 about 10 miles to Flynn Creek Road, then northeast to State Highway 20, then north to Sherwood Peak. It follows Sherwood Ridge about six miles continuing northwest, following mostly along ridgelines to the Pacific Ocean. It finally intersects at a point just south of the town of Rockport, about 25 miles, forming the northeastern boundary.

Battalion 6 includes two CAL FIRE Stations: The Fort Bragg Station (Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) and Battalion Headquarters) and the Woodlands Station, east of the town of Mendocino. Mendocino Coast Hospital provides ground ambulance service, and CALSTAR (Ukiah) and REACH (Willits) provide helicopter emergency medical services (EMS). The California State Parks provides EMS and water rescue service up and down the coast with 1 – 3 Lifeguards on duty daily. The U.S. Coast Guard provides EMS and water rescue service from the Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg and can provide additional helicopter support to local agencies apparatus from Eureka.

Included in the battalion is JDSF, purchased in 1947 from the Caspar Lumber Company and is the largest State Forest in California. JDSF is a public use area excluding motorized vehicles and includes campsites and day use areas. The forest is a popular area for hiking, biking, hunting, horseback riding, swimming, and picnicking, and is visited by over 40,000 people annually.

The California State Parks and Recreation Department's Mendocino District is headquartered within the battalion at Russian Gulch State Park. Seven campground facilities and numerous state beaches and recreation areas are in the battalion. This includes the Mendocino Woodlands Campground which is contracted to private management with occupancies of up to 500 per day.

The outlook for the Battalion is for increased tourist traffic and more residents in additional rural homes and subdivisions. Logging continues to remain steady within the battalion with more timber harvest plans being reviewed. Projected fire hazards and at-risk assets will continue to grow due to the changing demographics of the area. As rural development

continues and subdivisions expand, an increasing fire problem will exist in both preventing and suppressing fires. The points below identify some issues that will increase the complexity of the future fire environment.

Response times outside developed communities can be quite extended, and resources are limited. The topography of the battalion, in conjunction with the winding, slow, and limited road system, is a contributing factor to response times.

Developed water resources are sparse with limited availability and accessibility in outlying areas. The increased population in rural areas will have an impact on and strain the already limited resources in the area. This will potentially result in increased fire starts as well as medical aid and rescue response requests.

Increased public land use including off-road recreation and camping will result in additional potential for fire as well as medical aids. Property addressing and access continue to be marginal and inconsistent throughout Mendocino County, resulting in increased dispatch and response times. Population growth will increase equipment use and debris burns, increasing the potential for fire starts and control burn escapes. Lack of awareness and education regarding fire safe planning by persons moving from city to rural environments regarding fire safe planning manifests itself through poor preparation and ultimately increased risks.

Battalion personnel continue to participate and interact with the local schools to promote fire prevention and education programs. This focuses on youth education and prevention as well as providing a conduit to parents for prevention information and fire safe planning. The program has been successful to date and has been well received by the community.

Battalion personnel regularly participate in community events including parades, fairs, and barbeques utilizing Captain Cal, fire apparatus, and booths to distribute prevention and education materials including fire safe pamphlets. The events also provide opportunities for personal public “one on one” contact for adults and youth alike relating to prevention, education, career, and general CAL FIRE information.

Fire Safe inspections continue in the various communities with LE-100 inspections of residences and power lines. The annual issuance of Burn Permits including LE-63 (campfire), LE- 62a (dooryard), and LE-5 (project burn) are used as opportunities to increase public awareness and conduct training in the proper and safe use of fire.

The battalion continues to participate in public outreach meetings sponsored by the Fire Safe Council, to assist in education, and to identify public concerns regarding prevention or future community projects. CAL FIRE Battalion 6 is committed to working cooperatively with the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council, Fort Bragg Fire Safe Council, communities, and local government fire jurisdictions to assist in addressing specific concerns, by technical assistance or facilitation through administrative services.

The Battalion co-sponsors, with timber stakeholders, the annual timber “industry meeting” to update and exchange contact information, identify available resources, and identify logging operations or major projects occurring within timber holdings.

MEU Battalion VI has several active Fire Safe Councils; Albion/Little River FSC, Caspar Prepared FSC, Westport FSC and Fort Bragg South FSC. There are several more beginning to operate. These councils operate under the umbrella of the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council.

## **Battalion 6 Target Areas**

### ***State Parks Fuel Reduction***

Cooperatively working with DPR to remove hazard trees and to reduce fuels in multiple State Parks and Public Use areas by prescribed fire or mechanical means. This reduces the fire danger within the park boundaries, to visitors and to neighbors. It also gets rid of the unwanted non- native species of plants to the area and helps the ecosystem of some native species that need fire.

### ***Mitchell Creek Emergency Access Roads***

Cooperatively working with JDSF and DPR to create an emergency access/egress road between Mitchell Creek Road and Gibney Lane. This will provide a secondary route in the event of a disaster in the area for the several hundred homes that could be affected by the single way in and out of the area.

*\*This project has been completed apart from rocking portions of the road and annual maintenance will be occurring.*

### ***Mitchell Creek & Simpson Ln Fuel Break***

Working with JDSF, State Parks, Mendocino County Fire Safe Council to creak a fuel break along Mitchell Creek Rd and Simpson Ln. This will be a shaded fuel break long both sides of the road. This will on Mitchell Creek Rd at the Gibney Gate entrance and extend to Simpson Ln and JDSF Rd 450.

### ***County Road 408 Fuel Break***

Working with JDSF and the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council, CALFIRE plans on creating a fuel break along county road 408. This fuel break is planned to span from the intersection of 408 x HWY 20 all the way to the intersection at roads 408 and 409 when the fuel break will continue past the intersection along both roads until the end of JDSF property lines. Road 408 is one of the more prominent ridge roads within Jackson Demonstration State Forest and acts as a common place for public recreation which will act as a part of this project. The fuel break is planned to be roughly 400 ft wide or 200 ft from the center of the road on each side. This project will align with JDSF and the Units goals for VMP projects more recreational opportunities.

## **Battalion 6 Additional Areas of Interest:**

### ***Westport Area***

Westport Fire Department and Westport Fire Safe Council have identified several roads in their district that require treatment to allow access for fire engines and emergency vehicles. Already narrow roads have become choked with vegetation putting residents and first responders at risk. Despite being on the coast, Westport and its surrounding communities are in a High Fire Hazard Severity Zone and decades of unchecked fuel accumulation have put this area at risk.

### ***Albion/Little River Area***

The Albion Little River Fire Department and Albion/Little River FSC have identified several roads in their district that require treatment to remove highly flammable invasives like scotch broom, remove dead/dying hazard trees that pose a danger to roadways and push encroaching vegetation back from ingress/egress routes. Albion Ridge and Navarro Ridge are large subdivisions that have been identified by the Board of Forestry as lacking access. Despite being on the Coast, much of Albion Little River Fire Department's District and residents are in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. A significant number of residents are seniors, communication and power lines are frequently down, and roads are narrow and overgrown. The combination of risk factors makes this area a target for community education, fuel reduction and investment.

## APPENDIX A: CURRENT PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Brushy	Willits	Submitting 1/3/21	VTP	2022
Covelo South	Covelo	Planned	VTP	2022
HREC	Hopland	In Progress	VTP	2022
Shamrock	Laytonville	In Progress	VTP	2022
Cold Springs FRP	Elk	In Progress	NOE	2022
Golden Rule Roadside FRP	Willits	Approved	NOE	2022
Green Gate Run SFB	Willits	Submitted to Region	NOE	2022
Mill Creek Rd SFB	Ukiah	In Progress	NOE	2022
Three Chop / Road 1000	JDSF	Approved	NOE	2022
Sherwood Road - Phase I Timber Blue Lake Ridge	Willits	In Progress - funds remaining	Fire Plan	2019
Elk Evacuation Fuel Break - Phase I	Elk	In Progress - Ongoing	Fire Plan	2020
Parlin Shaded Fuel Break	JDSF	In Progress - initiating work	THP	
West Hills- Ukiah Fuels and Fire Break	Ukiah	In Progress - funds remaining	Fire Plan	2018
Brooktrails Fuels 2017	Willits	In Progress- funds remaining	Fire Plan	2017
Brooktrails/Willits Fuel Reduction	Willits			

## APPENDIX B: PAST PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

2021	Ukiah Fuels Reduction--Eastside VMP	Governor's Priority	Completed
2021	Ukiah Fuels Reduction--Westside VMP	Governor's Priority	Completed
2021	Willits Fuels Reduction	Governor's Priority	Completed
2021	Elk Wildfire Mitigation Mapping	Grant Admin	Completed
2021	Redwood Complex Fire Recovery and Hazardous Tree Removal	Grant Admin	Completed
2021	Elkhorn Road Shaded Fuel Break	MEU Project	Completed
2021	Mitchell Creek Fuels Reduction	MEU Project	Completed
2021	Robinson Creek Shaded Fuel Break	MEU Project	Completed
2021	Corson Ranch	VMP	Completed
2021	Hopland Research & Extension Center 1	VMP	Completed

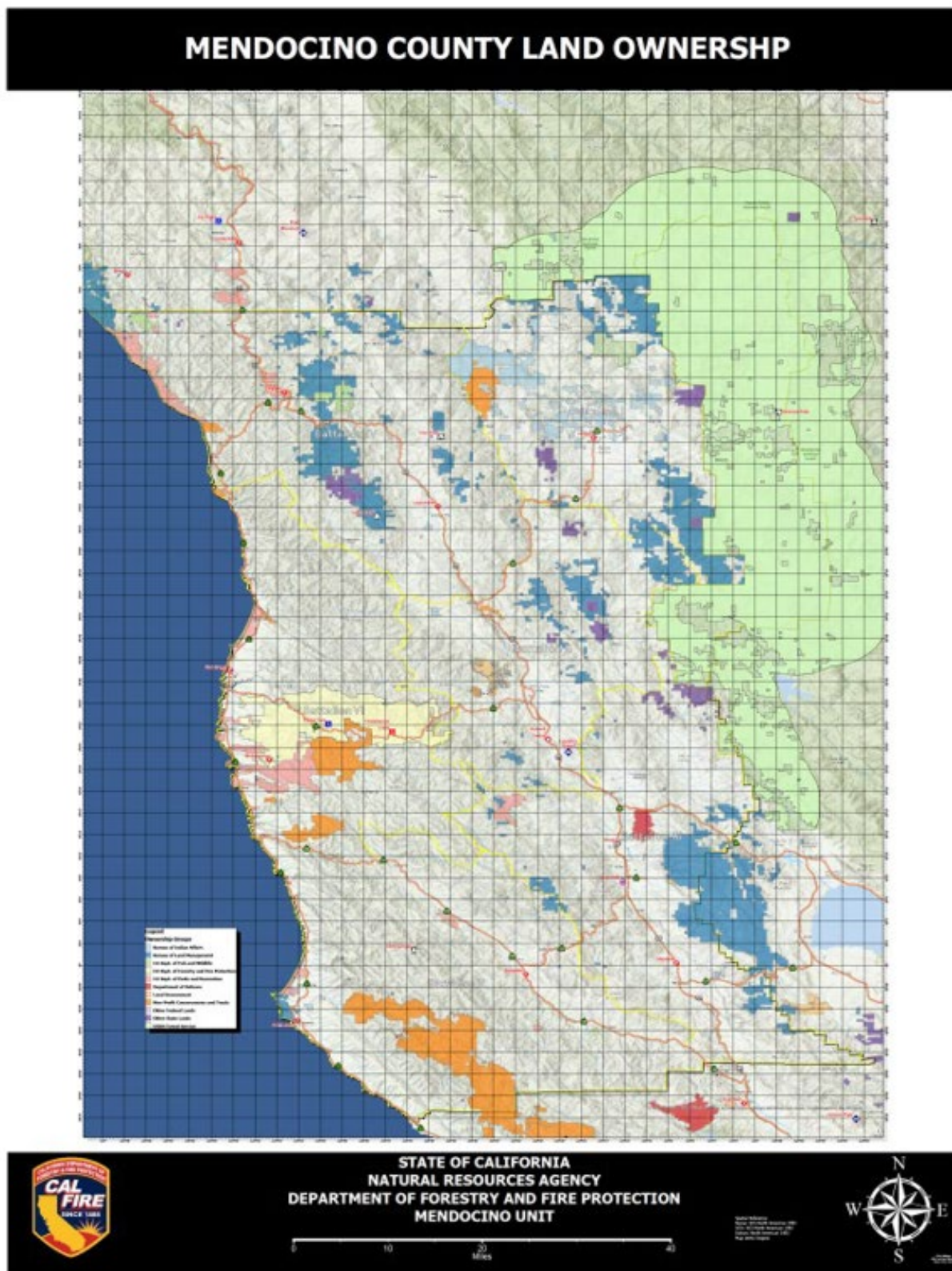
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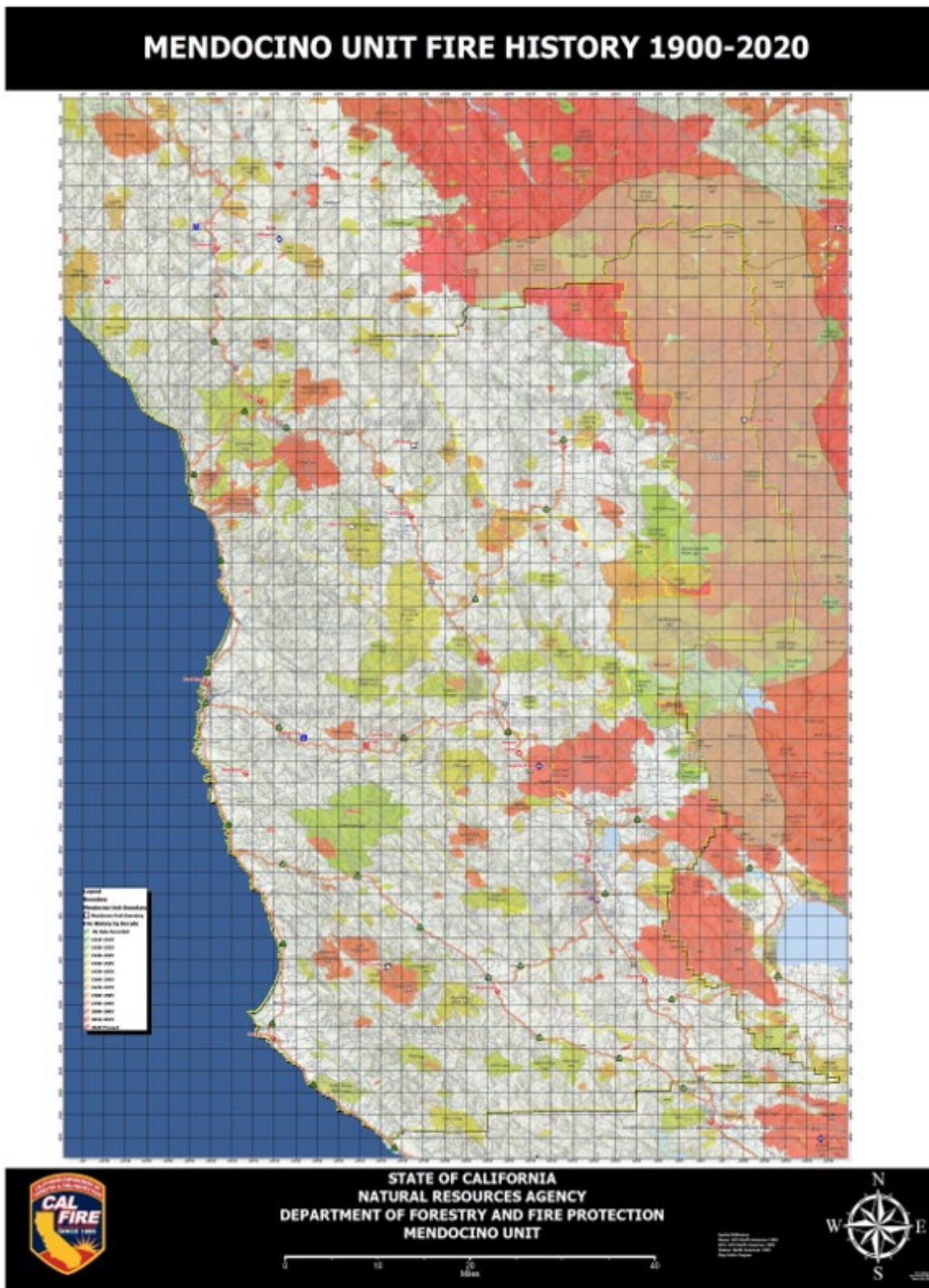


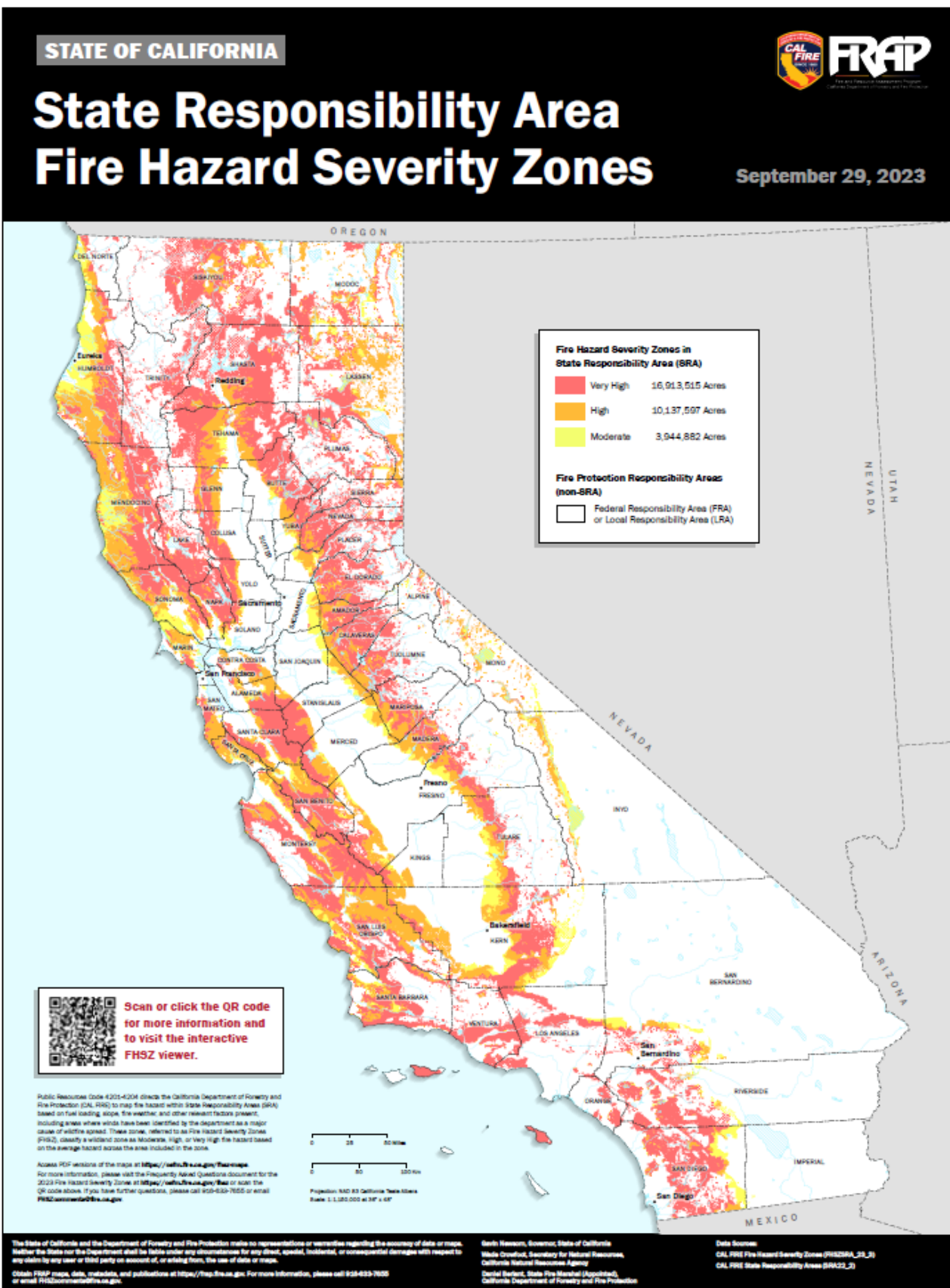
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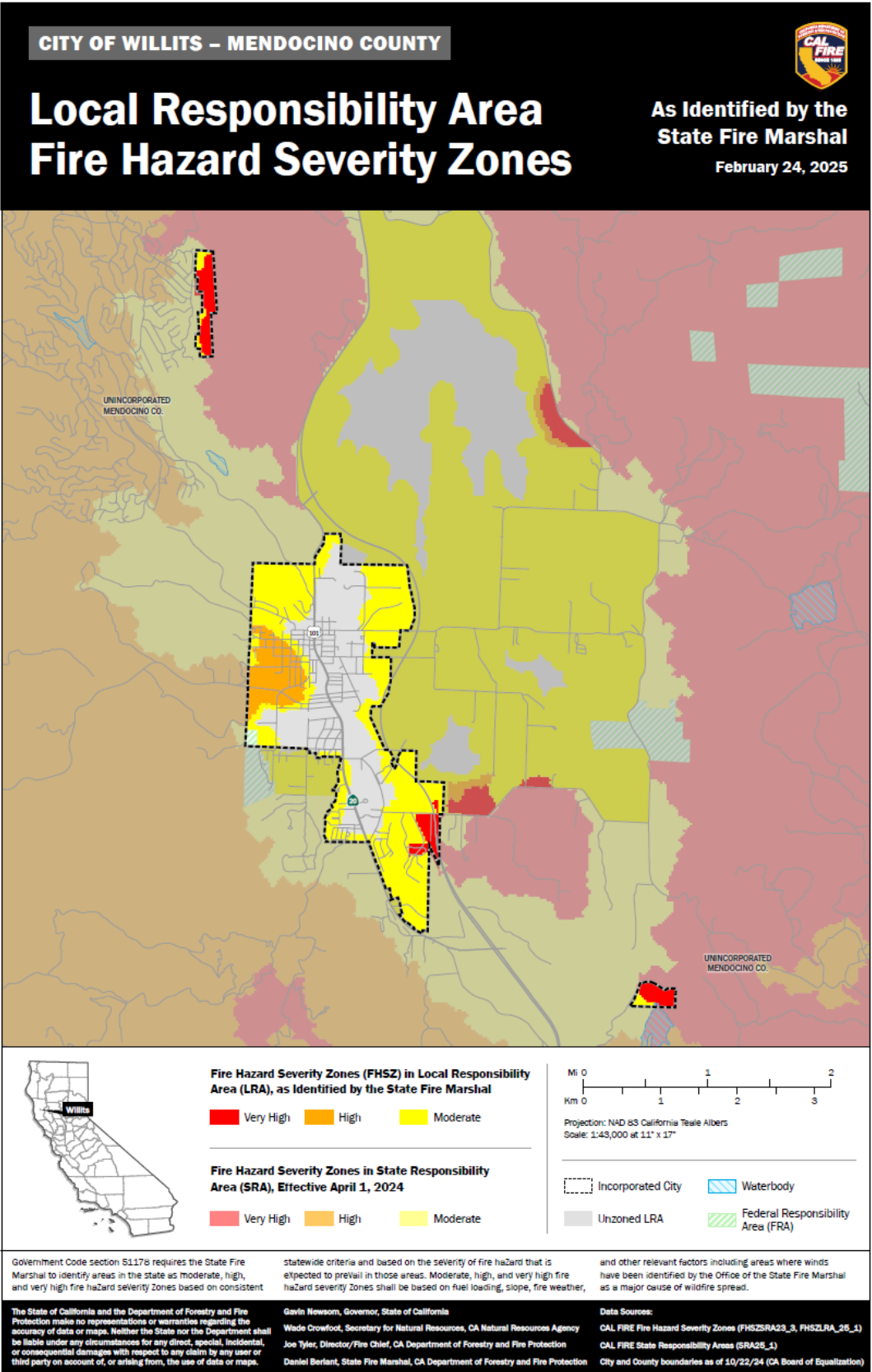
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5	7.0	6.0
10	6.0	4.0
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20	6.0	4.0
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30	6.0	4.0

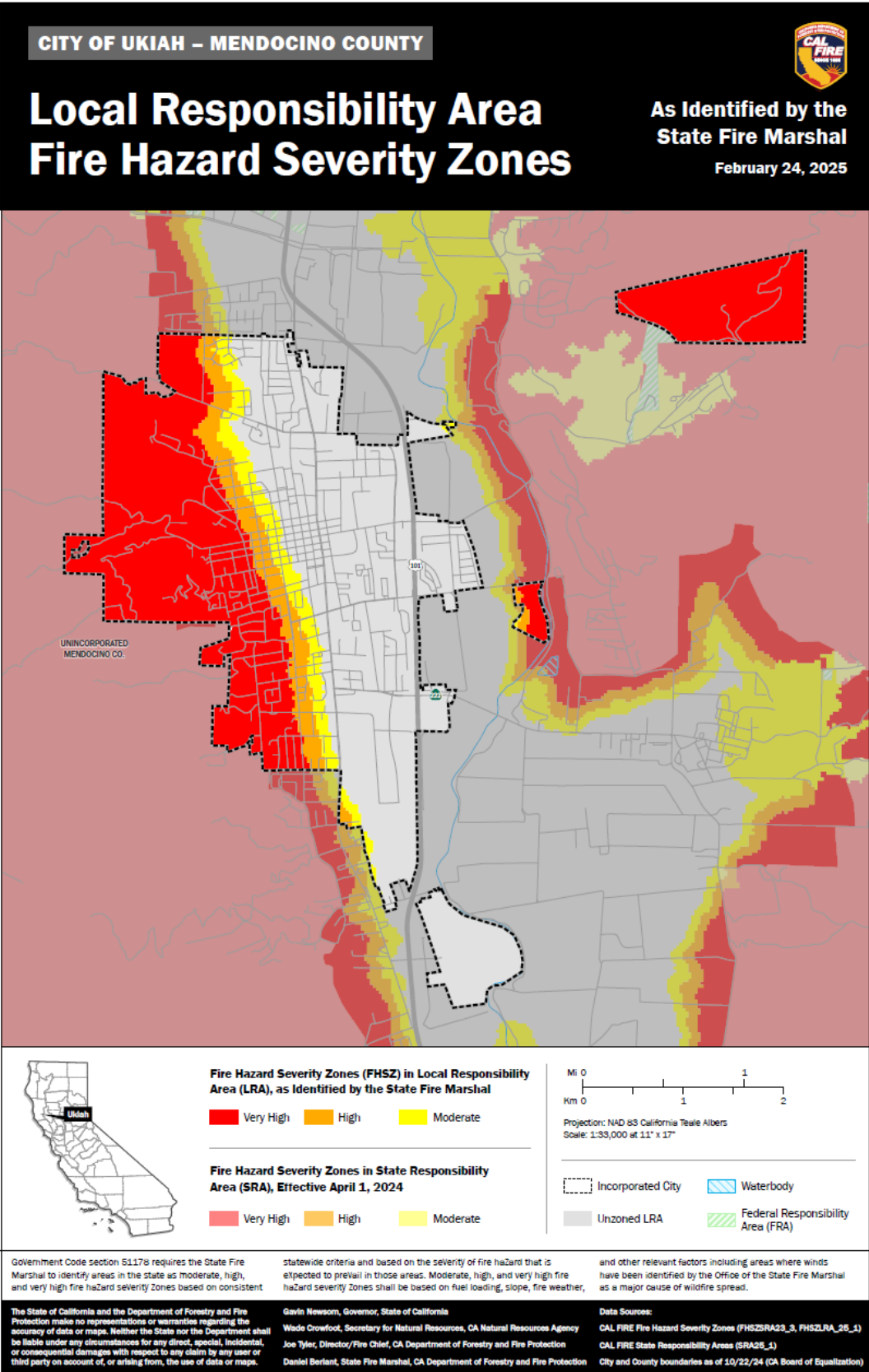


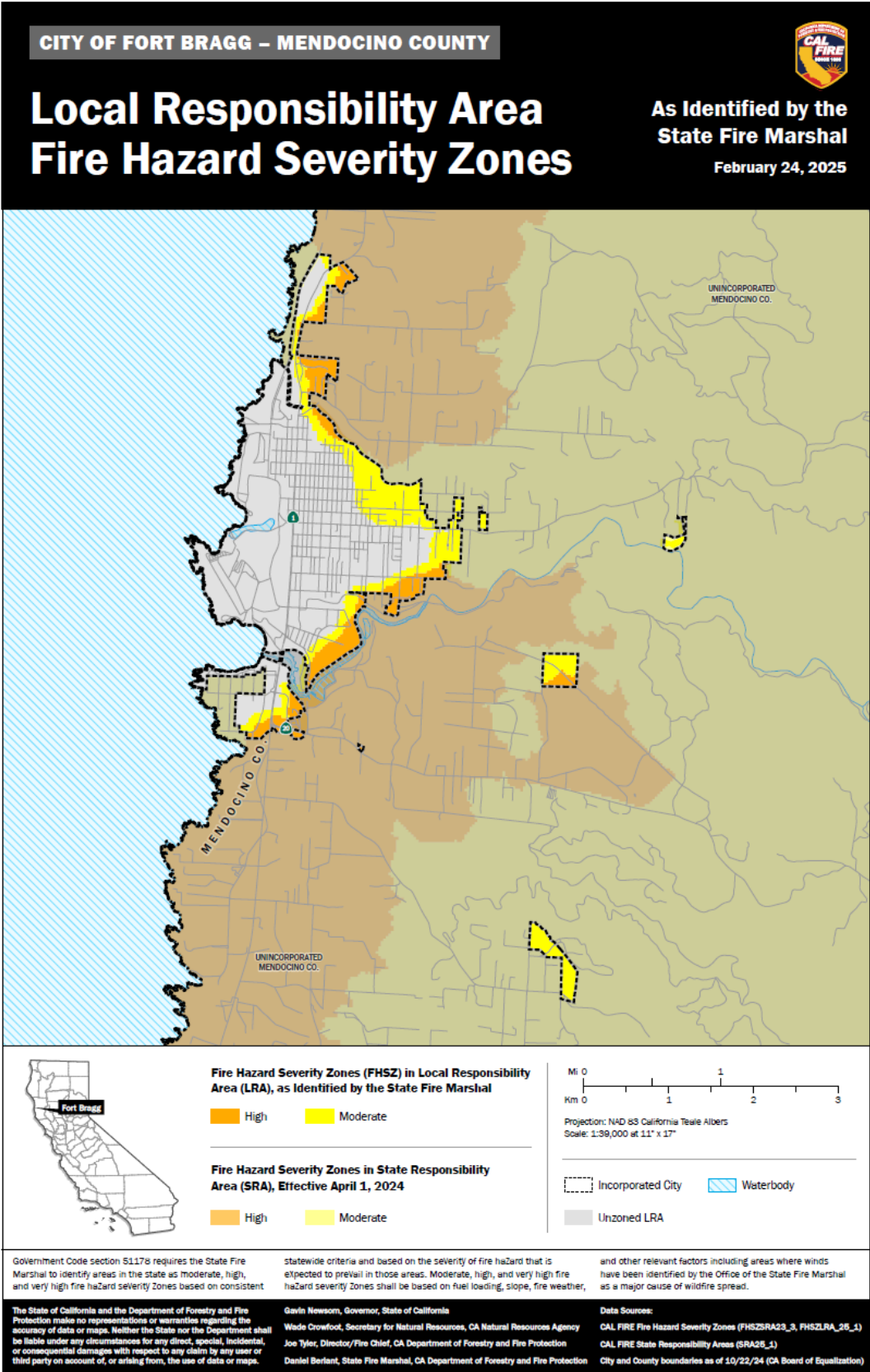


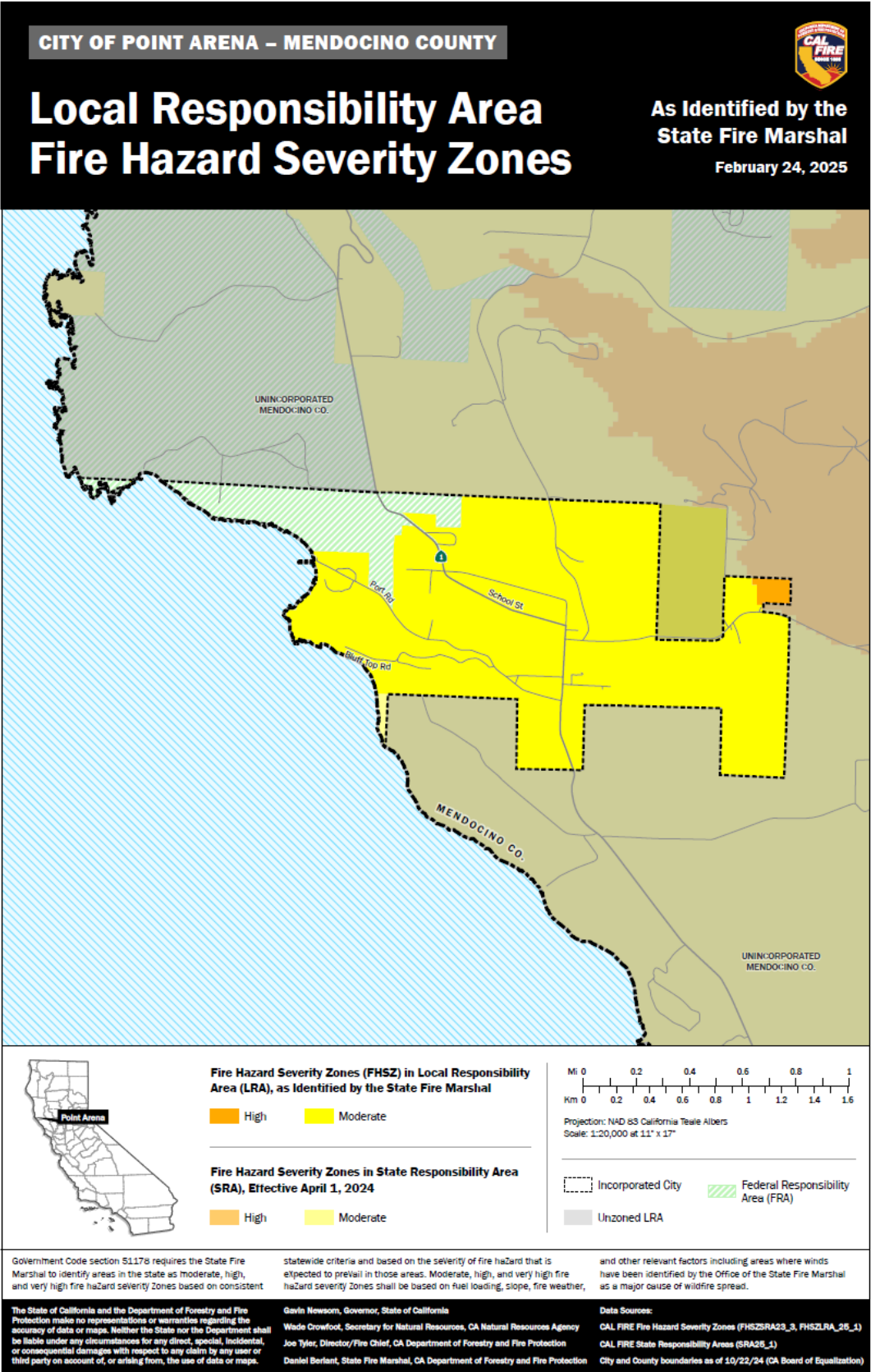


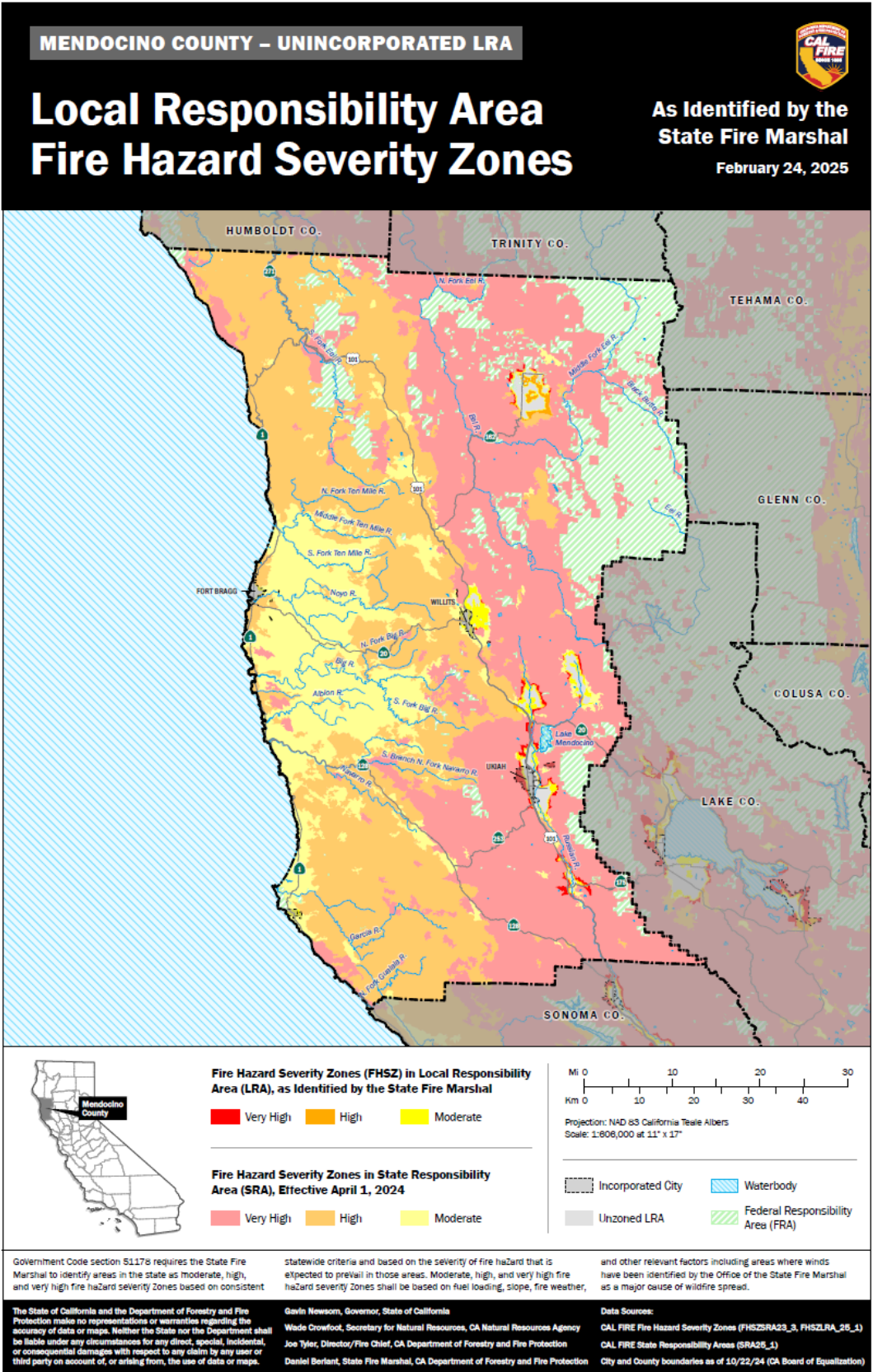












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