

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

for participants in the
Trinity County Fire Safe Council

Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes a proactive coordinated approach to address the risk of catastrophic fires in Trinity County by forming a Fire Safe Council to identify high risk areas and undertake strategic planning to reduce those risks on both private and public lands using a locally led planning process.

The MOU will help facilitate coordinated action with local, state, and federal agencies, watershed-based groups, industry and commercial associations, neighborhood associations, private landowners, and other concerned parties in programs that contribute to healthy ecosystem functions in Trinity County and its watersheds by reducing the risk of catastrophic fire.

Background

Over the past century, forest use, management, and aggressive fire suppression have significantly increased the volume and continuity of live and dead wood fuels near the forest floor. These fuels provide a “ladder” that connects surface fuels with the forest canopy. Consequently, risks of larger, more intense, catastrophic fires have increased.

Residential and recreational development in forest lands have increased the risk of fire, as well as the economic value of assets at risk from wildfire.

In areas of adjoining private and public land ownerships, coordinating management is desirable and important for better assuring that ecosystem health can be maintained and restored.

Water supply and water quality require healthy watershed processes in the upper portions of tributary watersheds. Catastrophic fire is detrimental to watershed function and water quality. By killing vegetation, burning the organic matter in litter and soil, and forming impervious soil layers, severe fires accelerate runoff from the watershed. More water is discharged over a shorter period of time, peak flows are greater (contributing to increased flood hazards), and summer and fall streamflows are lower than those in less disturbed watersheds. Bare soils and increased runoff result in higher levels of sedimentation and landslides become more prevalent.

Land management and resource activity in the upper portions of tributary watersheds have substantially modified watershed processes by making it more susceptible to catastrophic fire. This has affected the reliability of high-quality water inflows to the Trinity River and its tributaries. Catastrophic fires also increase risks of fine sediment runoff.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the US Forest Service are already engaged in steering the process of planning for fire safety, and other signatories are pursuing a variety of activities aimed at reducing risk of wildfire. The Trinity County Fire Safe Council will aid in coordination and long-term planning at the local level.

Goal

The shared goal of this MOU is to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire in Trinity County by establishing priorities for reducing risk of catastrophic fire on a landscape-level scale in order to improve forest health, water quality and quantity, and community well-being.

Objectives

Undertake strategic planning to address and prioritize fire hazards in Trinity County utilizing a locally led planning process with all stakeholders based on a landscape-level analysis of risk factors and action priorities.

Focus efforts by aggressively pursuing prevention of catastrophic fire through vegetation management, prescribed burning, land use planning, and forest health programs.

Priority Tasks for Coordinated Action

- 1) Improve coordination among local, state, and federal resources for long term planning, fire prevention, and emergency response.
 - Facilitate active communication among all parties engaged in planning or other activities to reduce and respond to risks of wildfire in Trinity County.
 - Develop means to identify and fully utilize local knowledge and capabilities in coordinated planning and fire response.
- 2) Coordinate activities with regard to GIS-based mapping of data important to fire management and risk assessment in Trinity County.
 - Mapping will include assets at risk, local fire history and response effectiveness, vegetation type, slope, aspect, roads, streams, fire breaks (planned, implemented, and maintained), prescribed burns, and emergency response initiatives.
 - Identify data gaps, prioritize data needs, and coordinate activities to obtain critical information.
 - Prioritize community projects based on analysis of fire risk hazard.
- 3) Work cooperatively to develop and implement cost-effective means of fuels reduction/thinning, fuel breaks, prescribed burning, and other appropriate projects.
- 4) Convene community meetings to familiarize local community members with ongoing efforts and encourage their active involvement.
 - Follow-up outreach at the local level.

- Educate landowners about the risk of fuels buildup and the need for appropriate treatment.
 - Conduct workshops and distribute newsletters.
- 5) Develop a monitoring program that will involve all interested parties, based on ecosystem principles, and take into account watershed, forest, and community assets and values at risk from wildfire.
- Track progress and evaluate effectiveness of all activities undertaken pursuant to this agreement.

Mutually agreed and understood by all parties

A. Reducing risks of wildfire to forest and watershed ecosystem functions, safety, and community assets through coordinated planning efforts and improved emergency response is a concern of all signatories of this Memorandum of Understanding.

B. This MOU seeks to enhance and expedite the ongoing efforts to address wildfire risks undertaken by each of the signatories.

C. This MOU is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligating document. Any endeavor involving reimbursement or contribution of funds between the parties to this agreement will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures including those for Government procurement and printing. Such endeavors will be outlined in separate agreements that shall be made in writing by representatives of the parties and shall be independently authorized by appropriate statutory authority. This instrument does not establish authority for noncompetitive award to the cooperator of any contract or other agreement. Any contract or agreement for training or other services must fully comply with all applicable requirements for competition.

D. This MOU may be revised after the mutual consent of all the parties by the issuance of a written amendment. It may be terminated with a thirty (30) day written notice of any of the principals.

E. This MOU does not preclude the Council from engaging in other activities mutually agreed upon. Press releases or media activity which reference this MOU, or the relationship established between the parties of this MOU, shall have prior approval of all parties affected by the press release or media activity.

F. This MOU is executed as of the last date shown below and expires no later than December 31, 2002 at which time it is subject to review, renewal, or expiration.

G. All parties agree to review and assess the effectiveness of the program and MOU annually.

Principal Contacts

The principal contacts for this instrument are:

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(530) 623-3991

Declaration

This MOU may be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

We, the undersigned, commit to assist and cooperate in achieving the stated goal for the Trinity River Watershed Fire Safe Council in accordance with the conditions stipulated above.

Trinity County Board of Supervisors

Name Representing Date

Chairperson, Trinity County Fire Chiefs Assoc.

Name Representing Date

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

Name Representing Date

Forest Supervisor, Shasta-Trinity National Forest, USFS

Name Representing Date

Forest Supervisor, Six Rivers National Forest, USFS

Name Representing Date

Area Manager, Bureau of Land Management

Name Representing Date

Watershed Research and Training Center

Name Representing Date

Trinity County Resource Conservation District

Name Representing Date

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Name Representing Date

Natural Resources Advisory Council

Name Representing Date

Trinity County Resource Conservation & Development

Name	Representing	Date
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South Fork Coordinated

Resource Management Planning Group (SFCRMP)

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