

SYNOPSIS OF TRINITY COUNTY FIRE AND FUEL REDUCTION PLANS

“EAST FORK/SMOKY CREEK WATERSHED ANALYSIS, SOUTH FORK TRINITY RIVER.” SHASTA-TRINITY NATIONAL FOREST, HAYFORK RANGER DISTRICT, MARCH 1998

As stated in the introduction, “Watershed analysis is a procedure to characterize the human, aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial features, conditions, processes, and interactions (collectively referred to as ecosystem elements”) within a watershed. It provides a systematic way to understand and organize ecosystem information. In so doing, watershed analysis enhances the ability to estimate direct, indirect and cumulative effects of our management activities and guide the general type, location, and sequence of appropriate management activities within a watershed.” Further, “The results of watershed analyses establish the context for subsequent decision making processes, including planning, project development, and regulatory compliance.”

Information relevant to wildfire effects on vegetation and project priorities that address potential effects is included under the heading “Catastrophic Fire and Fuels”. Chapter 2-7 presents the key issues and questions that drive the analysis of catastrophic fire and fuels. Chapter 3-8 to 3-9 provides a broad characterization of fire and fuels in the watershed. Chapter 4-8 to 4-12 provides a history of conditions and events affecting fire and fuels. Chapter 5-29 to 5-38 discusses how past events affect current conditions and what those conditions are. Chapter 6-22 to 6-29 synthesizes information in previous chapters and suggests management actions that could enhance the health and viability of the ecosystem and its resources. Chapter 7-3 to 7-4 highlights the highest priority recommendations from Chapter 6.

The list of priority resources needing protection from catastrophic fire is as follows:

- 1) Mapped and unmapped LSRs
- 2) Riparian Reserves and dispersal corridors for late-successional species
- 3) Plantations
- 4) Forests on productive soils
- 5) Southern and western aspects (areas most susceptible to catastrophic fire conditions)

A network of Defensible Fuel Profile Zones (DFPZs) was recommended to be created within the following 10 years (by 2008). The first priority was a DFPZ along the northern divide, from Red Mountain southeast to Stuart Gap, north to Mud Springs, and then east through the LSR to Hellgate.

In conjunction with DFPZ construction, it was recommended to reduce fuels and break up their vertical and horizontal continuity on Matrix lands outside of DFPZs using appropriate silvicultural and activity slash treatments, including underburning.

“EAST FORK FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN”, KENNETH C. BALDWIN, JUNE 2000

<http://www.tcr cd.net/pdf/EastForkFirePlan.pdf>

This report describes (pages 3-12) the East Fork of the Stuart Fork of the Trinity River watershed, including 1) location, 2) ownership, 3) topography, 4) climate and fire weather, 5) transportation system, 6) present fire threats, 7) wildfire hazard, risks and values at risk, 8) management of hazard and risk and 9) firefighting resources.

The report also addresses landowner values and goals (pages 12-15) and natural resources (pages 16-33) and recommends rural residential treatments (page 34) as well as community-wide wildfire defense projects (pages 36-53). Recommendations to establish fuel breaks, reduce ladder fuels, and execute other management projects that reduce fire intensity will help protect surrounding resource lands. It is anticipated that these projects will allow lower intensity fires to be contained more quickly and prevent them from moving into or out of the settlement areas.

“EAST BRANCH FINAL REPORT, EAST BRANCH FUELS REDUCTION, ACCESS IMPROVEMENT, AND EROSION CONTROL PROJECT”, TRINITY COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT, DECEMBER 2000

<http://www.tcr cd.net/pdf/EastBranchFinalReport.pdf>

This plan addressed fire safety and forest health opportunities for 31 rural residential parcels within the lower one-third of the East Branch of the East Weaver Creek watershed. The plan recommended fuel breaks at strategic locations, an emergency evacuation route, fuel modification including chipping, thinning, and fuel ladder removal, emergency access improvement, and prescribed low intensity burns.

This plan incorporated an education and outreach component to inform other communities in the County about the success of a community-based fuels reduction and fire management plan. This project demonstrated an ecologically sensitive and economically viable method of fuels reduction that will reduce the risk of catastrophic fire and promote future projects in other areas of Trinity County.

The benefits of this project included: improved forest health, reduced potential sedimentation, reduced risk of catastrophic fire destroying public and private lands and resources, and the continuation of another demonstration project for a community-based fuels reduction project on both private and public and industrial timberlands interface. This project continued implementation of the recommendations from the Fire Management Plan for the community that was developed as part of the 1996 Forest Stewardship Project. This Plan prioritized the work in and around East Branch community. It also depicted the best location for community-wide fuel breaks to minimize the risk and potential damage of catastrophic fire. Recommendations in this Plan and input from community members are now being incorporated into the County-wide Strategic Fire Management Plan.

“GRASS VALLEY CREEK WATERSHED FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN”, KENNETH C. BALDWIN, DECEMBER 2002

http://www.tcrccd.net/pdf/GVC_Fire_Plan.pdf

The purpose of this plan is to portray past and current fire and fuel conditions, current fire access and infrastructure, and to identify management practices and projects that will promote forest succession and health while protecting the primary resources of soil and water, and associated resources of wildlife and fisheries, from the deleterious effects of high severity, stand replacing fires in and immediately adjacent to the Grass Valley Creek watershed. This plan addresses residential property protection, fire control access and safety, fuel management, and forest health opportunities in the watershed.

The Grass Valley Creek Watershed Fire Management Plan contains recommendations (in Chapter 6) that agency and individual landowners can follow to reduce the danger of wildfires degrading resource lands or burning homes or other structures. Recommendations to establish shaded fuel breaks, thin overstocked forests, reduce ladder fuels, apply prescribed fire, and execute other management practices and projects that reduce fire spread and intensity should reduce the likelihood of high severity fires and facilitate control of low and moderate severity fires to prevent them from increasing in intensity or becoming crown fires. In support of these goals, the plan extends into public and private lands that are adjacent to the watershed boundary.

“DOWNRIVER FIRE AND FUELS MANAGEMENT PLAN”, KENNETH C. BALDWIN, DECEMBER 2005

http://www.tcrccd.net/pdf/DR_Fire_Plan.pdf

The purpose of this plan is to portray current fire, fuel, and access conditions and fire infrastructure and to identify management practices and projects that will promote forest succession and health while protecting the primary resources of soil and water and associated resources of wildlife and fisheries from the deleterious effects of high severity, stand replacing fires. This plan addresses residential property protection, fire control access and safety, water development for firefighting, and fuel management. It includes the communities of Hawkins Bar and Salyer and the residential areas of Gray Flat, Suzy Q Ranch, Oden Flat, Hudson Creek (southeast Willow Creek), and South Fork Road.

The Downriver FFMP contains recommendations that agencies and individual landowners can follow to reduce the danger of wildfires degrading resource lands or burning homes or other structures. Recommendations to establish shaded fuelbreaks, thin overstocked forests, reduce ladder and surface fuels, apply prescribed fire, and execute other management practices and projects that reduce fire spread and intensity should reduce the likelihood of high severity fires and facilitate control of low and moderate severity fires to prevent them from increasing in intensity or becoming crown fires. Also included are recommendations to improve fire infrastructure, water supplies, and community safety. In support of these goals, the plan should be used to extend existing and proposed fuel treatments on the Six Rivers National Forest into private lands. Chapter 3 includes recommended residential and area-wide projects and completed, partially completed, and planned projects on the Six Rivers National Forest.

“UPPER TRINITY RIVER WATERSHED ASSESSMENT REPORT & MANAGEMENT AND ACTION PLAN”,
TRINITY COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT, MARCH, 2006

http://www.tcrccd.net/pdf/UT_AssessmentReport.pdf

As stated in the Introduction, “The primary goal of the [Upper Trinity River Watershed Analysis] is the identification of projects that will reduce sediment delivery and therefore, improve water quality, minimize loss of storage capacity and improve forest health by addressing fire risk and fuel buildup.] Fire history is addressed in Section 3-9 and Plates 3-3 and 3-4. About 66% of the fire starts since the 1910’s have been caused by lightning, mostly on mid to upper slopes. Almost all of the human caused fires are associated with communities and residential areas, developed and undeveloped campgrounds, and roads and trails. Plate 3-4 shows the location and cause of starts within the Watershed area.

Fire and fuels management and forest health issues are addressed in Sections 5-1 to 5-9. Projected USFS priority fuels management projects (reducing fuel ladders and creating defensible space) for the next 10 years (2006 to 2016) are addressed in 5-2 and prioritize the WUI areas of Covington Mill, Trinity Center, and Coffee Creek and recreational facilities. The critical and unique resources at risk are listed in Section 5-6 and include residential areas, communities, resorts, a vineyard, USFS and private campgrounds, USFS fire guard stations, LSR, Riparian Reserves and Spotted Owl Activity Centers in the Matrix, plantations in Matrix and LSR and on SPI, Timber Products, and Roseburg Resources Co. lands, Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity National Recreation Area, historical sites (ex. Bowerman Barn, Carraville Hotel), high value focal (refugia) sub-watersheds that are important within the analysis area and within the entire Trinity River watershed, populations of Port-Orford cedar, and the forests and brushfields that protect the watershed from erosion.

TRINITY RIVER WATERSHED DOCUMENTS, VARIOUS REPORTS AND DATES,

<http://www.tcrccd.net/index.php/publications-and-downloads/trinity-river-watershed-documents>

These are mainly watershed analyses for various sub-watersheds of the Trinity River that contain information on fire and fuels management.

Addendum Compiled by Kenneth Baldwin for the Trinity County Resource Conservation District 3/10/2021