

Prior to the Oregon fire that threatened Weaverville, CA, 11 cooperative entities joined forces to support the Shasta-Trinity National forest's Five Cent prescribed fire which in turn aided firefighting resources during the aggressive suppression efforts with the Oregon fire.

Many years in the planning, the project included local stakeholders taking part in the planning, implementation and execution of multiple parcels within the Weaverville Community Forest. In particular the Five Cent prescribed fire was specifically designed to address fuels reduction and wildlife habitat enhancement for the benefit of the community. Under the direction of Tim Ritchey as the Burn Boss, an attempt to burn the unit on October 25, 2013, was unsuccessful due to unfavorable smoke dispersal. A second attempt on November 7, 2013, was successful with collaboration involving the Weaverville Fire Department concurrently utilizing strategic control lines, equipment and personnel to accomplish six acres of private property that is adjacent to the unit.

The burn met the objectives of the intended reduction of leaf litter, branches, and ladder fuels which add to the spread of wildfire as well as openings in brush fields for deer movement by promoting sprouting of manzanita and ceanothus species. Approximately five tons per acre of dead and downed woody material were consumed as a result of the burn.

One objective not built into the plan was the valuable experience gained by the Weaverville Fire Department as they burned the private units adjacent to the Five Cent unit. While the local fire suppression unit works within the Weaverville wildland urban interface (WUI) they do not always get the opportunity to work with the fire in a controlled environment, monitoring fire behavior, smoke dispersal and the effects of the fire in an oak-woodland. Valuable firsthand experience of what can be anticipated in the event of a wildfire served to aid these firefighters who had provided structure defense during the Oregon fire.

On Sunday August 24, shortly after 4:30 p.m., CAL FIRE, U.S. Forest Service and local firefighting resources responded to the Oregon fire two miles west and just north of Highway 299 on the edge of the community of Weaverville, CA. Steep terrain, dry vegetation and high winds fueled the spreading wildfire forcing the evacuation of 150 people and closing Highway 299.

Shasta-Trinity NF firefighter Tim Ritchey assigned to the fire as a supervisor said that the active fire behavior was impressive. "It was spotting a quarter mile ahead of the main fire. Flame lengths in the brush and oak-woodland were in excess of six feet with torching [of individual trees] of 20 feet, maybe even 30 feet in some places," he remarked. When it advanced into the treatment area of the Five Cent

prescribed fire the wildfire behavior dramatically decreased. “[There was] minimal fire behavior,” he noted, adding that the reduced fuels contributed to diminishing the forward movement of this potentially catastrophic wildfire and exemplified the classic textbook example of successful fuels program.

The project not only proved to be a significant contributor to suppression efforts of the Oregon Fire in the WUI but demonstrated the successful coordination of federal, state and local entities in addressing public safety and wildfire protection strategies to protect life and property.

As the lead agency in the project, the Shasta-Trinity NF teamed up with CAL FIRE, the North Coast Air Unified Quality Management District, the California Deer Association, the Resource Advisory Council (RAC), the Trinity County Board of Supervisors, the Weaverville Community Forest Steering Committee, the Trinity County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD), the Trinity County Fire Safe Council, the Weaver Basin Trails Committee the Weaverville Fire Department and local property owner Frank Schmidbauer.

Unique attributes contributed to the roles they played. For instance, the California Deer Association, a primary player in the project, assisted the U.S. Forest Service by providing necessary funding. The RAC assisted the county with finding additional federal funding for fuels reduction projects and has allocated \$500,000 dollars over a ten year period for many of the local counties.

The smoke management plan was approved by the North Coast Air Unified Quality Management District to ensure that air quality for the community residents would not be adversely impacted.

An agreement with CAL FIRE to utilize their crews aided the project with manpower to prepare the edge of the burn area removing large logs and snags, and constructing control lines in a few places. CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Andy Reiling inspected and approved the burning on Schmidbauer’s parcel.

Schmidbauer permitted the use of existing trails and the implementation of prescribed fire on his small parcel of land adjacent to the burn and supported the use of the Weaverville Fire Department to conduct the private burn.

The TCRCD facilitated a public meeting for public awareness in October 2013 and assisted with mailed notifications a few weeks prior to the burn. The Weaver Basin Trails Committee approved the use of about 1.5 miles of trails for both control lines and access into the burn units.

Vital support from local leadership including the Trinity County Board of Supervisors, the Weaverville Community Forest Steering Committee, and the Trinity County Fire Safe Council empowered the group

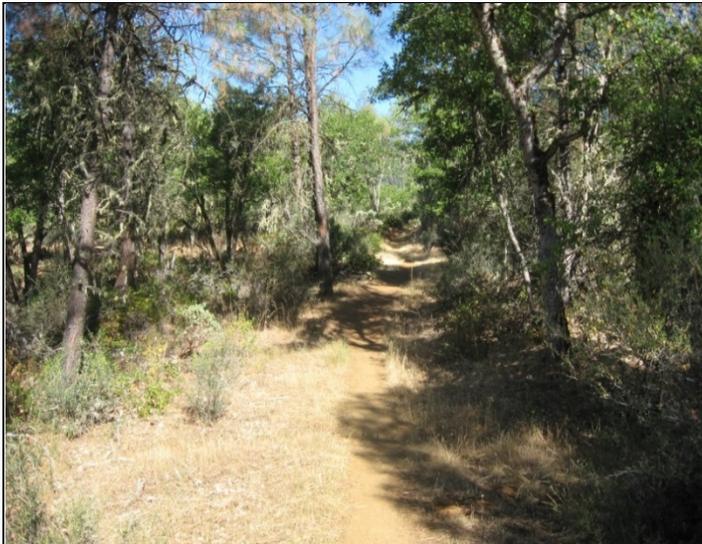
to move forward with a proactive plan to reduce fuels and create a buffer between the wildland and urban interface.

Historically, wildfire is an element in the landscape, creating its own natural fire cycle to replenish the ecosystem by burning away overcrowding of vegetation and trees in the forest's understory as well as bug-killed trees. When the country's population density increased in more remote areas of the wildland landscape, the suppression of such fires did more to disrupt the natural cycle of fire which had led to major catastrophic wildfire events.

Wildfires are unplanned, and can potentially become out of control and a danger to life and property. However, prescribed fire focuses on the reintroduction of fire back into fire dependent ecosystems and is designed, planned and controlled to create a desired outcome and accomplish specific objectives. Through the use of prescribed fire, land managers reduce the risk of large catastrophic wildfires and their impact on communities.

“The Shasta-Trinity NF completes approximately 10,000 acres of fuels reductions per year,” stated Forest Fire Management Officer Ben Newburn, adding “Most of these treatments occur in and around communities where National Forest System lands are in close proximity to communities.” Newburn stressed the importance of the coordination of federal, state and local cooperators as instrumental in the success of the program. “Continued public support of the Forest's prescribed fire program is needed to ensure a fire resilient landscape.”

One collaborative effort has led to the founding of the Northern California Prescribed Fire Council whose purpose is to create a venue to promote such topics as training, understanding, communication and facilitate the responsible use of prescribed fire as a management tool. More information on the Northern Prescribed Fire Council and prescribed fire in the northern California landscape can be found on their website at <http://www.norcalrxfirecouncil.org/>.



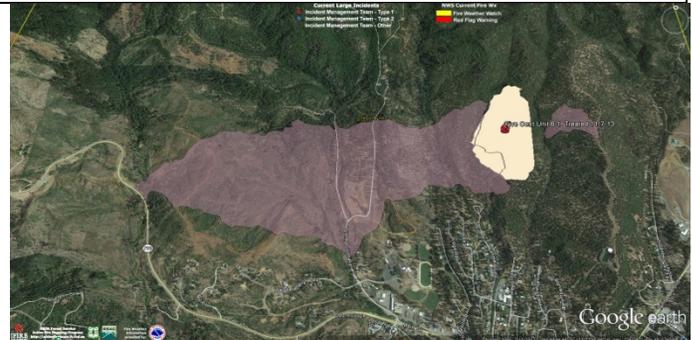
Taken on August 8, 2012, prior to any treatment, this image shows years of vegetative growth within the Weaverville Community Forest creating fuel loading and ladder fuels that could sustain and carry fire across the landscape, placing the community of Weaverville at risk for a catastrophic event.



On November 7, 2013, firefighters introduced controlled applications of fire to the landscape. Fuels, such as brush, logs, snags and other forest debris were consumed to create an open forest floor. The lack of flammable materials on the landscape meant that fire would not be able to travel through the landscape creating potentially catastrophic wildfires and placing the community at risk.



On August 27, 2014, following the Oregon fire, the untreated landscape to the left of the trail in this image shows a high intensity of burning and a higher mortality of trees and vegetation. The landscape to the right of the trail was minimally impacted and created a natural barrier void of fuels to carry the fire. The fire behavior decreased and allowed firefighters to gain control over the wildfire.



This image of the Oregon Fire's perimeter from August 26, 2014, clearly shows the proximity of the wildfire to the Town of Weaverville, CA and the location of the Five Cent prescribed fire. When the fire reached the area that had had been treated with prescribed fire in November of 2013, the fire behavior changed dramatically allowing firefighters to gain control.

All photos Courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service