



Putting the "Breaks" on Fire



Photo courtesy of WSRCD

Before Fuel Break

A fire under severe fire weather conditions can climb ladder fuels into the crowns of the larger trees, becoming an intense, fast moving wildfire that can resist control until weather and burning conditions change, winds die down, and temperature drops at nightfall.

Fuel breaks are not designed to stop a wildfire by themselves. The purpose of a defensible fuel profile zone (DFPZ), or a shaded fuel break, is to slow a wildfire's spread and reduce its intensity to allow fire fighters and equipment to suppress the fire safely.

Proposed by Western Shasta Resource Conservation District (WSRCD), the Backbone Ridge Fuel Break is an eight-mile long DFPZ along a strategically located 20-mile ridge between the Pit River Arm of Shasta Lake, and residential areas to the south along Highway 299 in the Cow Creek watershed.

The fuel break is 300-feet wide, and is a combination of fuel modification areas, biomass clearings, sites prepared for tree planting, and minimum road improvements for periodic maintenance access. Selected portions of the DFPZ were seeded with native grasses to re-establish native vegetation, suppress brush re-growth, and retard soil erosion. In 2008, the fuel break was utilized to contain a wildfire on the eastside of Sugar Pine Road.



Photo courtesy of WSRCD

Project cost - \$373,000
RAC funds - \$200,000

After Fuel Break

Removal of ladder fuels (smaller understory trees and lower limbs of larger trees). A wildfire can burn along the ground at low intensity, and thus be safely suppressed by fire fighters.

The Secure Rural Schools Act of 2000 (SRS)

This legislative act has provided monies to rural counties with declining revenues from timber harvests on federal lands since the year 2000. SRS was originally authorized for six years, and has been renewed several times.

A percentage of the SRS is reserved for grant projects that are recommended to the Secretary of Agriculture by a committee of local citizens known as the Shasta Resource Advisory Committee (RAC).

From 2002 thru 2006, the Shasta RAC allocated grants totaling \$2.3 million to forest fuel reduction treatments; education projects; roads and trails; watershed restoration; fish and wildlife habitats; and invasive weed control.

Shasta College received grant funds to monitor selected projects to determine their condition and continuing value. Five representative projects are presented in this newsletter.

RAC grant projects are proposed and conducted by public agencies and non-profit organizations.

Forest Thinning—Improving Safety for Campers

Manzanita Lake Forest Health Project is located on the Lassen Volcanic National Park (LVNP), surrounded by the Lassen National Forest. The Manzanita Lake Forest Health Project demonstrated a forest health problem prevalent on forests. Smaller white fir trees compete for space with taller Jeffrey pines. The thinning and removal of these competing trees reduce the risk of crown fire and improves the health and vigor of the pines. Where appropriate, Jeffrey pine seedlings were planted to restock open areas.

The Manzanita Lake campground is an ideal place to see this demonstration because of its visibility and accessibility to the public. Concerned that the public would object to fuel treatment, the LVNP staff informed the public on the forest condition and the benefits of thinning treatment. There were few visitor complaints about the harvesting and equipment operations, and an overwhelming majority of park staff, park visitors, and the public remain supporters of this and future similar projects.

This project was proposed by the LVNP. Sixty-six acres were treated at a cost of \$116,000 (\$28,000 from a 2007 RAC grant). Hand crew clean up of the logging residue and cutting stumps flush with the ground (for campground safety and aesthetics) represented over half the cost. Some of these clean up actions and costs might be foregone in non-campground areas where aesthetics and public safety is less of a concern.

—Photos courtesy of LVNP

Site progression photos



Forest Education Goes on the Road



Photo courtesy of Turtle Bay Exploration Park



Photo courtesy of Shasta County Dept. of Public Works



Photo courtesy of Shasta County Dept. of Public Works

In 2002, Turtle Bay Exploration Park in Redding, California, developed the **Sustainable Forests, Sustainable Communities Mobile Learning Center**. The traveling exhibit illustrates basic concepts of forest resources and management, forests and ecosystem balance, the importance of sustainable forestry to local communities, and the role of wildfires in the past and future.

The mobile unit is designed for use at county fairs, logging conferences similar to the Sierra-Cascade Logging Conference held in Redding, and at school sites where teachers can incorporate hands-on exhibits with classroom lessons and activities.

At a cost of \$400,000, \$83,000 was provided from a Shasta RAC grant.

Shasta County Youth Conservation Project



Students helped to restore vegetation in the Jones Valley area where the Bear Fire burned in August 2004. Students planted 3,000 to 6,000 seedling trees in the planting area.

Students learned about fire prevention, fire suppression, and reforestation of burned areas.

A \$2,000 RAC Award provided funds to purchase equipment and materials such as planting bars, trowels, and hoedads for 300 participants.

Sulphur Fuel Break is a shaded fuel break proposed along the western boundary of Castle Crags State Park, neighboring the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The proposed fuel break is 300-feet wide, with retention of a 40% tree canopy cover. Trees less than 10-inches in diameter at breast height, and understory and ladder fuels less than 10-feet high will be removed.

The project is partially complete. Mechanical fuel clearing is complete, but slash piles remain to be burned or chipped for mulch.

The project was proposed to the Shasta RAC by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and will cost \$60,000 when complete.



Photo provided by Shasta County staff

2010 Request for Proposals

Special projects on federal lands

The Shasta RAC is accepting proposals for the FY 2010 grant cycle. There is \$225,000 available to award.

Title II funds may be used for protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat, and other resource objectives consistent with the Secure Schools Act on federal land and on non-federal land where projects benefit the resources on federal land.

Funds may be used for projects that include:

- Road, trail, and infrastructure maintenance or obliteration
- Soil productivity improvements
- Improvements to forest ecosystem health
- Watershed restoration and maintenance
- Fish and wildlife habitat
- Control of noxious or exotic weeds
- Re-establishment of native plant species
-

Preferences will be given to projects that:

- Create local employment
- Generate revenue and promote economic benefits beyond the grant period
- Leverage additional funds or in-kind services
- Create an innovative or alternative industry product
- Provide on-the-ground results
- Encourage sustainable forestland management
- Benefit fish and/or wildlife
- Provide or enhance recreation opportunities
- Support rural communities in Shasta County

Applications are due Friday, May 28th 2010 by 4:30 p.m. to the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Headquarters.

Applications by email or CD are preferred, but not required. To download a form electronically, please visit the Shasta-Trinity National Forest website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity>. Select Working Together, then Advisory Committees.

To receive an application via email or hard copy, contact the Shasta-Trinity National Forest at (530) 226-2595.

If you have questions please contact Rita Vollmer, Assistant Public Affairs Officer, at (530) 226-2595 or rvollmer@fs.fed.us

Send completed applications to: rvollmer@fs.fed.us or

Shasta-Trinity National Forest,
Attn: Rita Vollmer
3644 Avtech Parkway
Redding, CA 96002

Shasta County RAC

Members

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Les Baugh
Glenn Hawes
Brenda Haynes
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Stan Leach
Sylvia Milligan
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Rose Sloan
Terry Thomas

Forest Service Representatives

Scott Armentrout-DFO
Ray Mooney
Rita Vollmer

Shasta County Dept. of Public Works Representatives

Sue Crowe

Shasta County Resource Advisory Committee Contacts

Address:
USDA Service Center
Shasta-Trinity National Forest
3644 Avtech Parkway
Redding, CA 96002

Rita Vollmer
Phone: 530-226-2595
Fax: 530-226-2487
Email: rvollmer@fs.fed.us

Website:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/shastatrinity>

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Newsletter contributors

Gary Nakamura, RAC Member
Ken Nolte, Shasta College
Curt Chulack, Shasta College
Sue Crowe, Shasta County Dept. of Public Works