



National Fire Plan

Tahoe National Forest

Sierraville Ranger District

Fire Safety of Calpine Enhanced Through NFP Funding

Residents in the small mountain community of Calpine, California, are a little more thankful these days that they have the Forest Service as a neighbor. Since the 1994 Cottonwood Wildfire that burned more than 43,000 acres and came up to the doorsteps of a not too distant community, the residents in Calpine have been anxious for the forest surrounding their homes to be treated with a fuel reduction project. Their requests were answered this spring, when the Sierraville Ranger District of the Tahoe National Forest completed a forest thinning and prescribed burn project that removed small trees and brush from the understory of 200 acres of National Forest adjacent to Calpine.

Approximately 250 residents who reside in this community saw a little smoke the first day of the burn, but other than that, the treatment went off without any problems. District Fuels Specialist, Lance Noxon, has been eyeing the situation around Calpine for some time. "This rural community is completely surrounded by National Forest System lands, and if we are to set an example of good land stewardship then we need to start by treating public lands adjacent to communities first," stated Mr. Noxon.

The Calpine Fuel Reduction Project was initiated in 1996, when logging equipment was used to thin the stand and remove small diameter trees that crowded the forest. Prescribed burns were then initiated to remove additional fuels. When National Fire Plan funds became available in 2001, plans were made to complete the fuel reduction work by underburning additional acres. "Our burning window was especially tight due to the smoke concerns of the residents, so we were not able to complete the burn until this spring," Mr. Noxon said. The remaining 75 acres were ignited on April 3rd, which completed this Community Defense Zone on National Forest System land.

The Sierra County Fire Safe Council has plans to start treating private land around Calpine this summer. With grant money the Council received from the National Fire Plan, residents will be able to reduce the fuels on their private property. Sierraville District Ranger, Karen Hayden, believes that treating private property will also benefit the defense zone around Calpine. "Once this line of defense is completed, the homes of Calpine should have a much better chance of surviving a wildfire and allow residents to feel safer during the heat of the summer," stated Ranger Hayden. The benefit of National Fire Plan funding is that it can be made available to treat both National Forest System lands and adjacent private lands in these small, rural communities.



Smoke from the Calpine fire as seen from Sierra Valley during the first day of lighting.



A firefighter drips a mixture of diesel fuel and gasoline from his driptorch as he carries fire across the unit during the Calpine prescribed burn.