



Trinity County Fire Safe Council & Firewise Communities Program

Miners Fire Assessment (Fire Safe Council Meeting)
September 24th, 2009
Location: USFS SFMU (Hayfork)

Responses to Public Comments **Public comments in BLACK, Responses in BLUE**

Fuels/Veg. Management

- Build local capacity for first response to fires.
Response: This is great comment/suggestion and is something that is being looked into at the forest level. Within the scope of this project we will not be able to address the need for local responsiveness to incidents, however the need for such capacity is great and the Watershed Center will be working on this in a separate project.
- Need accurate assessments of standing dead fuels.
Response: We will work towards getting an accurate assessment of standing dead fuel through this assessment project. We will run the Forest Vegetation Simulator (FVS) model to help us determine possible outcomes if a variety of treatments take place, including a “no action” scenario.
- Learning/transfer of information from the outcomes of fighting the fire should be happening. Collect lessons learned and get them to the right people.
Response: We agree, lessons learned from suppression efforts need to be shared. The National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) is one program developed to support wildland fire initiatives including accelerating and increasing fuels treatment, increasing capability and capacity, and evaluating and developing a more effective fire management model for complex fires. We will utilize the information provided by the forest fire professionals to steer future recommendations within the project area
- Treating where the Hyampom and Miners fires meet should be a priority.
This area is of a high concern for a few reasons; fire trends (frequency of the area burning); proximity to the community of Hayfork; and fire suppression activities and soil stability. We will spend a significant amount of our time on this area and will focus our evaluation on short and midterm resource needs.
- Maintain existing fire lines/fuel breaks
The fuel breaks and fire lines that were used and/or created during the Miners Fire suppression efforts will be evaluated for their usefulness, strategic locations, accessibility, ability to maintain and so on. Through this assessment suggestions will be made on what fire lines/ fuel breaks to maintain for future use and which ones should be decommissioned and rehabilitated based on future fire use, accessibility, maintenance, safety etc. During suppression efforts two foot trails within the Pattison Roadless Area were used as fire lines; through this assessment we will evaluate the feasibility of rehabbing these foot trails.



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- Need to ensure fire lines (fire suppression efforts) don't add sediment to the watershed. The Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) teams conducted fire suppression assessment and rehabilitation efforts immediately following the fire. These efforts focused mainly on Hillslope stabilization, Road and trail storm proofing, Noxious weed treatments and detection, Safety and protection and included road work to remove berms and cleaning and upsizing culverts for anticipated increased flows, water barring, mulching areas with straw, and so on.
- Use Rx Fire to retreat areas that burned with low to moderate intensity. Rx fire is a great management tool when used correctly. It can be extremely effective, cost efficient, and has ecological benefits. However, there are also downfalls to using Rx fire such as public support, air quality regulations, burn windows, personnel availability, etc. Through this assessment we will work with FS personnel to determine what areas would be feasible to manage/maintain with Rx fire
- Make a Fire Management Plan that pre-prescribes areas before there is a fire so that we can both use the fire to our advantage and keep it away from communities. In the past the Forest used to have plans called Pre Fire Response Plans, which would give managers sound advice for management actions during a wildfire incident. The problem is that these plans were done prior to the digital era which means they are difficult to find, difficult to use, and are most likely need to be updated. The Forest also lacks a Fire Management Plan which would help managers make sound decisions during a wildfire incident. Because of the location of the Miners Assessment Project area to the communities of Hayfork and Hyampom we will address these concerns within our assessment.
- Clean up areas in the Adaptive Management Area (AMA), and where there are fewer restrictions (private lands etc.) first. A large portion of the project area falls within Administratively Withdrawn, Unroaded Non-Motorized Recreation. Currently any work in Roadless Areas must be specifically approved by Sec. Vilsak. This makes it very difficult to get timely work done within these areas until guidance on this Administration's Roadless Rule is given. We will prioritize projects within the Roadless Area, however, these constraints will be considered when making overall recommendations.
- Encourage research that will build a case for the repercussions of fuel loading (leaving dead fuel in the forest after a severe burn). Through this assessment we will run some models to determine outcomes for different management scenarios, one of which will be if no treatments are done. These models will take what is on the ground today and look 10, 20, 50... years down the road to see what different outcomes may be. This information will be passed along to those who affect policy.



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- Do NEPA before fires so we can respond quickly to post fire opportunities/needs (Pre-prescribe post fire treatments)
Response: Problem is that you will be doing NEPA everywhere which isn't economically or practically feasible, plus NEPA environmental assessments need to be up to date and therefore will "go bad" if not used in a timely manner.
- Utilize the "Roads and Ridgetops" plan as a guide for consensus projects that could be implemented.
The Shasta-Trinity NF is currently working on a Roads and Ridgetops plan. We will be working with Shasta-Trinity planners to insure that are efforts are in sync.
- Firefighters were able to use the Bar 717 Ranch as a starting place because of existing defensible space created by fuels reduction projects.
Additional areas that could be used as strategic fire suppression points will be investigated through this assessment.

Watershed Restoration/Health

- Concern for algae bloom in Hayfork Creek
This assessment will investigate and address some of the issues around high water temperatures, water quality, and low flows
- Addition of Bear Creek, Gates Creek, and Knowles Gulch to the "Creeks of Concern" BAER map. This map indicates creeks that are likely to suffer from sediment inputs.
This assessment will analyze Bear Creek, Gates Creek, and Knowles Gulch

Policy

- R. Jaegel would like a silviculturists added to the BAER teams as the fuels left after a fire are a serious threat to the safety of communities.
This is a great suggestion however it falls outside of the scope of this project. We will forward your concerns to those who have an effect on policy

Human Uses/Recreation

- Consider how some of the fire lines could be used as hiking and equestrian trails.
Response: Some of the fire lines that were utilized during the suppression efforts were pre existing trails (trails suitable for foot and horseback travel). The Bear Creek and Pattison Trail are located within the Pattison Roadless area. Through this assessment we will examine the feasibility of repairing these trails to a condition that is compliant with the Shasta Trinity Land Resource Management Plan for Unroaded Non-Motorized Recreation.
- Concern for OHV use on sensitive/erosive soils
Response: Through this analysis we will look at current OHV access, locations of fire lines on sensitive soils and current closures.



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- Determine which roads should be priorities to keep open in partnership with the community (perhaps through the CWPPP revision process) and work on ways we can maintain them that are fiscally feasible and make sense for response times, and being ecologically sounds/good roads.

The CWPP update will be taking place this winter (2009/2010), it is crucial that if the public has strong opinions on what roads should remain open for fire response time that they make those known so that they can be future evaluated. In regards to the Miners Assessment Project we will be working with the Forest staff to determine recommendations concerning road closures and maintenance in regards to fire suppression, water quality, appropriate use, feasibility etc.

If you have questions or concerns about the comments or responses made please contact Nadya Novak at the Watershed Research and Training Center 530-628-4206

Meeting Attendees:

Josh Smith
Steve Graves
Jesse Cox
Homer Yates
Tim Bradley
Curt Conner
Kent Collard
Larry Winters
Pat Frost
Nadya Novak
Donna Harmon
Michelle Medley-Daniel
Jim Gonzales
Alex Cousins
Joseph Bower
Bob Sherman
Joe (Willow Creek FSC)
Andrew Spain
Jeanne Bonomini
Carl Bonomini
Roger Jaegel
Stan Stetson
Stan Ehler
CalFire Rep.
One woman and one gentleman who didn't sign in