

**Amendments to the  
Tehama East/Tehama West  
Community Wildfire Protection Plan**



**Report to the Tehama County Board of Supervisors and CAL FIRE Tehama-Glenn Unit Prepared by**

**Resource Conservation District of Tehama County 2 Sutter**

**Street, Suite D**

**Red Bluff, California 96080**

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**Resource Conservation District of Tehama County**

**Proposed Amendments to Tehama East and Tehama West Community Wildfire  
Protection Plan  
May 2020**

- 1. RCD of Tehama County Fire Coordinator**
- 2. Battle Creek Ranch Forest Health Project**
- 3. Mineral Firewise Hazard Tree Removal Project**
- 4. Tehama Mendocino Fuel Reduction Partnership Phase II Project**
- 5. Collaborative Watershed Restoration Treatments on Former Commander Industries In-  
Holdings Located Within the Mendocino National Forest.**
- 6. Brushing and Herbicide Applications Along Sierra Pacific Roads in Tehama County**
- 7. Elder Creek Watershed Assessment**
- 8. Additional Vegetation Treatment and Fire Ecology Projects Within the Lassen Volcanic  
National Park**
- 9. Continuation of Westside Fuel Treatments from Platina to the Whiskeytown National  
Recreation Area**
- 10. State Route 32 E Roadside Vegetation Treatments**
- 11. Education and Community Outreach**
- 12. Carbon Sequestration**

## 1. RCD of Tehama County Fire Coordinator

Over the past 16 years, the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County (RCDTC) has provided a Fire Safe Council Coordinator to the Tehama Glenn Fire Safe Council. Funding for the coordinator has been provided using RCDTC overhead dollars. Providing this funding reduces the number of dollars available for RCDTC funded fire related education, outreach and implementation efforts. To improve coordination and effectiveness of federal, State and local government efforts to develop and implement fire/fuels management efforts within Tehama County, funding for the creation and maintenance of a full time Countywide Fire Coordinator is recommended. Potential funding sources could include fire related public and private grant sources, or that provided by Tehama County Government. Tasks assigned to this individual could would include:

- Continued coordination of the Tehama-Glenn Fire Safe Council and the organization's meetings
- Development of funding applications for fire/fuels management projects to be implemented by the RCDTC and other Tehama County entities.
- Providing continual contact with federal and State fire/fuels management entities to obtain information and spatial data related to project work that is in process, has been completed or is proposed within Tehama County. This information would be continually incorporated into the Tehama County Base Map. The goal of this coordination and mapping effort is to better connect, coordinate and leverage the efforts being developed and implemented by local fire entities throughout Tehama County to better protect the communities and watershed resources of Tehama County.

## 2. Battle Creek Ranch Forest Health Project

Work within Battle Creek Meadows Ranch forestlands would include an array of forest health treatments including pre-commercial thinning, removal of dense, poorly growing trees and brush within the understory, processing of dead ground fuels and treatment of roadside vegetation along State Route 172. Completion of proposed project work is expected to improve forest health and its resilience to fire and climate changes through a reduction in competition between healthy mature trees in the overstory and poorly performing small trees and dense brush within the project area's understory. Project area forest stands will also be better protected from wildfire through the removal of dead ground fuels; while roadside ignition risk will be reduced through the roadside treatments to be completed along State Route 172 highway infrastructure. This project would also improve the protective capabilities of the **Mineral Firewise Hazard Tree Removal Project** located to the north of this efforts project area.

## 3. Mineral Firewise Hazard Tree Removal Project

This project would result in the reduction of large and small tree stem density and the overall volume of live and dead ground fuels within the Mineral community. Treatments would occur on developed sites within 100 feet of all structures such as homes and business. Open areas throughout the Mineral and Mill Creek communities would be included as well, when appropriate and conducive to community protection. Once completed,

roadside ignition risk, ground fire spread, ground to crown and crown to crown connectivity between large trees and structures will be reduced. In addition, project treatments will improve both communities' defensible space. Importantly, both sets of treatments will lessen the threat of high-severity wildfire impacts within the Mineral and Mill Creek communities along with related Green House Gas generation. Once vegetation treatments have been completed and wildland fuels reduced, only a limited amount of smoke and GHGs will be produced during pile burning operations. This contrasts with the extremely large release of smoke and GHGs during large wildfire events that are becoming a common occurrence within Tehama County. It is anticipated that the protective abilities of this project will be improved through completion of the **Battle Creek Ranch Forest Health Project** located to the south of this effort's project area.

#### **4. Tehama Mendocino Fuel Reduction Partnership Phase II Project**

At the present time, the RCD of Tehama County is completing CAL FIRE California Climate Investments Program project work on Crane Mills and Mendocino National Forest Lands within the South Coast Range of Western Tehama County. As proposed, additional vegetation and forest health related project work similar to the RCD's current efforts would be completed on both Crane Mills and Mendocino National Forest parcels adjacent to the current project area. These treatments would include:

- Thinning and removal of diseased overstory trees.
- Thinning of small understory trees through mastication, piling and burning or chipping and shipment of material to a local biomass cogeneration plant
- Thinning of young (less than 100 years old) conifer stands and plantations.
- Mastication or broadcast burning depending on vegetation
- Disposal of material unsuitable for commercial utilization through mastication, chipping and burning
- Reforestation through planting of appropriate tree species.
- Retention of suitable snag trees within all treatment units
- Improved green tree and oak retention which will restore balance between attainable forest management practices and development of desired late-seral stand attributes.

#### **5. Collaborative Watershed Restoration Treatments on Former Commander Industries In-Holdings Located Within the Mendocino National Forest**

It is proposed that collaborative watershed improvement/protection efforts be developed between the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County and the Glenn County Resources Conservation District related to Glenn County forestlands adjacent to the **Tehama Mendocino Fuel Reduction Partnership Phase II Project**. Lands under consideration for this effort include 22,574 forested acres formally managed by Commander

Industries that were incorporated into the National Forest system in 2003. These properties are being managed under the Mendocino National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan for multiple public benefits including the provision of recreational opportunities, maintenance of wildlife corridors, protection of threatened and endangered species, the promotion of old growth forest characteristics, reducing fuel loads and enhancing watershed functioning. These parcels are bordered by Kneecap Ridge on the South, Forest Highway 7 to the North, Black Butte River and Plaskett Ridge to the west and the Alder Springs area to the east. Currently Identified Resource Issue Within the Former Commander Parcels include understocked timber stand moderately erodible soils, minor land sliding along steep drainages, gully erosion and heavy fuel loadings attributable to past logging

Rationale for Initiative:

- Grindstone Creek is a significant tributary to Stony Creek and its watershed is located within both Glenn County and Tehama County.
- Maintaining watershed conditions within this tributary will require collaborative efforts from both Counties.
- The Glenn County RCD and RCD of Tehama County have established Interagency Agreements with the Mendocino National Forest and with one another. Both sets of agreements were developed with the goal of improving and maintaining watershed conditions within those portions of Sacramento River tributary watersheds located on National Forest lands within the two counties.
- Using these agreements, the USFS can utilize staff and expertise of the Glenn County RCD and RCD of Tehama County. The agreements between both RCD's allow the two entities to work together on restoration efforts within National Forest lands and other areas of their respective counties.
- Assures that local landowner and community concerns are addressed and incorporated into the project implementation efforts

Major goals of this initiative:

- Protection of plantations
- Protection of riparian zones within Grindstone Creek and others including Cold Creek, Spanish Creek and segments of the Black Butte River.
- The development of adequately stocked forest stands.
- Reduction of fire ignition spread risk through the treatment of green and dead fuels.
- Development of improved terrestrial and aquatic habitat.
- Reduction of road related sediment within the major streams of the project area

## **6. Brushing and Herbicide Applications Along Sierra Pacific Roads in Tehama County**

Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) maintains a network of forestland roads throughout Tehama County. In addition to SPI personnel, these roads are used by fire fighting forces to rapidly access remote wildland areas. As result of reduced response time, small fires can often be controlled before they grown into catastrophic wildfires. As proposed, this effort would entail simple brushing and follow up application of herbicides to approximately 15' both sides of the road edge along Sierra Pacific Industries routes within Tehama County to improve access for firefighting personnel.

## **7. Elder Creek Watershed Assessment**

In discussions with Mendocino National Forest personnel, there is a considerable amount of fuels work that needs to be completed within the Elder Creek Watershed on both public and private parcels. Forest Service regulations require that a watershed assessment and plan be completed before projects can be funded, developed, designed and implemented on USFS lands. The goal of this effort is to complete a watershed assessment/management plan developed to U S Forest Service standards that would apply to both public and private lands within the Elder Creek Watershed. With this analysis in place, the RCDTC could apply for USFS dollars and other funding sources to implement fuels work on private lands as well as federally managed parcels. The MNF could also conduct agency funded projects on National Forest Lands within this watershed.

## **8. Additional Vegetation Treatment and Fire Ecology Projects Within the Lassen Volcanic National Park**

At the present time, the RCD of Tehama County has an interagency agreement with the US Department of Interior's National Park Service to procure the services of the RCD's Vegetation Management Program's equipment, staff and field personnel. Over the past two years, District personnel have completed various vegetation management effort within a number of developed sites inside Lassen Volcanic National Park (LVNP) boundaries. Based upon discussions with National Park Service personnel, other areas of the LVNP need vegetation treatments to reduce fire ignition and spread risk and to reestablish the Park's natural fire ecology. These efforts are currently limited by reduced federal funding for fire and fuels management efforts on National Park Service lands. As proposed, the RCDTC would apply for non-federal funding to continue completion of needed fire/fuels management project work.

## **9. Continuation of Westside Fuel Treatments from Platina to the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area**

The RCD of Tehama County proposes the continued long term development of fuel break infrastructure that would extend the more than 70 miles of treatments that have already been developed within Western Tehama County. As proposed, additional treatments would be complete between Platina and the State Route 36W corridor, north to the Whiskeytown National Recreation Area were linear fuel breaks would connect with the significant amount of fuels work that has been completed, is in process, or has been proposed by National Park Service fire/fuels management personnel within those National Park Service lands. Work would be completed

through a consortium of entities including the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, CAL FIRE, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, RCD of Tehama County, Western Shasta RCD and the Watershed Center in Hayfork. Vegetation/fuels treatments would include a combination prescribed fire, mechanical and hand treatments.

### 10. State Route 32 E Roadside Vegetation Treatments

Proposed project work would include the development of roadside fuels reduction efforts along the State Route 32E highway right-of-way corridor. The goal of this effort would be to address CAL TRANS concerns related to high fire ignition risk along this heavily used State Highway. In addition to understory vegetation, hazard trees would be removed. Continued maintenance of vegetation treatments would be the responsibility of CAL TRANS.

As proposed, treatments would occur exclusively on private lands. Work on federal lands would occur at later date under a separate project once NEPA analysis and environmental documentation had been completed. These linear vegetation treatments would tie together other regional fire/fuels management efforts adjacent to the State highway corridor that have been completed, proposed, or are currently in progress. In addition, such treatments would protect known assets of the State highway corridor and provide improved ingress for first responders and egress of evacuees including those originating within the neighboring communities of Butte Meadows, Mineral, Chester, etc. The average treatment area would be approximately 75' both sides of the State highway right-of-way. Potential State Responsible Area treatment areas are shown in the table below.

TEH-32,	Post Mile	
	0.0 - 2.2	2.2
	2.5 - 3.7	1.2
	4.1 - 10.6	6.5
	21.2 - 21.4	0.2
	21.7 - 24.9	3.2
	Total SRA Miles	13.3

### 11. Education and Community Outreach

Tehama County residents and their communities have benefited from the education and community outreach activities of the Tehama-Glenn Fire Safe Council, CAL FIRE, local fire Districts, along with other County, Municipal, State, and Federal agencies. The federal Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (Title II) and the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County have provided funding to Tehama-Glenn Fire Safe Council for such efforts and the RCD of Tehama County itself has initiated its own array of education and outreach initiatives. With this funding and agency efforts, several successful programs have been or are currently being implemented that benefit Tehama County residents along with those living in adjacent areas of neighboring Glenn, Mendocino, Shasta, Plumas and Butte Counties. Among these efforts are:

- Homeowner consultations
- Emergency Preparedness and Wildfire Evacuation Planning
- Senior and disabled defensible space creation and maintenance

- Educational information and displays
- Wildfire safety information provided and community meetings
- Assistance to interested communities in becoming recognized Firewise USA Communities.

To maintain the momentum of these efforts, it is recommended that the Resource Conservation District of Tehama County seek additional funding for the RCDTC provided Tehama-Glenn Fire Safe Council Coordinator as well as to allow the RCD, CAL FIRE and other TGFSC agency members the ability to continue the efforts mentioned above. More specifically, such funds would be used to continue and expand information and education services provided to local residents from the California Fire Safe Council, the RCD of Tehama County and the Tehama-Glenn Fire Safe Council, the Firewise Communities program, Fire Districts, along with State and Federal agencies. Education and outreach programs should also address: ember awareness and what causes homes to ignite and burn in a wildland fire, the need for safe access and signage, the importance of available water, adequate fire protection, and the critical role vegetation plays in wildland fire.

Related to development, the Tehama-Glenn Fire Safe Council, local Firewise Communities, Tehama County Government, local fire Districts along with State and federal agencies should provide educational information for developers, realtors, contractors, home builders, and building inspectors on methods to ensure structure and forest survival following a wildfire. These programs should focus on PRC 4290 and the State Fire Marshall WUI Standards, with emphasis on what causes homes to ignite and burn in a wildland fire. Programs should also address:

- The need for appropriate home site location, safe access, and signage related to wildfire safety
- The importance of available water
- Adequate fire protection
- The critical role vegetation plays in wildland fire including how to make forests fire-resilient.

In addition, it is recommended that an education program be developed related to enhancing realtor and new homeowner understanding of structure fire protection and disclosure of High Fire Hazard information from CAL FIRE.

## **12. Carbon Sequestration**

Given that wildfire is a natural ecological function within Tehama County's wildland areas, it is anticipated that fire in the form of either controlled or uncontrolled natural fires or controlled burns set to manage vegetation will be an ongoing occurrence. In either event, greenhouse gasses (GHG) including CO<sup>2</sup> will be generated. To minimize long and short-term impacts of GHG production, CAL FIRE has identified five forestry strategies for reducing or mitigating greenhouse gas emissions that align with the Scoping Plan for AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions including;

1. Reforestation to sequester more carbon
2. Forestland conservation to avoid forest loss to development
3. Fuels reduction to reduce wildfire emissions and utilization of those materials for renewable energy

4. Urban forestry to reduce energy demand through shading, increase sequestration, and contribute biomass for energy generation
5. Improved management to increase carbon sequestration benefits and protect forest health

In addition to fuels reduction projects (Strategy 3), it is recommended that the RCD of Tehama County, CAL FIRE, and other public and private organization members of the Tehama-Glenn Fire Safe Council develop projects within the other four strategy categories. It is anticipated that the improvement of overall environmental conditions within Tehama County that result from such actions will efficiently and effectively sequester natural and man caused sources of Green House Gasses.

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**Jack Bramhall**  
**President**  
**Resource Conservation**  
**District of Tehama County**

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**Christine Thompson**  
**Unit Chief**  
**CAL FIRE**  
**Tehama-Glenn Unit**

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**Bob Williams**  
**Chairman**  
**Tehama County Board of Supervisors**

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**Jon Barrett**  
**Coordinator**  
**Tehama-Glenn Fire Safe Council**