

FOOTHILL FIRE FLASH

El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (EDCFSC)

Inside this Issue

- Targeted grazing
- Fences- Home hardening spotlight
- Contractor resources
- FSC news

Final CWPP comment period.

The final draft Western EDC CWPP (Community Wildfire Protection Plan) is out. Comments are being accepted until June 9, 2025. Let your ideas, any corrections etc. be heard! Submit comments to: wildfireready@edcgov.us

more things, such as fuel projects. Prescribed burns are the focus during this season, including several recent understory burns. In the winter they mostly do pile burning.



Eldorado National Forest firefighter situation

Ryan Waggoner, Assistant Chief, Eldorado National Forest (ENF), sat down with the Fire Flash recently to discuss the current situation. Fortunately, funding for the fire and fuels side of the forest remain largely intact. The forest is staffed at or above 2024 levels and has even converted many temporary positions to permanent ones with around a 90% permanent workforce.

What do they do when there are no fires? The crews are able to support

Burns can be tricky: there are restrictions on smoke, which require careful modeling and field observations before burn plans can be put into effect. Smoke especially can not be sent into the Tahoe basin, or Class 1 airsheds such as

Forecast: Challenging Fire Season Ahead

Chief Blankenheim (CAL FIRE) and Chief Waggoner (Eldorado Nat'l Forest) warn that there is a **higher risk than normal for wildfire this summer for the entire West Slope of the county.** Reasons are a higher abundance of fuel (including a higher grass crop), earlier snow melt, lower water content of remaining snow, and higher temperatures expected for June and July. **Be extra careful not to be the one to start a fire, and be sure your yard is ready!**

Desolation or Mokelumne Wilderness, or south to Yosemite National Park. Conditions are closely monitored for a low risk of fire escape as well. Authorization is given or withheld every 24 hours.

Other types of fuel work include hand thinning before prescribed burns, removal of brush along roads, fuel reduction such as mastication (where tree material breaks down faster into the soil), and even projects with a timber production element. Such timber is often small, but can be used for things like fence posts, mobile pole factories, etc.

Despite the importance of fuel management, emergency response always comes first. 3 engines and roughly 60 people from ENF helped in Southern California during the January fires, mostly on the Angeles National Forest.

Chief Waggoner reminds us to ***recreate safely*** so as to not start a fire!

Campfire permits are needed even for gas stoves and grills when used in the forest. Permits are free, [available online](#), and good across the country.

Do regular staff help with fires too? Yes, regular ENF staff who go through training and carry “red cards” are also called to help as needed, including for security, logistics, service and general support. Recent reductions in those staff will have to be absorbed.

Targeted Grazing: another great way to reduce fuels

Have you seen the dense herd of goats grazing a field along Missouri Flat Rd recently? One subset of “prescribed grazing” - grazing done for a purpose other than animal feed - is “targeted grazing”, in which a main goal can be vegetation and landscape management, or fuel reduction. This is generally done through a contract with someone who actually owns and transports/manages the livestock, by either a single WUI resident, an HOA (homeowner’s association), or a government agency. Targeted grazing can be a great tool in some situations, such as when other tools (e.g. herbicides) are either too costly or inappropriate.



As Dan Macon, livestock/natural resources UCCE advisor, recently presented to the Coloma- Lotus FSC (recording [available here](#)), targeted grazing can reduce fuels in 3 ways:

- Eating surface fuels, especially annual plants
- Defoliating and changing the growth patterns of some shrubs and small trees (reducing ladder fuels)
- Trampling (lowering fuel receptivity to ignition, reducing air flow)



Any animal that eats plants can be used, such as cattle, goats, or sheep.

Several practices are used for best results:

1. Overgrazing (especially for dense weeds like star thistle)
2. The shortest graze period possible, while maintaining adequate rest
3. The highest stock density possible
4. The largest herd size possible, consistent with sound animal husbandry practices

In general, timing is critical and depends on the vegetation targeted. And animals aren't miracle workers- the grazing tends to leave patchy results, and to require multiple years of management. The animals might also eat non-targeted plants with unintended results, or can actually improve the density of native wildflowers (such as happened at North County's Cronan Ranch after regular sheep grazing by BLM).

Which animal?

For spiny plants, sheep and goats tend to be best. For shrubs below waist height, sheep can be especially helpful. For plants growing above waist height, goats are a better choice. Cattle can be great at grazing large areas of grass and low weeds.

Home livestock

Many homeowners find that keeping animals themselves can really help with fuel reduction too. Horses can leave large pastures of basically fire safe bare dirt, while cattle can leave large areas with nice short stubble. Even free range chickens can greatly reduce fuels by eating and scratching out weed seedlings around the house.



Great resource

Macon, Dan ["Targeted Grazing: a Primer for Consumers"](#)
[UCCE publication 31-1002](#)

Own 5 acres or more? The federal **EQIP "Environmental Quality Incentives Program"** was designed to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners/renters manage their land, including fuel reduction. Technical planning advice is coupled with a financial assistance program, to help cover some of the costs of implementing conservation practices. Contact our county's Natural Resources Conservation Service at (530) 295-0120 Ext. 3. [More info about EQIP here.](#)

Fences: home hardening spotlight

Wooden and other combustible fences are a great risk when they connect to houses. They act as wicks during fires, and bring flames right up to a house, causing it to catch fire. This often leads to the total destruction of the house unless firefighters are available (unlikely in a large fire such as our Caldor Fire, or those that occurred in L.A. in January).



Photo: Wildfire Today

Attached fence bringing fire to homes and into eaves



Fence brought flames to this El Dorado Hills house during a fire last year (which firefighters were able to put out). Flames weren't able to continue along a wrought iron fence nearby.

It's NOT generally needed to replace the whole fence. Just replacing the closest 5-10 feet with something noncombustible, such as a wire gate, is generally sufficient. But when the fence provides important privacy, coming up with an alternative is more challenging and can often be expensive. One option is to clad the near house gate in fiber cement instead of wood, or to try a decorative metal one.



Photo:
NIST

Flame is much less likely to progress to a home when fence stops, such as by an opened gate, or is noncombustible, within 5 or more feet



Photo:
Elizabeth
Standeven

Example of decorative metal work that could be used on a privacy gate.

Contractors for defensible space and home hardening work.

One barrier for homeowners to making their homes more fire resilient is not knowing where to find contractors. A helpful [“Fuel Reduction Contractors”](#) section is now on the updated El Dorado County FSC website. El Dorado County contractors can be found at the [California FSC website](#) linked on the webpage. as well as on the [“Living with Wildfire”](#) webpage out of Nevada (where only contractors who complete defensible space or home hardening all day workshops are included). The [EDCFSC webpage](#) also provides good tips when hiring contractors. This is offered as a public service and the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council does NOT SPECIFICALLY recommend or endorse any of the individuals or companies listed.



Fire Safe Council News-

Upcoming Fire Service 101 Presentation

The June 18 EDCFSC board meeting will have a unique format, in which there will be a regular meeting in the morning, a barbecue at 12, and from 1-3PM a “How Wildland Fire Protection Works in California” presentation. Several engines of different types will be on hand to help us understand their size better, and various fire staff will explain how fire suppression in the county is organized and how it works.



Fire Safe Council News (cont)

Evacuation Simulation- Auburn Lake Trails

Over 100 community residents and guests attended an excellent presentation headlined by representatives from CAL FIRE, EDC Fire Protection District, and the EDC Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services (OES), as well as several other local agencies. Participants at the March 20 "Wildfire Evacuation Simulation" learned in an engaging way how local agencies deal with a rapidly developing fire and the challenges it presents to first responders, community, families, and animals when it escalates to a community evacuation. The program focused on decisions made around the firefighting response, road closures, evacuation orders, traffic control, and public safety and security during a wildfire event. A community Q&A session ended the program.

The Fire and Sheriff's representatives made quite an impression on their residents, who will be better prepared for a real wildfire evacuation as a result.



"3 PM Breaking News: Tractor trailer rollover blocks all lanes...." adds to the simulation

Webinar: Insurance shopping tips- Serrano, with United Policyholders

United policyholders, a valuable nonprofit that advises consumers on insurance issues, gave a webinar to Serrano FSC in April on "Keeping your home protected, when insurance options are limited (and expensive!)". They recorded the presentation and have made it available on their [website](#). Its very informative!

Greenwaste Dumpster Days

Several FSCs held successful Spring green waste dumpster days. Two that especially stand out are those of Sand Ridge, where two 20 yard dumpsters were filled with chipped material (the first day people could add their branches to a pile which was then chipped the next day), and Mt. Aukum, where two 40 yard dumpsters were filled with chipped material (representing 47 loads and over 400 hours of work!) and 8 address signs were made. Both FSCs used chipper contractors rather than renting chippers themselves.



Mt. Aukum FSC volunteers



“One couple fairly new to living out in El Dorado County was extremely thankful for the green waste days. It allowed them to clear an area to use for a future burn pile. The property was so overgrown that they could not find a place they felt was safe to even try a burn pile. Now they have a cleared area and have plans to clear and burn material each year to get all of their acreage in shape!”

Sand Ridge FSC chair, Elizabeth Standeven

Home and Garden Show

EDCFSC participated in the May 2025 Placerville Home and Garden Show. We even spearheaded a new "feature" at the show.... the **Wildfire Prepared section**. In this area, we encouraged contractors with home hardening services and companies selling WUI approved products to join us, enabling homeowners to more easily see products and find the help they need to make their homes more wildfire resilient. The weather was beautiful and we had a good response from the public. Several FSC volunteers made this public outreach possible; Ken and Michael from **Logtown FSC**, Tom and John from **Aukum Fairplay FSC**, Judy from **Omo Ranch FSC**, Angel from **Strawberry FSC**, Elizabeth and Denise from **Sand Ridge FSC**, and Bob from **Coloma Lotus FSC**. John Hess even toughed it out all 3 days to provide reflective signs to visitors. **Thank you to all who helped to make this possible, especially Elizabeth Standeven who organized it all!**



Wrights Lake Dark Lake FSC awards- forest cabins

This unique FSC composed of 75 cabins near Desolation Wilderness in the Eldorado National Forest (ENF) were recently honored with three national awards at the National Forest Homeowners Conference in Pasadena. The FSC had conceived and developed a 1,700-acre fuel reduction project around Wrights and Dark Lakes and obtained full NEPA environmental approvals. The project is now shovel ready and the USFS grants team is seeking the first phase of \$5 million in funding.



The project will benefit not only the cabins in the FSC, but also campground users nearby, as well as bikers, hikers, boaters, fishermen/women, swimmers, and off-roaders in this heavily used recreation area. The project is cited as being an exemplary public/private partnership, one that can be a model for fuel reduction work in other forests and cabin tracts. One of the awards went specifically to Dionne Uzes, Pacific District Ranger on the ENF, as being the years' outstanding USFS recreational advocate. Read all about it in a [May 16 Mt. Democrat article](#).

Assessor Training Re-Cap

Two well-attended workshops were held this Spring to train volunteers to perform free home hardening/defensible space assessments on the West Slope. Attendees learned from CAL FIRE, EDC fire protection and OWPR staff, (Thank you professionals!!) and several EDCFSC volunteers on how best to analyze homes for wildfire vulnerabilities and what retrofits/fuel reduction to suggest. Each two day workshop included a half day in the field assessing actual homes. Roughly 130 volunteers are now trained and ready to provide these free assessments on the West Slope. To schedule a free home assessment [contact Carri](#). (530) 647-1700

We extend a hearty thank you to seven EDCFSC volunteers who made this happen: **Hugh Council, Ron Phillips, Elizabeth Standeven, Kit Veerkamp, and Alice Cantelow** for their work organizing and teaching the workshops, and to **Karen Pullen and Dorothy Fine** for providing the all important food component.
Thank you!!

Helpful Links- reduce risk!

[El Dorado Co. Fire Safe Council](#) [Free chipping prog.](#) [Hazard Tree Program](#) . [Senior/Vet/low income program](#) .

[EDC Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience](#) includes insurance updates, info on defensible space inspections

[EDC Sheriff Office of Emergency Services \(OES\)](#) alert and warning information

[Defensible Space](#)

[Home hardening](#)

[Insurance discounts](#)

[Burning information](#)