

Plumas County Fire Safe Council



Community Hazardous Fuel Reduction (HFR) Program Overview

Thank you for your interest in collaborating with your neighbors to address the hazardous fuels that pose a risk to your safety, your home and the environment.

The Plumas County Fire Safe Council and Plumas Corporation are pleased to provide assistance to communities that are interested in collaborating to reduce the risk of wildfire.

The goal of the Council's community hazardous fuel reduction program is to provide technical and cost-share assistance to collaborating landowners to reduce hazardous fuel that threatens their homes and environment.

Community fuel reduction is a complicated process involving many entities including the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management that provide grant funds and the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection that has regulatory responsibility for forestry practices on private land. Hazardous fuel reduction work is not the same as a timber harvest although it can include the removal of commercially valuable trees and involve professional foresters.

There are several important advantages to working collaboratively with the Council. These advantages include:

- The Council has professional expertise in the form of fire science specialists, foresters and grant writers.
- The Council will pursue grant funds to assist with the cost of hazardous fuel reduction.
- The Council includes representatives of all of the agencies that are involved in implementing the National Fire Plan.
- In California the agencies that provide grants for the purpose of community fuel reduction will only work with established fire safe councils or other government or non-government entities such as non-profits.
- By working with the Council there are important cost savings associated with economies of scale. It is more cost-effective to treat 10 to 20 acres or more that are owned by several landowners than to have each landowner working independently.
- The Council works on your behalf with the foresters and the treatment contractors.

There are a number of very important considerations that you should understand as you begin to work with the Plumas County Fire Safe Council (PCFSC). These considerations relate to community fuel reduction policies including fuel reduction treatment goals, cost sharing, grant sources, and the process itself.

Cost-Share Assistance Policies

The Plumas County Fire Safe Council (PCFSC) has five important policy considerations related to the community hazard fuel reduction assistance program.

***P. O. Box 1225, Quincy, CA 95971
(530) 283-0829 or 800-973-3320 (Ca only)
www.plumasfiresafe.org***

1. The goal of a community hazardous fuel reduction project is to treat surface, ladder and crown fuel to create a fire resilient forest to protect life, property and natural resources. The treatment goal is not to perform a commercial timber harvest for silvicultural reasons to enhance forest growth, although it can be a beneficial result, or to maximize landowner economic gain.
2. The PCFSC requires that landowners contribute a minimum match of 5% (the match can be actual dollars or in-kind contribution in the form of labor or wood fiber value) to the total cost of the project.
3. The council has established a maximum cost share schedule.

Practice	Maximum Fire Safe Council contribution per acre
Mastication	\$575
Biomass Thinning	\$500
Commercial Thinning	\$0
Prescribed Burning	\$200
Hand Piling and Burning or Chipping	\$575
Mechanical Piling & Burn Disposal	\$300

For example a project that involves hand piling and burning that costs \$750 per acre will require that the landowner cover the \$150 per acre that is not covered by the maximum cost share amount of \$575 per acre.

4. Where there is potential to do so, the PCFSC requires that some amount of commercial timber be included in the project to cover all or part of the treatment costs. The commercial timber will generally be selected from the smaller diameter classes and will be selected with concurrence from the landowner. Those projects that receive cost share assistance from the federal government (National Fire Plan or Title II of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (PL 106-393)) require that all proceeds from commercially valuable trees be used to cover the project cost.
5. If it appears that the goals of the landowner or the Council will not be met then either party can withdraw from the process. Landowners certainly have the final say on cutting of trees on their property. However, if the final treatment won't provide a fire resilient stand, then the Council won't assist with the funding.

Grant Sources

The PCFSC has sought grant support from several different sources. The fires of 1999 and 2002 resulted in the development of the National Fire Plan. These fires and the existence of the National Fire Plan and the recent fires have resulted in considerable federal funding the past couple of years. The National Fire Plan grants are available through the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service to assist "communities at risk" with fuel reduction. All of the grant funds are subject to annual federal appropriations.

The specific federal grant sources include the Community Protection Grant Program and the Economic Action Program. Both of these grant programs are managed by the US Forest Service. The council has been successful in obtaining grants from both of these sources.

Another source of funds is the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. There are two sources of funds associated with this legislation, Title II and Title III. Title II

funds can be used when it can be demonstrated that the work benefits national forest land resources. The closer the land is to the national forest the better chance it will have of qualifying. Title II funds are recommended for distribution by a Resource Advisory Committee that is a local assemblage of citizens representing diverse interests. The Resource Advisory Committee recommends projects to the Forest Supervisor for approval. The Council has used the Title II funds for the actual fuel reduction treatment. Title III funds come from the same legislation, but the Plumas County Board of Supervisors distributes them. We have used these funds to plan the projects.

The Process

The PCFSC will work with communities where a resident has performed the outreach to generate community interest and recruited several homeowners. The following describes the steps involved in a community fuel reduction project.

- Step 1. Begin by talking to your neighbors. You want to generate interest among your neighbors to participate in a community fuel reduction project. Have them complete the “Homeowner Request for Community Assistance” (<http://plumasfiresafe.org/fuel/request.pdf>) form to demonstrate their interest.
- Step 2. When you have several landowners that represent more than 10 acres the Council will begin working on your behalf to develop grant proposals to help fund the project.
- Step 3. A community meeting may be held at this point to answer questions.
- Step 4. Complete the Landowner Agreement that is the legal document that addresses issues related to expectations, responsibilities and liabilities. The landowner agreement is with Plumas Corporation which implements the Fire Safe Council’s projects under a Memorandum of Agreement. The basic landowner agreement is available on line at <http://plumasfiresafe.org/fuel/agree.pdf>
- Step 5. The PCFSC develops the project. Information will be collected from preliminary field data to help develop grant proposals for treatment funds. Planning funds are required for this project step. Grant funds will be requested for both the planning and the on-the-ground fuel reduction work. These funds may come from a couple of sources.
- Step 6. When the Council has obtained planning funds the services of a Registered Professional Forester will be retained to begin the project planning and environmental assessment process. This process includes development of the required environmental documentation for both the state (California Environmental Quality Act- CEQA) and federal processes (National Environmental Policy Act-NEPA). The forester will assess the parcels to determine the treatment area and identify the boundaries with flagging. The forester will also assess the area for archaeologically significant sites, threatened and endangered wildlife and sensitive plants.
- Step 7. When the environmental documentation has been completed and approved the Council will solicit for a contractor to do the fuel reduction work.
- Step 8. Fuel reduction treatment work begins.
- Step 9. Maintenance considerations. The forest will grow back unless you perform frequent and possibly annual maintenance.

How long does all of this take?? It depends on many things but the most important time element is the time it takes to obtain the grant funds. Generally, the grant opportunities only happen once each year. The environmental assessment can take a few weeks to several months.

When there are commercially valuable trees available the project may not require any grant funds, however the costs to do the planning may be greater because of increased regulatory process.

The primary contacts will be Jerry Hurley, Plumas County Fire Safe Council Coordinator (283-0829), Mike De Lasaux, UC Cooperative Extension (283-6125), or John Sheehan, Director of Plumas Corp, (283-3739) a non-profit organization working to enhance Plumas County's natural resources.

You, or a member of the community, are encouraged to attend the Plumas County Fire Safe Council meeting (2nd Thursday of each month). The meeting agenda and minutes are available at the council website.

The Plumas County Fire Safe Council is a non-profit tax-exempt organization. Tax-deductible donations are welcomed. They can be mailed to P.O. Box 1225, Quincy, CA 95971. They are used for community firewise education or fuel reduction.