

Greenhorn Hazardous Fuels Reduction

06-DG-11051150-014

Final Project Report

December 31, 2010

General

This project was brought to the Plumas County Fire Safe Council by the Greenhorn Volunteer Fire Department, which itself had earlier conducted a homeowner “consultation” (inspection) program with PCFSC. GVFD also has used RAC funds to purchase a chipper. The VFD routinely offers a site for annual forest debris burning to the residents. The current evacuation plan (attached) was developed in 2004. This Hazardous Fuel Reduction project is a broadening of a Plumas RAC approved hazardous fuels reduction (HFR) project. The project was initially funded with \$23,380 in federal Title II funds (Secure Rural Schools) and \$54,070 in anticipated matching funds, including \$10,000 in Title III funds from the Plumas Board of Supervisors as well as funds from the Greenhorn Community Services District. The RAC funds were approved on 7/12/05 and subsequently augmented (in 2007) to a total of \$70,430 in RAC Title II funds. The original Title II contract was executed between PNF and the PCFSC with a start date of 4/18/06 and a finish date of 12/31/08. A request to extend the project till 12/31/09 was granted on 6/5/09 and further requests extended the termination date to 12/31/10.

This project took place on twenty vacant parcels (~30 acres) of various sizes, owned by the Greenhorn Community Service District as an outgrowth of a court-supervised bankruptcy sale of the subdivision. A map of the treated parcels is attached.

Fuel Conditions

The Greenhorn area has been a source of wildfire concern, most recently in the community level narratives developed by Plumas County Fire Safe Council for the *Plumas County Fuels Assessment and Strategy* (2005) as well as the *Community Wildfire Protection Plan*. Both are adopted by CalFire, FEMA, Cal OES and Plumas County. A major wildfire occurred just uphill from the community in 1990, resulting in evacuation of the area. The Forest Service has been planning evacuation road and forest thinning in the area. Industrial landowners have significantly changed fuel loading in the area already. The narrative from the 2005 *Strategy*, defining the wildfire risk, follows:

Community: Greenhorn Ranch

Dominant Historic Large Fire Behavior by Community:

Uphill runs for one burning period on southwest slopes, highway and railroad ignitions.

Tactical Considerations:

One road in and out, heavy fuels on private timberlands adjacent to entry road. Many structures in community lack defensible space. Many vacant parcels are unthinned. History in area of highway ignitions with powerful upslope runs. Approximately 425 individual parcels. Expect long-range spotting into community likely from fires starting below the community.

Fuels Comments/Recommendations:

Recent thinning on SPI lands west of community. Planned 2006 thinning project on PNF will protect SE side. Spot fire hazard from fires making uphill runs at community would likely render small fuelbreak thinning projects adjacent to community ineffective - community should work with private timberland owners to south on area treatment scale thinning projects, with emphasis on raising crown base height to reduce torching/spotting hazard. Vacant parcels as well as occupied parcels within community are high priority for thinning, emphasizing removal of ladder fuels and follow up treatment of surface fuels

Photopoints

GR 1, GR 2

Fire Behavior

Fire starting on Hwy. 70 or down slope could have extreme fire behavior with active crowning.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction Activity

A solicitation by PCFSC for registered professional foresters resulted in two proposals. Brian Wayland was hired on to develop the project in May, 2006. Wayland was succeeded by 'North Valley Resource Management' (Danielle Banchio) in late 2007. The landowner agreement was signed on 5/11/06 with Plumas County (on behalf of the Greenhorn CSD). All parcels are vacant and owned by the CSD. Thirty (30) acres were slated for fuels treatment. An Encroachment Permit was issued by the road department to allow for small log decks in the (untraveled) Right of Way.

The initial 'prospectus' (bid document) was issued on 5/21/07. A total of five bidders presented proposals ranging from **\$ 3,296 to \$ 8,561 per acre**. The original cost estimates were \$1,850 per acre (\$55,500 for 30 acres). This significant deviation from estimates to bids called for a rethinking of the project approach and a request for additional funding. Additional RAC funding was requested in August, 2007 and the RAC approved an additional \$47,050 proposal in September, 2007. Total RAC approved Title II funds were at \$70,430.

The Title II Agreement extending the project & augmenting the funding (as described above) was executed on 6/12/08.

The project was again put to bids on 4/14/08. There were six bidders by 5/12/08, ranging from \$ 65,025 to \$ 123,500. The project was awarded to the low bidder, Pearson Wildland Fuel on 6/10/08 for 26 acres. Project LTO costs ended up at **\$2,792** per acre, well over the average paid for HFR activities by PCFSC, but significantly less than the \$ 3,200-\$ 8,500 per acre actually bid in the aborted 2007 contracting process. This lower pricing, from the dollar amounts bid in 2007, was influenced by the beginnings of the basic economic downturn in mid-2008.

Project work began after a purchase order for logs was developed with Collins Pine Co (Chester). That resulted in the northern 13 + acres being logged and material brought to Chester by the PO close date on 12/15/08. The prices received for those logs were the lowest on any Fire Safe Council project to date, since the log market had deteriorated in the intervening months.

The economy and lumber prices had further deteriorated by December, 2008. Additionally, the biomass electric generator in nearby Quincy had declined accepting chips from outside of their own operations. The consequence of these developments was that the amount of funds received through the project's revenue producing operations was significantly below that anticipated as late as the 2007 RAC supplemental grant. None of the expected chip revenue was received.

The project commenced additional work (broadcast chipping and mastication) for the 2009 spring. There were no significant sales in 2009. All logging and other ground work was completed by 7/31/09. 6 log truck loads were decked, sold and shipped to cordwood suppliers. All deliveries and field work were completed by 8/31/09.

Volumes Removed/Revenues Received

The supplemental RAC application predicted that there would be 306 BDTs of Chips and 49.98 MBF of logs. The prediction at that time (8/07) was that the ensuing revenues would contribute \$26,035 to the project. All material removed was in the form of small sawlogs in two groupings. The initial log loads were taken to the Collins Pine lumber mill in Chester in December, 2008. A second group was sold as log-loads to a nearby private party (after phone bids) for use as cordwood. This latter removal was carried out in August, 2009. The project resulted in slightly more sawlogs being sold than anticipated, albeit at a lower price than predicted (60 MBF sold versus 50 predicted). No chips were sold versus the 306 BDTs predicted. This was an approximate \$12,000 decrease in projected revenues from sales. The revenues received from sales were approximately half those predicted.

These volume removals had the following revenue results:

Destination	Acres with removals	MBF	\$ Receipts from Sales
Collins Chester	13	45	11,153
Local cordwood buyer	7	15	2,200
Totals	20	60	\$13,353

Contractor Payouts

Contractor (LTO) Payments took place from 1/2/09-8/14/09 [in approximately monthly increments] and totaled \$71,197.

Monitoring

Photo Point and other monitoring were carried out by University of California Cooperative Extension for PCFSC, before and after the HFR treatments. The Photographic Monitoring report was completed in 5/10 and is an attachment to this report. In addition to photos, surface fuel, ladder fuel, canopy cover and forest composition attributes were monitored. The narrative on these aspects has not been presented as of this date (12/31/10). There were eleven photo monitoring plots established and gps'd. Before and after photos were taken in the four cardinal directions from these points. This format has been the most effective in showing changes resulting from HFR and also provides property owners with a view of changes to be expected with growth in the future. On this project, the photos show a significant reduction in surface and ladder fuels due to the HFR project.

Financial

Greenhorn Project Revenues Received

The project received the following revenues from the following sources within the grant period:

Revenue Type	Amount	Last Payment
Miscellaneous sales to Mill	11,153	4/9/09
Cordwood sales	2,200	9/8/09
RAC Title II	70,430	10/6/09
Plumas B of S Title III	10,000	2/5/07
Greenhorn CSD	2,500	9/29/09
Total	\$ 96,283	

Greenhorn Project Expenditures

Project expenses were primarily to reimburse Licensed Timber Operators to remove, masticate or chip the materials (biomass and small sawlogs), to contract Foresters to design and oversee the work and also to Plumas Corporation to administer the project on behalf of Plumas County Fire Safe Council.

The costs were incurred in the following categories during the extended term of the project (7/05-12/10):

Cost Item	Licensed Timber operators	Registered Professional Foresters	Plumas Corporation Staffing	Plumas Corporation Overhead	Plumas Corporation Direct Expenses	Total
\$s Expensed	71,197	14,788	4,515	996	227	\$ 91,722.84
%	78	16	5	1	<1	

Relative to other Plumas County Fire Safe Council projects, payments to the LTO, as a percentage of total costs, were ~ 10 % lower than comparable projects. Forester costs were ~10 % higher than earlier projects. This is due to the high level of planning, layout and supervision necessary in this small lot subdivision and its density of roads, drainage and utility poles (see attached map). Other costs were comparable to previous projects.

Total expenditures are at \$ 91,722.84 at 12/31/10 for all purposes. The final draw has been submitted to USFS and all RAC funds have been received (\$70,430) in 9/09.

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GREENHORN CREEK COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT TRAVEL ROUTES AND EMERGENCY EVACUATION STAGING AREA

