

1/10/11

## **LaPorte Rd. I Hazardous Fuels Reduction**

### **Final Report-**

### **Plumas County Fire Safe Council**

**12/31/10**

### **General**

The LaPorte Rd. I Hazardous Fuels Reduction project was a property owner initiated project to reduce dangerous forest fuels. The project area is a mile long segment of the LaPorte Rd, east of Quincy and immediately south of State Highway 70. Slopes have northerly and easterly aspects. The road segment is a crescent shape (see map).

Private owners approached the Plumas County Fire Safe Council in 2006. A final application was submitted to Cal Fire for 'Proposition 40' funding in early 2007. The project was funded by CalFire (under California Proposition 40, voter approved bond funds) for \$116,132 in April, 2007. Eleven property owners were included in this Phase I project and additional fuels work is planned for the area.

#### **Project highlights include:**

- 119 acres were thinned using a variety of techniques, well above the initial project objective of 100 acres.
- Revenues received from sale of chips to the local electric generator were \$37,500 or \$315 per acre.
- Due to the revenue received and the termination date of the project contract, only \$ 99,228 of the \$116,132 grant was expensed and claimed during the grant period.
- Remaining Prop 40 funds (~ \$17,000) have been disencumbered,
- Additional acres could have been completed if the State had been able to grant an extension. This was due to the remaining grant funds not being able to be expensed within the allowed for grant period for a variety of reasons.

A total of \$99,228 in Proposition 40 funds were expensed and invoiced. \$131,776 was expensed on the project (by 6/30/10), including funds received from sales of chips.

The initial project was completed in April of 2010. A total of 119 acres were treated (by June of 2010) in the project versus the 100 acres proposed. Post project monitoring was completed in September 2010.

## Project Milestones and Timelines

Date	Event
3/13/07	Final Application forms to CDF
4/30/07	Grant Agreement with CDF executed (through 4/15/09)
10/9/07	Community Meeting held
10/17/07	RFP for Professional Forester issued
12/19/07	Forester chosen (NVRM)
9/24/08	Project put to bids (95 acres)
10/15/08	Proposals received from 8 Licensed Timber Operators
11/30/08	LTO (Logger) contracts executed
12/4/08	CDF issues Woody Debris Exemption # 2-08 EX 982 PLU
12/23/08	California 'Bond Freeze' halts all planning and field work
1/28/09	Mitigated Negative Declaration under CEQA completed by CDF
3/23/09	Grant Extension # 1 through 6/30/09
6/15/09	Grant Freeze lifted and grant restarted
6/24/09	Grant Extension #2 through 4/30/10
11/1/09	Contract fuels work underway
11/30/09	Second CDF exemption 2-09 EX 521 PLU issued
4/15/10	Prop 40- 95 acres completed
6/30/10	Additional 24 acres completed
9/30/10	Monitoring Photos Catalogue released

## Project Area

The *Plumas County Hazardous Fuels Assessment and Strategy* (2004) showed crown fire potential in the various regions in Plumas County. The area south of Thompson Valley, east of Quincy, showed a high risk of active crown fire, even though the area is mostly north-facing.



LaPorte Rd, in this segment, contains primarily lots trending uphill from Thompson Valley, which it surrounds on two sides (S & W). 2-10 acre lots are the norm along the road and relatively new homes make this a bedroom area for Quincy.

LaPorte Rd is in the East Quincy Wildland Urban Interface and is a populated area needing fuels treatments, as discussed in the companion 2004 *Plumas County Wildfire Protection Plan* developed by the Fire Safe Council.

The East Quincy discussion from that plan follows:

**Community: East Quincy**

**Dominant Historic Large Fire Behavior by Community:**

*No large fire history on north facing slopes adjacent to town.*

**Tactical Considerations:**

*Valley-edge location exposes community to large-scale winds.*

**Fuels Comments/Recommendations:**

*Developed areas with slope are highest priority for thinning.*

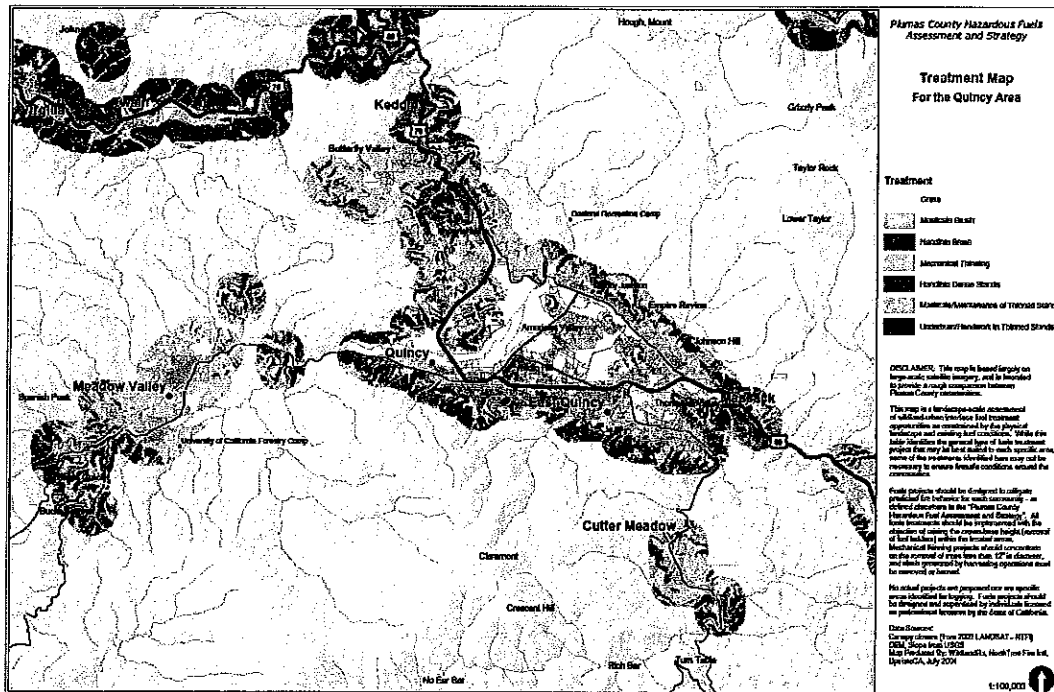
**Photopoints**

*QY 1, QY 5*

## Fire Behavior

Moderate Fire Behavior surface fire.

The 2004 *Plumas County Hazardous Fuels Assessment and Strategy* also mapped out recommended treatments. Those treatments in the LaPorte Rd. area were primarily seen to be mechanical thinning and mastication.



## Project Contract and Bidding History

PCFSC received landowner applications from the area in 2006-2007 and subsequently entered into 'Landowner Agreements' to provide for the actual field work. PCFSC had discussions with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on the possible use of their "EQIP" landowner reimbursement program for forest thinning, which had previously been used for single or a few landowners. Some of the landowners took advantage of this cost-sharing funding as well as the CDF CFIP program (see attached project area map). However, a number of the local landowners demonstrated a preference for the PCFSC funded approach since the landowner cost-share percentage is much less than either the federal or state cost share programs for individual landowners.

PCFSC submitted funding requests for a broader thinning project to California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF, now known as CalFire) for Proposition 40 funds in 2007 and also to Plumas County Board of Supervisors for federal Secure

Rural Schools Title III funds for planning purposes. This latter funding was not approved and so Prop 40 funds were used for all cost phases of this project, excepting the completion of photo monitoring work in late 2010.

The California Proposition 40 funds contract (Contract # 8CA06526) was executed in April of 2007 with an initial completion date of 4/15/09. The CDF agreement was subsequently twice extended until 4/15/10 and field work within the approved contract acreage was completed and expensed by that date.

The 2007-2008 period was spent in developing the environmental and permitting work on the project with CALFIRE (CDF). The forester began work in early 2008. The permit framework was especially time consuming. The Prop 40 funding set a very narrow framework for the project. Particularly, Prop 40 funds could not be used to develop a timber harvest plan. This limited the use of the Registered Professional Forester for these planning functions and no other funds were readily available for this function. The Prop 40 regulations also limited the size and scope of tree removal, beyond the limits employed on most PCFSC projects. This prohibition was in contrast with the initial PCFSC project proposal to harvest smaller trees for both sawlogs and chips in order to earn revenues to complete fuels work on additional acres. Chips were the only product actually generated in the project. Permits to carry out the work (CDF Exemptions) were not issued until 12/08. The overall CEQA document (Mitigated Negative Declaration [45 pages] was developed internally, completed and filed by CDF (using NVRM field analyses) on 1/28/09, releasing the project to be carried out.

The project was also, however, subject to the State Bond Freeze and all work was ordered halted on 12/23/08. The project was restarted and extended in 6/09. This false start made the effort to spend all Prop 40 funds within the adjusted time frames difficult, since a full half year of planning and thinning activity (12/08-6/09) had been consumed during the inactivity of the freeze period. The thinning Contractors were also not able to immediately restart on 6/09 since other projects had been taken on by the contractors during the 'freeze' hiatus.

PCFSC had first issued a Request for Proposals to California Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) in late 2007. The RFP was somewhat delayed due to PCFSC's desire to request proposals on five thinning projects at one time. A proposal was accepted from North Valley Resource Management (NVRM) in 12/07. This firm designed the project, developed the environmental background and analyses as well as CALFIRE permits on the project and oversaw the eventual on-the-ground work of the timber contractors.

The thinning work was initially put to bids on 9/24/08 for 95 acres. It called for a combination of thinning techniques including biomass thin from below [which generates chips for the biomass electric plant], hand piling/chipping and/or mastication. There were eight bids submitted on 10/15/08 after a field tour on 10/8/08. The bids ranged from \$66,000 to \$ 231,000. The bid *Prospectus* is attached. Pearson Forest Management was the lowest responsive bidder and a contract (\$72,650) for the mechanical work was

executed with them. American Valley Tree Service was hired for the hand pile and burn work for \$ 6,183.

The State Bond freeze (12/08) resulted in the contractors then being put on hold until mid-summer of 2009. At that time of year in 2009, field operations were somewhat constrained by the wildfire danger. The contractors could not immediately restart this 'contingent' project since they already had secured and were operating other thinning projects. Payments to the contractors began in 12/09 and the last payment was in May and June of 2010. These latter two payment periods were for acreages above and beyond the Prop 40 contract target (100 acres). Total payments to logging contractors were \$112,197. All project revenues from sale of wood chips were received from the Quincy SPI mill by 5/25/10

The contractually promised work (95 acres) was fully accomplished by 4/15/10. A total of 119 acres was accomplished by 6/30/10. The additional acres were funded with the ~\$37,500 in revenues received from chip sales.

The basic techniques used included 'biomass thin from below', hand pile and burn and mechanical mastication.

## **Monitoring**

Monitoring was carried out by UC Cooperative Extension and consisted of more than a dozen plots established at the beginning of the project (see attached map). Photo points were established in the plots (as well as other attributes) and the four cardinal directions were photographed and gps'd before and after the project. This photo series, as well as the plot data, can be used to measure the completeness of the initial thinning as well as viewed over time to gauge in-growth and the relative and timely need for future fuels treatments.

## **Financial**

### **Grant Use**

\$ 99,228 of the \$116, 132 Prop 40 grant was expensed and claimed during the grant period. CALFIRE, the RPF and PCFSC attempted to extend the grant period but various regulatory and bond statutory reasons prevented the needed extension. This had an unfortunate result that limited the project's success. The result was that ~ \$16,000 in grant funds could not be used and were disencumbered. These funds could have accomplished ~ 15-20 additional acres.

**Project Sales/ Revenues**

Revenues were predicted at \$37,888 in the project application in 2006. Actual revenues were at \$ 37,534 in 2009-2010. The nearby Quincy small log mill (Sierra Pacific Industries) temporarily closed in May of 2009 (due to the economy) and reopened in May of 2010. All project revenues were generated during that closure period. All revenues were from sales of chips to the SPI electric generator. No logs > 16” were removed or harvested in the project.

Revenues were generated on the 119 acres completed by April 2010. Revenues averaged \$315 per acre. This acreage generated 962 Bone Dry Tons- BDTs. This represents ~ 2000 ‘wet’ tons on the truck or ~ 80 truckloads of material removed. This level of chip production is > 8 BDTs per acre, equivalent to averages for other PCFSC projects. Total costs per acre were \$1,107 so the chips were able to defray ~ 36 % o of overall project costs. The progress of revenue production was as follows:

**LaPorte Rd. I Project Wood Chip Sales**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b># Bone Dry Tons</b>
12/23/2009	14,011.92	359.28
3/10/2010	10,471.11	268.49
5/10/2010	1,198.08	30.72
5/25/2010	11,853.66	303.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$37,534.77</b>	<b>962.43</b>

**Cost areas**

The costs totaled \$131,776 on the project or \$1,107 per acre treated. Logging contractor costs were \$ 943 per acre.

There were four cost areas on this project and their overall percentages follow:

<b>Plumas Corporation [PCFSC Fiscal Agent] Salaries and Benefits (including monitoring)</b>	<b>Plumas Corporation General Administration</b>	<b>Registered Professional Forester</b>	<b>Logging Contractors</b>	<b>Total \$s</b>
5,735.13	864.94	12,978.78	112,197.50	\$ 131,776.35
4.3 %	.6 %	9.8 %	85.1 %	

These percentages are comparable to other PCFSC projects. Logging costs had been predicted at \$135,500 in the Prop 50 application so the actual costs (\$112,197) were less than expected. All other costs were budgeted at \$18,750 and were actually at \$19,579.