

Guiding Principle Statement Hazardous Fuel Reduction Cost-Sharing

This guiding principle statement addresses the issue of the role of cost-share for Hazardous Fuel Reduction (HFR) projects supported and or managed by the Plumas County Fire Safe Council to assist private landowners in reducing hazardous fuels to protect homes and communities.

Intent:

A goal of the Plumas County Fire Safe Council is to reduce hazardous fuels, beyond the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) - at least 100 feet around all structures - on as many acres as possible, especially on non-industrial private lands adjacent to or intermixed with "Communities At Risk" in Plumas County. Fuel reduction projects supported by the council will result in creating a fire resilient stand, with a fuel profile that will not initiate or sustain a crown fire, and will produce flame lengths that are generally less than three feet in height.

The Council will assist private non-industrial forest landowners by sharing the costs to achieve fuel reduction goals using those methods that are best suited to the situation, including commercial timber harvest. Another goal of the Hazardous Fuel Reduction program is to do the work in the most cost-effective manner possible and obtain the greatest value for each cost-share dollar.

Principles:

The Council when providing cost share assistance to a landowner will enter into an agreement to assist in paying for:

- a) A Registered Professional Forester to assist landowners with the necessary permits and plans;
- b) Thinning operations, and
- c) Treatment of surface, ladder and crown fuels that meet the Council's standard.

There are several vegetation management options for use in hazardous fuel reduction. The options include, but are not limited to the following:

- Mastication of surface fuel.
- Chipping of dead and down woody debris to remove surface fuel.
- Hand or mechanical thinning of small trees and brush that may not have commercial value to remove ladder fuels.
- Mechanical thinning of trees with commercial value to increase inter-tree distance, reduce ladder fuels and tree canopy density and help offset costs associated with reducing other fuels.

The Plumas County Fire Safe Council expects the landowner to create “Defensible Space” and address treatment (beyond the HIZ) of surface fuels, ladder fuels and the overstory fuel associated with larger trees using one of the options described above. Additionally, the Council expects the landowner to reduce post-harvest surface and any remaining ladder fuels to a higher standard of fuel reduction than required by the California Forest Practices Rules for Timber Harvest Plans (THP); but similar to those required by California for THP Fire Prevention Exemptions.

The landowner may be required to pay up to \$250 per acre for the proposed fuel reduction treatment. However, *costs continue to fluctuate greatly so the in-kind cash contribution may be greater.* The exact amount will be specified in the Landowner Agreement prior to treatment.

Furthermore, when the fuel reduction project includes a commercial harvest component that provides revenue from forest products, the revenues will be aggregated for all property owners and contributed as part of the project’s in-kind match. When a project involves such commercial timber-harvesting operations, the Plumas Fire Safe Council requires a prescription of thinning from below.

The landowner has the final say on which trees will be removed, however the Plumas County Fire Safe Council won’t provide cost-share funds if the desired fuel profile is not attained. The PCFSC may provide cost-share assistance only for those acres that positively affect life and property beyond the Defensible Space requirements of California.

The PCFSC reserves the right to negotiate the terms of the agreement in the interest of the county, and communities. Those terms, roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined in a signed landowner agreement, approved by Plumas County’s Council.

Definitions:

Commercial timber harvest- Removal of timber products (sawlogs and biomass chips) with commercial value.

Cost-share- Financial assistance to the landowner from the Plumas County Fire Safe Council

Hazardous Fuel- Combustible material that accumulates in the forest or other wildlands and is concentrated on the ground surface as surface fuel or just above the ground surface as ladder fuel, or in the tree canopy as crown fuel.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction (HFR)- Active reduction of hazardous fuels by any of several fuel management or silvicultural practices.

Ladder Fuel- Those fuels that convey flames from the ground surface to the tree canopy. Ladder fuels are generally small trees, brush or tree limbs near the ground.

Surface Fuel- Those fuels that are located on the ground surface. Surface fuels are generally comprised of litter and duff, grasses and forbs and down woody debris.

Tree canopy- Limbs and foliage that are on large trees and brush and the interrelationship thereof.

Wildland-urban interface (WUI)- The area where communities and homes intermix with or are adjacent to wildland vegetation, including forests and chaparral, that can readily burn and cause loss of life and/or property.