

Little Grass Valley HFR Project

Grant # 07-DG-11051150-014

December 31, 2010

Final Report

General

This project is a Hazardous Fuels Reduction project on private industrial forest lands in the Wildland Urban Interface surrounding recreational subdivisions on Little Grass Valley Reservoir, near LaPorte. It was initiated primarily by the homeowners. More than two dozen nearby homeowners (organized by one homeowner) sent letters to Plumas County Fire Safe Council (PCFSC) requesting the thinning project on the adjacent industrial forest lands in order to reduce the destructive effects of wildfires.

The project accomplished the following:

- Soper Wheeler Co. reduced forest fuels on 111 acres southwest of Grass Valley Reservoir to fire safe levels (expected 2-4' flame lengths in a wildfire).
- Local residents, local contractors, Plumas County, the Plumas County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC), Plumas Corporation, Plumas County Fire Safe Council, University of California Cooperative Extension, LaPorte Volunteer Fire Department, CALFIRE and the US Forest Service successfully combined efforts between 2005- 2010 to make the area more fire resilient. The primary fuels work was completed in 2008. The mastication, hand piling and burning surface fuels treatments were completed in 2009.
- Sales of wood chips were used to offset approximately 1/3 of the fuels reduction cost on this project, providing additional employment (beyond the loggers) at the nearby biomass electric generator.
- Complimentary work has been accomplished in nearby LaPorte (public and private lands), on nearby national forest lands (as part of the Herger Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act) and also at individual elderly and disabled homesites in the area (using RAC and other National Fire Plan funding through PCFSC).

Plumas RAC ‘Secure Rural Schools’ funds Title II funds were applied for on 4/26/06 by the Plumas County Fire Safe Council (PCFSC) in cooperation with the adjacent residents and the landowner- Soper Wheeler Co.. The project was approved by the RAC on 6/2/06. The Title II contract with USFS (\$55,510) was executed on 3/13/07 and originally ran through 12/31/08. The project contract was subsequently extended until 12/31/10 to accomplish all the tasks (including hand pile burning and monitoring). Title III funds

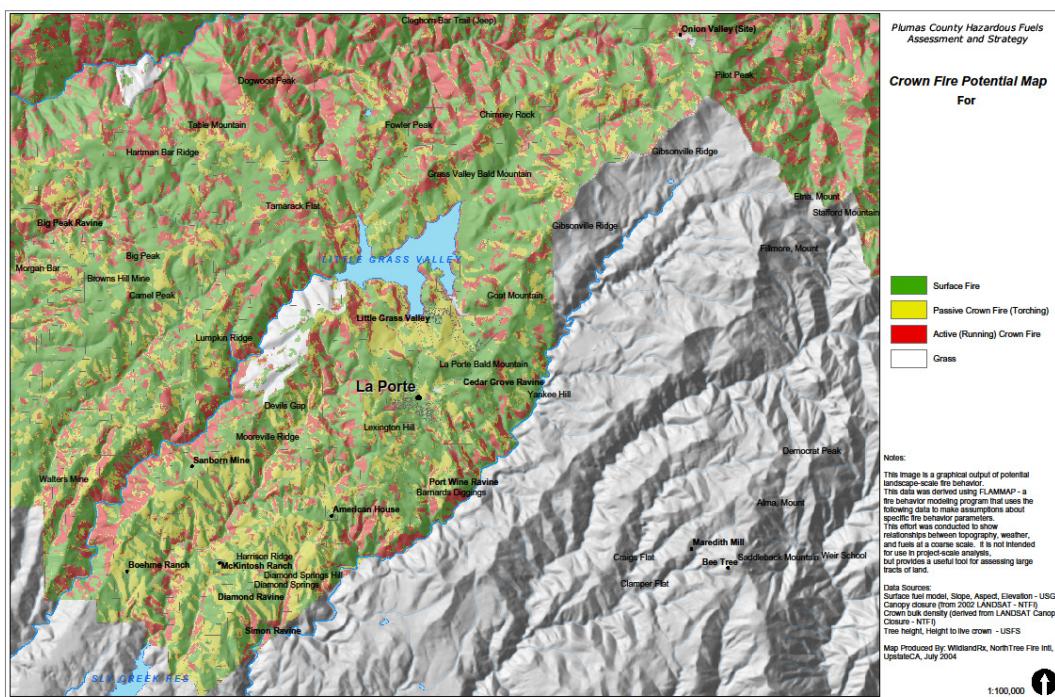
(\$5,000) for project planning were approved by the Plumas County Board of Supervisors in June, 2006. The intent was to reduce fuels on 111 acres.

The project took place over a number of years. The highlights and a schematic timeline of the project follows:

Year	Date	Activity
2005		Outreach to residents and discussions with Soper Wheeler
2006	1/3	District Ranger approves project Concept
	4/26	Final proposal submitted to Plumas RAC
	6/26	Plumas RAC approves proposal
	7/1	Plumas Supervisors approve planning funds (Title III)
	9/21	Budget and other application forms to PNF
	10/1	New federal fiscal year with earmarked funding
2007	2/12	PNF Supervisor approves project
	3/13	Title II project funding contract executed
	8/22	District Ranger approves environmental review
2008	12/17	Soper Wheeler reports that all acres have basic thinning complete with invoices for project reimbursement.
	12/19	PNF extends project till 6/30/09
2009		Soper Wheeler completes piling and burning in late fall.
	6/29	PNF extends project till 12/31/09
	12/31	PNF extends project till 6/30/10
2010	8/15	UC Cooperative Extension completes photo monitoring report.
	10/7	PNF extends project till 12/31/10

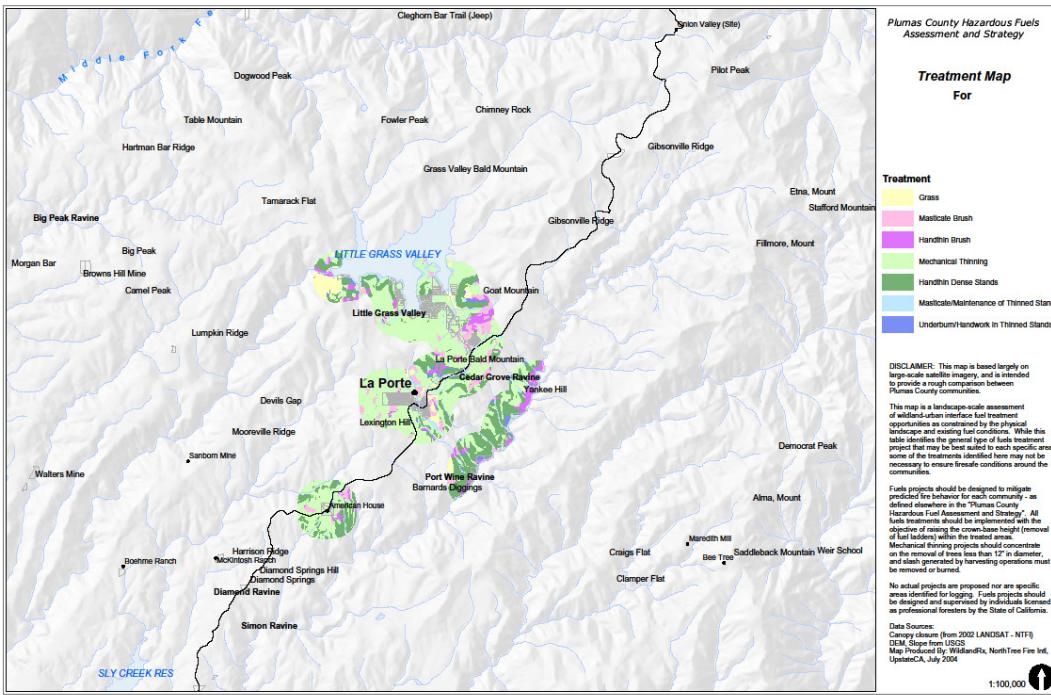
Hazardous Fuels Reduction Approach and Costs

Little Grass Valley reservoir is relatively high up in the watershed (~ 5,000') and in an extremely high precipitation zone (~ 75" per year). The (primarily summertime recreational) subdivisions around the reservoir are included in the Wildland Urban Interface. The following map from the *Plumas County Hazardous Fuels Assessment and Strategy* (PCFSC) shows the crown fire potential in the area as moderate:



The attached map (following this report) shows the planned project treatment areas on USFS and private lands in LaPorte and Little Grass Valley reservoir area.

The 2005 *Plumas County Hazardous Fuels Assessment and Strategy* (PCFSC) mapped the prospective fuels treatments in the area as follows:



The *Strategy* also described the circumstances in the area in this manner:

Community: LaPorte/Little Grass Valley

Dominant Historic Large Fire Behavior by Community:

Lightning ignitions resulting in multiple starts. Few large fires above elevation of La Porte.

Tactical Considerations:

Good access to ridgetops, rugged canyons, situated at break to true fir forest. "Diggings" south of town have tactical value and could be incorporated into fuelbreak design. 1999 fire burned area southwest of Little Grass Valley Dam.

Fuels Comments/Recommendations:

Mainly true fir above town. While planned DFPZ projects would provide regional level protection to developed areas, many of the planned fuels projects on USFS land in the area have not been implemented or completed. The South Fork DFPZ project below town received only one bid, and was pulled until Sierra Nevada Framework thinning specifications could be revised. Many of the units in the Bald Onion DFPZ - located above and around Little Grass Valley Reservoir - will be technically difficult to burn in their current layouts. Also, opportunities for fall burning at this elevation have been difficult to obtain - mainly due to hesitancy at Forest Level to allow prescribed burning during last month of official wildfire season - when many of these units are within their burn prescription.

Roadside hazard reduction on private lands between La Porte and Little Grass Valley Reservoir and clearance of fuels around individual structures are high priority.

Plantations in clearcuts south of town may need thinning. Opportunities for private landowners in Upper South Fork Feather River basin above Lt. Gr. Valley Res (sec 11 east of chimney rock) to collaborate on stalled Bald Onion DFPZ.

Photopoints

LP 1, LP 2, LG 1, LG 2

Fire Behavior

Moderate Fire Behavior with Passive Crown Fire.

Project Implementation

The project was carried out on Soper Wheeler Company forest land around the reservoir and the subdivisions (see map). The firm conducted the planning/NEPA research and CDF permitting work (expensing against Title III and their own funds). They were authorized to proceed with that field work on 3/13/07 by the USFS Feather River District Ranger, who issued a Decision Notice on the project, since federal funds are involved.

Bids were received in 9/08 and were ~ \$29,000 above original estimates. Soper Wheeler subsequently worked with the involved contractors and reached acceptable prices. ‘Biomass thin from below’ fuels work began in October of 2008 and continued into December, 2008. Numerous burn piles were created by this activity and they were all burned by early November of 2009. Some remaining surface fuels work was also accomplished by Soper Wheeler as part of this ‘finish’ fuels treatment work.

Full billings were received from Soper Wheeler on 12/17/08 for the \$146,279.50 in expenses incurred on the project by their contracted timber operators. The grant paid for \$ 46,010 in project thinning expenses. Project revenues (primarily from chip sales) were \$ 58,698 (totaling \$ 104,708 in ‘revenue’ to the project, including the RAC grant). Soper Wheeler absorbed the “overage” of \$ 41,571.50 on the project. Soper Wheeler also absorbed the 2009 costs of pile burning and the remaining surface fuels reduction activities. Some surface fuels work was finished in fall, 2009. Pile burning was completed in early November, 2009 after the onset of winter snows. Costs to Soper Wheeler on the fuels treatment portion of the project were well over \$1,300 per acre. The RAC grant paid \$ 414 per treated acre.

The project established monitoring photo points and plots in 2007. This post-project monitoring work was accomplished under the auspices of UC Cooperative Extension in September 2010. The photo series is an attachment to this report. All field work is now complete. This delay did necessitate a request for RAC contract extension until 12/31/10 to complete the final report.

Financial

There was \$ 50,582.48 in Title II funds (RAC) expensed as of 9/30/10. The grant was \$55,510. No further expenses are contemplated. \$5,000 in additional Title III funds have been expensed. The logging costs were all incurred by Soper Wheeler.

Budget Projections vs. Actual Expenses

There were basically three cost components on this project: Project administration and monitoring, Project planning/environmental analyses and permitting as well as the actual Hazardous Fuels Reduction work in the field. The funds expended by Soper Wheeler (\$103,769 reported-see asterisk)) were somewhat offset by \$56,898 in sales of chips from the acres treated.

Sources	Projected Uses			Actual Uses				
	Total Plan \$ s	Admin and Monit	Plan and Envir	Fuels Reduct	Total \$s Used	Admin and Monit	Plan and Envir	Fuels Reduct
Plumas RAC Title II	55,510	9,500		46,010	50,582	4,572		46,010
Soper Wheeler	52,562		3,500	49,062	103,769		3,500	100,269*
Plumas Supervisors Title III	5,000		5,000		5,000		5,000	
Total	113,072				159,351	4,572	8,500	146,279

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La Porte RAC Projects La Porte Pines and Little Grass Valley

