

## **DEFENSIBLE SPACE CHIPPING PROGRAM NARRATIVE DESCRIPTIONS**

### Project Description

The Defensible Space Chipping Program provides landowners direct assistance in meeting their hazardous fuels reduction goals. This program is rated as a high priority in the countywide CWPP developed by the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County. The project goal is to reduce landscape fuel loading across the checkerboard pattern of private and public land ownership to protect the forest from catastrophic wildfire. Mutual goals include forest health, increased resistance to insects/diseases/fire, improved wildlife habitat and protecting community assets.

### Goals/Results

Implementing defensible space and evacuation routes provides speed bumps across the landscape to slow the rate of fire spread while providing fire suppression resources a safe working environment. The goal is 800 acres of treatment based on 1 acre of clearing per resident participating in the program. Additional goals are to avoid residential debris burns and improve air quality. The expected results are to improve forest and watershed health, protect it from catastrophic wildfire, insects and diseases.

### Scope of Work

The program provides drive by chipping service to all residents of Nevada County working to reduce ladder fuels <8" DBH on their property and private roadways. Material is hand cleared by landowners from their property and stacked within 5 feet of a roadway. Neighborhood routes rotate on a weekly basis. An Access database system manages the individual work orders and provides route schedules for completion based on a first-come, first-served basis. The council owns a chipper and utilizes trustee labor from the county jail. Nevada County Consolidated Fire District provides maintenance service and fuel to support the program. This program model provides a low-cost program at \$95 per hour of service compared to a retail average of \$200 per hour. Program outreach is conducted through print, radio, newsletters, website, Facebook, Twitter, presentations and email. Ongoing education and support services provided are a tremendous incentive to get the work done.

Brush is chipped and material is left on site to allow use for weed abatement and soil enrichment/erosion control. Statistical information is gathered on in-kind donations from landowners to cut and stack the brush, monies paid to have work completed by contractors, trips avoided to transfer station and number of piles that were not burned.

Success is measured by program participation and a quality assurance survey that is left for residents to complete after receiving service. The Fire Safe Council Board of Directors reviews statistical reporting as well as individual responses to ensure the program is effective at meeting the community's need.

### Location

The project is located throughout Nevada County where landowners are working to clear defensible space around their homes, other structures and evacuation routes. Project work is conducted along existing roadways where landowners have completed fuels reduction clearing.

Chipping services will be provided so long as access for the chipping equipment is safe and adequate for turning around.

### Purpose

The purpose of this project is multifold – community wildfire protection, forest health restoration and watershed improvement. This project is identified as a high priority in the CWPP and Multi-Hazard, Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan update and sponsored by Nevada County. The loss of the watershed to catastrophic wildfire with its attendant sediment problems would be devastating sending toxins from structure loss into the watershed downstream.

### Project Summary

Restoring forest health provides multiple benefits and has widespread community support. This project will restore the forest to historic stocking levels, reduce the fire hazard, improve watershed functions and protect the irreplaceable historic assets of the 49'er gold rush.

### Environmental Setting

The vegetation models in the county include oak woodland, chaparral, mixed conifer to sierra alpine. The environmental setting is adjacent to residential development throughout the county where disturbance has occurred. Mitigating fuels around evacuation routes and homes provides a mechanism to reduce the impacts of human use of the forest and watershed. There are currently no proposed land use changes for established residents using the drive by chipping program.

### Workplan and Schedule

1. Program promotion (Months 1-12)  
Conduct continual public outreach via website, Facebook, Twitter, HOA newsletters, direct email, radio/newspaper PSA's and live talk interviews. Forest health education embedded in all outreach regarding fuels mitigation.
2. Operations (Months 1-12)  
Distribute work order forms, answer customer inquiries, enter data into Access for management, create route list schedules, receive/record Q&A surveys, resolve complaints/issues in operations, chipper maintenance scheduling, database queries for reporting/mgmt
3. Grant Administration & Accounting (Months 1-12)  
Detail accounting/mgmt of staff /volunteer hours, in-kind contributions, revenues and expenditures. Includes pro-rated share of annual fiscal compliance audit, overhead and general supplies.

### RESTRICTIONS, TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS & AGREEMENTS

Defensible space clearing and roadside vegetation management are exempt under CEQA. Individual property owners submit a work order request form to secure service and agree to the terms and conditions of the program prior to receiving service.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

FSCNC is a recognized leader in fire safe programs in the State of California. We have been awarded *The Bronze Smokey* for outstanding public service in wildfire prevention by the US Forest Service National Association of State Foresters and The Advertising Council in 2001. The *Regional Excellent Award* in 2003 from the CA Fire Safe Council. Our Executive Director was given a *Special Recognition Award* by the Nevada County RCD in 2007 for dedication and advocacy to the awareness and collaboration of partnerships and the 2010 Forestry Achievement Award by the NorCal Society of American Foresters. The National Fire Protection Assoc granted the 2010 Firewise Leadership Award to the council. FSCNC was the only award in CA in 2010. We have a full time Executive Director, part-time office manager and part-time chipping supervisor. Our paid staff is supported by 18 directors, 50 routine volunteers and contractors. FSCNC passed each fiscal audit over the past 5 years.

### COOPERATION & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

This project was identified as a top priority in the Nevada County CWPP. The CWPP was developed in collaboration with a volunteer community core team( including representation from both western and eastern county) and professional expertise through contractor TSS Consultants. Public town hall meetings were advertised and held in Truckee and Grass Valley to obtain feedback and conduct surveys of values. The CWPP is a countywide plan and was the first to incorporate ecosystem values into the analysis in order to normalize the diversity of development patterns. The CWPP has formal signature support from 14 entities, including the Forest Service, BLM, Cal Fire, County of Nevada, Office of Emergency Services, City of Grass Valley, City of Nevada City, Town of Truckee, The Sierra Club, the Federation of Neighborhood Associations and Nevada County Fire Chief's. This project was collaboratively developed and strategically placed for maximum benefit.

### LONG TERM MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

All landowners participating in the program will have already demonstrated the commitment to long term management simply by the initial clearing of fuels. Many are already in a maintenance regime after creating defensible space. This program's benefits are sustainable due to the landowner's desire to steward their land. Cal Fire provides enforcement of PRC4291 and more recently homeowner insurance companies are inspecting properties for defensible space prior to renewal. These mechanisms provide periodic inspections of properties to ensure they are managing the hazardous vegetation fuels around their homes and communities.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures include the number acres treated for hazardous fuels, total acres of forest restoration through thinning and releasing the forest structure and number of homes in the community protected. Target measure for forest restoration is 800 acres, with 15,000 people learning of the project through education, and \$100,000 value through in-kind labor donations by landowners through work on private property. No new jobs will be created but four jobs preserved for FSCNC staff and contractors. All performance measures are overseen by the FSCNC Projects Committee.