

The Orleans/Somes Bar FSC: Burning For a Fire Safe Community and Forest

The Orleans/Somes Bar Fire Safe Council (OSB FSC) has been actively planning and implementing fuel reduction and prescribed burning projects in our community to create and maintain shaded fuelbreaks that protect homes and provide critical habitat for elk and other plant and animal species dependent on fire adapted landscapes. Recent activities include the implementation of 100 acres of fuel reduction on private residences through USFS Community Protection Program and BLM Community Wildfire Protection Program grants. Properties from Weitchpec to Ti Bar were made Fire Safe and eleven local jobs were created during the winter months, a hard time for our rural economies.

While we have completed over 600 acres of fuel reduction throughout our community, there is still work to be done. The OSB FSC has secured grant funding for creating another 110 acres of shaded fuelbreaks next winter. The focus will be on large properties around the Orleans valley to create contiguous fuelbreaks that coincide with tribal and USFS projects in the same area.

Continued outreach to landowners is needed to get critical information for both emergency fire and medical response, as well as detailed fire safety and fuel reduction planning. To this end, the OSB FSC has secured grant funding to hire 15 part-time liasons to conduct information gathering and volunteer workday planning for all neighborhoods in the Orleans/Somes Bar area. The theory is that by collaborating with individuals from every part of the community, we can increase participation in Fire Safe programs and reach our goal of serving all area residents. This summer, we will be conducting interviews for these community liason positions. Funding will pay for five hours per week for a year. If you are interested, please contact the OSB FSC at 627-3202 for more information.

The fiscal sponsor for the OSB FSC, the Mid Klamath Watershed Council (MKWC), also received a California FSC Grants Clearinghouse grant for \$13,000 to create a model Fire Safe Garden as part of the Karuk Native Plant Demonstration Garden in Orleans. This garden has already taken shape through a major volunteer effort from the Karuk Basketweavers, MKWC, and the community. Contact MKWC for upcoming opportunities to participate.

The OSB FSC is working on their final draft of the Orleans/Somes Bar Community Wildfire Protection Plan, while providing support to Humboldt and Siskiyou countywide Fire Safe Councils in their efforts to complete their CWPP's. The OSB FSC has contributed information to the Humboldt County Community Wildfire Protection Plan that synthesizes input from landowners and other stakeholders, and identifies potential projects in our communities. The Humboldt County CWPP is being prepared for final acceptance by the appropriate signatories, including the Humboldt County Fire Chiefs Association and the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors.

While this spring was extremely wet, the OSB FSC was prepared to take advantage of the short burn window to conduct prescribed burning to maintain established fuelbreaks by

creating firelines and getting necessary permits. In coordination with the OSB FSC, Karuk Tribe, the USFS, and the Orleans Volunteer Fire Department, landowners were provided with the resources to safely maintain and increased the effectiveness of their fuelbreaks through low intensity prescribed burning. Successful prescribed burns were conducted on Butler Creek on the Salmon River, Bull Pine on Rodgers Creek, Cooper Ranch on Aikens Creek, and the Downs Ranch in the Orleans Valley. In total, approximately 35 acres of burning were completed.

We would like to thank our funders, the Orleans Volunteer Fire Department, the Karuk Tribe DNR, and the volunteers at these burn days for continued support in creating a model for how to maintain these fuelbreaks. Funders include the USFS Community Protection Program, the BLM Community-Based Wildfire Prevention Program, the Siskiyou County Resource Advisory Committee, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the CDF Wildland-Urban Interface Program.

“Good Fuelbreaks Make Good Neighbors!!!”