

# So You Want A Fuels Reduction Project?

## A Community Based Fire Preparedness/ Fuels Reduction Program at Work

A fire preparedness or fuels reduction project of the Orleans/ Somes Bar Fire Safe Council begins with a meeting with a landowner in a prioritized WUI area to conduct what we call a Critical Information Survey. The objectives of the survey are twofold. The first is to provide location, access and hazard information to emergency response services, in our case the local volunteer fire department. The other is to assess the risk that the particular property is at in order to rank it in terms of its need for a fuels reduction project.

Once a property has been prioritized and surveyed, a fuels reduction project area will be designated in cooperation with the landowner. Project areas are generally located near structures, escape routes, water systems and other values at risk. If it is in an area that threatens a whole neighborhood, occasionally a project area will be designated strictly due to the dangerous conditions of the fuels. With project area boundaries determined, a map will be generated using GIS. These maps will provide the basis for our Landowner Agreement Contracts as well as the next steps in the planning process, NEPA/ CEQA and SHPO requirements. At this point we can flag the project areas and take a series of “before” photos

To complete our environmental and archeological assessments we turn to the specialists. For Projects using Forest Service funding, the Forest will provide biologists to write the BO (Biological Opinion), part of the requirement of NEPA. If the BO determines a no effect on threatened and endangered species, the project is a go on that front. A private archeologist hired by our Fire Safe Council handles the archeology survey requirements of SHPO. With surveys and BO's finalized a cover letter and appointed signature complete the requirements of NEPA are fulfilled.

With Agreements, Maps, NEPA, and Monitoring Stakes in place, the project now has a green light to go. A brief project prescription outline is written based on survey report and given to the crew boss who will brief the crew on treatment methods and areas of special concern. The crews are generally hired through Salmon Mt. Forestry and will number between 4 to 6 people. Depending on slope, fuels species and densities, the crew will complete ½ to 1 acre per day of mechanical fuels treatments. If conditions are proper, the crews will burn or chip some of the fuels during the time they are working. Otherwise fuels are generally left in piles for homeowners to burn when conditions are appropriate. It is important that these piles are burned in an expedient manner so they don't become a liability to every body as we have the can quickly become.

Once all work is completed we will assess the results of the project using the photo-monitoring results. After project photos will be taken and a report with a sample of project photos will be generated and sent to the project funders. The next stage of the project is really up to the landowner. Will they maintain the fuels reduction project areas or will those areas return to becoming a hazard to their neighborhoods? If you need assistance or need to know more about how to maintain your fuels reduction project areas, don't hesitate to contact us.