

National Fire Plan

Six Rivers National Forest

Pacific Southwest Region

California



Hazardous Fuels Reduction Projects through Fire Safe Council Orleans/Somes Bar Fire Safe Council

Project Description. The Orleans Somes Bar Fire Safe Council was established in 2001 with the goal of “working for community protection and economic stability through community-based cooperative planning and implementation of fuels reduction, fire protection, and habitat restoration.” The communities of Orleans and Somes Bar are located in remote regions of northwestern California and are completely surrounded by the Six Rivers and Klamath National Forests. The communities are both listed as “Communities at Risk” in the Federal Register. The Council has been implementing fuels reduction projects to create shaded fuelbreaks around mid-slope homes in the wildland/urban interface, to provide fire safe protection measures for the homes of senior citizens in the wildland/urban interface, to eliminate ladder fuels and maintain canopy closures above 70% to create low-maintenance shaded fuelbreaks, and to increase landowner participation and fire readiness through shared responsibility in the project.

Over the past 18 months, the Council received five grants to conduct fuels reduction work around the two communities. The locations and treatments were developed in collaboration with the Forest Service to ensure that treatments complement the Forest’s community protection projects that are reducing fuels on adjacent National Forest System lands. Together, these projects are creating a network of fuelbreaks around the communities.



Figure 1. Collaborative meeting.

Projects have included the Lower Mid Klamath Hazard Fuels Reduction Project and Orleans Hazard Fuels Reduction Project. In 2004, the Council is proposing the first

project that uses established fuelbreaks to conduct low intensity broadcast burning on treated private lands. Through another grant, the Council is researching the regional feasibility of marketing Non-Timber Forest Products (e.g., California bay, evergreen huckleberry, hazel, bitter cherry, and redbud) collected from treatment areas to the floral and craft industries. Preliminary results show that harvest of targeted plants and tree boughs, after initial treatments, may offset most of the costs of maintaining the fuelbreaks. Finding and developing markets for fuelbreak regrowth may be one creative way to combine business and community protection benefits from a single project.

The Orleans/Somes Bar Fire Safe Council is made up of residents from the two communities and members of the Orleans Volunteer Fire Department. Cooperating agencies and groups include the Forest Service, Humboldt and Siskiyou Counties, Karuk Tribe, Orleans Volunteer Fire Department, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Mid-Klamath Watershed Council, and the Salmon River Restoration Council.

Implementation. Projects (on private property) have thinned flammable species and overstocked small trees and shrubs 6 inches or less in diameter, breaking up the continuity of surface and ladder fuels. They also cut the lower branches off remaining trees to reduce the potential for crown fire. The resulting slash was piled for later burning (when the weather is wetter) or chipped. Council members wanted to provide local employment opportunities, so they hired and trained local crews for all of their fuel reduction projects. Many of the crew are members of the Karuk, Yurok, and Hoopa Tribes. Residents have been inspired by these projects to contribute in-kind labor through pile burning and additional brush clearance. Firewood generated by these projects was made available, by participating landowners, to elderly and disabled community members.



Figures 1 and 2. Before and after treatment photos of the Orleans Hazard Fuels Project.



Figures 3 and 4. Before and after treatment photos of the Orleans Hazard Fuels Project.



Accomplishments to date. To date, the Council has completed over 330 acres of fuels reduction treatments on over 120 private properties.

Contact. Lucy Salazar, Six Rivers National Forest Vegetation Mgmt Specialist/Air Coordinator. Phone number: (707) 441-3514.