

2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass

A Bright Spot in a Very Bad Year

2020 has been universally declared the worst year in memory. But along the Ebbetts Pass Corridor, there is a bit of good news.

First of all, we did NOT have a wildfire in our area this fire season. Yes, we had to contend with smoke from the terrible fires in the rest of the state, but we were spared, and that is something to be grateful for.

The other bright spot, and the point of this article, is that our corridor has received several grants to develop or complete fuel breaks in the area. Over the past several years a network of fuel breaks along the Ebbetts Pass Corridor has been planned, coordinated, and implemented by several agencies, including CAL FIRE, the US Forest Service, the Calaveras Foothill Fire Safe Council, The Calaveras Amador Forestry Team, The Calaveras County Resource Conservation District, Sierra Pacific Industries, homeowners' associations, and private landowners.

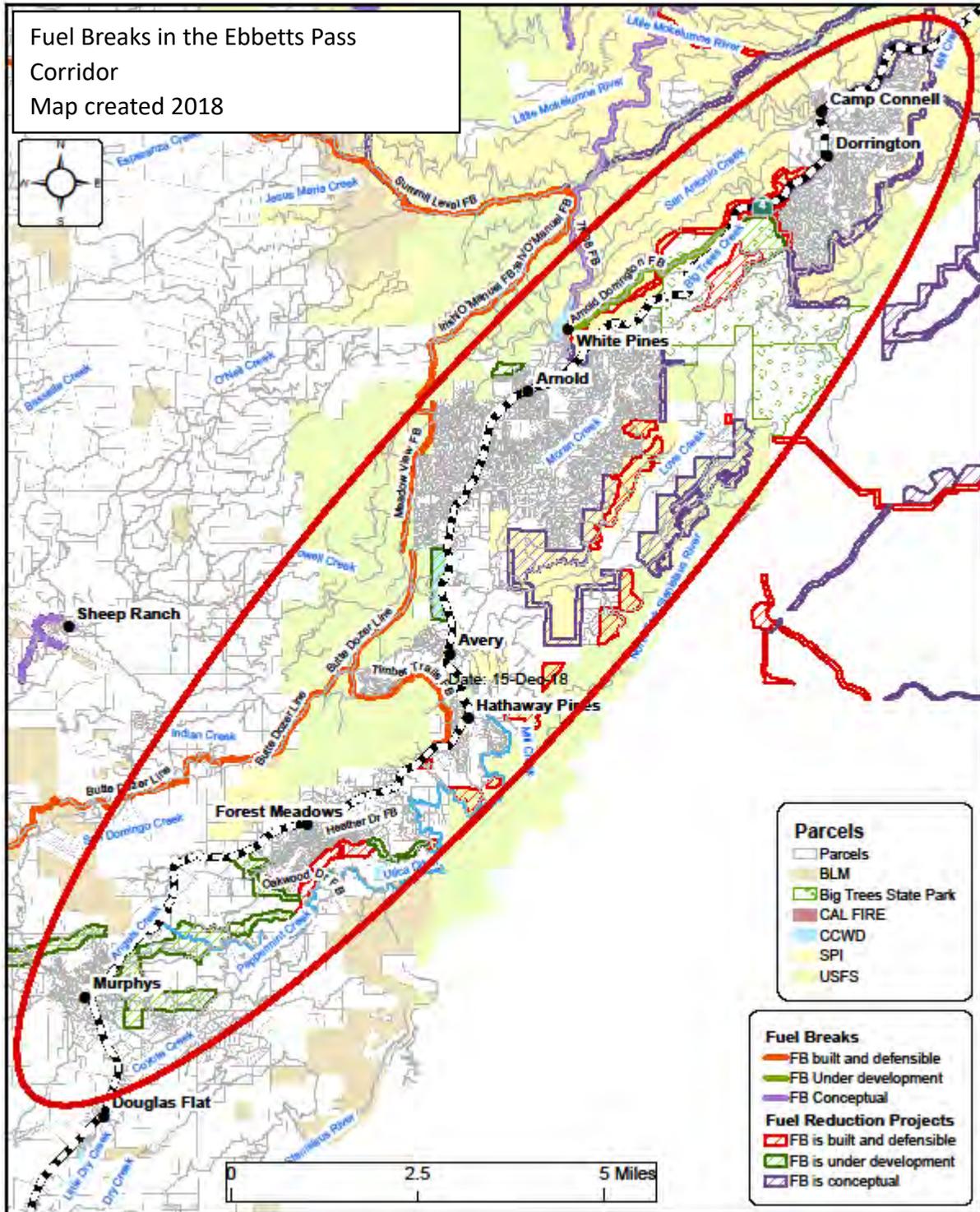
Fuel breaks are usually strips of land about 300 yards wide, often along ridgetops, that are cleared of dead and dying trees and other vegetation that can feed and accelerate fires. The goal is to break up fuel continuity to eliminate the fuel chain between structures and surrounding forest vegetation. The breaks are placed to provide firefighting teams strategic access and staging areas to effectively stop wildfires before they destroy homes and critical structures. These fuel breaks have the potential to save lives and property and preserve our beautiful community.

Projects on federal or state lands are generally paid for by the agencies that manage them (USFS, BLM, CA State Parks, etc.). But some areas that would benefit from a fuel break are on private property. Clearing strategic areas is expensive work that usually requires large machinery and crews of experienced and knowledgeable people – this is often too expensive and difficult to coordinate for private landowners, especially those with smaller parcels.

In these cases, grants of federal or state money are often the answer, and Ebbetts Pass was awarded several grants in 2020 that are being implemented now. As citizens of the Ebbetts Pass Corridor, you may be interested in the following list of current projects, each with a short description and map. You may see evidence of the work as you walk the Arnold Rim Trail or drive along Highway 4.

The following map was developed in 2018 and shows the many projects along Highway 4 and their status at that time.

2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass



2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass

Murphys-To-Forest Meadows WUI Fuel Break Project

This project is funded by a grant from CAL FIRE and the California Climate Initiative (CCI) These are California state funds from Proposition 68. The award was made in March 2020. The project will create a shaded fuel break across approximately 732 acres located on the south side of Highway 4 between Murphys and Forest Meadows. The entire project is on private land, impacting ~90 private parcels with ~50 homes.



C:\GIS_Projects\Murphys & Forest Meadows\MXD\Forest_Meadows_WUI_Fuel_Breaks.mxd

Map by CalAm, revised by BPolakov, 26-Nov-18

Current Status: A new set of updated maps of the project footprint was recently completed. We are currently in the process of selecting a contractor to complete CEQA requirements and develop treatment plans. Actual groundwork is scheduled to start in summer/fall of 2021.

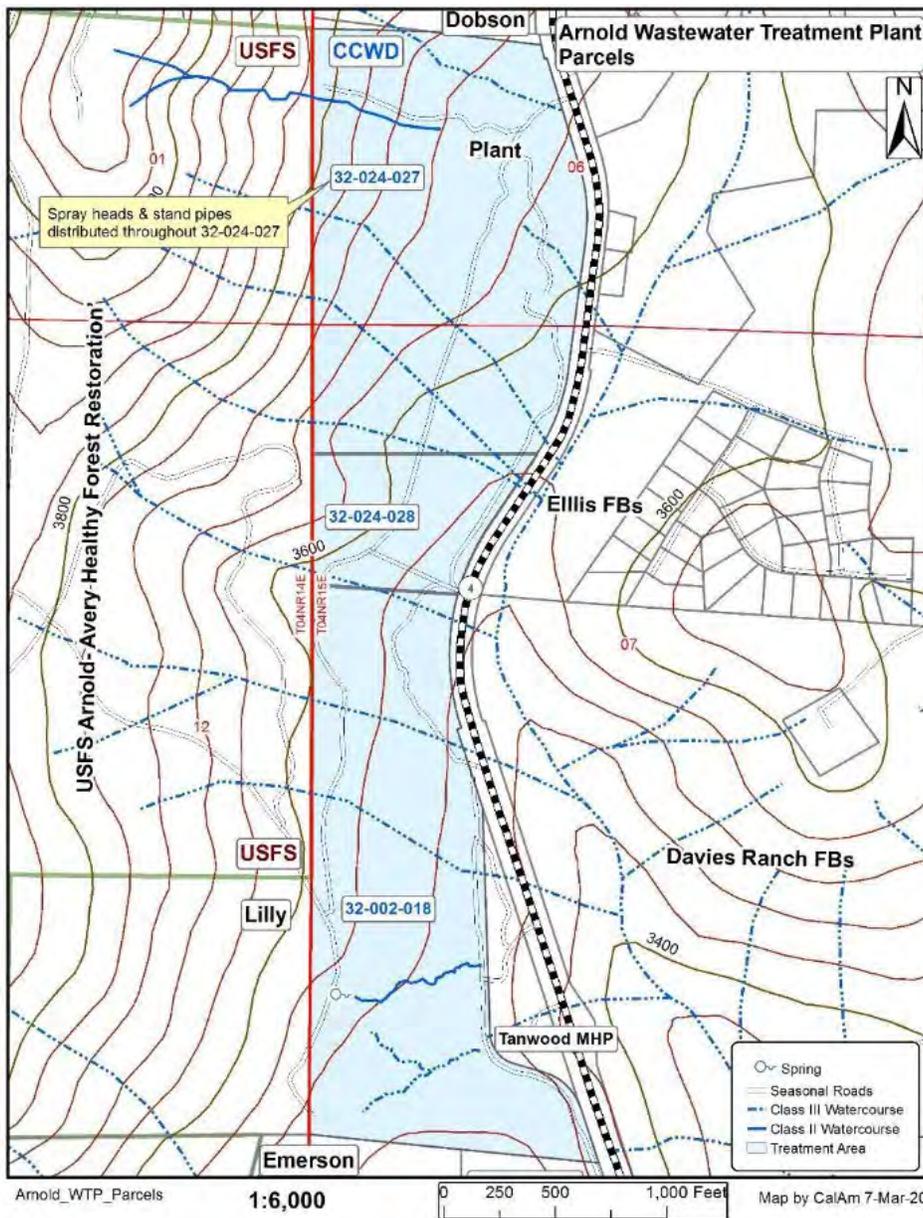
The “fiscal agent” for the grant is the Calaveras County Resource Conservation District (CCRC), which is responsible for managing and implementing the grant funds and activities. For more information about this project, contact Jill Micheau at jillmicheau@gmail.com or (209) 813-7019.

2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass

West Arnold Thin Shaded Fuel Break

Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions, Inc. (CHIPS) was awarded a grant from the Stanislaus National Forest (STF) to reduce the risk of fire ignition and its rate of spread at the Arnold Wastewater Treatment Plant (Arnold WTP) that is owned and operated by the Calaveras County Water District (CCWD). Of concern is the spread of fire between the Arnold WTP and STF lands and protection of the communities of Arnold and Avery on the Highway 4 corridor.

This project expanded the developing fire protection system on the western boundary of Arnold and Avery, rural communities with ~4,900 single family residences in Calaveras County. This area includes the STF on the west side of the 'Wildland Urban Interface' (WUI) and the Arnold WTP. The landscape on both sides of the WUI is an uneven age mixed conifer forest that is overstocked with trees and flammable brush.



The primary goal of the project was forest restoration on CCWD property through the reduction of surface and ladder fuels to minimize the risk of fire ignition and the rate of fire spread while increasing forest resilience to drought and disease. The secondary goal of the project was to delay the need for follow up maintenance by suppressing brush sprouting for ten years with a layer of mulch in the areas treated by mechanical mastication.

The project was just recently completed by the Calaveras Amador Forestry Team (CalAm Team), a group of natural resource professionals, and fiscally managed by CHIPS. The project goals were accomplished through targeted tree removal, followed by mastication of surface and understory fuels. A total of 95 acres were treated.

For information about the

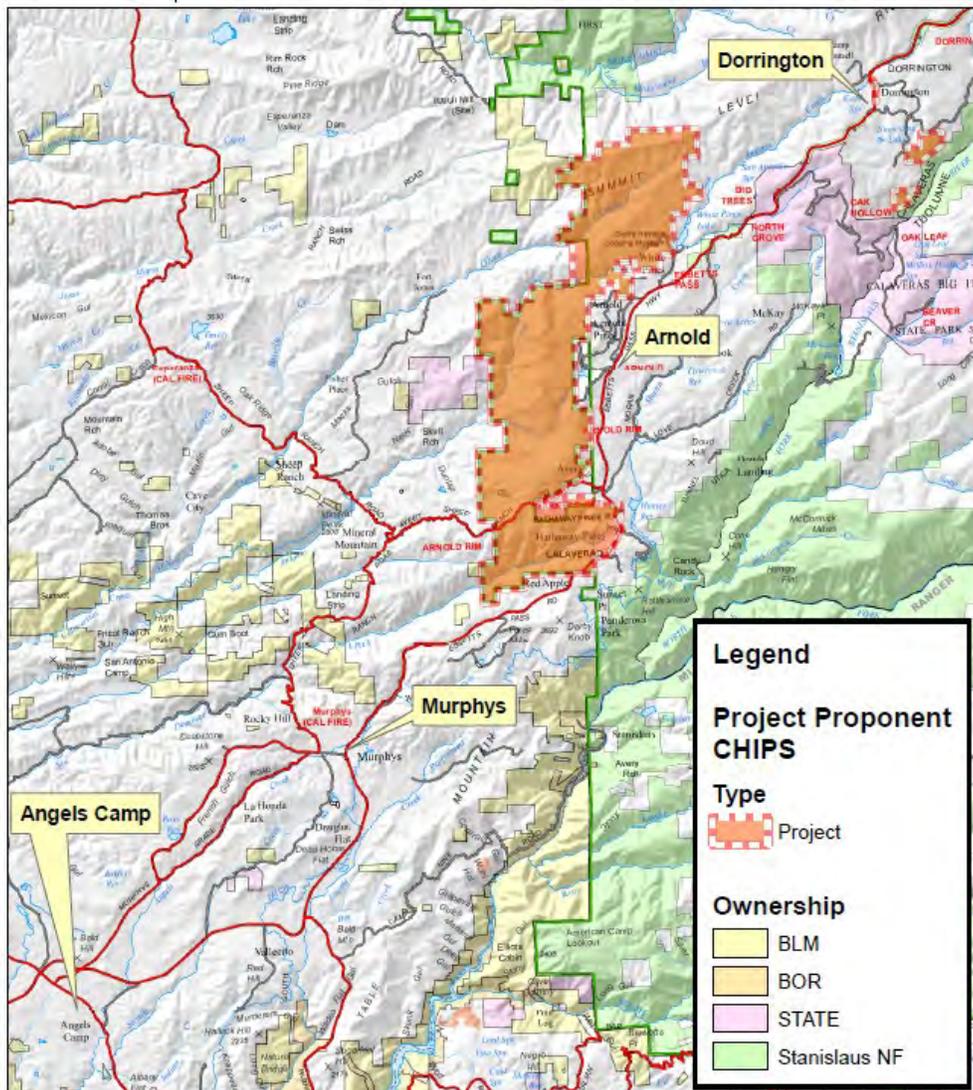
project, contact Regine Miller at (530) 277-3843 or email regine.chips@gmail.com.

2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass

Arnold-Avery Hazard Fuels Reduction and Fuel Break Maintenance Project

This project is part of a collaborative bi-county fuel break effort, and represents one strategic segment within a much broader, high priority effort to create a bi-county fuel break stretching from the Tiger Creek and View 88 fuel breaks in Amador County to the Arnold-Avery/Ebbetts Pass corridor projects in southeast Calaveras County. The project activities include 940 acres of Sierra mixed conifer forest. It will impact 841 acres of Forest Service land and 75 acres on private parcels.

The project will be implemented beginning in the winter of 2020-2021 and be completed by 2024. Project activities will include removal of excess surface and ladder fuels and maintenance and expansion of the 2015 Butte Fire Dozer Line fuel break and the Village fuel break which is located in the vicinity of Dorrrington.

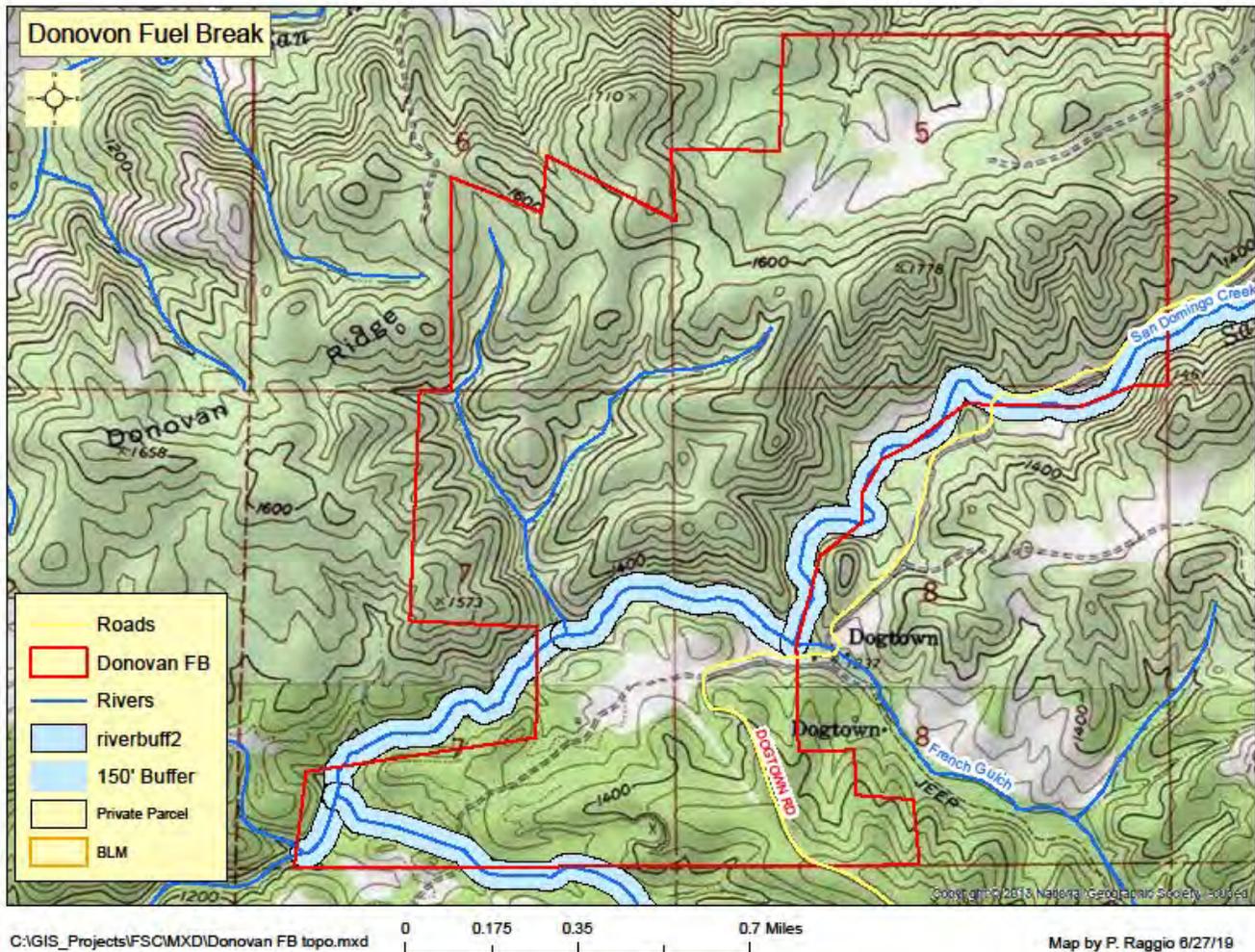


The project is managed by Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions (CHIPS). For information about the project, contact Regine Miller at (530) 277-3843 or email regine.chips@gmail.com.

2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass

Donovan Fuel Break

This is a 1,098-acre shaded fuels reduction project that strategically ties in with other landscape fuels reduction projects in Calaveras County. The project lies near the communities of Murphys and Angels Camp and directly in the path of the 2015 Butte Fire. There are 1,000 dwellings in the immediate area and recent projects have been completed on neighboring properties.

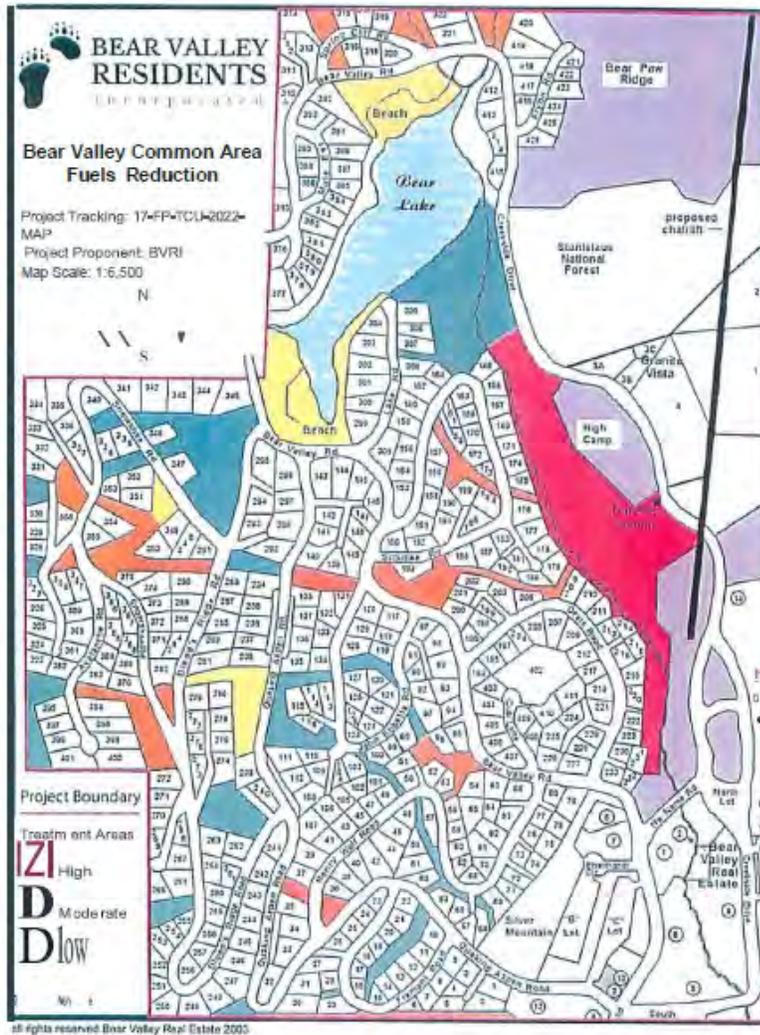


The project is managed by the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council. For information about the project, contact Bill Fullerton at (209) 728-8785 or email info@calaverasfiresafecouncil.org.

2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass

Bear Valley Fuels Reduction

This project will be the completion of 53 acres of fuels reduction work in Common Area parcels (County lands) rated into one of four Treatment Area types based on their current dead and down fuel load. These Treatment Areas will be addressed in descending order with high priority areas first, progressing to moderate, and eventually completing areas rated as low. This work will include thinning of dense clumps of trees, removal of hazard trees and down logs, and pruning of retained trees to remove ladder fuels. Dense clumps of brush will be thinned to approximately 50% of the current volume. Worker safety and minimal property damage is another objective.



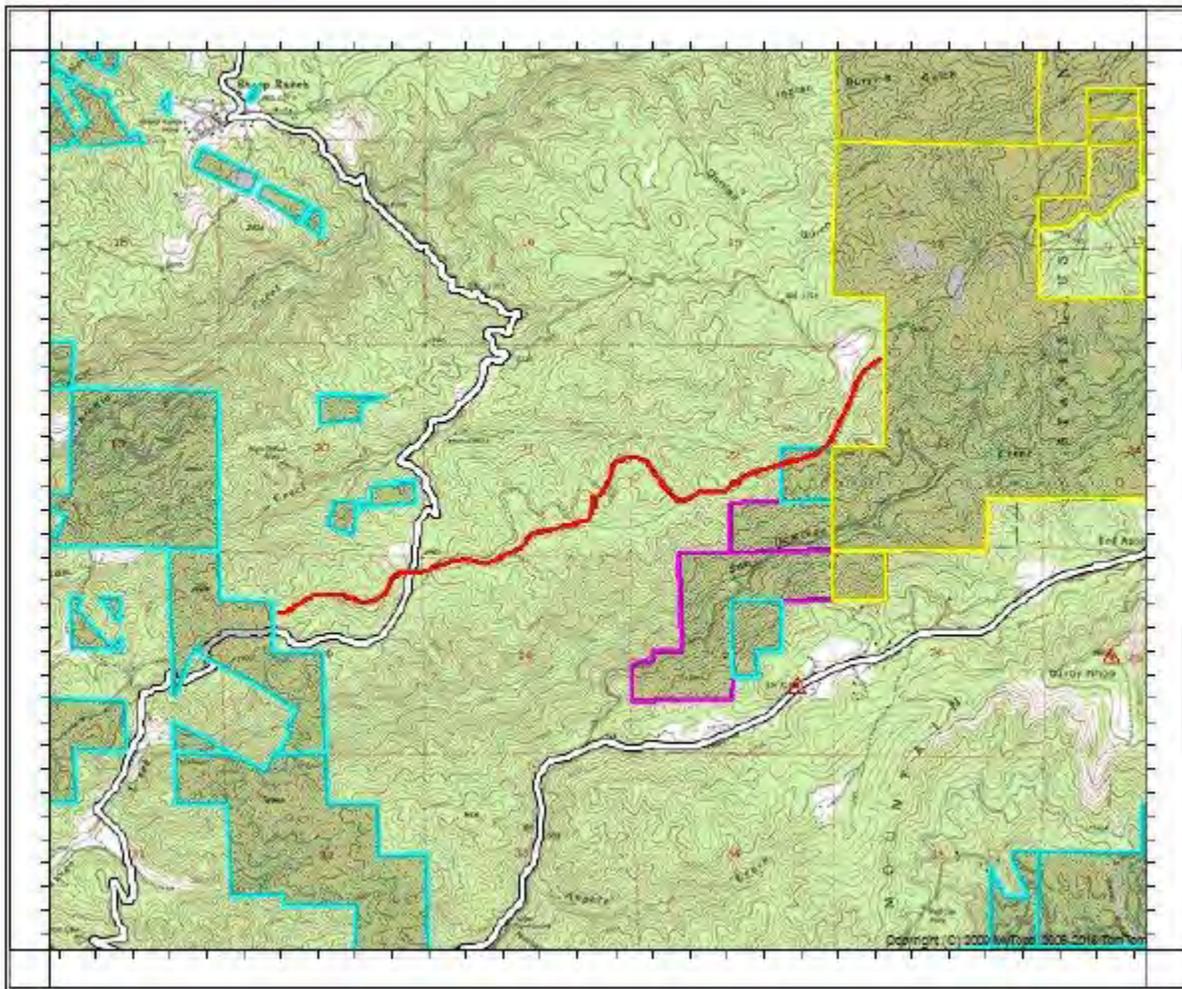
The project is managed by the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council. For information about the project, contact Bill Fullerton at (209) 728-8785 or email info@calaverasfiresafecouncil.org.

2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass

Fullen Road Fuel Break and Maintenance Project

The Fullen Road Fuel Break and Maintenance Project will complete and maintain a fuel break that was constructed as a contingency fire line for the 2015 Butte Fire. The proposed fuel break also served as a fire line for the Mineral Fire (2004) and the Old Gulch Fire (1992).

This proposal would fund the work required, hand and mechanical removal of new sprouting and masticating of areas where needed, to convert this often used fire line into a permanent fuel break. The history of large damaging fires in the area, assets at risk, geographic alignment of the ridge, and landowner support makes this an important project to fund.

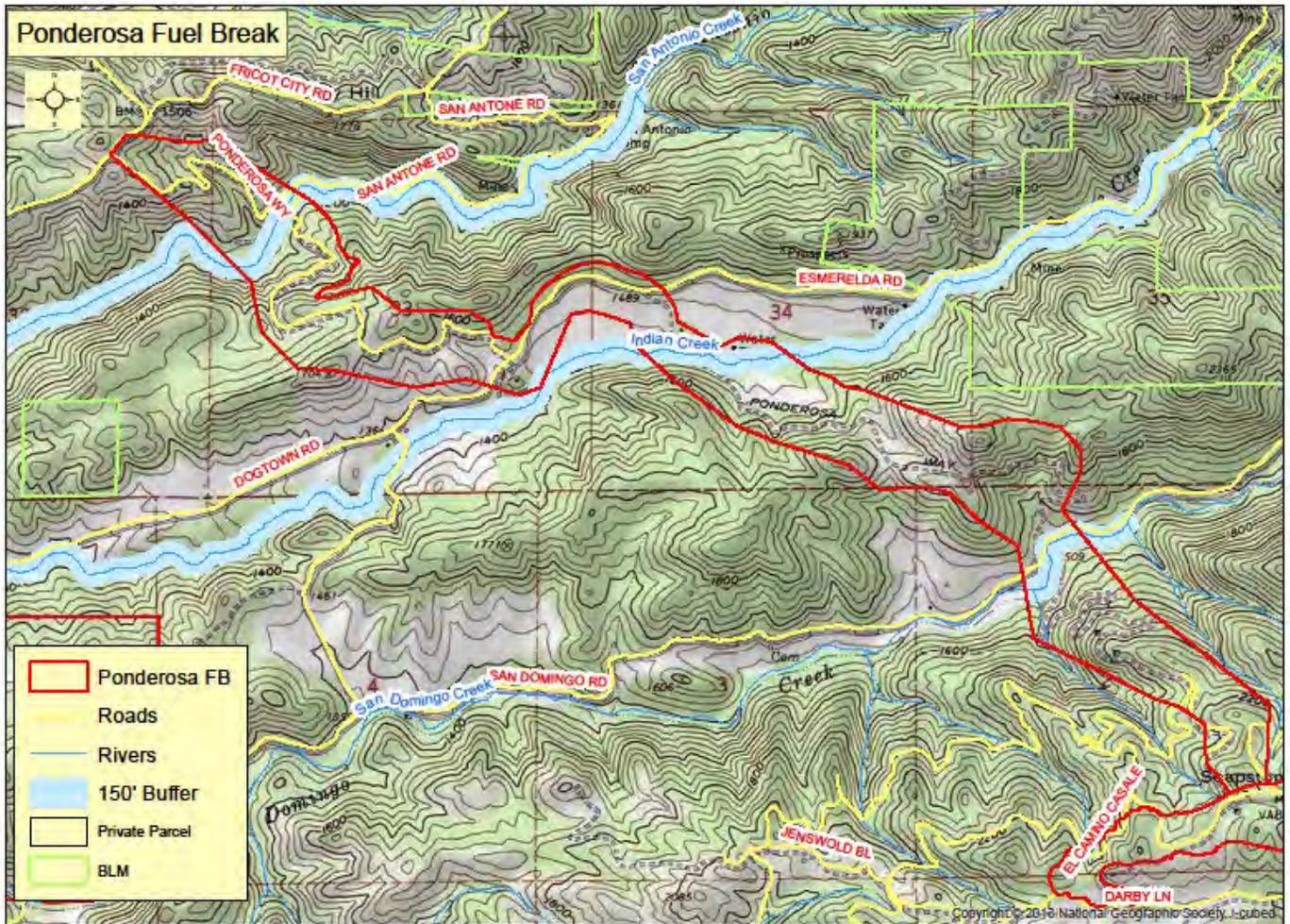


The project is managed by the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council. For information about the project, contact Bill Fullerton at (209) 728-8785 or email info@calaverasfiresafecouncil.org.

2020 Fuel Break Projects Along Ebbetts Pass

Ponderosa Fuel Break

This fuel break runs along Ponderosa Road from Fricot City Road to the Murphys Pines subdivision in Murphys. It will tie into the control lines from the Butte Fire the Murphys Fuel Break. It will protect approximately 1,000 residences over 200 acres by masticating brush and felling dead trees.



The project is managed by the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council. For information about the project, contact Bill Fullerton at (209) 728-8785 or email info@calaverasfiresafecouncil.org.