

El Dorado County Fire Safe Council

Summary

Prepared for the California State Fire Safe Council

July 2014

History

The El Dorado County Fire Safe Council was formed in September 2001 and the Articles of Incorporation were approved by the California Secretary of State on April 30, 2002. The Council is a stand-alone non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. El Dorado County is approximately 1800 square miles. About one half of the land is public lands, primarily National Forest. The population is 188,000 people with suburban areas in the western side and rural areas into the Tahoe Basin on the east.

Organizational Structure

The council was originally formed under the El Dorado Resources Conservation District and became independent after incorporation. There was a full time Executive Coordinator, and part time Program support specialist, defensible space inspector and a community education coordinator. The Executive Coordinator worked out of her home and her duties included writing and managing grants, managing projects, managing the funds and administrative tasks. In 2010 the Executive Coordinator's contract was not renewed. The Council operated with volunteers and a part time program support person for the chipping project. In 2012 the Board hired a part time Executive coordinator. The Executive Coordinator left in the spring of 2013 and the Council has operated with an all-volunteer administration for over one year. While we have been extremely successful, this model is not sustainable. Board members are starting to experience "burn out" and administrative support and an Executive Coordinator are essential to continue operating.

Board

The council has a formal board structure under the by-laws. There are 21 board members authorized and currently there are 11 board members. The board is comprised of nine members and officers from local fire safe councils, a member at large and one member from the CCC. Members are elected to serve a two year term. The board meets monthly at the USFS building in Placerville. There is a "General" meeting every quarter where the board and the agency representatives meet to discuss items of common interest and explore teamwork opportunities. Agencies include the Community Development Agency/ Transportation Division (Formerly DOT), Water (EID), CAL FIRE, Local Fire, Utilities (SMUD & PG&E), USFS, BLM, and Industry (SPI & Waste Management).

Local Councils

There are currently 16 local councils in the county. Seven councils are very active. They hold regular meetings that are well attended, accomplish community projects, submit and manage grants and hold fundraisers. Most have community CWPPs. Four councils are semi active and five local councils are inactive. It has been our experience that the most successful and productive local councils have an active and strong community base. Several operate within a Home Owner's Association (HOA) or Community Services District CSD(CSD) structure, but three

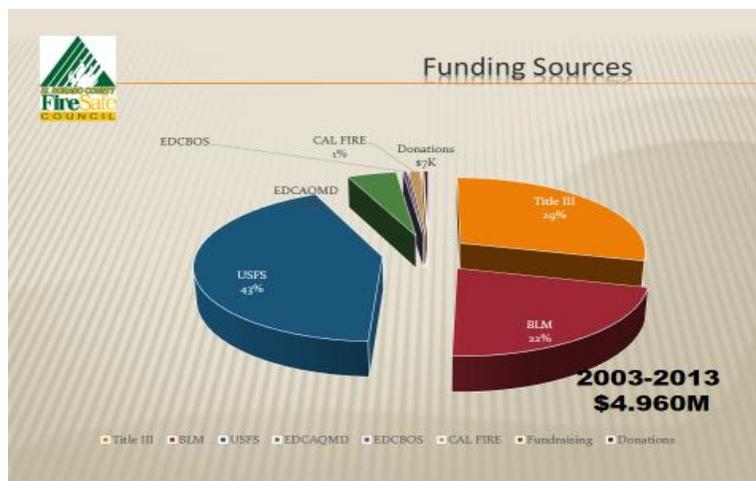
of our most active councils are simply groups of neighbors with a common goal and strong community involvement. Some of the councils were formed to accomplish a single objective such as roadside clearance or a specific fuels reduction project. They accomplish the project

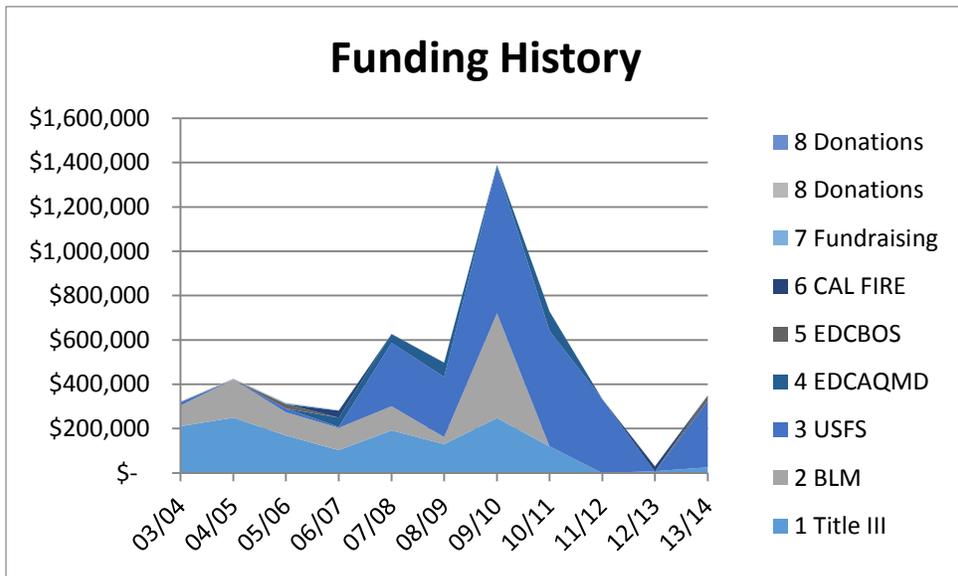


and then go dormant. Four local councils use the County Council’s 501(c)(3) “umbrella” and the rest operate under another “parent” but they all sign formal association agreements with the County Fire Safe Council. The County Council represents all (except one) local councils at the Board of Supervisors, Fire Chief’s Association, CAL FIRE and other community meetings.

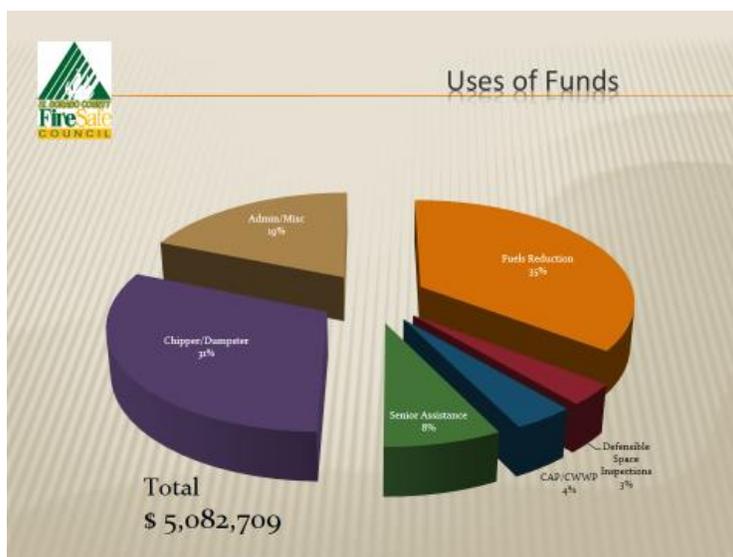
Funding sources,

Title III had been the sustaining funding for County Fire Safe administration until the 2011/2012 fiscal year. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) would alternate between the Sheriff’s Search and Rescue and the Fire Safe Council. In 2011/2012 all of the Title III funds went to the Sheriff’s Department and again in 2012/2013. This left the FSC in a very tight financial situation. In 2013/2014 the BOS provided \$26 thousand Title III funds and an additional \$25 thousand in general funds to the Fire Safe Council.



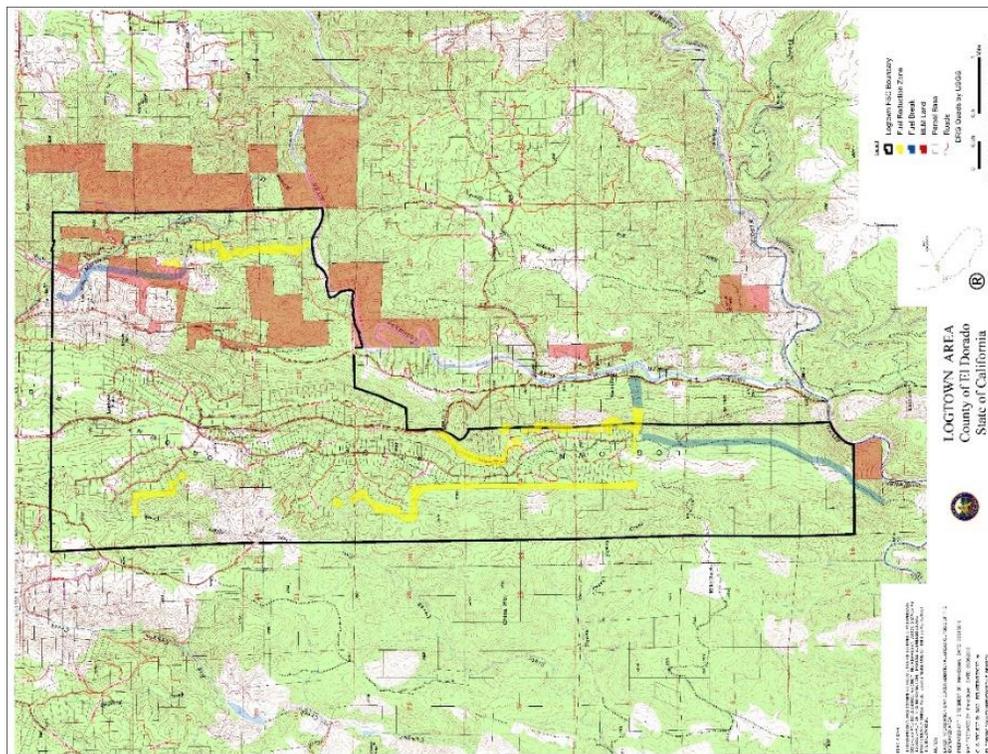


The council has been adding administrative fees to the grants over the last year since the change in guidelines allowed the recovery of administrative costs. We have completed an agreement with the Sheriff to evenly split the current and any future Title III funds evenly. The BOS supports this agreement. Over time there have been other sources of funds including BLM, CAL FIRE, Air Quality and donations, but they were all sporadic and unpredictable. We attempted fundraising but were not very successful as the public associated us with the “Fire Tax”. The USFS is the primary source of our project funding through the grants clearing house.



Highlights of Programs/Projects

The EDCFSC believes in a “bottom up” community concept. The County Council does not dictate projects to the community councils. We help the community councils form, set goals, complete a CWPP for their community, obtain grants for projects identified in their CWPP and act as the fiscal sponsor. The County Council performs a supporting role. We believe it is the homeowner’s responsibility to create and maintain defensible space and we assist them by providing senior assistance, chipping service and dumpsters, but it is still their responsibility, we do not do it for them. In addition, it is the community’s responsibility to create and execute a protection plan. We support that effort but do not do it for them. Given that philosophy, the active councils have been very successful in creating fuel reduction zones around their communities and evacuation routes. Logtown and Grizzly Flat have aggressively pursued the projects identified in their Community Protection Plans. Logtown is working on LT-10, the 10th area of fuels reduction around the community.



Grizzly Flat is working on their 12th zone and are expanding their efforts. The Grizzly Flat project table is below and shows that over 700 acres have been treated, a new grant (GF-12) will enable



Grizzly Flats Fuel Reduction

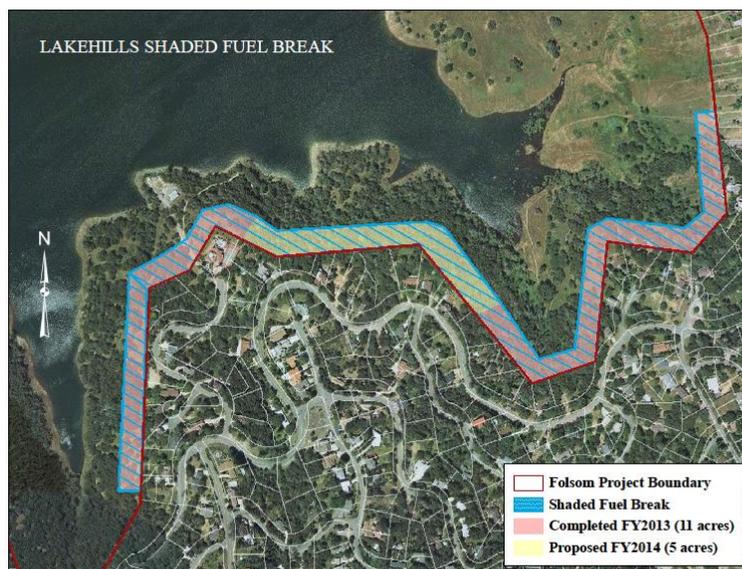
Completed Grizzly Flats Fire Safe Council 'CWPP' Fuel Treatment Projects

Since 2006, the GFFSC has worked diligently and with focus to encircle the Grizzly Flats community with defensible space around its school and a continuous shaded fuel break along the communities evacuation route and around the community. The Council has been able to accomplish all of its 2006 CWPP fire prevention goals and is currently working on the goals identified in its 2012 CWPP Update. Completed CWPP Projects are listed below.

Project No.	Project Type	Grant Funding	Funding Match	Start Date	Completion Date	CWPP	Treatment Method	Treated Acres
CWPP	Create the GF CWPP	\$21,823.	n/a	3-2005	1-2006	n/a	n/a	n/a
GF-1	Primary Evacuation Route	\$234,731.	\$42,919.	8-2007	11-2008	Yes	Hand Treatment	128
GF-2	Fuels Treatment around the elementary school	Project was done without grant funding. Project was done with community volunteer labor.		8-2006	8-2006	Yes	Hand Treatment	1
GF-3	Secondary Roads Evacuation Route	Incl. in GF-1	Incl. in GF-1	8-2007	11-2008	Yes	Hand Treatment	Incl. in GF-1
GF-4	Fuels Treatment	\$211,341. (inclg. Prop. 40; \$80,000.)	\$18,000.	8-2007	6-2008	Yes	Mastication	100
GF-5	Fuels Treatment	\$363,693.	\$76,484.	10-2009	5-2010	Yes	Mastication	190
GF-6/7	Fuels Treatment	\$338,150.	\$56,000.	7-2011	12-2011	Yes	Mastication	160
GF-8								150
Totals =		\$1,169,738.	\$193,403. (16.5%)					729
Grand Total =		\$1,363,141.						

the effort to continue.

Lakehills is adjacent to the Folsom Lake State Recreational Area and has been working with the State parks, Bureau of Reclamation, and others to improve the interface with Folsom Lake. They have treated a total of 16 acres.



Fuel Reduction Projects Summary

Council	Year	Project	Grant	Acres	
Grizzly Flat	2007-2011	GF1 to GF7	\$1,169,738	729	
Logtown	2010		\$ 467,775	261	
Logtown	2014	LT-10	\$ 58,294	14	
Gold Hill	2011		\$ 52,206	25	
Volcanoville			\$ 50,315	51	
Lakehills	2012-2014			16	
Nashville	2011		\$ 38,814	13	
			\$1,837,142.00	1109	

Over 1000 acres have been treated and more projects are in the works. Nearly two million dollars of grant and supplemental funds have been expended to help protect communities in El Dorado County. This does not include the thousands of hours of volunteer time expended performing fuels reduction on private property and supporting community FireWise activities.

Chipping & Dumpsters,

In addition to the fuel reduction projects, the El Dorado County Fire Safe Council has provided over 100 green waste dumpsters per year for community clean up days. We have also provided chipping service for approximately 500 residents per year to help them maintain defensible space. In addition to reducing the fire danger, these programs reduce material destined for the land fill and greatly reduce air pollution from burning and protect the watershed. These programs continue to be very popular and provide good interface and visibility with the community.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP),

The basis for most of the fuels reduction projects in the County is the CWPP. These are comprehensive documents that define risk and outline mitigation plans. In El Dorado, we have a broad County wide CWPP, two broad corridor CWPPs (HW-50 and SR-49) that bisect the County and nine community specific CWPPs. The council has expended over \$200,000 to prepare and update these plans. After the plan is complete there must be an environmental review before

projects can move forward. This is a time consuming and costly process that is definitely a constraint. The five year review requirement for a CWPP may also need to be examined and possibly extended. We currently have two new CWPPs in process.



Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP)

	Approval Year	Year Revised	Battalion
Auburn Lake Trails	2005	in process	2
Gold Bug Park	2005	no	1
Cameron Park	2008	in process	5
Volcanoville	2002	2013	2
Grizzly Flat(s)	2006	2012	3
El Dorado County Wide	2004	no	1,2 & 5
Hwy 50 Corridor	2010	no	1
Hwy 49 Corridor	2013	no	1
Logtown	2007	In process	1
South Lake Tahoe	2004	in process	1
Future CWPP's			
Lake Hills Estates	in process		1
Georgetown	in process		2
Fire Safe Plans			
Gold Hill	2009		
Royal Equestrian Estates	2008		
Nashville/Sand Ridge	2008		
			Total \$201K

Senior/Disabled Assistance₇

The El Dorado County Fire Safe Council established a partnership with the El Dorado Friends of Seniors. Together we hosted a spaghetti feed with the proceeds (\$4000) earmarked for the senior assistance program. The EDCFSC added \$2000 from our general fund and we raised another \$1700 from the El Dorado County Foundation “Give Where You Live” campaign. The Friends of Seniors identify potential recipients from their Meals on Wheels drivers and other sources. The homes are evaluated for defensible space needs by a Fire Safe Council volunteer and the work is contracted to Motherlode Rehabilitation Enterprises Inc. (MORE), a non-profit that employs people with developmental disabilities. This program is operating primarily on donations and seems to be a “win” for all involved. We are very proud of this partnership.

Community Outreach and Education₇

Our most effective tool for communicating with the residents of El Dorado County is our “retooled” web site. Our volunteers spent a lot of time with the web master in a total overhaul to make the site more appealing and relevant. We configured the page to mirror our mission statement ***“To protect the people of El Dorado County and their property from the effects of wildfire through education, cooperation, innovation and action”***. We added tabs at the top of the home page consistent with each mission area. It is designed to be a single gateway to fire information. There are hot links to fire weather, current fire status and educational material. There are links to our cooperators and programs. Each local council has space to post their

announcements and information. Our CWPPs are downloadable, giving the public easy access. It is a great team effort that we are proud of. Check it out at: www.edcfiresafe.org.

In addition to the regular meetings of the community councils, the EDCFSC has participated in county wide events including the Diamond Springs Labor Day Parade, the Home and Garden Show and the County Fair. The council volunteers distribute literature and encourage FireWise activities. There were three fire safe venues that participated in the NFPA National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day on May 3rd, 2014 and we expect to expand participation next year.

Challenges

While the County Council has been extremely successful in continuing and expanding programs with an all-volunteer force, a paid professional with admin support is essential to sustain operations and take the council and the County to the next level. We have had discussions with the Resources Conservation District (RCD) and other agencies concerning partnering and sponsorship but have not found the right “fit”.

In El Dorado County, there is no focal point for fire. There is no County Fire Marshal. We do meet with the Fire Chief’s Association on a regular basis and they are very supportive. There are ten independent fire protection districts/departments, each with their own strengths and issues. Most are small and have financial and staffing challenges themselves. CAL FIRE, USFS and BLM all have resources but are focused on specific areas.

There are thousands of acres of fuels reductions projects with estimated unfunded costs in the millions that are identified in the various CWPPs. Each community pushes for grants in their area. The more active and organized community councils are more likely to receive grants while communities with a much greater fire risk but an inactive council do not obtain much needed projects. As a county council we try to find and support the “spark plug” to raise interest and awareness in at risk communities and help them form councils. We are also trying to inventory and prioritize potential projects and front load the environmental reviews necessary to make them “shovel ready” but this is a costly gamble. The current system is haphazard at best and may not be applying resources where they are needed the most.

Conclusion

A core group of fire safe executive coordinators from each county is essential to build on past successes and provide consistent oversight of the programs and grants. One business model could be a CAL FIRE contract with the California State Fire Safe Council to provide fire safe and FireWise coordination and fire wise prevention activities in each county. The state council would then have more leverage on consistent applications of the programs in each county. An alternative model would be to fund grants for fire safe/fire wise administration in each county with a dollar for dollar hard match from county funds. Participation would be at the discretion

of each county. The counties should also contribute funds to sustain and support the executive coordinator and the county council so they have “skin in the game”.

It is ludicrous to state that the fire fee funds cannot pay for salaries of the fire safe county administration while all the CAL FIRE prevention salaries are paid from the fund. Some creative thinking is required.

We applaud the efforts of the California State Fire Safe Council and CAL FIRE to work together to attack these problems and we look forward to contributing to the process.

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