

Chapter 2: El Dorado County Characteristics and Demographics

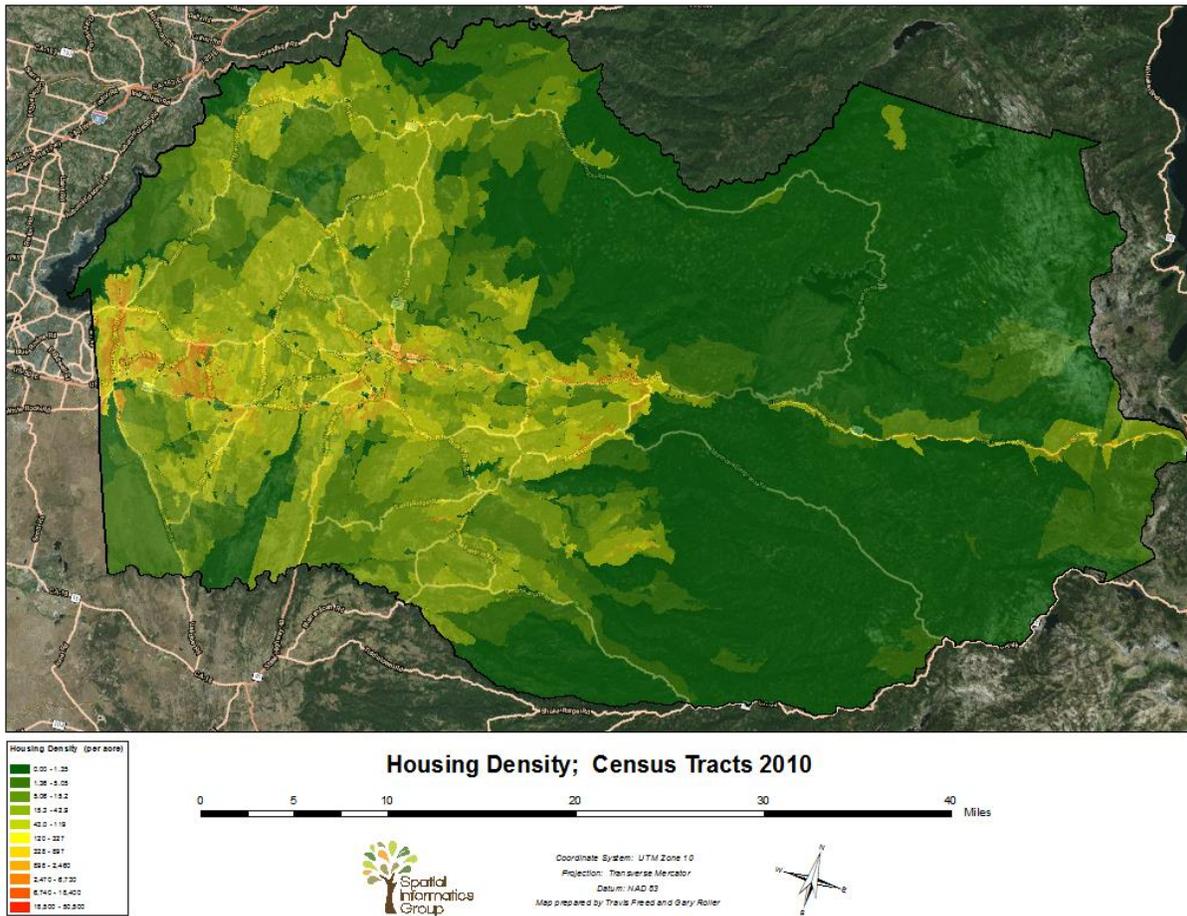
2.1 Geographic Area and Demographics

El Dorado County comprises 1,805 square miles with over half of the area in the Eldorado National Forest and recreation areas managed by various public and private entities. The remainder of the county is a mix of residential areas, agriculture lands, and business parks all grouped in small communities scattered throughout open space made up of wildland vegetation. Nearly 58% of the land area of the county is considered to be WUI. The western boundary is Sacramento County and the eastern boundary is the state of Nevada and the southern half of Lake Tahoe. Placer County is to the north with Amador and Alpine Counties to the south. The population of El Dorado County continues to expand into forested, shrub dominated, and grassland vegetation types with residential and commercial development occurring in wildland/urban interface areas of high fire hazard risk. CAL FIRE has classified this area of El Dorado County as very high fire hazard. Additionally, the California Fire Plan indicates that some or all of the wildland fire threat to this county comes from the adjacent federal lands.

El Dorado County is currently home to 182,019 people, with a projected population of over 225,439 by 2020. As of 2010, the population density in the county was 106 residents per square mile, putting it well below the statewide average population density of 248 people per square mile. It is projected that by 2020 the population density in El Dorado County will reach 132 people per square mile.

Of the two incorporated cities in El Dorado County, the city of South Lake Tahoe was the most populous, with 24,087 people in 2010. However, the city of Placerville, the only incorporated city in the study area, was the fastest growing incorporated city in the county, with an annual average population increase of 1 percent between 2000 and 2010 (El Dorado County 2010). The community of El Dorado Hills is the fastest growing unincorporated community in the county. The population was 42,108 at the 2010 census, up from 18,016 at the 2000 census. Many residents commute to the greater Sacramento area and the median home price is \$480,000 (EDCCED 2011). Development is concentrated in the western portion of the county, with a few smaller communities extending east along the Highway 50 Corridor (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Housing Density for El Dorado County (2010).



1.2 Climate, Hydrology and Watershed

Climate

El Dorado County has a Mediterranean type climate which features hot, dry summers and cool, moist winters. The June – October dry season produces ideal conditions for wildfires. Annual plants die and perennial plants lose moisture and become highly flammable. Fires burning toward the end of the dry season are intense, resist suppression efforts, and threaten lives, property, and resources. Drought conditions intensify the wildfire danger (Table 4).

Table 4. Climate readings as of 2010 (El Dorado County 2010)

	<i>Georgetown</i>	<i>Placerville</i>
<i>Avg. July max. temperature (degrees)</i>	<i>89.4</i>	<i>92.7</i>
<i>Avg. January max. temperature</i>	<i>51.2</i>	<i>53.4</i>
<i>Avg. July min. temperature</i>	<i>59.5</i>	<i>51.9</i>
<i>Avg. January min. temperature</i>	<i>35.2</i>	<i>32.6</i>
<i>Avg. July precipitation (inches)</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.1</i>
<i>Avg. January precipitation</i>	<i>10.6</i>	<i>6.9</i>
<i>Avg. annual precipitation</i>	<i>53.0</i>	<i>38.1</i>
<i>Avg. January snowfall</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>1.2</i>
<i>Avg. Annual snowfall</i>	<i>31.8</i>	<i>2.5</i>

Middle Fork American River

The Middle Fork American River Watershed encompasses the northern region of El Dorado County and the southern region of Placer County. El Dorado County's portion of the watershed extends from the headwaters at Rockbound Valley in Desolation Wilderness, west to its terminus at the confluence with the North Fork American River, east of Auburn. The Rubicon River is the main tributary flowing into the Middle Fork American River, and receives flow upstream from the South Fork Rubicon River and Pilot Creek. Other principal water features within the watershed include Rubicon Reservoir, Loon Lake, Gerle Creek Reservoir, Robbs Peak Reservoir, and Stumpy Meadow Reservoir. The peak runoff from this watershed, where precipitation occurs primarily as snowfall in the upper elevations of the watershed and rainfall in the lower elevations, is typically from March through June.

South Fork American River

The South Fork American River watershed encompasses the central region of the county, extending from the headwaters at Echo Summit, west to the terminus at Folsom Reservoir. The major tributaries contributing flow directly into the South Fork American River are Silver Fork American River, Silver Creek, Slab Creek, Rock Creek, and Weber Creek. Upstream tributaries are Caples Creek, South Fork Silver Creek, and Jones Fork Silver Creek. Other water features within the watershed are Caples Lake, Silver Lake, Lake Aloha, Weber Reservoir, Ice House Reservoir, Union Valley Reservoir, Junction Reservoir, Camino Reservoir, Brush Creek Reservoir, Slab Creek Reservoir, and Chili Bar Reservoir. The peak runoff from this watershed, where precipitation occurs primarily as snowfall in the upper elevations of the watershed and rainfall in the lower elevations, is typically from March through June.

Cosumnes River

The Cosumnes River rises on the western slope of the central Sierra Nevada Mountains and flows approximately 52.5 miles (84.5 km²) into the Central Valley, emptying into the Mokelumne River in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Cosumnes is the only river in the western Sierra without major dams. Flowing from the western slope, the Cosumnes starts as North, Middle and South Forks cutting canyons through the El Dorado and Amador County Gold Country before converging just east of Highway 49. The North Fork, about 40 miles (64 km) long, begins at the Singleton Springs in El Dorado County, at the head of Leek Spring Valley, 7,400 feet (2,300 m) above sea level.

2.3 Vegetation

El Dorado County is situated almost entirely within Sierra Nevada foothill, scrubland, woodland, and lower-montane forest ecological zones. The primary vegetation types found in the CWPP area are as follows:

- Foothill scrubland vegetation, which is made up of foothill pine, interior live oak woodlands, mixed hardwood, and chaparral scrublands. Some blue oak woodlands occur near the western boundary of the CWPP area.
- Lower montane forest, which is the most prevalent vegetation type, is made up of the following vegetation types: California black oak, ponderosa pine, white fir, incense cedar, Douglas fir mixed conifer, mixed evergreen interspersed with chaparral, and meadows.

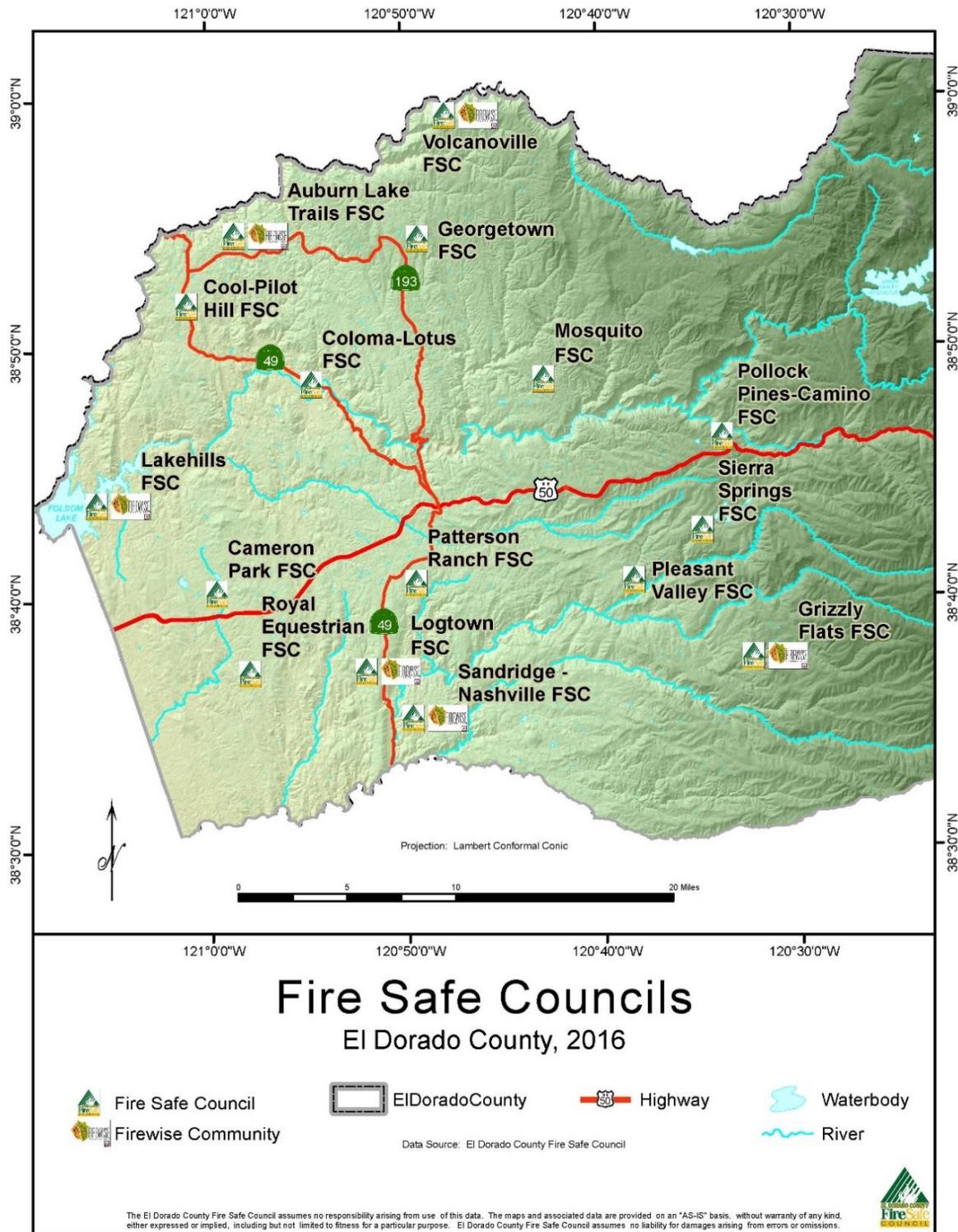
2.51 Communities at Risk within the CWPP Planning Area

The Federal Register currently identifies 22 Communities at Risk in El Dorado County (CALFIRE, 2016; Federal Register, 2001). Seventeen of these communities are covered by this CWPP and the remaining five are covered under the Lake Tahoe Basin CWPP (TFFT 2015) (Table 5). The proximity of these communities to each other and their status as a Firewise Community is indicated on Figure 5.

Table 5. List and Status of Fire Safe Councils within Communities at Risk (CAR) within the CWPP Project Area

Community At Risk	Yes Declared at Risk*	Fire Safe Council Status	Firewise Community	Existing CWPP (Date of CWPP)	Plan to be Integrated or Created in This CWPP
Auburn Lake Trails	2001	Yes	Yes	Yes (2013)	Yes
Cameron Park	2001	Yes			Yes
Coloma-Lotus	2001	Yes			Yes
Cool-Pilot Hill	2001	Yes			Yes
Georgetown	2001	Yes		Yes (2014)	Yes
Grizzly Flat	2001	Yes	Yes	Yes (2012)	Yes
Lake Hills Estates-EDH	2001	Yes	Yes	Yes (2014)	Yes
Logtown	2013	Yes	Yes	Yes (2007)	Yes
Mosquito	2001	Yes		Yes	Yes
Patterson Ranch - DS	2001	Yes		Yes (2004)	Yes
Pleasant Valley	2001	Yes	Yes	Yes (2004)	Yes
Pollock Pines	2001	Yes		Yes (2004)	Yes
Royal Equestrian Estates		Yes		Yes (2008)	Yes
Sand Ridge	2001	Yes	Yes	Yes (2004)	Yes
Sierra Springs	2001	Yes			Yes
Volcanoville	2001	Yes	Yes	Yes (2012)	Yes

Figure 5. Map of communities with Fire Safe Councils and status as a Firewise Community



2.7 Infrastructure

El Dorado County is a major transit route for commercial, recreational, and local traffic traveling east-west along the Highway 50 Corridor. Highways 49 and 193 provide highway access to the northern and southern portions of the county, connecting with extensive county and residential road networks. Many of the residential access roads are 2 lane roads with limited alternate routes. A detailed description of road network within El Dorado County is provided in the General Plan (EDC 2004).

The county contains abundant water resources, dams, and associated infrastructure. The El Dorado County General Plan (EDC 2004) should be considered a key resource describing this and other infrastructure.