Butte County/Paradise
Camp Fire...what’s next?

Tim Snellings, Director
Butte County Department of Development Services
May 18, 2019 SVS APA Planning Commissioner Workshop
Camp Fire – NOVA PBS

- [https://www.pbs.org/video/inside-the-megafire-uzvhug/](https://www.pbs.org/video/inside-the-megafire-uzvhug/)
Butte County/Paradise Camp Fire...what’s next?

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Recognizing Your ‘Current Hand’

• Do any of you have any streets or communities with long, dead end roads? (aka Fire Traps)
• Are any of your communities or forests full of dead and dying trees?
• Have you experienced confusion during an emergency by the public and law enforcement? (the fire is on my property when in fact, it is 2 miles away...)?
• Has your fire/law enforcement staff been overwhelmed by a fire emergency?
Does your County have a history of Wild Fire?
Camp Fire – Nov 2018

Field damage inspection is still subject to change. The points on the map are being updated regularly subject to change as information is updated and verified. The icons on the map represent the current known status of the structure if it is not identified as destroyed. Some addresses may not be included in this map. For additional information visit:

- CAL FIRE - [incident page](#)
- Butte County - [website](#)

Legend

- **Destroyed (>50%)**
- **Major (25-50%)**
- **Minor (10-25%)**
- **Affected (1-9%)**
- **No Visible Damage** (Black)
Paradise Pines on Day 2 of the Camp Fire
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E6xxChFvwVM

• View Tim’s YouTube Video
The Camp Fire

• 153,336 acres
• 85 lives were lost
• 18,804 structures lost
  • 13,696 single family dwellings
  • 276 multi family dwellings
  • 4,832 other structures (garages, sheds, etc.)

• Total losses > $20 billion
• Confirmation that PG&E power lines were the cause of this fire
Nov 16, 2018 (8 days after the start of the Camp Fire in Butte County)

A comparison of the bay bridge in San Francisco California before the camp fire smoke and during. The shot on the left was taken November 16th and the one on the right October 14th. Both photos were taken from the same position on treasure island using the same cellphone camera. No filter or effects were added to the images besides cropping and aligning.
Fire Progression Map (0736 – 11/08/2019)
Fire Progression Map (0828 – 11/08/2019)

1891 Acres
Fire Progression Map (0900 – 11/08/2019)

4280 acres
Fire Progression Map (1001 – 11/08/2019)

13,149 acres

Fire jumped 4.5 miles to the west of the Town of Paradise
Fire Progression Map (1103 – 11/08/2019)

22,096 acres
Fire Progression Map (1205 – 11/08/2019)

28,525 acres
Fire Progression Map (1307 – 11/08/2019)

33,481 acres
Fire Progression Map (1441 – 11/08/2019)

39,510 acres
Fire Progression Map (2349 – 11/08/2019)

69,879 acres
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

Every state has a WUI
Percent of total homes in the WUI

[Map showing the percentage of homes in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) by state, with a legend indicating different percentage ranges and states highlighted in various colors representing those ranges.]
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

Definition:

The WUI is any area where human development meets or intermixes with wildland vegetation.

• The WUI varies based on local conditions such as the amount and type of vegetation, topographical features, and the density and pattern of development...wind, drought, etc.
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

But a confluence of factors—including

• previous forest management and suppression policies,
• an increasing number of homes being built in wildland areas across the country
• and a changing climate

—have resulted in a WUI challenge that is now national in scope
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

Tackling the challenges associated with wildfire impacts on communities has traditionally been within the purview of

• Land management agencies

• Fire rescue

• Emergency services
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

Community preparedness efforts have primarily focused on

• improving **response tactics** to protect structures and residents
• reducing hazardous fuels (i.e., vegetation) near a community edge
• educating residents through voluntary programs.

These are all essential activities to reduce wildfire risk in the WUI,

But...
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

...with structure losses continuing to increase and wildfire suppression costs skyrocketing primarily attributed to WUI fires

It is critical for communities to expand their portfolio of solutions to include...

Drum roll please...
Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

Land-Use Planning
Disasters happen...r u ready?

1. Mitigation (where and how to build)

2. Preparedness (roles/responsibilities and plans)

3. Response (notification/EOC/LAC/FAC/DROC)

4. Recovery (and Re-Building...and possibly “Re-Planning”)

Disasters happen…r u ready?

1. Mitigation - Pre-Planning is key – Do you have your “Plans” in order?

   • General Plan (Health & Safety Element)
     • Land Use Element…should we grow in the WUI?
   • Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
   • Emergency Operations Plan
   • SEMS/NIMS staff training
   • Communication Strategies – Twitter, FB, NextDoor, CodeRed, Reverse 911, Sirens, etc.

NOTE: What happens when all of the cell towers are burning up?
Disasters happen...r u ready?

2. Preparedness (Putting the Plans Into Action)

- Prepare for 'when' it happens
- Establish authorities and responsibilities for emergency actions and garnering the resources to support them
- Staff must receive training and the facilities and equipment must be maintained in working order
- There must be a program of tests, drills, and exercises
- A key element of preparedness is the development of plans that link the many aspects of a jurisdiction's commitment to emergency management
Disasters happen...r u ready?

3. Response

• Declaration of a **Local Public Health Emergency** by your Health Officer. This is critical to trigger Cal OES, Cal Recycle and DTSC resources for Hazard Assessment and Clean Up

• Proclaiming a **Local Emergency** by CAO/Board of Supervisors

• Request Governor to proclaim a State Emergency

• This launches mutual aid

• Presidential Declaration – triggers federal resources

• Require emergency services of any local official or employee

• Track ALL Costs for potential cost recovery under CA Disaster Assistance Act (if Governor declares a State Emergency)

• Incorporate GPS coordinates of damage assessments...are you equipped to do this?
Disasters happen...r u ready?

4. Recovery

• 0-12 hours post-event: **Windshield Survey** - Locate and identify casualties and hazards

• 0-24 hours post-event: **Safety Assessment** - Identify life safety problems, obvious structural or utility damage. Includes assessment of roads, guard rails, bridges, tunnels

• 24 hours to 1 week post-event: **Detailed Damage Assessment** - Identify and document damage and initial cost estimates. Inspect structures, bridges, tunnels, water lines, fire alarm systems, sewer lines, street lights, and roadways

• 1 week to 2 (6) months post-event: **Engineering Assessment** - A quantitative engineering evaluation of damage. This assessment is used to prepare plans for permanent repairs and to prepare engineering cost estimates
Disasters happen...Lessons Learned

4. Recovery

- Get help from CalOES at the very beginning of your disaster
- Call for help from other cities/counties via Mutual Aid
- Have your staff Document, Document, Document
- Disaster Recovery Operations Center may last for weeks or months (After Camp Fire started on Nov 8, 2018, DROC is still meeting)
- Santa Rosa was still filling out FEMA reimbursement forms 1 year after the Tubbs fire
Disasters happen...Back to Step 1

5. Learning and Application to Planning (Mitigation)

• De-brief - what did you learn?
• What went well?
• What went poorly?
• What can you do to fix and strengthen your preparation for the next event. (Butte County’s fire in 2008 (next to Paradise) and 5 fires in 2017 prepared us for the Camp Fire of 2018)
What is needed in Counties?

• Updates to Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (needs funding)
• Update Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation as required by SB 379 (2015)
• Update to Safety Element (Fire) to comply with SB 1241 (2012)
• Update to GP to address Environmental Justice SB 1000 (2016)
• Updates to Safety Elements of General Plans when LHMP is updated (needs funding)
• Training – SEMS/NIMS, Drills (needs incentives)

You are going to be VERY BUSY addressing issues of Fire, GPU, etc.
Things that don’t work anymore...

1. Community Boundaries
   • Protecting development from wildfire impacts at the edges

   • Ventura thought they were safe be having hardened their boundaries from fire (setbacks, defensible space, clearings, etc.)

**Suggestion:** Still require/maintain community edge buffers, but don’t rely ONLY on them for fire protection
Things that don’t work anymore...

2. Emergencies are OES and Fire’s responsibility

• NOT TRUE...it all starts with Planning

• Coordinate and integrate your Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, SB 1241 (Fire), SB 379 (Adaptation/Resiliency) into your General Plan

Suggestion: Get very familiar with your Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
Things that don’t work anymore...

3. “We’ll update the General Plan later…”

• SB 1241, SB 379, SB 1000 all need to be updated now

• Your General Plan needs NEW action items around Fire Safety

• Possible state funding to help with General Plan Update

Suggestion: Budget/Plan now to update your General Plan to get into conformance with State Law...
Things that don’t work anymore...

4. Only do the minimum required by State Law...NOT!!

• Even in rural counties, where regulations are disliked, we need to have conversations about hardening our existing communities to the fire risk, creating new programs to replace wood decks, cover gutters, cover eave vents, etc.

• Think FIRE Planning, FIRE Prevention, FIRE Protection

Suggestion: Pursue grants, pilot projects to get funding for your Legacy Housing Communities that are vulnerable to catastrophic wildfires
Things that don’t work anymore...

5. More subdivisions in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)?

- Limit new subdivisions in High Fire Danger areas within the County...Land Use Authority means you set the density for future growth/development...get the community engaged in these discussions

- No new subdivisions approved without real secondary access

- New Building Code will harden structures

- Maintain 100 ft defensible space

**Suggestion:** We need to take a serious stand against putting more people in harm’s way
Things that don’t work anymore...

6. Solving the Fire Danger issues in CA is not Mandates **or** Incentives...think **AND**

- Going to take both *carrot and stick* to make statewide progress in making CA a more fire resilient state
- **New codes** help with new construction
- **May need a Tax Incentive** to get people to replace wood decks (similar to tax rebates for solar...behavior we want to encourage)
- **PACE** programs can be used for Fire hardening existing homes (Open PACE at cscda.org)
- Explore the concept of a National Fire Insurance Program (similar to National Flood Insurance Program)
- Work with the **Insurance industry** to create new programs to improve fire safety at the parcel level

**Suggestion:** Find partners to move these issues forward with our Legislature, etc.
Things that don’t work anymore...

7. For Legacy Community, what to do if you can’t evacuate everyone at once?
   • Develop some ‘Shelter in Place’ locations/strategies
   • Phased evacuations
   • Work with your Fire Safe Council on education
   • Fire Department for enforcement for weeds, etc.
   • Develop Defensible Space and Building education programs

**Suggestion:** Develop Community Plans with Legacy Communities
Things that don’t work anymore...

8. Support CEQA Statutory Exemption for Fire Safe Council projects for forest fuels reduction, if...

• The project is consistent with a County’s General Plan, and

• The project complies with established standards developed by Registered Professional Foresters, the Board of Forestry, etc.

Suggestion: We need to support fuel reduction programs as a part of our long-term strategy (like painting the Golden Gate bridge)
READ THIS BOOK - A great resource on planning.org
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire

A.

• Debris Removal...that is going to take 1 year, at a cost of $1.7 billion and over 3,000 employees...

• Where do you temporarily house people AND not take away from housing that survivors need?

• We didn’t even have a ‘basecamp’ definition in our Zoning Code
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire

B.

• What do you do with 500,000 dead and dying trees?
• Take them to the mill, right?
• We don’t have any mills anymore...urghhhhh
• Stockpile them in “Log Decks” and ship them out
• We don’t have a Land Use for “Log Decks”...
• What is a “Log Deck”? 
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire

C.

• Where do you take 1 million tons of concrete debris where it has a chance to be recycled and possibly used as road base in the future?

• You need to allow a temporary use for this in your best locations adjacent to your incident.

• Your zones and the need may not match...what will you do?

• Who has discretion?

• Does everything need to be included in your Emergency Ordinance or Code?
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire

D.

• What about ‘the other’ workers that need temporary housing or survivors that need temporary housing?

• You will see people who want to have ‘temporary RV Parks’.

• Our Emergency Ordinance expires December 31, 2019

• The hope is that we transition people out of this temporary housing into a more permanent housing during this time...likely to be extended
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire

E.

• Where do people park all of these hundreds of trucks that are being used to haul the debris and dead trees?

• Why, of course, they park in “Laydown Yards”

• Another use we’ve never heard of that we needed to find a way to accommodate
6 Months AFTER The Camp Fire
CONTACT INFO...

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