Fuels Reduction Project Viewer Frequently Asked Questions

What is fuels reduction?

Fuels reduction is work conducted in an area where the primary objective is to change fire behavior and minimize potential negative impacts of future wildfires. It is accomplished by activities that alter vegetation to break up vertical and horizontal fuel continuity and selectively keep larger, more fire-resistant trees, as well as remove downed wood. Fuels reduction projects occur in forests, woodlands, and chaparral ecosystems. The goal of fuels reduction is to create conditions that mimic the role of low intensity fire or other disturbances that once naturally thinned the forest, or to provide fire fighter access for protecting communities during wildfires. While intended for reducing hazardous wildfires, fuels reduction can also result in improved overall forest health.

What are Fuels?

Grass, brush, & trees can burn, fueling wildfires throughout most of the year across California, and especially during our increasingly hot and dry summers. During springtime, these plants grow rapidly. Every year, this new growth is measured in "tons-per-acre". There are a few ways this new vegetation is removed from the landscape. Some examples can include animals (grazing), human (harvesting or thinning), fire (natural wildfire or broadcast burning), or decomposition (a very slow process releasing stored carbon).

What is the Fuels Reduction Project Viewer?

The Fuels Reduction Project Viewer is a visual representation of CAL FIRE-funded fuels reduction project data that has been recorded in the CAL FIRE Management Activity Project Planning & Event Reporter (CalMAPPER), which is CAL FIRE's mechanism to capture map-based data on project activities.

What types of projects are shown in the viewer?

The projects shown in the viewer are projects for which the primary purpose is to reduce the fuel load on the landscape for community fire protection or forest health objectives. These projects are completed by CAL FIRE personnel, contract county personnel, forest health grantees, and fire prevention grantees. Projects showing in this viewer will have a status of active, complete or in maintenance.

Why are grant funded projects shown in the viewer?

Grant funded projects are included in the viewer because these are projects that are funded by CAL FIRE and grantees report their accomplishments to CAL FIRE. Most of the State Responsibility Area (SRA) over which CAL FIRE has jurisdiction is private property. Grant funds allow CAL FIRE to support projects at the local level where the community knows its needs and

capabilities. Grantees work directly with landowners, contractors and sometimes CAL FIRE to accomplish the project.

Are USDA Forest Service and other projects on Federally owned property shown in the viewer?

The viewer shows projects on USDA Forest Service and other Federal lands that have been funded by a CAL FIRE Grant Program. Projects implemented under a Good Neighbor Authority Agreement that are being implemented by CAL FIRE staff are also included.

What activities take place on a fuels reduction project?

There are many activities that may take place and are reported in fuels reduction projects. Examples of common activities are described here:

- Broadcast Burn – the controlled application of fire to wildland fuels in their natural or modified state over a predefined area, often conducted to reduce wildland fire fuel loads, restore ecological health of an area, or to clear vegetation. Also known as prescribed fire.
- Pile Burning – A disposal method consisting of burning of piles of fuels collected from the treatment area. Considered a type of prescribed fire.
- Mastication – uses a machine mounted implement to change the shape, size, and distribution of fuels. Vegetation is generally shredded and left on-site to decompose.
- Chipping –reduces woody debris to small chunks and pieces. Chips are often left on-site to decompose.
- Limbing & Pruning – branches or limbs are removed from existing vegetation to reduce ladder fuels that could otherwise cause fire to move from the ground into the tree canopy.
- Thinning – a tree removal practice that reduces tree density and competition between trees in a stand.

What CAL FIRE programs are responsible for fuels reduction?

Fuels reduction projects are planned and implemented across several CAL FIRE programs, including: Vegetation Management Program, Forest Health Grants, Fire Prevention Grants, and Wildfire Prevention Engineering.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal, Wildfire Planning and Engineering Division also has a role in fuels reduction projects. The Strategic Fire Plan for California and Unit Fire Plans guide this work.

Some projects may also be completed under the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP).

Why are there projects showing that have zero acres treated?

Projects that show zero acres treated may not have started work on the ground yet but may have completed other activities such as mapping or environmental review. In other cases, activities may be tracked using different units of measurement, such as the number of trees felled instead of acres treated.

I've been involved in a CAL FIRE grant funded project, but it's not showing up in this viewer. Why?

CAL FIRE grant projects are entered into CalMAPPER at the beginning stages of the project. If you do not see a project you were involved with, please reach out to your local CAL FIRE contact to verify the information has been received. We enter data for the projects as soon as the grants are awarded and have entered into an agreement with CAL FIRE. However, a project must have reported at least one activity accomplishment before it will show up in the viewer.

What time frame do the reported acres cover?

"This Fiscal Year" report shows projects that have been completed since July 1, the beginning of the state's fiscal year. The "Last Fiscal Year" report covers a period from July 1-June 30.

How is the data used?

This data is used to mark progress and report to internal and external stakeholders for purposes of planning, accountability, management, and emergency response.

There's a project planned for my neighborhood. Can I use this viewer to monitor progress?

This viewer can be used to monitor progress on a project once there has been at least one accomplishment or activity recorded. To find a project, click on the "projects this fiscal year" or "projects last fiscal year" tab at the top of the viewer. To the left of the map is a list of projects sorted by county. Click on the project name or county to view project details and see its location on the map.

How are fuels reduction projects determined and prioritized?

CAL FIRE developed a methodology to characterize communities' relative vulnerability. This methodology incorporates physical wildfire risks around communities and socioeconomic characteristics of these communities to understand the relative vulnerability of each community. This methodology integrates three primary analyses: 1) Identification of vulnerable communities based on the socioeconomic characteristics of communities that indicate vulnerability to wildfire; 2) Identification of priority fuel reduction projects based on existing CAL FIRE Unit Plans. Each of these Unit Plans has identified priority projects based on the place-specific expertise of CAL FIRE Unit personnel working in each region of the state; and 3) Evaluation of wildfire risk within the proposed project area.

In addition to the criteria above, project implementation is prioritized based on:

- project readiness
- funding
- landowner agreements
- limited operating periods (protection of sensitive species)
- weather conditions
- fuel conditions
- soil conditions
- wildfire situation
- availability of Department and cooperator personnel and/or contract vendors

What environmental review is required for fuels reduction projects in the SRA?

All fuels reduction projects must meet [California Environmental Quality Act](#) (CEQA) standards, [National Environmental Policy Act](#) (NEPA) requirements, or they may be conducted with the [California Vegetation Treatment Program](#) (CalVTP) environmental document.

How are projects implemented and what tools are used?

Please see the [Fuels Reduction Guide](#) to learn more.