



# CREEK FIRE

## Fuel Break Utilization

Fire Year 2023



### THE CREEK FIRE

The Creek Fire started on July 25, 2023 on the northbound side of Interstate 5 near the Hooker Creek Road exit in Tehama County. The fire spread quickly along the steep verge on the side of Interstate 5 before forward progress was stopped by the Interstate 5 North Red Bluff Fuel Treatment. Due to the aggressive suppression efforts and the history of ongoing fuel treatments dating back to 2011, the 1.3 acre fire was fully contained on July 25, 2023.



*Figure 1. The treatment area clearly acted as a fuel break between the fire and surrounding vegetation.*



### EFFECTIVENESS OF THE I-5 NORTH RED BLUFF FUEL TREATMENT

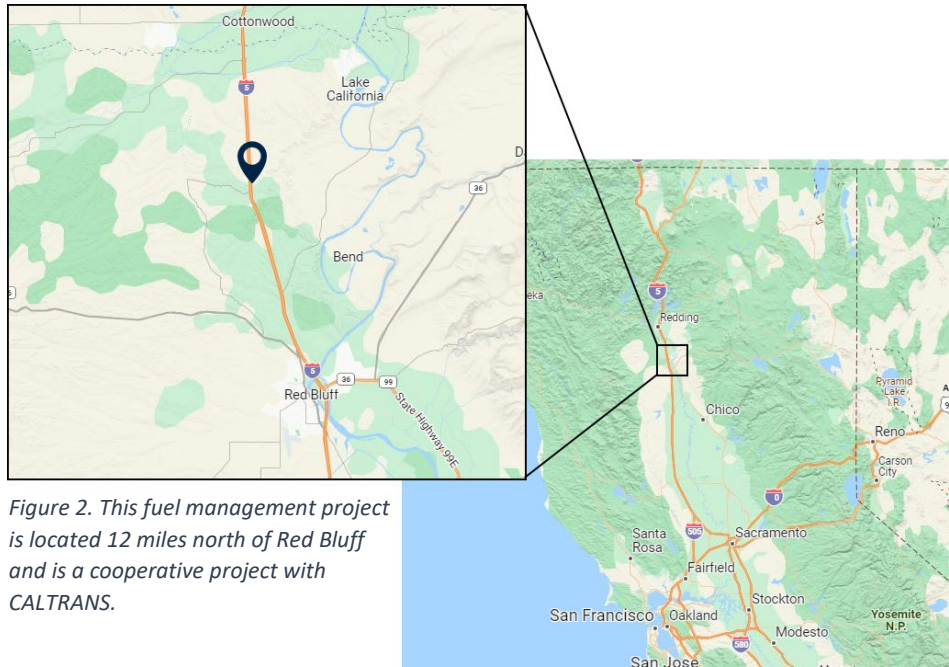
Work on this cooperative project with CALTRANS spans from May 2011 to the most recent treatment on June 30, 2023. The treatment area consists of a handline fuel break, which is designed to prevent the spread of fire to the east.

During the Creek Fire, this project acted to completely contain the fire between Interstate 5 and the fuel break 100 feet to the east (see fig, 1). This prevented the fire from spreading further to the east into residential and commercial areas. This effectively stopped the head of the fire, creating a slower expanding fire along Interstate 5, allowing firefighters to use the fuel break and freeway to contain the fire. The fire only started to expand slowly parallel to Interstate 5 when the faster moving head of the fire was contained by the fuel break. Without the fuel break, fire had potential of 10-20 acres which would have burned into residential and commercial properties valued at \$4,000,000.



## LESSONS LEARNED

The Creek Fire is a good example of the effectiveness of cooperative fuels management along major roadways. At peak, this section of Interstate 5 sees 50,000 vehicles per day with high winds and dry conditions being normal for large parts of the year. This combination of factors means that there is a strong potential for fires starting and spreading from the roadway.



*Figure 2. This fuel management project is located 12 miles north of Red Bluff and is a cooperative project with CALTRANS.*

This fuel management project not only helped to slow the spread of the Creek Fire, it also allowed firefighting personnel greater access to suppress the fire along the edge of the roadway. Projects such as this one will continue to keep fires stemming from roadways from spreading rapidly to neighboring land, safeguarding life and property in the proximity to major highways.