

Unit Strategic Fire Plan

CAL FIRE / Tulare Unit MAY 2025



Last Update April 16, 2025

ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS

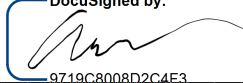
AMENDMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
SIGNATURE PAGE	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
SECTION I: UNIT OVERVIEW	2
UNIT PREPAREDNESS AND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITIES	3
SECTION II: COLLABORATION	4
COMMUNITY/AGENCIES/FIRE SAFE COUNCILS	4
SECTION III: VALUES/COMMUNITIES	5
SECTION IV: PRE-FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES	7
A. FIRE PREVENTION	7
B. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT	10
C. BATTALION/ PROGRAM AREAS	13
1. BADGER BATTALION - B4111	12
2. KAWEAH BATTALION - B4112	15
3. TULE BATTALION - B4113	21
4. FOUNTAIN SPRINGS BATTALION - B4114	25
5. PORTERVILLE AIR ATTACK BASE	29
6. TULARE FIRE CENTER/ FIREFIGHTER HANDCREW	30
7. MOUNTAIN HOME CONSERVATION CAMP	31
8. MOUNTAIN HOME DEMONSTRATION STATE FOREST	32
9. TRAINING BUREAU	35
APPENDIX A: PRE-FIRE PROJECTS	37
APPENDIX B: FUEL MODEL	38
APPENDIX C: LARGEST FIRES (PAST 50 YEARS)	39
APPENDIX D: IGNITIONS	40
APPENDIX E: FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE	43
EXHIBITS: UNIT MAPS	44
ANNUAL REPORT UNIT ACCOMPLISHMENTS	46

SIGNATURE PAGE:

Unit Strategic Fire Plan developed for Tulare Unit:

This Plan:

- Has been collaboratively developed. Interested parties, Federal, State, City, and County agencies within the Unit have been consulted and are listed in the plan.
- Identifies and prioritizes pre-fire and post fire management strategies and tactics meant to reduce the loss of values at risk within the Unit.
- It is intended for use as a planning and assessment tool only. It is the responsibility of those implementing the projects to ensure that all environmental compliance and permitting processes are met as necessary.

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5/13/2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tulare Unit (TUU) is one of 21 administrative Units within CAL FIRE. The Tulare Unit Strategic Fire Plan is a product of the implementation of the California State Fire Plan. The TUU Strategic Fire Plan was completed by a collaborative effort between the Unit Chief, Battalion Chiefs, Program Managers, Bureau Managers, and various stakeholders in the Unit. This process provided TUU background information on fuels and fire data, current and proposed projects, and individual Battalion activities commonly carried out each year. The TUU Strategic Fire Plan is our local road map to create and maintain defensible landscapes to protect vital assets. The Fire Plan seeks to reduce firefighting costs and property loss, increase public and firefighter safety, minimize wildfire risk to communities and contribute to ecosystem health.

This Unit Strategic Fire Plan emphasizes State Responsibility Land within CAL FIRE jurisdiction. The Fire Plan will be a tool to assist the Unit with pre-suppression projects which exist within each Battalion. TUU plans, identifies, and evaluates priority landscape, fire hazards, and wildfire risk. Additionally, it identifies opportunities for reducing structural ignitability and identifies potential fuel reduction projects and techniques for minimizing those risks.

The TUU Strategic Fire Plan is our dynamic planning tool and intended to be a living document. While we plan for and develop new projects, our primary focus will be completing current projects and the maintenance of the existing projects and pre-suppression infrastructure that is in place. This document will be updated each year on the successes that have been accomplished and new goals and objectives as outlined by the Unit and the California Strategic Fire Plan.

The Tulare Unit's Key Goals and Objectives from the California Strategic Fire Plan:

- Support the implementation and maintenance of defensible space inspections around structures.
- Analyze trends in fire cause and focus prevention and education efforts to modify behaviors and effect change to reduce ignitions within Tulare County.
- Continually evaluate the success in achieving the 95% threshold of keeping fires less than 10 acres in size.
- Identify and evaluate wildland fire hazards and recognize assets at risk, collect and analyze data to determine fuels reduction projects, and other wildfire and forest resilience mitigations.
- Meeting the Fuels Reduction Goals set forth by the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force, Legislature, Governor, CAL FIRE Director and Tulare Unit Management. This plan will identify how the Unit will meet the following fuels and fire prevention goals:
 - Conduct defensible space inspections of one third of the residential structures within Tulare County (Pg. 10).
 - Conduct a minimum of 900 acres per battalion (3,600 acres) of fuels reduction including prescribed fire, not inclusive of grantee work (Battalion Project Priorities).
 - Conduct a minimum of 450 acres per battalion (1800 acres) of prescribed fire (Battalion Project Priorities).
- Support the availability and utilization of CAL FIRE resources, as well as public and private sector resources for fuels management activities, including ongoing maintenance.

- Assist landowners and local government in the evaluation of the need to retain and utilize features (e.g., roads, fire lines, water sources) developed during fire suppression efforts, taking into consideration those identified in previous planning efforts.

Through the Tulare Units Strategic Fire Plan implementation, CAL FIRE will partner with collaborating agencies to reduce fire suppression costs, property loss, damage to our watersheds and timberlands. More importantly, this plan will provide for protection of listed values and safer communities, while reducing injuries and the loss of life to both the public and firefighters. In 2025, the Unit will add a Resiliency Assistant Chief with the primary responsibility of increasing scope and scale of fuels projects and community wildfire resilience. Tulare Unit will strive to collaborate with program staff and cooperators in 2025 in the creation of a network potential operational delineations (PODs) to describe the roads, ridge tops, fuel breaks, and other landscape features needed for strategic wildfire response and the proactive use of prescribed fire.

SECTION I: UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT DESCRIPTION

Located in Tulare County, the CAL FIRE Tulare Unit is in the San Joaquin Valley of Central California. The fire response responsibility areas across the county consist of 599,086 acres of State Responsibility Area (SRA), 908,328 acres of Local Responsibility Area (LRA), and 1,591,911 of Federal Responsibility Area (FRA) with a total combined acreage of 3,099,325. Through Interagency agreements the Direct Protection Area (DPA) differs from the Responsibility Area 629,045 State DPA, 913,845 Local (DPA), and 1,556,291 Federal DPA. CAL FIRE Tulare Unit is bordered on the east by Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and Sequoia National Forest. The counties of Kern, Kings and Fresno border to the South, West, and North respectively. The elevation of Tulare Unit land receiving direct protection by CAL FIRE ranges from 200 feet along the county's western boundary to a highest point of 9,252 feet on Moses Mountain to the East. This wide range of elevation supports many areas of vegetation consisting of grass, oak woodland, brush, and forests from mixed conifer to sub-alpine, including old growth Giant Sequoia. For the Tulare County Fuel Models see Appendix C.

Average annual temperatures range from 50 to 75 degrees; with low 20s during the winter months and highs exceeding 100 degrees for extended periods during the summer months. The rainy season is October through April; the average annual rainfall is 9.1 inches. Summers can be hot with extremely warm temperatures with low relative humidities lasting for weeks. During the summer, North American Monsoonal season thunderstorms are not uncommon over the higher elevations with some extending out over the Sierra Foothills and valley floor. Some years a monsoonal push will work from the southwest heading northeast causing thunderstorms with associated lightning and scattered precipitation on the valley floor and foothill region.

The most recent United States Census Bureau estimates Tulare County's population at 483,546, with most the population in the State Responsibility Area (SRA) is located along two east-west highways. Highway 198 which leads to the Sequoia / Kings Canyon National Parks and Highway 190 which accesses a significant portion of the Sequoia National Forest/Giant Sequoia National Monument. Tulare Unit continues to experience a population growth rate of approximately 1 percent annually. Along with the population increase, wildland urban intermix has significantly increased where structures are being built throughout wildland areas. Providing adequate fire protection to those structures has become a major undertaking. However, the Tulare Unit has a low frequency of large damaging fires. CAL FIRE strives to extinguish 95% of all wildland fires at 10 acres or less. For the top ten largest fires over the past 50 years see Appendix D.

Tulare Unit's Strategic Fire Plan is our mechanism to catalog potential hazard areas and develop prescriptions to begin mitigating them based upon assessed priorities.

UNIT PREPAREDNESS AND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

TUU Facilities:

TUU Headquarters is located 1 mile South of Highway 198 in Visalia. During the peak fire season, the Unit staffs 8 fire stations, an air attack base including one fixed wing air attack and two air tankers, an Inmate Conservation Camp with 2 year-round hand crews, the Tulare Fire Center with 8 professional firefighter hand crews, Emergency Command Center, Fire Prevention Bureau, Training Bureau, 2 dozers / transport combinations and 2 Registered Professional State Foresters.

The following is a list of TUU's facilities, equipment, and overhead personnel by battalion.

Badger Battalion

Badger Station	1-Type III Engine
Woodlake Station	1-Battalion Chief 1-Type III Engine 1-Dozer / Transport

Kaweah Battalion

Visalia Station	1-Type III Engine
Three Rivers Station	1-Battalion Chief 2-Type III Engines

Tule Battalion

Porterville Station	1-Battalion Chief 1-Type III Engine 1-Dozer / Transport
Bear Creek Station	2-Type III Engines

Fountain Springs Battalion

Fountain Springs Station	1-Battalion Chief 2-Type III Engines
Railroad Canyon Station	1-Type III Engine

Tulare Fire Center

Porterville Developmental Center	7-Type I/II IA FF Hand Crews 1-Division Chief 2-Battalion Chiefs
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Mountain Home Conservation Camp

Mountain Home Camp	1-Division 2-Type I IA Hand Crews
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Emergency Command Center

Visalia Headquarters	1-Battalion Chief 6-Fire Captains 4-Comm Operators 1-Comm Op Supervisor
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Porterville Air Attack Base

Porterville Airport	1-Battalion Chief 3-Fire Captains 1-Fire Apparatus Engineer 8-Firefighter I's
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UNIT PREPAREDNESS AND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITIES CONTINUED:

Tulare Unit has MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS with the following Departments:

- Tulare County Fire Department (TCFD)
- United States Forest Service (SQF)
- National Park Service (Sequoia & Kings Canyon)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (Tule River Indian Reservation)
- Porterville City Fire Department (PFD)
- Farmersville Fire Department (FFD)
- Woodlake Fire Protection District (WLF)

SECTION II: COLLABORATION**COMMUNITY / AGENCIES / FIRE SAFE COUNCILS**

Representatives involved in the development of the Unit Strategic Fire Plan are included in the following table. Their organization and title are indicated below:

Plan Development Team:

Organization	Title
CAL FIRE Tulare Unit	Unit Chief
The Sequoia Fire Safe Council	Council President
United States Forest Service	FMO / District Manager
Tulare County Resource Conservation District	President
National Parks Service	Superintendent
Tulare County Tree Mortality Task Force	Deputy Administrator
Oak to Timberline Fire Safe Council	Council President
Three Rivers Fire Safe Council	Council President
Porterville Fire Department	Fire Chief
Farmersville Fire Department	Fire Chief
Woodlake Fire Protection District	Fire Chief
County of Tulare	Grants Specialist / Forest Health Coordinator

SECTION III: VALUES

A: VALUES

The Unit description contained in this Strategic Fire Plan provides the background for identifying TUU's Assets at Risk. Additionally, CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) prepared the document entitled California's Forest and Rangelands: 2017 Assessment. This assessment identifies Unit Priority Landscapes. Priority Landscapes are intended to focus investments and other programs to address issues such as fire threat to ecosystem health, rangeland fire threat, and post fire erosion threat to community water. Each of the programs in TUU is geared to protect or enhance the assets. The following list provides a summary of TUU's Assets at Risk:

Life and Safety

The loss of life and disregard for safety is the ultimate price paid. One ounce of prevention is little compared to any injury or a loss of life. This is based on population density and makeup of the communities. The fire size, location, and rate of spread could prove detrimental.

Communities and Homes

There is a wide variety of structure types in the Unit. The effect of fire would depend on the housing density and the exposure (potential for structure loss in a large fire event). The cost would not only be to the average dollar lost per home but the non-commodity assets as well.

Water and watersheds

From north to south the major watersheds in the Unit are Kaweah River, Tule River, and the White River. Prior to the installation the dams the Kaweah and Tule Rivers would flow into Tulare Lake. Tulare Lake was the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River prior to it being drained and converted to agricultural fields. Initially installed to manage flooding the dams are used to store water from the spring snow melt run off for later use by the agricultural industry. Fire could increase water yields but could cause significant damage to the ecosystem and water ways. Vegetation Management Plans are the key to watershed management. The fuels reduction and low intensity fire prescribed in VMP's can create habitat mosaics that decrease the risk of catastrophic wildfires. Landslide and debris flow can follow catastrophic wildfires, this could impact the County's water systems, which could impact agricultural production which given the right conditions can lead to landslides.

Range Productivity

Agriculture is the primary industry in Tulare County and in the Unit. Cattle ranches and range land encompass hundreds of thousands of acres in the Unit. Fuel's reduction and prescribed fire can increase rangeland production, but wildland fires can burden cattle ranchers when they are forced to purchase feed to replace feed lost in a wildland fire. The dollar cost to replace feed per acre will vary depending on the regions, owners, and feed.

Timber

There are millions of board feet of merchantable timber in the Unit. As forests trees provide innumerable ecosystems services. From the blue oak woodlands at lower elevations in the SRA to the Giant Sequoia and Red Fir forests in Mountain Home State Demonstration Forest, trees provide the following ecosystem services:

- Regulate temperature and provide shade
- Filter air pollutants
- Sequester carbon
- Manage and filter rainwater
- Stabilize soil
- Maintain soil health
- Provide food and shelter for living organisms
- Improve people's mental, physical, and well-being
- Improve recreation and aesthetics

Air Quality

The topography of the San Joaquin Valley air basin, the reliance on fossil fuels, and the seasonal weather patterns have created the conditions for significant air quality issues. Smoke from wildfires adds to the already poor air quality conditions in the Unit, which can have negative health impacts. The potential is damage to health, vegetation, and visibility. This is ranked on vegetation type and air movement. The unit is working to mitigate air quality impacts using fuels treatments and prescribed fires.

B: COMMUNITIES

The communities in the Unit that are at risk and are recognized on both the State and National levels are:

Badger	Camp Nelson	Exeter
East Porterville	Kennedy Meadows	Lindsay
Poso Park	Pine Flat Village	R Ranch
Tule River	Wilsomia	Tule River Indian Reservation
Springville	Three Rivers	Woodlake

The communities that are not recognized at the state and national levels are:

Balance Rock	Blue Ridge	Elderwood
Campbell Creek	Fountain Springs	Hartland Camp
Hammond	Jack Ranch	California Hot Springs
Kaweah	Lemon Cove	Mehrten Creek
Posey	Sugar Loaf Village	Sierra Glen

SECTION IV: PRE-FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A: FIRE PREVENTION

The Tulare Unit fire prevention program accomplishes fire management goals using four primary resources. These resources are law enforcement, pre-fire engineering, education and volunteerism.

Throughout CAL FIRE's history, our officers have worked in partnership with the community along with our cooperators to provide the highest level of safety, service, and security while protecting the natural resources of the state of California, through enforcement of forest and fire laws. Our officers hold people accountable who ignite fires through violations of law and/or negligence as well as those who violate the Forest Practice Act. CAL FIRE peace officers conduct patrol, investigate fires, investigate reports of forest and fire law violations, make arrests, issue citations, conduct surveillance operations, collect, and preserve evidence, and testify in court. Peace officers have Statewide authority and although their primary function is to enforce forest and fire laws, they may be called upon to enforce any of California's laws.

Pre-fire works with property owners, stakeholders, fire safe councils, resource conservancy and local districts in planning fuel reduction projects, Chaparral Management Plans (CMP), California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP), and fire safe projects. To meet the Governor, State Legislature, CAL FIRE and the Tulare Units Fuel Reduction goals, CAL FIRE Tulare Unit will be striving to increase frequency, scope and scale of fuel reduction projects.

Education and outreach are accomplished by the Unit's Fire Prevention Specialist. Activities include annual first grade school visits, fire prevention floats in local community parades, various community functions and staffing the Tulare County Fair exhibit. Volunteerism is supported through the Volunteer in Prevention (VIP) program, which uses local volunteers to assist with public information, represent CAL FIRE at public events, and correspond with the public with CAL FIRE's mission in mind. Currently the Tulare Unit has a roster of 6 VIPs.

Civil Cost Recovery

CAL FIRE's Civil Cost Recovery Program recovers fire suppression costs when a fire investigation reveals that the party responsible caused the fire negligently or in violation of law. This benefits the State in two ways: aligning fire suppression costs to culpable parties rather than the taxpayers at large, and serves as a deterrent to carelessness that can result in destructive fires. All fires meeting the above criteria are forwarded to Southern Region Office for review and civil cost collection.

Pre-Attack Plans and Potential Operational Delineations (PODs)

The Unit needs updated maps utilizing GIS technology to capture all roads, fuel breaks, water locations, staging locations, Heli-spots, and plot probable control lines. Possible strategies for fire suppression could be pre-determined utilizing fire history, typical fire weather and fire behavior models. The creation of PODs could be inclusive of pre-attack information. The Tulare Unit will strive to begin the process of PODs and pre-attack planning in 2025.

ENGINEERING & STRUCTURE IGNITABILITY

The Prevention Bureau, through its Fire Captain / Pre-Fire Engineer position supports and collaborates with a multitude of agencies and community members in the planning, organizing, and documentation of fuel reduction projects throughout the Unit.

In the Tulare Unit, wildland urban interface (WUI) continues to grow. TUU contains a variety of land uses and types, from agriculture to forest. Commercial and residential structures are present throughout these land use types. The communities within the confines of the Tulare Unit have always been confronted by the threat posed by uncontrolled wildland fire. The structures within the Unit reflect well over one hundred years of acceptable building materials and techniques. State law establishes certain requirements for building in the WUI that affect structure placement and decrease structure ignitability. Construction types, ignitability of materials and proper engineering are all critical when wildland fires encounter structures.

The California Building Commission (CBC) adopted the Wildland-Urban Interface codes (Chapter 7A) in late 2005. Many of the new requirements took effect in 2008. These new codes include provisions for ignition resistant construction standards applicable to the WUI, which emphasizes protecting against airborne embers. During this same period, CAL FIRE initiated a statewide project to update the Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) designations within the WUI. Starting with the State Responsibility Areas in 2005 and concluding with Local Responsibility Areas adjacent to or within the SRA in 2008. Fire Hazard Severity Zones were field validated, updated as required and adopted by local government (County and City governing and regulatory entities) before official CAL FIRE maps were produced and released to local government. For Fire Hazard Severity Zones see Appendix F.

The requirements in Chapter 7A of the CBC and the associated FHSZ's have been enacted and are being enforced by local government building officials as new development plans work their way through the approval process. Property owners will also use the updated zones to comply with Natural Hazards Disclosure requirements at the time of a property sale. Local government is encouraged to integrate the updated FHSZ's into the Safety Element of their General Plans. Property owners, developers, contractors, building materials businesses, and product designers can find specifics and answers to questions regarding California Building Code Chapter 7A, Fire Code Chapter 47, PRC 4290 and 4291, and Title 14, 19, 24 and other related information at the CAL FIRE Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Defensible Space

It is a fact recognized by all fire control personnel that any ignition can quickly result in a fire that immediately threatens structures. Whether it is 1 or 1,000 acres, structures can be threatened. In the case of small rapidly growing fires, ignition can be from direct flame impingement and/or radiant heat. In the case of large landscape scale fires, a means of ignition could be airborne embers. Recognition of this fact by property owners should encourage them to take personal responsibility for improving the safety of their structures by following the steps required and/or recommended to reduce the threat of structure ignition.

The Tulare Unit also enforces the LE-100 program (Defensible Space Inspections). The Unit attempts to inspect all structures in the State Responsibility Area with the 6 Defensible Space Inspectors. Homeowners who do not comply with the Public Resource Code (PRC) 4291 are cited. The idea and reasoning behind the program is not to issue a citation but to prevent the loss of structures when fire is moving through properties and communities by receiving compliance. 3,598 properties of the 4,240 properties within the SRA were inspected in 2024. This gave the Tulare Unit an 84% inspection rate of properties exceeding the department goal of 33% of properties inspected annually. With the defensible space staff already working for the season we will meet our inspection goal again for 2025.

The department has instituted an easy-to-use Defensible Space Inspection known as the LE-100a. This form is accessed by our inspectors utilizing the "Field Maps" via handheld electronic tablets. It contains detailed explanations of violations and how to correct them. Used by agency inspectors alike, it is checkbox format acts as a detailed guide for inspectors and a prompt for veteran inspectors while minimizing the amount of writing required, speeding up and standardizing inspections. During inspections, we encourage discussions with property owners about property issues.

Property owners living in State Responsibility Areas (SRA) are required by Public Resource Code (PRC) 4291 to maintain clearance of flammable vegetation around their property. A property owner's responsibility is to clear one hundred feet from his or her structure(s) or to the property line, whichever is closer, and is limited to their lands. However, coordination with adjacent landowners to achieve maximum defensible space is encouraged. Short of expensive remodel and retrofit projects for existing structures, compliance with existing PRC 4291 requirements is the single most effective means by which property owners can reduce the likelihood of fire damage.

PRC 4291 clearance requirements: a thirty-foot wide Defensible Space Zone immediately adjacent to the structure, plus an additional seventy feet Reduced Fuel zone, for a total of one hundred feet of clearance around all structures. The Prevention Bureau and each Battalion in the Unit is actively engaged in PRC 4291 education and compliance efforts, including: on-sight inspections, self-inspection forms, face to face education at the fire stations, participation in community events, close cooperation with Home/ Property Owner Associations, and collaborative efforts with the local Fire Safe Councils, Local and Federal Government Fire Agencies and Land Management Agencies.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Information & Education is an integral part of the Fire Prevention Program. One of the main focuses is to teach elementary-aged children tips in fire safety as well as inform teenagers and young adults about CAL FIRE as a career through school programs. In addition to the school programs, it is imperative to educate the public on the importance of Defensible Space clearance, the proper method to burn hazard reduction materials, fire danger, and the importance of our various projects and work being done for fire suppression and prevention throughout the year.

The Fire Prevention Specialist utilizes various social media platforms to continue to share fire prevention messages with the public. From January 1st 2024, to January 1st 2025, CAL FIRE TUU's social media had a wide reach on our various platforms. With Facebook, we had 227.4K views on our content, we reached 288K people and have 9.5K followers. On Instagram, we had 239.6K views, reached 36.6K people, and have over 3K followers. The goal for 2025 is to broaden our reach with our messaging on these platforms, which in turn will help us create a better-informed community on the fire prevention topics we focus on.

The first step in planning a fire prevention program is to identify what the Unit's priorities are. Review the Unit Fire Plan to determine what fire causes occur in the target areas. For example, children match-caused fires may have dropped in occurrence due to heavy saturation of school education programs over the years, while equipment uses or debris burning fires may have increased. This would indicate a change in priorities. The Unit could then choose to redirect emphasis on equipment uses and debris burning programs or assign additional personnel to assist with the implementation of programs to meet those needs in targeted areas.

The Tulare County Fair was held this year in our newly renovated booth area. The Tulare Unit Prevention team utilized grant funds to upgrade the buildings and educational spaces within the CAL FIRE booth over the first half of 2024. This project allowed the unit to interact with over 3,000 people throughout the five-day event.

Education and Information:

In 2023 the Tulare County RCD received an education grant to pay for upgrades to CAL FIRE TUU's 1 acre Tulare County Fairgrounds. The old A frame structure at the fairgrounds was torn down and replaced with a new building to replicate a home in the Wildland Urban Interface. This grant allowed us to update the landscaping on the premises to demonstrate proper defensible space around structures in the State Responsibility Area. The upgrades were finalized and in place for the September, 2024 Tulare County Fair.



Figure 1 The renovated CAL FIRE booth at the Tulare County Fair.

Fire Prevention Roadside Sign Program

Battalion staff will continue promoting the fire prevention message based on our current ignition problems via the 4'x8' roadside signs. These signs are placed in high traffic areas in all 4 battalions within the Tulare Unit. There are 5 in the Badger Battalion, 5 in the Kaweah Battalion, 5 in the Tule Battalion, and 3 in the Fountain Springs Battalion. These are the primary entry points for commuters, part-time residents, and visitors to Tulare County. These highways and roads experience a large volume of traffic, making it an excellent point to publicize our fire prevention messages. This is an annual program in which signs are posted throughout the year with different messages displayed during fire season and wintertime.

B. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Natural Resource Management is supporting the TUU Fire Plan through Forest Practice activities, the Chaparral Management Plan, and other fuel reduction initiatives and grants. Through the Forest Practice Program, we are encouraging healthy forest throughout the Unit. Landowners as well as local Registered Professional Foresters are currently reducing overcrowded timber stands implemented through Timber Harvest Plans (THPs). Reducing the amount of vegetation with high fire potential and providing an opportunity to fight fire safely and aggressively is the primary goal. These programs also help increase the water table by reducing the amount of evapotranspiration. Reducing the amount of hazardous brush will increase the amount of forage for livestock and wildlife. These projects help bring the natural mosaic back to the landscape.

While maintaining firefighting capabilities with an early start to the 2024 fire season, the Tulare Unit continued with ongoing CMP, VTP and maintenance projects while adding an additional 1,105.35 total treatment acres with 796 being broadcast burn acres and the remaining 309.35 acres being fuel reduction projects such as shaded fuel breaks, fire control road maintenance, and handline construction. Roadside burning that took place along roadways with a history of frequent unwanted fire ignitions throughout the Unit.

A total of 12,961 personnel-hours and 4,479 equipment-hours were recorded for the above projects. The scope of work consisted of thinning vegetation, mastication, manual and mechanical piling, limbing and bucking, lop and scatter, pile burning, and broadcast burning.

Tulare Unit Proposed projects:

The Tulare Unit currently has 12 new proposed projects, some of which will be grant funded under the (CAL FIRE) Climate Investments Fire Prevention Grants Program (CIFPGP). All listed proposals are projected to be awarded to the Tulare County RCD either through the CIFPGP or through the CAL FIRE direct award.

Project Name: Grouse VTP

Description: 6,300 acre Vegetation Treatment Project in the Grouse Valley Area will include hand and mechanical treatments as well as prescribed fire.

Community: Three Rivers, Springville

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE

Project Name: Fraiser Valley Roadside Burn

Description: Roadside burn along Fraiser Valley Road from the SRA boundary to Holdridge Drive.

Community: Strathmore, Springville

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, TCFD

Project Name: King George VMP

Description: 1,700 ac. Vegetation Management Project on King George Ridge.

Community: California Hot Springs

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE

Project Name: Mountain Home VTP

Description: Vegetation Treatment Project for Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest

Community: Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE

Project Name: Stagecoach VMP

Description: Vegetation Treatment Project in the Cedar Creek Drainage that ties Shadequarter VMP in with the Mankin VMP.

Community: Badger

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE

Project Name: Pierpoint Fuel Break

Description: Fuel break around the community of Pierpoint.

Community: Pierpoint Springs, Camp Nelson

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tulare County Fire, Tulare County landowners in the SRA, Sequoia Fire Safe Council, United States Forest Service

Project Name: Tule Indian Reservation

Description: Fuels Reduction on the Reservation and neighboring lands affected by the Windy and Castle Fires.

Community: Tule Indian Reservation

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tule Indian Reservation, BIA, Tulare County Fire, TCRCD, Sequoia Fire Safe Council, and other local stakeholders

Project Name: Sequoia Crest Fuel Break

Description: Fuels Reduction and creation of fuel break in tree mortality areas

Community: Sequoia Crest

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, USFS SQF, Tulare County Fire, Tulare County Resource Conservation District, Tulare County landowners in the SRA, Sequoia Fire Safe Council, and other local stakeholders

Project Name: Camp Nelson Fuel Break

Description: Fuels reduction around the mountain community of Camp Nelson

Community: Camp Nelson

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, USFS SQF, Tulare County Fire, TCRCD, Tulare County landowners in the SRA, Sequoia Fire Safe Council, and other local stakeholders.

BADGER BATTALION – 4111

Fuels:

The fuels within the Badger Battalion are typical of those found in the foothill and mountain regions of the Southern Sierra Mountain Range. Vegetation types range from annual grasses, near the valley floor, to mixed conifer forest at higher elevations. Below 500' elevation annual grasses, where wild oats are the predominate fuel type. Fuel loading in this area changes from year to year based on the amount of precipitation received and the number of grazing livestock. Between 500'-3500', the fuel type becomes more oak woodland with an inter-mix of brush. The brush is made up of several varieties including manzanita, chemise, ceanothus, scrub oak, live oak, and poison oak. The brush becomes denser with the rise in elevation and on the North and East aspects. Above 3500' elevation, fuels transition to a Conifer fuel type. At 4500' elevation and above, the fuel is dominated by conifer species such as incense cedar, ponderosa pine, sugar pine, white fir, live oak and black oak with a mixed brush understory.

Topography:

There are a wide range of topographical features that vary in elevation from 400' to near 5000'. The lower elevations are comprised of rolling foothills, while the upper elevations contain mountainous terrain with steep drainages, rugged canyons, and a few gentle valleys. Dry Creek and Cottonwood Creek are the major drainages in the battalion.

Weather:

Being a Mediterranean Climate, the typical summer weather pattern consists of 90 – 105 degrees with humidity's in the upper teens to low 20's during the day. At night, the temperature is in the upper 50's to near 70 degrees with humidity in the high 30's to low 50's. Winds are generally light with upslope, up canyon during the day and downslope, down canyon at night.

Fire History:

The Badger Battalion averages approximately 5-10 unwanted fire ignitions annually. Most of the fire causes are vehicle and equipment use in the lower grasslands. Although rare, ignitions in the upper elevations within the battalion pose a significant potential for large extended attack fires. Extended attack fires have occurred in the battalion over the years with several fires in the 500 –1000 acre range. Most recently in September 2021 the battalion was affected by the KMP Complex. The KNP Complex burned over 1100 acres in the battalion, and we were able to utilize our fire roads and fuel reduction projects as control features.



Figure 2 Crawford Corral project progress.

2024 Badger Battalion Accomplishments

The Badger Battalion was able to make progress in 2024 on the Crawford Corral VMP. We continue to reinforce fuel breaks and strengthen fire lines. TUU is planning 750 acres of broadcast burn on Crawford Corral to meet the Unit fuels reduction goal for 2025.



Figure 3 CAL FIRE Dozer clearing brush.

We have continued the maintenance of fire control roads. CAL FIRE personnel, equipment and fire crews are utilized in all aspects for the maintenance and repair of these vital roads. CAL FIRE bull dozers, backhoes and road graders repair damaged roads and maintain a drivable surface.

Battalion personnel continue to be proactive with residential Defensible Space inspections (PRC 4291) which requires the 100-foot clearance around all structures within the SRA. We have placed fire prevention signs throughout the battalion in high traffic areas reminding the public to prepare for fire season by clearing flammable vegetation from their property.



Figure 4 CAL FIRE Defensible Space Inspectors educating property owners on Defensible Space.

Badger Battalion personnel will continue to participate in community meetings, public relations opportunities and foster relationships with stakeholders and cooperators.

We now have numerous funded projects in the battalion that have reduced vegetation along major thoroughfares throughout the battalion. The funded projects are reducing vegetation around Highway 245 and Whitaker Forest Road in the community of Badger. These projects will encompass not only fuel reduction but will provide a greater escape route under fire conditions.

Badger Battalion Project Priority's:

The following projects in the Battalion have been identified in support of CAL FIRE and Tulare Unit goals.

Priority #1

Project Name: Crawford Corral VMP – TUU 2025 900/450 acre fuels goal identified project, 750 acres.

Description: Established Vegetation Management Project starting at Eshom Valley Road and extending towards Shadequarter Lookout.

Community: Badger and Eshom Valley

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE

(750ac projected to be burned 2025 yr)

Priority #2

Project Name: Eshom (Grant Funded)

Description: Vegetation Management Project North of Eshom Valley Road. This is a grant funded project that uses masticators to reduce fuel loading in the Eshom Valley.

Community: Badger, Eshom Valley and Hartland.

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE Tulare County RCD

Priority #3

Project Name: Fire Control Road maintenance

Description: Maintain the fire control roads in the battalion for fire suppression and quick access to fires.

Community: Badger, Sierra Glen, Eshom Valley, Hartland Christian Camp, Sand Creek, Miramonte,

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tulare County landowners in the State Responsibility Area, Sequoia Fire Safe Council.

KAWEAH BATTALION – 4112

Fuels:

The fuels within the Kaweah Battalion are typical of those found in the Central California San Joaquin Valley and Sierra Nevada. This area is influenced by a Mediterranean climate with warm, dry summers and cool moist winters. The climate, topography, geology, and land use patterns within this region determine the vegetation patterns. Vegetation within the Kaweah Battalion varies from annual grasses and forbs on the valley floor to mixed conifer forest at higher elevations. The lower elevations manifest annual grasses, including wild oats, and loading varies from year to year based on seasonal rainfall. Between 500'-1000' elevation this changes to an oak woodland fuel type with brush becoming more prevalent along with pockets of gray/bull pine starting around the 2000' level. The brush component is made up of several species, including, but not limited to manzanita, chemise, scrub oak, live oak and poison oak. The brush is interspersed with black oak and live oak, buckeye trees and sycamore (in drainages) with higher densities on the north and east aspects. This vegetation type continues to about 3500' where it blends into the conifer belt with scattered oaks, brush and conifer trees. At about 4500' conifers become the dominant fuel including the following species: cedar, pine, fir, live oak and black oak with a mixed brush understory including bear clover, lotus, chinquapin and whitethorn.

Topography:

The Kaweah Battalion is typical of most of the foothill areas in the Southern Sierra Nevada Range and encompasses a large portion of the Kaweah drainage and the Cottonwood Creek drainage. The topography ranges from gentle rolling foothills above the Central Valley floor to steep river drainage along Kaweah River. Major ridges and mountains are separated by small ravines, rugged canyons, and a few gentle valleys with elevations within the State Responsibility Area topping out near the 5000' elevation range.

Weather:

Typical summer weather patterns consist of 90 – 105 degree days with humidities in the upper teens to low 20's and nights in the upper 50's to near 70 degrees with humidity in the high 30's to low 50's. Winds are generally diurnal, up slope, up canyon generally around 10am and switch to down slope, down canyon shortly before sunset. The winds can be upwards of 10mph and tend to have a heavy influence on fire behavior.

Fire History:

The Kaweah Battalion averages approximately 8-15 unwanted fire ignitions annually. Most ignitions causes are vehicle or electrical power in the lower grasslands. Lightning tends to be a common fire cause in higher elevations. Although rare, ignitions in the upper elevations within the battalion do pose a significant potential for a large extended attack fire. Large extended attack fires have occurred in the battalion over the years with several fires in the 500 – 1000 acre range. Type 1 Incident Management Team activations have impacted or took place in the Kaweah Battalion including the Case Mountain fire in 1987, and Kaweah Fire in 1996. In 2020 the SQF Complex (Castle) burned 174,178 acres and had an impacted areas of the community with mandatory evacuations that lasted over a week. In 2021 the KNP Complex burned 88,307 acres and impacted the East Fork and North Fork drainages. In 2024 the Coffee Pot Incident burned 14,104 acres and impacted the community with mandatory evacuations in the areas of South Fork and Mineral King Road.

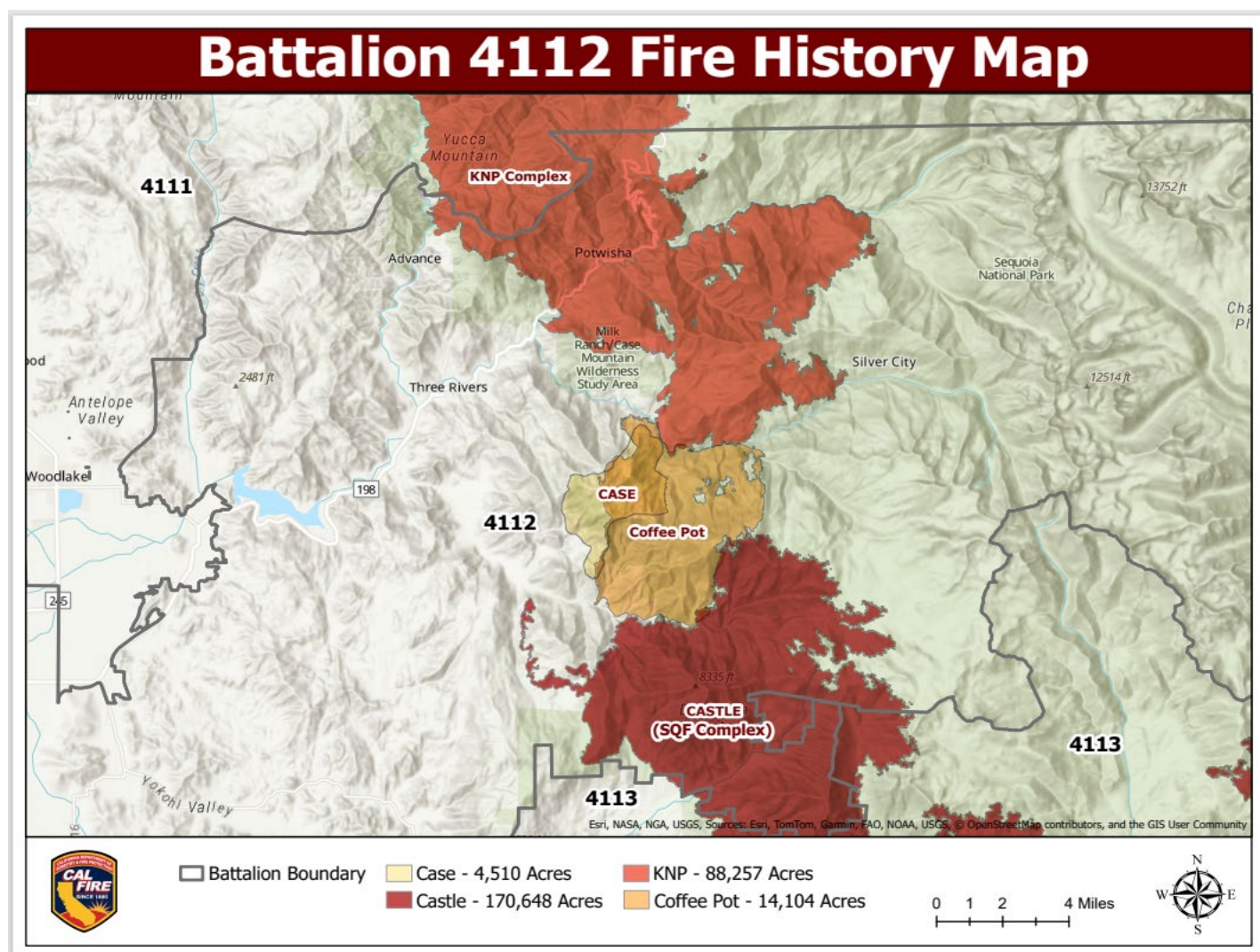


Figure 5 Three Rivers large fire history

2024 Kaweah Battalion Accomplishments

The Kaweah Battalion accomplished several projects in 2024. One of the major continuing projects is fire road maintenance. Fire roads were identified as a priority in the past 5 year's fire plans. In 2024 fire suppression staff spent hundreds of hours making sure all fire roads in the battalion were inspected, brushed, and had serviceable culverts cleared.

Upper Grouse Hazard Tree Removal– Contracted through the Tulare County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) they were able to treat 40 acres of Hazard Tree Removal. All trees that were removed have been piled and are ready to be burned later when conditions warrant. These 40 acres are within the footprint of the Grouse 2 Vegetation Treatment Program.

Three Rivers Fire Safe Council- The Three Rivers Fire Safe Council was able to secure a CAL FIRE Fire Prevention Grant that will establish a new fuel break in the community of Three Rivers. The project will consist of 4 stages. Phase 1 will start around the community of Cherokee Oaks. The different stages will encompass the utilization of goats, hand crews, and masticators. This will be followed up with the use of herbicides to eradicate invasive non-native plants and shrubs.

Rocky/Myer Roadside Burn- With the successful completion of project application packet we will be able to conduct a right-of-way roadside burn. This burn will encompass the county right of way along Rocky Hill Road, Myer Drive and Yokohl Valley Rd. The goal of the burn is mitigation of human-caused fires that this area is historically prone to.

Fire Control Road Repair- The Salt Creek FCR (Fire Control Road) was heavily utilized during the Coffeepot fire. Salt Creek FCR played a significant role in containing the Coffee Pot Fire. This road was utilized for various types of suppression tactics during the fire. Without this road the acreage of this fire would have grown significantly. Since this road was one of the main access points for the fire it sustained a large amount of damage. Our personnel continuously maintained these roads throughout the fire. Additionally, our personnel will continue to improve and make sure these fire control roads are in good working order throughout 2025.

Escape Routes and Shelter-In-Place Locations – Previous fire plans have identified a concern with escape routes and shelter locations in the Three Rivers area. In 2019 the Tulare County Fire Department identified escape routes and shelter locations for all areas of the community. The plans are published and were distributed to the cooperating agencies. In 2023 fire crews were successful in continuing vegetation treatment on Mountain Road 319, North Fork Drive, and Mineral King Road, this directly supports evacuation escape routes for residents. There are multiple future projects to support the escape routes hardening in the community of Three Rivers.

Lake Kaweah Rat Trail – The Kaweah Rat Trail was implemented and consists of a six-mile fuel break around Lake Kaweah on the Highway 198 corridor. This project was completed by Tulare Unit hand crews, with the purpose of any accidental start off the highway to be confined to the fuel break and slow down any potential expansion that would lead to a large-scale wildfire.



Figure 6 CAL FIRE hand crew cutting a fuel break in the Three Rivers area.



Figure 7 CAL FIRE hand crew constructing a fuel break.

Gill Range Improvement Burn- In 2024 CAL FIRE and its local cooperators conducted the Spring Exercise. During this exercise we were able to train and work hand and hand with our local cooperators. We were able to conduct live fire training which also purposed as range improvement prescribed fire. This coordinated burn supported eliminating dead and down fuels and invasive Star Thistle present in the watershed.



Figure 8 CAL FIRE personnel conducting a broadcast burn.



Figure 9 CAL FIRE personnel conducting a broadcast burn.

Concerns:

Fuel loads along escape routes: There are areas in the Three Rivers community where escape in a catastrophic fire emergency could be compromised due to fuel load along the road easement. It needs to be a priority for CAL FIRE and the cooperating agencies/groups to commence fuels projects starting with the major arteries and continuing with primary subdivision routes.

Tree Mortality: The Three Rivers community is at a heightened risk of catastrophic fires due to recent increased tree mortality rates. As indicated on the FRAP Tree Mortality Viewer, most higher elevations in the Battalion range from 20+ to 40+ dead trees per acre. Tree mortality on Case Mountain and in the Grouse, area is evident by plain sight and shows well over 75% mortality rate in conifers. Some areas of Case Mountain have had an increase in tree mortality due to the Coffee Pot fire.

Flooding: The burn scar from the Coffee Pot fire has left some areas vulnerable to flooding and debris flow. This is more apparent in the areas of the South Fork drainage. Some areas have the potential to cutoff access/egress to residents. Flooding and debris flow could also damage fire control roads.

Kaweah Battalion Project Priority's:

The priority for the Kaweah Battalion will be to integrate fuel reduction efforts into broader land management and conservation strategies to promote the long-term health and resilience of ecosystems while reducing wildfire risks within the community of Three Rivers and outlying areas of the battalion.

The following projects in the Battalion have been identified in support of CAL FIRE and Tulare Unit goals.

Priority #1

Project Name: Silver City (Grant Funded)

Description: Fuel reduction / Pile burning

Community: Three Rivers – Silver City

Project Collaborators: Cal Fire, Tulare County RCD

Acres: 202 Acres

Priority #2

Project Name: Cherokee Oaks Fuel Reduction Phase #1 (Grant Funded)

Description: Fuel reduction / modification goat grazing

Community: Three Rivers – Cherokee Oaks/ South Fork Drive

Project Collaborators: Three Rivers Fire Safe Council, CAL FIRE

Acres – 200 Acres

Priority #3

Project Name: Kaweah Fuels Reduction (Grant Funded)

Description: Fuel reduction modification/ evacuation corridor widening from Lemon Hill to Pierce Drive

Community: Three Rivers

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tulare County RCD

Priority #4

Project Name: Rocky Hill Roadside Burn TUU 2025 900/450-acre fuels goal identified project, 80 acres.

Description: Roadside burn of the County Right of Way along Rocky Hill, Meyer Drive and Yohkol Valley Road.

Community: Exeter

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, TCFD

(80ac projected to be burned 2025 yr)

Priority #5

Project Name: Gill Range Improvement TUU 2025 900/450-acre fuels goal identified project, 100 acres.

Description: Broadcast burn in the ranch perimeter to reduce dead/downed fuels and help eliminate star thistle.

Community: Exeter

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Gill Ranch.

(100 ac projected to be burned 2025 yr)

Priority #6

Project Name: Fire Control Road Maintenance (In Progress)

Description: Maintain the fire control roads in the Battalion for fire suppression and quick access to fires.

Community: Badger, Kaweah, Three Rivers, Lemon Cove.

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tulare County landowners in the SRA, Sequoia Fire Safe Council.

TULE BATTALION – 4113

Fuels:

The fuels present within the Tule Battalion represent the typical composition found in Central California's San Joaquin Valley and the Sierra Nevada region. This area experiences a Mediterranean climate characterized by warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. The interplay of climate, topography, geology, and land use dictates the distribution of vegetation within this area.

In the Tule Battalion, vegetation varies from annual grasses and forbs on the valley floor to ancient Sequoia redwood/mixed conifer forests at higher elevations. The valley floor exhibits annual grass like wild oats, with fuel load varying yearly based on rainfall patterns. As elevation rises from 500 to 1000 feet, the landscape transitions to an Oak Woodland fuel type, where brush becomes more prominent. This brush component includes species such as manzanita, chemise, ceanothus, Scrub Oak, Live Oak, and Poison-Oak. Black Oak and Live Oak, along with Buckeye trees and sycamores in drainages, are interspersed throughout, with higher concentrations on north and east-facing slopes.

Topography:

The Tule Battalion exemplifies the typical characteristics of many river drainages within the Southern Sierra Nevada Range. It spans a significant portion of the Tule River drainage and extends into the Deer Creek drainage along its southern edge. Terrain varies from gradual, rolling foothills as it graduates from the valley floor at 500 feet elevation to towering granite monoliths at 8000 feet elevation. The Tule River drainage comprises three primary forks—the North, Middle, and South Forks—and is supplemented by numerous feeder creeks and seasonal streams. The landscape is marked by major ridges, mountains interspersed with small ravines, rugged canyons, and occasional gentle valleys. Evidence of glacial activity from millennia past is evident in the form of large granite boulders, rocky escarpments, and sheer rock faces that adorn most ridges and mountains.

Weather:

The Tule Battalion, much like Tulare County, experiences the influence of a Mediterranean climate characterized by cool, moist winters and warm, dry summers. On average, temperatures range from the 50s to the 70s throughout the year. However, it's not unusual to see temperatures drop into the low 20s during winter or soar above 100 degrees Fahrenheit for extended periods in the summer. Winds are generally light and diurnal, up slope, up canyon in the daytime and down slope, down canyon at night.

The rainy season typically spans from October to April, with an average annual rainfall of 11.03 inches. Summers can be intense, with scorching temperatures and low humidity persisting for weeks. During the North American Monsoonal season, thunderstorms frequently occur over higher elevations, occasionally extending across the Sierra Foothills and valley floor. Some years witness a southwest-driven Monsoonal push, resulting in thunderstorms, lightning, and scattered precipitation in the valley floor and foothill regions.

Fire History:

The Tule Battalion encompasses the Highway 190 corridor, granting access to various recreation spots such as Lake Success, Balch Park, Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest, Sequoia National Forest, Tule Indian Reservation, and Giant Sequoia National Monument. Traditionally, this area sees the highest fire activity within the Tulare Unit. While some fires are sparked by recreational activities, the majority stem from arson. Most arson-caused fires ignite in the lower grasslands, with historical large fires predominantly occurring in grass and oak woodland areas. Notable fires include the "Coffee", "Deep", "Tule", and "Pier" fires originating in the Middle Fork of the Tule River, threatening SRA lands and Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest.

In 2020, the Castle Fire SQF Complex scorched over 12,000 acres in the SRA, with a significant portion affecting the Tule Battalion. Additionally, in 2021, the Windy incident engulfed several thousand acres in the southeastern part of the Tule Battalion.

Tule Battalion Accomplishments:

The Tule Battalion actively pursued multiple fuel projects throughout 2023/2024. Within the battalion, strategically positioned fire suppression tanks play a crucial role. These tanks enable fire engines to swiftly replenish water closer to the incident, resulting in valuable time saved. Specifically, the Cow Mountain Fire Control Road (FCR), Upper Balch Park Road, and Rancheria FCR are focal points for these efforts. CAL FIRE successfully obtained funding through grants to sustain the maintenance of these tanks. Annual inspections ensure that all tanks are operational.

Within the Battalion, numerous fuel breaks exist, including the Rancheria, Happy Camp and River Ridge. While these breaks have demonstrated effectiveness in halting wildfires' advance, neglect can lead to their overgrowth with flammable vegetation. Fortunately, funding has been allocated for maintaining several of these breaks, and planning is underway to restore them to their original condition suppression and fuel treatment mitigation measures.



Figure 10 Mountain Home Crews cutting Fuel Breaks



Figure 11 CAL FIRE personnel educating property owners on proper clearance and

Fire Defense Projects:

Additional grant funding has been awarded for two additional fuel reduction projects from Blue Ridge Road along Balch Park Road to Happy Camp. The second funded project will be along Blue Ridge Fire Control Road. This project will encompass not only fuel reduction but will provide a greater escape route under fire conditions.

Currently, the battalion is supervising numerous substantial projects at different stages, with many already receiving approval. These include initiatives such as the Happy Camp Fuel Break, Merritt VMP, River Ridge, Blue Oak Ranch and Camp Nelson VTPs. These projects entail coordination with diverse landowners, ranging from owners of small parcels to those holding over 200,000 acres. The combined area slated for treatment across these projects amounts to roughly 20,000 acres, employing a variety of treatment methods.

The Tule Battalion has successfully conducted Right of Way (ROW) fuel mitigation (burning) along both sides of Plano/ Rd 256 from Reid Ave. to Ave. 196 in the surrounding communities of Porterville and Strathmore. This effort has resulted in a notable reduction of unwanted ignitions by 75%-85% over the past year. This year the plan involves expanding operations to the Frazier Valley and Yokohl Valley areas. The target timeline for implementation by early summer of 2025.

Tule Battalion Project Priority's:

The following projects in the Battalion have been identified in support of CAL FIRE and Tulare Unit goals:

Priority #1

Project Name: Merritt VMP – TUU 2025 900/450 acre fuels goal identified project, 2000 acres.

Description: VMP Fuels Reduction 10,000 acres

Community: Springville

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Merritt Farms

(2000 ac projected to be treated 2025 yr)

Priority #2

Project Name: Lewis Hill ROW – TUU 2025 900/450 acre fuels goal identified project, 25 acres.

Description: Maintain the Right of Way (ROW) along both sides of Plano St/Rd256.

Community: Porterville/Strathmore MTZ

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tulare County Fire Department, Porterville Fire Department, CHP, Tulare County Roads.

(25 ac projected to be burned 2025 yr)

Priority #3

Project Name: Rancheria / Cow Mountain Fuel Break maintenance (Grant Funded)

Description: Mechanical and hand crew fuels reduction along two fire control roads in the Springville area.

Community: Springville

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, USFS SQF, Tulare County landowners in the SRA, Tulare County Resource Conservation District, and other local stakeholders.

Priority #4

Project Name: River Ridge (Grant Funded)

Description: Fuels Reduction along the Bear Creek corridor that will utilize hand, mechanical and prescribed fire treatments. This project also includes areas of SCICON, a outdoor school in the County.

Community: Springville

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tulare County Resource Conservation District, Tulare County landowners in the SRA, and other local stakeholders.

Priority #5

Project Name: Balch / Blue Ridge (Grant Funded)

Description: Fuel reduction 300ft along roadway to improve egress and access to isolated mountain communities.

Community: Springville, Happy Camp

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tulare County Resource Conservation District, United States Forest Service

(Approximately 450ac treatment 2025 yr)

Priority #6

Project Name: Fire Control Road/ cistern maintenance

Description: Maintain the fire control roads in the battalion for fire suppression and quick access to fires.

Community: Balch Ranch, Springville, Triple R Estates, Mountain Home State Forest, Ponderosa, Camp Nelson, Happy Camp, Tule Indian Reservation.

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Tulare County landowners in the SRA, Tulare County Resource Conservation District and Sequoia Fire Safe Council.

FOUNTAIN SPRINGS BATTALION – 4114

Fuels:

The fuels within the Fountain Springs Battalion are typical of those found in the Central California foothills, San Joaquin Valley and Sierra Nevada. This area is influenced by a Mediterranean climate with warm, dry summers and cool moist winters. The climate, topography, geology and land use patterns within this region determine the vegetation patterns. Vegetation within the Fountain Springs Battalion varies from annual grasses and forbs on the valley floor to mixed conifer forest at higher elevations. The lower elevations manifest annual grasses, including wild oats and loading varies from year to year based on seasonal rainfall. Between 500'-1000' elevation fuel transitions to a Woodland Oak fuel type with brush becoming more prevalent along with pockets of gray/bull pine starting around the 2000' level. The brush component is made up of several species, including, but not limited to manzanita, chemise, ceanothus, Scrub Oak, Live Oak and Poison-Oak. The brush is interspersed with Blue Oak and Live Oak, Buckeye trees and Sycamore (in drainages) with higher densities on the north and east aspects. This vegetation type continues to about 3500' where it blends into the conifer belt with scattered oaks, brush and conifer trees. At about 4500, conifers become the more dominant fuel with such species as; cedar, pine, fir, live oak and black oak with a mixed brush understory which includes Bear Clover, Lotus, Chinquapin and Whitethorn Ceanothus.

Topography:

The Fountain Springs Battalion is typical of most of the foothill areas in the Southern Sierra Nevada Range and encompasses a large portion of the Deer Creek drainage, White River drainage and the upper portions of the Poso Creek drainage on its southeastern border. The topography ranges from gentle rolling foothills above the valley floor at 400' elevation to steep river drainages. Major ridges and mountains are separated by small ravines, deep rugged canyons, and a few gentle valleys with elevations within the State Responsibility Area topping out near the 5000' elevation range.

Weather:

Typical summer weather patterns consist of 90 – 105-degree days with humidity in the upper teens to low 20's and nights in the upper 50's to near 70 degrees with humidity in the high 30's to low 50's. Winds are generally light and diurnal, up slope, up canyon in the daytime and down slope, down canyon at night.

Fire History:

The Fountain Springs Battalion averages approximately 7-10 unwanted fire ignitions annually. The majority of those ignitions cause goes undetermined. Each year, however you can expect a least a couple of ignitions in the upper elevations within the Battalion where there is significant potential for a large extended attack fire. Large extended attack fires have occurred in the battalion over the years with several fires in the 500 – 1500 acre range, there is no known history of major fires in the battalion.

2024 Fountain Springs Battalion Accomplishments

Posey VMP- The Fountain Springs Battalion had several accomplishments in 2024. The 340 acre Posey VMP around the communities of Posey, Panorama Heights and Balance Rock was identified as the most important project needing attention due to the community risk. This project is still ongoing with a completion date of 2033.



Figure 12 Crew clearing brush from roadway.



Figure 13 Engine and Hand crew personnel Burning along roadways.

Rock Plant Roadside Burn - In 2024 CAL FIRE conducted prescribed fire consisting of six-miles of right away along Deer Creek Rd. and Rd. 296. This coordinated burn supported the prevention of unwanted fires in the area and reduced fuel loading.

Fire Road Maintenance - Other accomplishments include fire road maintenance, Station personnel have driven all fire control roads noting their condition, removing flammable brush where needed, and performed routine maintenance on culverts.



Figure 14 Defensible Space Inspectors educating a landowner about Defensible Space



Figure 15 Example of a shaded fuel break.

Battalion personnel continue to be proactive with defensible space inspections (PRC 4291) which require 100-foot clearance around all structures within the SRA. We have placed fire prevention signs throughout the battalion in high traffic areas reminding the public to prepare for fire season by clearing flammable vegetation from their property.

CONCERNS:

TREE MORTALITY

The communities of Posey, California Hot Springs, and Pine Flat are at a heightened risk of catastrophic fires due to recent increased tree mortality rates.



Figure 16 Crew assisting with “Chipper Days” in the Hot Springs area.

Fountain Springs Battalion Project Priorities

Key priorities for the battalion include:

****Regular Maintenance**:** Implementing a schedule for regular inspection and maintenance of fire roads to ensure they remain accessible and clear of debris or obstructions. This includes clearing vegetation along the roadsides to maintain them as effective fuel breaks.

****Road Upgrades**:** Identifying areas where road improvements are needed, such as grading, drainage enhancements, or surface repairs, to optimize accessibility and functionality, particularly during adverse weather conditions or emergencies.

****Strategic Planning**:** Developing a strategic plan for prioritizing road maintenance and upgrades based on factors such as fire risk assessments, proximity to communities, and historical fire patterns. This ensures resources are allocated efficiently to areas most in need.

****Collaboration**:** Collaborating with relevant agencies, including local authorities, landowners, and fire management agencies, to coordinate efforts in maintaining and updating the fire road network. This may involve sharing resources, expertise, and funding to achieve common goals.

****Community Engagement**:** Engaging with local communities within the battalion to raise awareness of the importance of fire road maintenance and seek their support in ensuring access to these areas in times of need. Community involvement can also help identify additional resources or volunteer efforts to supplement maintenance activities.

The following projects in the Battalion have been identified in support of CAL FIRE and Tulare Unit goals:

Priority #1

Project Name: Rock Plant Roadside Burn – TUU 2025 900/450 acre fuels goal identified project, 34 acres.

Description: Broadcast burn within the county roads right of way along six miles of county roads to reduce unwanted fires and to reduce fuel loading.

Community: Porterville, Tule Indian Reservation

Project Collaborators: CALFIRE, Tulare County Road Dept, Private Landowners in the SRA.

(34ac projected to be burned in 2025 yr)

Priority #2

Project Name: Posey VMP – TUU 2025 900/450 acre fuels goal identified project, 350 acres.

Description: Approximately 350 acers. Fuel reduction around the communities of Posey, Panorama Heights, and Balance Rock.

Community: Posey, Panorama Heights, Balance Rock

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, private landowners in the SRA, US Forest Service.

(350 ac projected to be treated 2025 yr)

Priority #3

Project Name: Fire Control Road maintenance

Description: Maintain the fire control roads in the battalion for fire suppression and quick access to fires.

Community: Fountain Springs, California Hot Springs, Poso, Poso Park, Jack Ranch, Sugarloaf Village

Project Collaborators: CAL FIRE, Private Landowners in the SRA, Sequoia Fire Safe Council.

AIR ATTACK PROGRAM: Porterville Air Attack Base, Battalion 4108



Figure 17 Firefighting Aircraft at Porterville Air Attack Base

The Porterville Air Attack Base (PAAB) was established in 1958, originally as a US Forest Service Base. In 1966 CAL FIRE and the Forest Service signed a cooperative agreement. In the mid 70's the Bureau of Land Management joined the agreement and have augmented staffing when needed. Originally built as a three-pad base, in 2003 a new base was built and placed in service. This base now consists of an operations building, warehouse, hanger, retardant mix plant and five loading pads.

Porterville Air Attack Base is a joint operation facility operated by both CAL FIRE and United States Forest Service (USFS) staff. The CAL FIRE staff consist of 1 Battalion Chief, 3 Fire Captains, 1 Fire Apparatus Engineer, and 8 Firefighter 1's. An additional 3-6 Fire Apparatus Engineers may be assigned to manage exclusive use (EU) contracted helicopters for an estimated 90 – 120 days. The Battalion Chief and all 3 Captains are ATGS qualified, and the Fire Apparatus Engineer operates as the tanker base manager. The USFS staff consists of 1 Battalion Chief, 1 Fire Captain, 2 Air Base Technicians, 2 perm/seasonals, and 4 temporary employees.

Equipment based out of PAAB consist of one OV-10 Bronco, which is used as an aerial supervision platform, and two S-2T air tankers. Often one or more Federal air tankers may be assigned to the base. Additionally, Redding Smokejumpers use PAAB as a satellite facility to position aircraft and jumpers during fire season as well as CAL FIRE and Federal Type 1 Helicopters (1 Fed & 1-2 State) under EU/call when needed (CWN) contract each season. For the 2025 Fire Season, it is anticipated PAAB will host 2 a CAL FIRE EU type 1 helicopter with night operation capabilities and a night vision capable type 3 helicopter coordinator.

The PAAB mix plant utilizes 2 electric pumps capable of flowing 1,100 Gallons Per Minute each. The mix plant also keeps 70,000 gallons of fire-retardant ready to be loaded on aircraft. With the new base built in 2003, Porterville also increased its loading capabilities by adding 2 additional loading pads bringing the total to 5. On average PAAB supplies over 1,000,000 gallons of fire retardant to incidents each year.

The Porterville Air Attack Base and its aircraft support emergency operations in 6 counties which include: Tulare, Kern, Fresno, Inyo, Los Angeles, and Ventura as well as 5 US Forest: Sequoia, Sierra, Los Padres, Angeles, and Inyo. The base will also support operations for incidents on BLM land falling within the Central California District and BIA land consisting of the Tule Indian Reservation.

Plans for PAAB consist of the possible construction of a 100' x 100' fully lit helipad designed to accommodate a type 1 helicopter. Normal operations locate the type 1 helicopters across the runway on the other side of the airport. The construction of the new pad will be located near the hanger and allow the type 1 helicopter that is on contract to have a closer parking location and increase response time and safety for the crew. When the pad is not in use, it may also offer a landing area for medivac helicopters in case of emergencies. Additional plans for the Porterville Air Attack Base will be an upgrade to the emergency back-up generator. The current generator only supports the main building which consists of the dispatch office, kitchen, briefing room, day/break room, staff offices, and sleeping quarters. The generator does not support the remainder of the compound which consists of the mix plant and its efficient electric pumps. An upgrade to a larger generator would allow support to the mix plant and all buildings.

Tulare Fire Center Overview

Situated at the Porterville Developmental Center off Highway 190 in southern Tulare County, the Tulare Fire Center was established in the summer of 2020 to address a critical shortage of inmate fire crews. Initially, the center operated with two crews, each comprising 12 firefighters and supervised by three captains. Since its inception, the program has undergone remarkable expansion and now encompasses seven permanently funded crews, supported with the overhead of 10 Captains and 9 Engineers. To help ensure seamless operations, the program is further bolstered by a Division Chief, two Battalion Chiefs, a Staff Services Analyst, a Forestry Logistics Officer, a Stationary Engineer, along with 8 cooks' staff to help feed all personnel

Facilities

Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Porterville Developmental Center, the Tulare Fire Center has access to five fully equipped buildings designed to meet the operational and living needs of the fire crews. These facilities feature fully functional kitchens, administrative offices, and sleeping quarters for both firefighters and supervisors. Additionally, two outdoor gymnasiums are available to support the crews' physical training regimens. The agreement also provides two modular annex buildings for administrative offices and supply storage. Training facilities include a centralized classroom at Camp Vandalia, located within the Porterville Developmental Center, where new and returning firefighters participate in rigorous academy sessions to prepare for the upcoming fire season. Fire crews also benefit from an outdoor track and field facility utilized for physical conditioning.

Operations and Projects

The firefighter hand crews are integral to both emergency fire suppression and proactive fire prevention initiatives. When not actively engaged in combating wildfires, crews focus on fuels reduction and vegetation management projects aimed at mitigating the risk of catastrophic wildfires. These efforts not only enhance fire suppression capabilities but also improve accessibility for emergency response teams.

Current projects include brush clearance, chipping, and the creation of burn piles in preparation for prescribed burns. Notable project sites include:

- Posey VMP
- Merritt VMP
- Crawford Corral VMP
- Kaweah Rat Trail
- PDC Training Burn
- Mountain Home Fuels Reduction Project

These initiatives are conducted daily, particularly during periods of low fire risk. Beyond these efforts, the crews assist in maintaining essential fire roads and collaborate with the Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest to clean campsites and maintain hiking trails, further exemplifying their commitment to resource stewardship and fire prevention.

Figure 18 MHCC Employee Sign

MOUNTAIN HOME CONSERVATION CAMP Program Information

Mountain Home Conservation Camp (MHCC) is in the Sequoia National Forest, northeast of Springville and slightly west of Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest. Mountain Home Camp can house up to 125 Inmates and staff up to 5 type 1 hand crews. MHCC currently operates two type 1 hand crews. Along with fighting wildland fires, crews assisted with numerous grant-funded pre-fire fuels projects last year. These projects include the fuels modification project around Shake Camp campground, Sequoia Crest fuel break, Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest fuels reduction project as well as helping with the Tulare unit VMP and VTP's. Crews from Mountain Home Camp also provide much needed public service work throughout Tulare County, including working with cooperators such as the Tulare County RCD, County Road Department, Army Corps of Engineers, Tulare County Office of Education, irrigation, and flood control districts as well as the cities of Porterville, Lindsay, and Woodlake.



Figure 19 MHCC Crew member on a prescribed fire



Figure 20 MHCC Crew Bus during a prescribed fire

Mountain Home Crews also assist maintaining trail systems within the Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest and facilitate and carry out the needs of hazard fuel reduction and vegetation management projects within the state forest. Mountain Home crews also performed work and maintenance on several miles of Fire Control Roads throughout the unit. Mountain Home Camp also produces fire prevention signs which are intended to increase fire safety awareness among the public. Mountain Home Camp produces thousands of board feet of milled lumber, hand crafted signs and various furniture items to nonprofit organizations, local government, and state agencies. In 2024 crews from Mountain Home Camp logged over 71,000 incident-based hours. Mountain Home Camp is committed to providing a quality workforce regardless of the nature of the assignment, from emergencies to fuels reduction work to community service projects.

MOUNTAIN HOME DEMONSTRATION STATE FOREST

Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest (MHDSF) Fuel Reduction and Restoration Activities



Fuel reduction and forest restoration activities at MHDSF during the summer and fall of 2024 primarily focused on salvage harvest of trees killed or substantially damaged during the 2020 SQF Complex Fire. Additional timber that died from bark beetle attacks was also harvested. These beetle killed trees were stressed from the SQF Complex and subsequently died. Sierra Forest Products (SFP) sawmill in Terra Bella allowed a daily production rate of 5-6 log truck loads or roughly 28-36 thousand board feet (MBF). As mentioned in last year's plan, the mill at Terra Bella was purchased during the summer of 2023. The new owners placed a defect of standard of 50% or better which was a struggle for both the Licensed Timber Operator (LTO) and the State Forest. The result was that logs that would normally be removed from the State Forest at the 25% standard, were left in the woods because they would have otherwise been deemed as cull in the mills log deck. Culls are useless in the mill / market environment. Logging operations ceased at the end of October even though the weather and ground conditions were conducive to timber operations. The year-end total of delivered logs yielded a volume of a little less than 2.8 million board feet (MBF) for 2024.

There have been three major resignations at the SFP mill that could be detrimental to 2025 log flow. Both log buyers and the mill manager left their positions in February and March 2025. Assuming SFP will be buying logs in 2025, and the LTO and State Forest can turn a profit, an estimated 2.5-3 MMBF from continued salvage operations will be delivered.

As expected, the Tulare County Road Department did some early season road work to the system leading to Mountain Home to prepare it for public use. All State Forest Campgrounds; as well as Tulare County's Balch Park were open in 2024.

Forest inventory work on the Old Growth Giant Sequoia (OGGS) survey continued in 2024 to reassess second order fire effects in the monarch trees. Many of the trees that were observed to be in decline in 2023 were found to be dead for various reasons. The OGGS survey should be done in the Summer of 2025, and the mortality map will be updated once the inventory is complete.

The small plantations (typically under 2.5 acres in size) reported in the 2023 Fire Plan are completely dead and the majority have fallen to the ground. The mortality, in large part, was initiated by prolonged drought stress and subsequent attack by bark beetles. Those trees that didn't die from beetles were killed by fire. These dead trees remain to be mechanically piled and burned to prepare the site for planting. Pile and broadcast burning shall be performed by MHDSF staff and/ or MHCC crews on permissive burn days with a permit through the San Joaquin Valley APCD. Given the dynamic nature of vegetation response to disturbance, sprouting and natural seeding will eventually re-invade the treated areas. These areas must be maintained by chemical and/or manual means which may and should include the use of prescribed fire.



Figure 22 - Snowfall on Mtn Home State Forest

Staff will maintain a defensible fuel profile within and around day use areas and campgrounds. Saplings and small poles shall be marked by MHDSF staff for cutting and chipping/burning. This work will take place within the common campground and day-use facilities and shall extend for a distance of at least 100' in all directions from the campground improvements. The treatment distance will be increased as slope increases or as directed by the Forest Manager. Much of this work may be done by LTOs in those areas where fire induced mortality occurred within and adjacent to campsites.

Staff will also maintain PRC 4291 clearance specifications around all State owned and operated structures that are maintained for human habitation.

This shall include the Summer and Winter Headquarters, barracks, and Pack Station. Similar maintenance shall be performed around the fuel tank, propane tanks, and warehouse as well.

Staff will continue fuel treatments in selected areas throughout the Forest. Strategically located areas that are within proximity to roads or trails shall be prioritized for treatment. These areas shall be treated by pre-commercial thinning of conifers typically less than 8 inches DBH and full removal of woody brush species. All cut vegetative matter shall be piled for seasonal burning and/ or lopped and scattered providing clearance around residual trees for future broadcast burning. All cutting, piling, lopping, and scattering shall be performed by contractors, MHCC crews, TFC crews, cover crews, and/ or MHDSF staff. These treatments shall be done once all post-fire rehabilitation and restoration work has been completed.

An emergency timber harvest is planned for Section 34, T19S, R30E and Section 3, T20S, R30E to remove trees that have slowed in vigor and additionally stressed by the Castle Fire. This harvest will then be site prepped to provide a clean planting area. Assuming heavy equipment can access the forest, a tractor piling operation may occur in conjunction with those lands that were acquired in 2020. Many of these areas have little timber value and are occupied with an abundance of undesirable vegetation. Any merchantable timber that exists will be harvested and the remaining slash and brush will be piled/windrowed with dozers equipped with brush rakes. The piles will be burned in the fall. Should time allow, there are four broadcast units in green forest stands that are being prepared and planned for a Fall 2025 burn.

Recent Harvest Activity

As previously stated, approximately 2.8 MMBF of fire damaged timber was harvested during the 2024 season.

Additional Fuel Treatments

We are currently waiting to hear whether the State Forest will receive some funding to perform rehabilitation work that will include the use of fire. A combination of pile burning, pile-casting, and broadcast burning is anticipated and would treat approximately 500 acres throughout the forest- **TUU 2025 900/450 acre fuels goal identified project, 500 acres.**

Planned Timber Harvest Operations

Mountain Home Forest staff continue planning for the harvest and rehabilitation of approximately another 300 acres damaged during the SQF Complex that remain to be treated.

Planned Fuel Treatments

The only fuel treatments planned under the scope of the 2025 Fire Plan are the treatment and burning of logging slash and other damaged vegetation resulting from the SQF Complex unless otherwise explained above. Forest staff are in the process of writing a forest wide Vegetation Treatment Plan that when finished will serve as the CEQA document for fuels reduction and prescribed fire projects in the future. This VTP will also allow herbicide application to control competing vegetation.

Summary

Current management activities at MHDSF focus on the restoration and protection of a magnificent Southern Sierra mixed conifer forest. This Forest contained 4,750 old growth giant sequoia specimens which John Muir referred to as “the finest the Sierra had to offer”. Given the history of fire suppression activities in the western states, forest managers must keep fuel loading and resource protection as a top priority. In the face of impending climate change, managers must consider the ecological needs of the species contained within the forest and develop strategies to minimize the potential for long-term negative effects. Wildfires that occur on the majority of public lands are getting bigger and burning with more intensity than they have historically. These “mega fires” indiscriminately destroy habitats and watersheds and set succession back centuries. The management activities occurring at MHDSF are designed to reverse the trends of overstocking by creating a forest that more closely resembles the pre-European condition as was found by the pioneers.

It should be noted that all the on-the-ground activities that take place at MHDSF have been thoroughly planned and evaluated and comply with the California Forest Practice Rules, California Environmental Quality Act, California Department of Fish and Wildlife Rules, Air Pollution Control District Rules and Regional Water Quality Control Board Rules and Regulations.

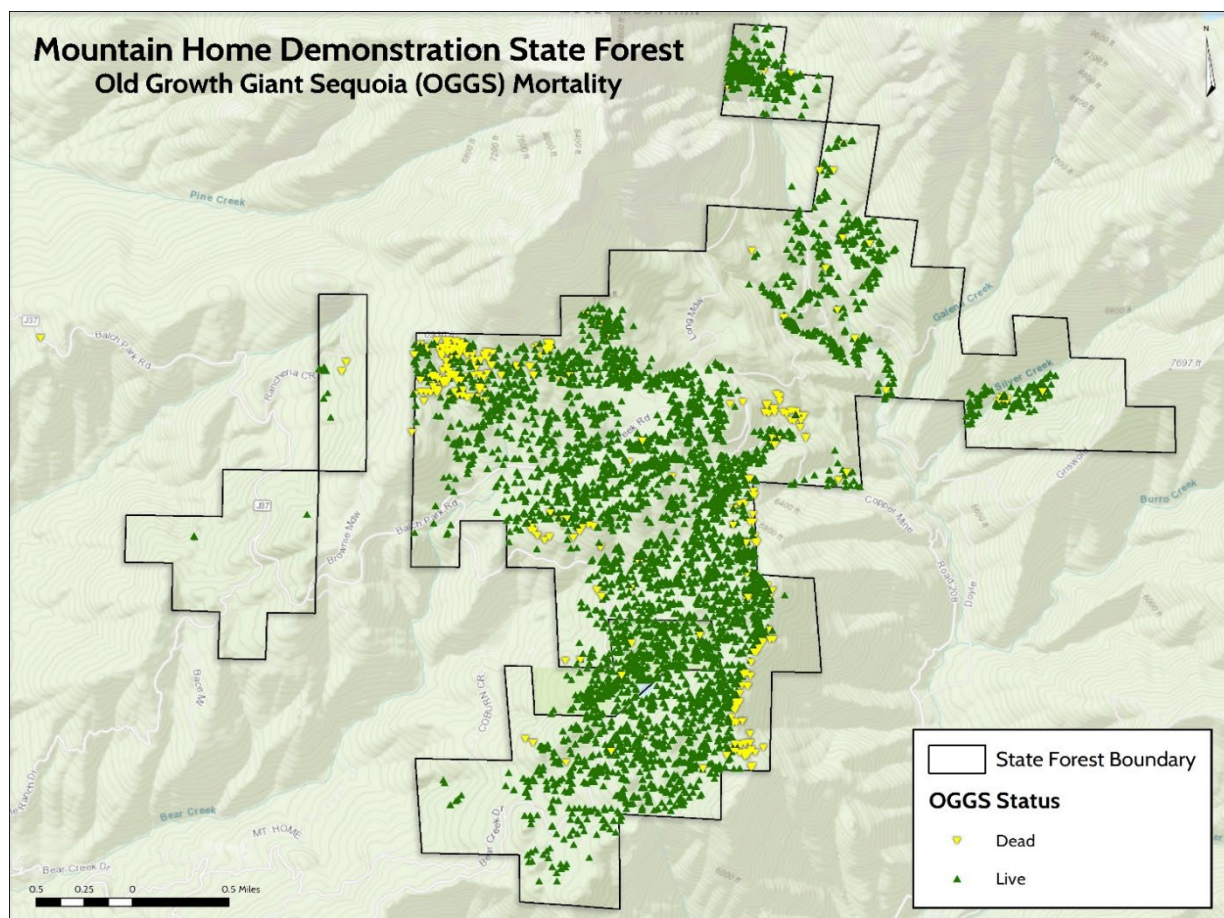


Figure 23 MHDSF Old Growth Giant Sequoia inventory

TRAINING BUREAU

The Tulare Unit Training Bureau has set several goals to improve firefighting effectiveness, training efficiency and safety of its members. The Goals include but are not limited to:

1. All Unit personnel attend all or applicable segments of the annual Continued Professional Training (CPT) academy(s) to maintain firefighting skills and required recurrence training. The intent is for personnel to meet 4029 and 4064 training requirements.
2. All Unit personnel to meet 4021 Employee Development Guide training specifications for their respective job classification.
3. All TUU Fire Control personnel receive continued training on firefighting tactics and safety in both wildland and structural firefighting. Through the newly implemented Multi Company Drills (MCDs) examples of such training include firefighting tactics (structural), vehicle extraction and Simulation Table scenario training.
4. All Tulare Unit personnel comply with department policy regarding Defensive Driver training by successfully completing the Department of General Service-ORIM online Defensive Driver Training at least once every four years.
5. All Firefighters become IFSAC ProBoard Certified
6. Work with Firefighter 1s to ensure their E-306 is complete. So, they are ready to attend the FFA / COA when offered a position TUU personnel attend applicable training and qualify in Incident Command System (ICS) positions. The intent is to meet the Unit's obligation to Minimum ICS Qualified Personnel Matrix (7700) located in Handbook 7000 - Fire Operations.



Figure 24 – TUU South Training facility at Porterville CAL FIRE Station



Figure 25 – TUU North Training facility at Woodlake CAL FIRE Station



Figure 26 – Firefighters lined up for roll call at New-Hire / Re-Hire academy.



Figure 27 – Firefighters doing the 500' progressive hose lay during academy.

APPENDIX A: PRE- FIRE PROGRAM PROJECTS



PRE-FIRE PROJECTS TULARE UNIT (TUU) 1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024

PROGRAM	PROJECT NAME	STATUS	TREATMENT	TREATMENT
			ACRES	MILES
VTP	Grouse	Active	6,355.00	
VMP	Crawford Corral	Active	1,078.17	
VMP	Merritt VMP	Active	1,080.93	
VMP	King George VMP	Planned	1,265.09	
VTP	River Ridge	Planned	690.86	
Fire Plan	Balch / Blue Ridge	Active	2690.81	
Fire Plan	Buzzard Roost FCR	Active		11.23
Fire Plan	Cow Mountain FCR	Active		3.92
Fire Plan	Davis Spur FCR	Active		0.08
Fire Plan	Gill Range Improvement	Active	246.82	
Fire Plan	Herbert Burn	Active	585.39	
Fire Plan	Kaweah Oaks Preserve	Active	212.35	
Fire Plan	Kaweah Rat Trail	Active		24.38
Fire Plan	Lewis Hill Roadside Burn	Active		
Fire Plan	Mankin Flat FCR	Active	32.49	8.74
Fire Plan	Fire Plan	Active	217.12	
Fire Plan	Home Fuels Reduction	Active	6,069.04	
Fire Plan	Mountain Home Reforestation	Active	797.34	
Fire Plan	PDC	Active	28.42	
Fire Plan	Pine Flat / Panorama Heights	Active	121.67	
Fire Plan	Pot Hole FCR	Active	45.33	
Fire Plan	Rancheria	Active		
Fire Plan	Rancheria Fuel Break	Active	21.82	3.85
Fire Plan	Rock Plant Roadside Burn	Active		
Fire Plan	Success RX burn	Active	306.01	2.56
Fire Plan	Three Rivers & Kaweah Community Risk	Active		
Fire Plan	Three Rivers Fuel Reduction Project	Active		
Fire Plan	Ward Canyon Fuel Reduction Project	Active	397.59	
Fire Plan	Yokohl Roadside Burn	Active		92.62
Forest Health	Case Mountain Forest Health	Active	2,876.76	
Forest Health	Sequoia Wildfire Reforestation	Active	6,468.63	

APPENDIX B: FUEL MODEL

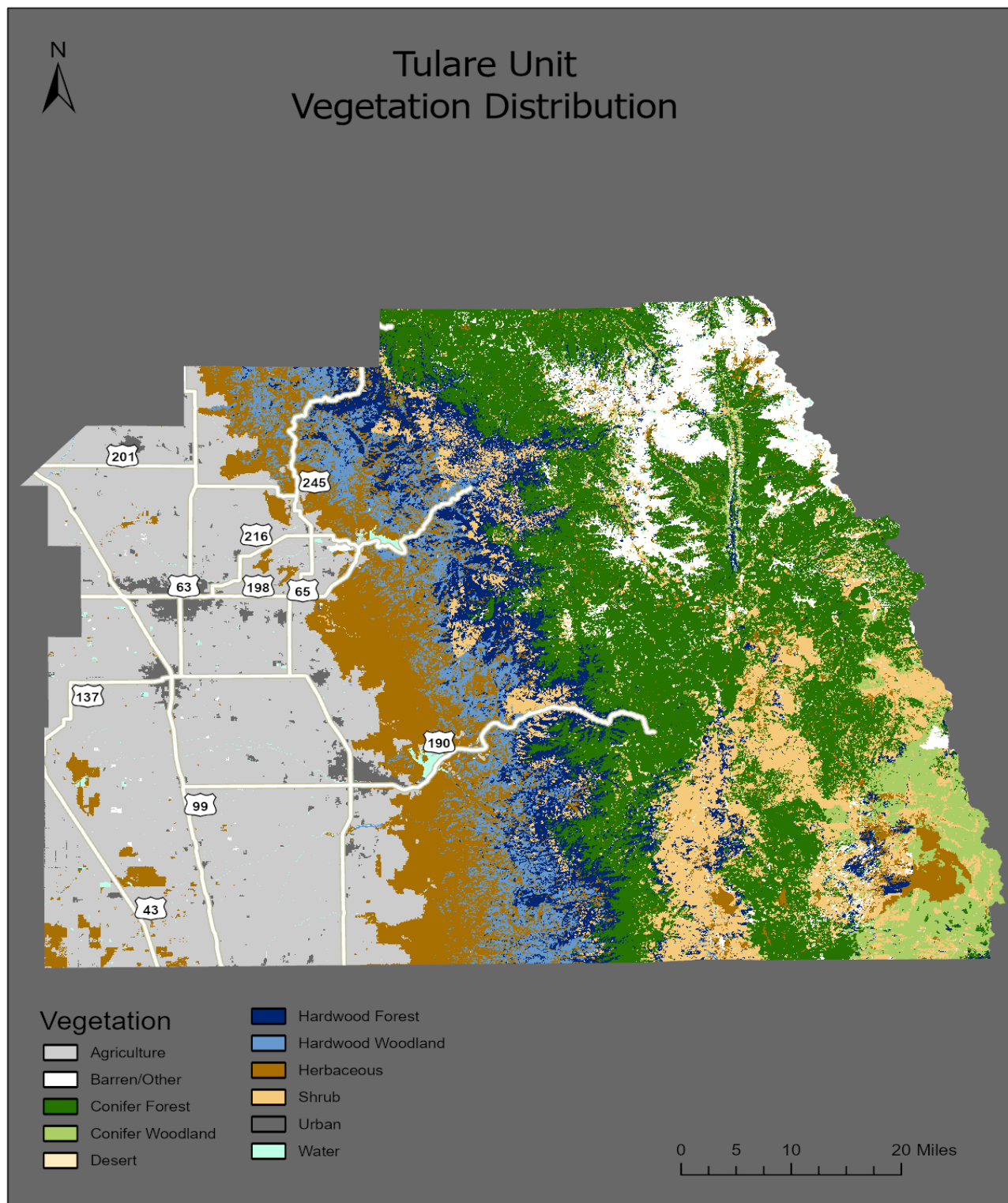


Figure 28 - Modelled distribution of fuel across the Tulare Unit

APPENDIX C: LARGEST FIRES PAST 50 YEARS

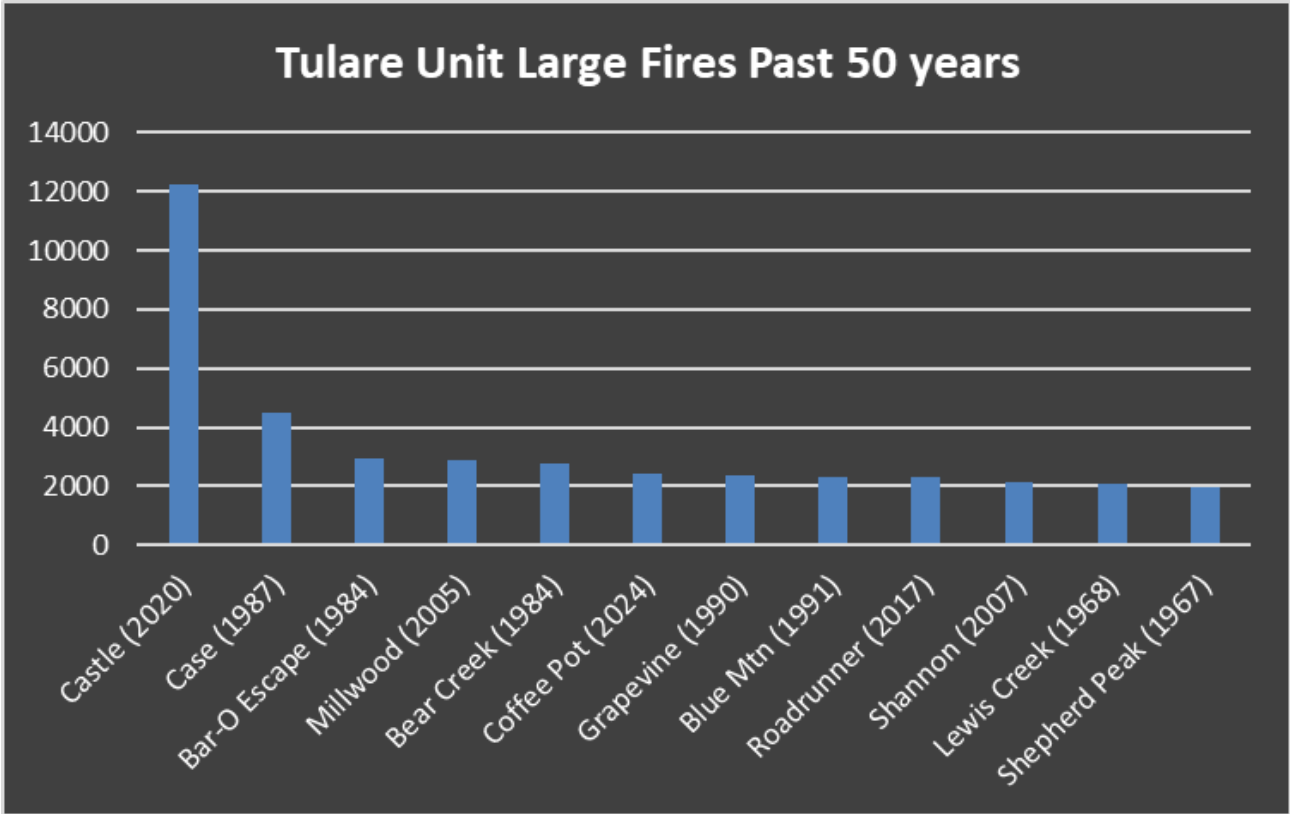


Figure 29 - The graph shows the largest fire in the State Responsibility Area in the past 50 years, with the 2020 Castle Fire being the largest at over 12,000 acres

APPENDIX D: IGNITIONS

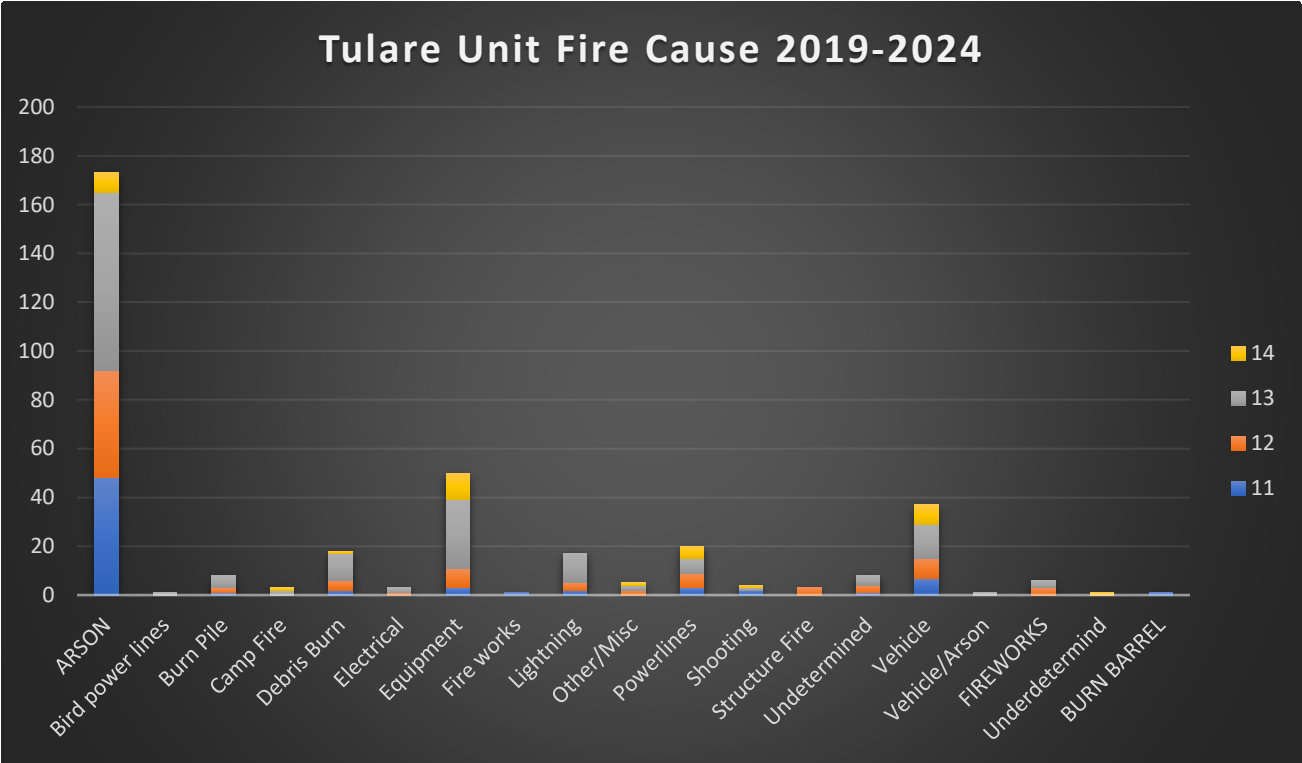


Figure 30 - This graph shows the distribution of ignitions causes by the Battalion in the Unit.

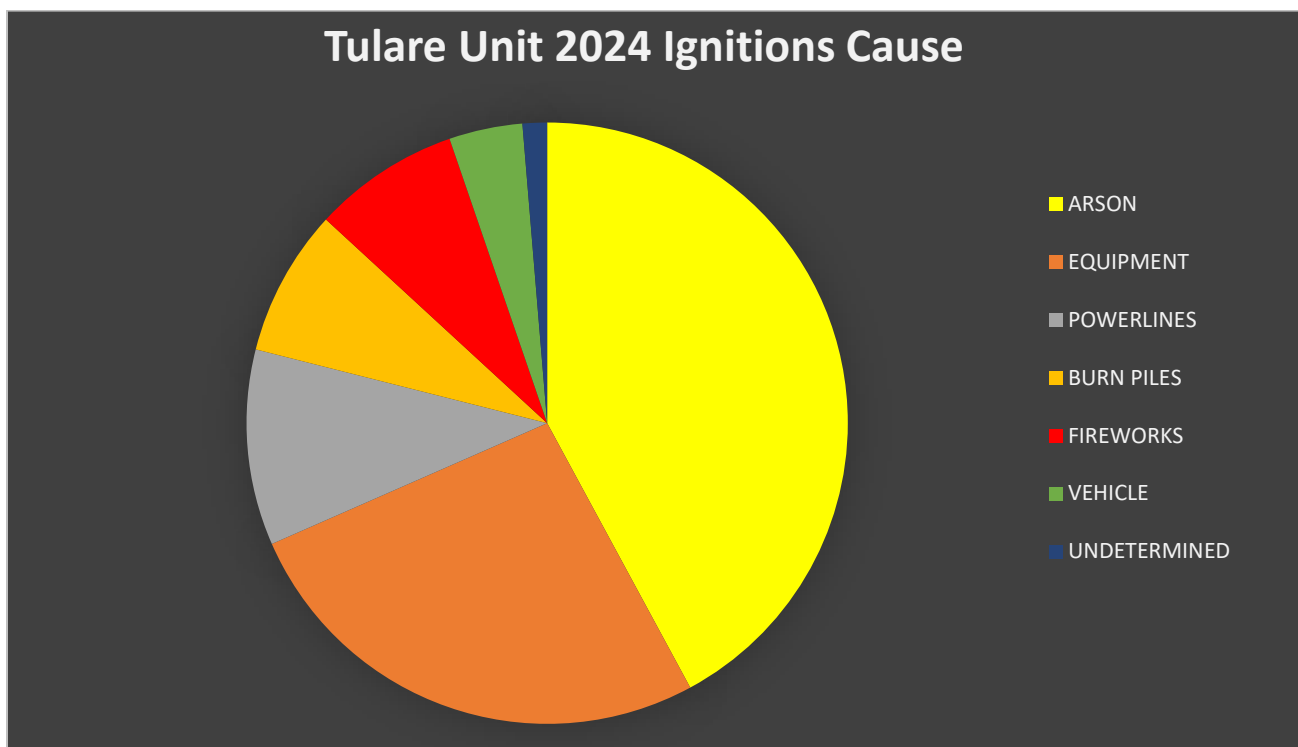


Figure 31 - The pie chart shows the distribution of fire causes in the Tulare Unit from 2019 – 2024



Figure 32 - Fire Causes in the Badger Battalion. There were 9 ignitions in the Badger Battalion.

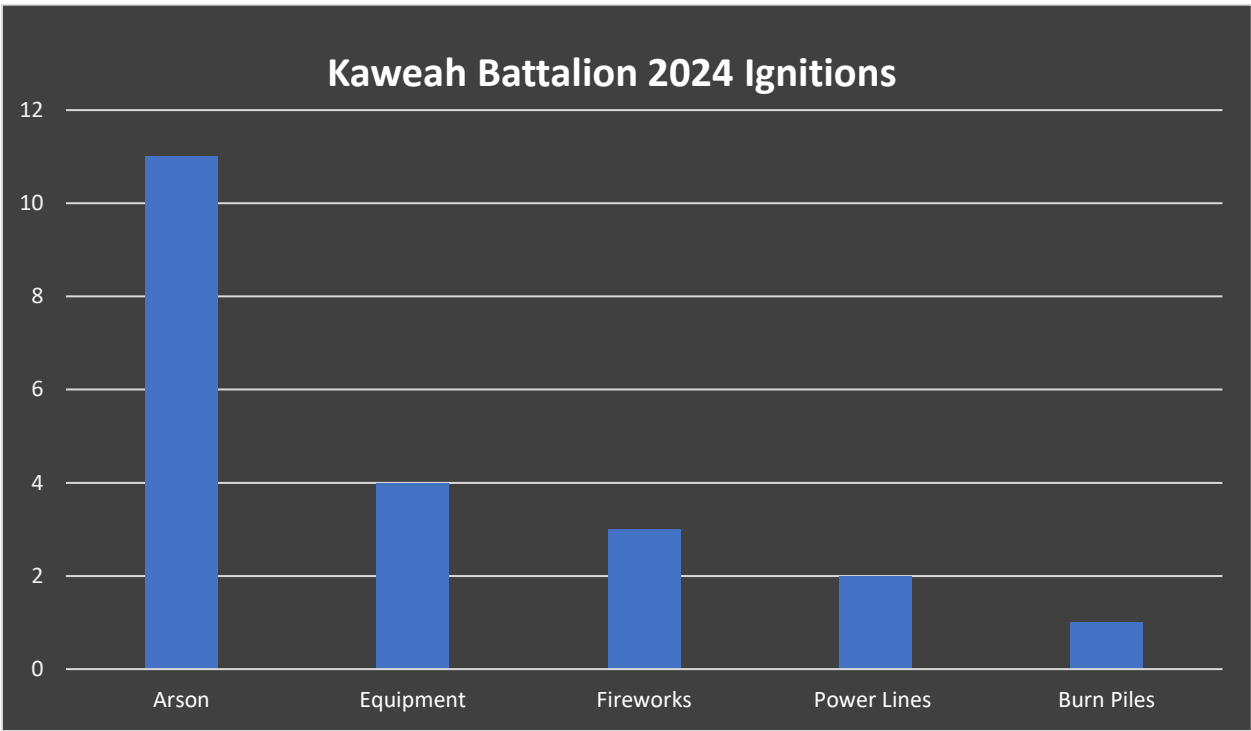


Figure 33 - Fire causes in the Kaweah Battalion. There were 21 ignitions in the Kaweah Battalion.

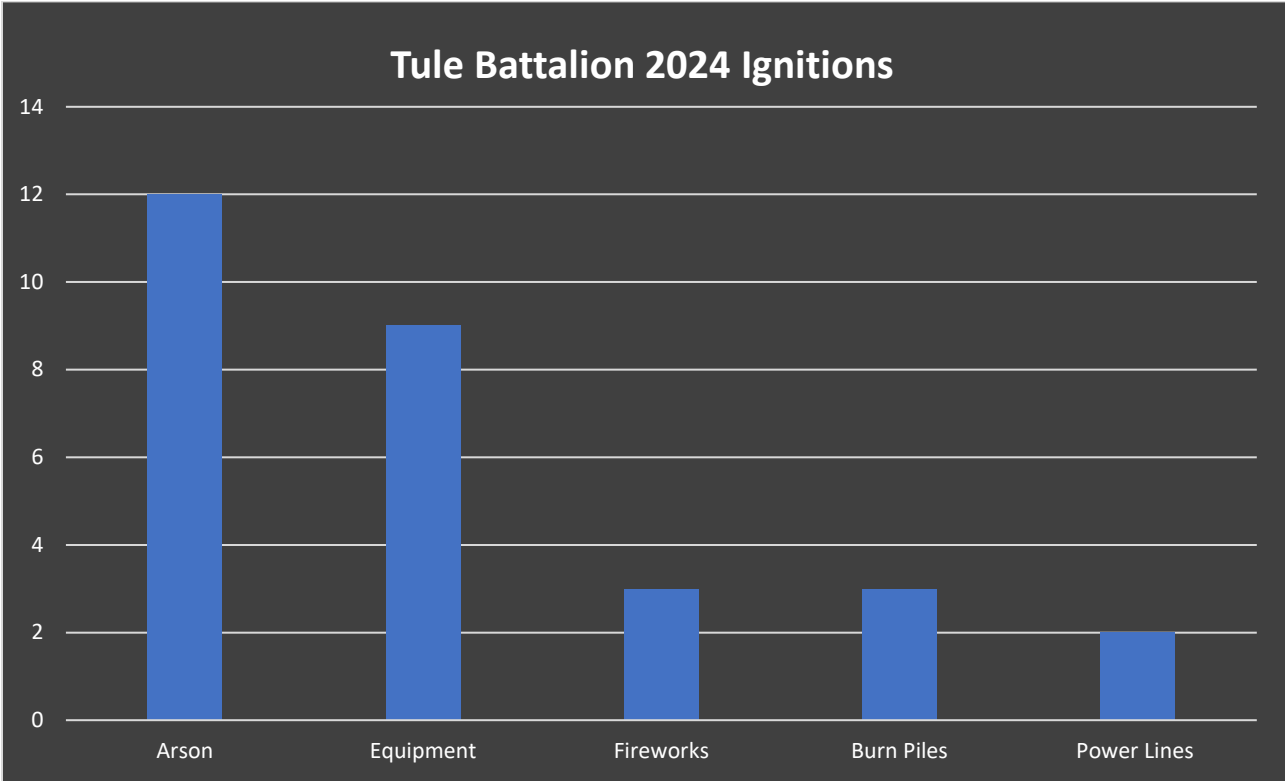


Figure 34 - Fire causes in the Tule Battalion. There were 29 ignitions in the Tule Battalion.

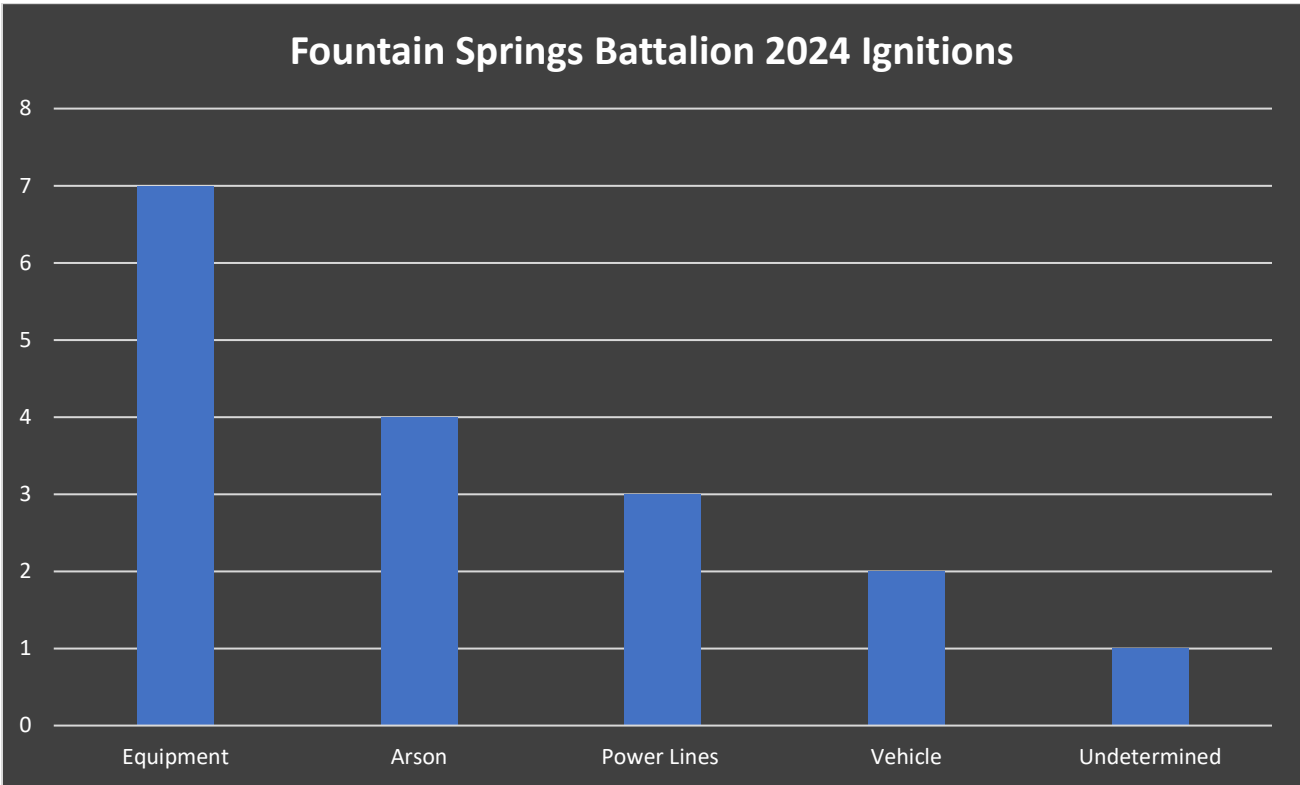


Figure 35 - Fire causes in the Fountain Springs Battalion. There were 17 ignitions in the Fountain Springs Battalion.

APPENDIX E: FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE

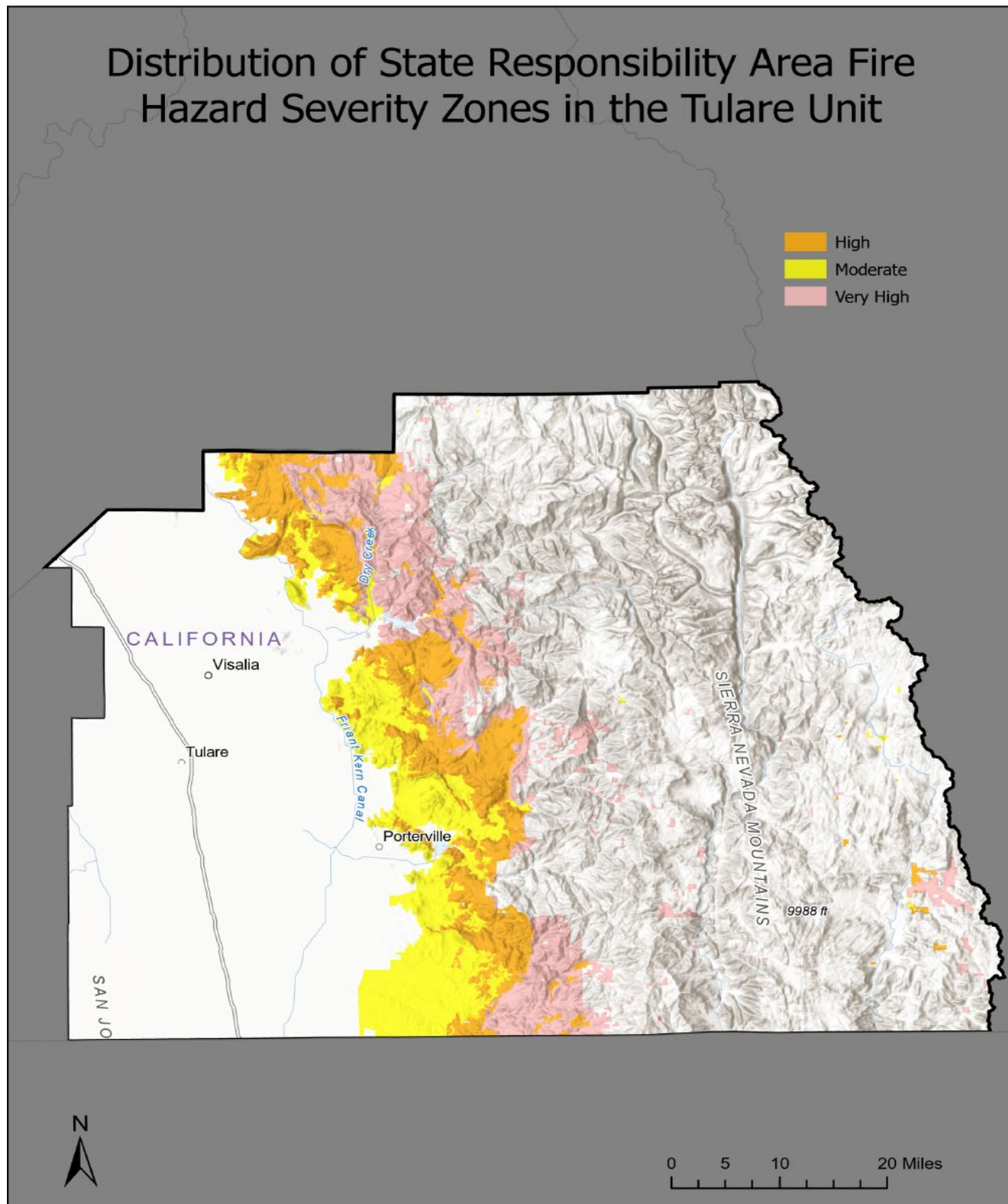


Figure 36 - Fire hazard severity zones in Tulare Unit's State Responsibility Area.

EXHIBITS: MAPS

Figure A: Unit Map

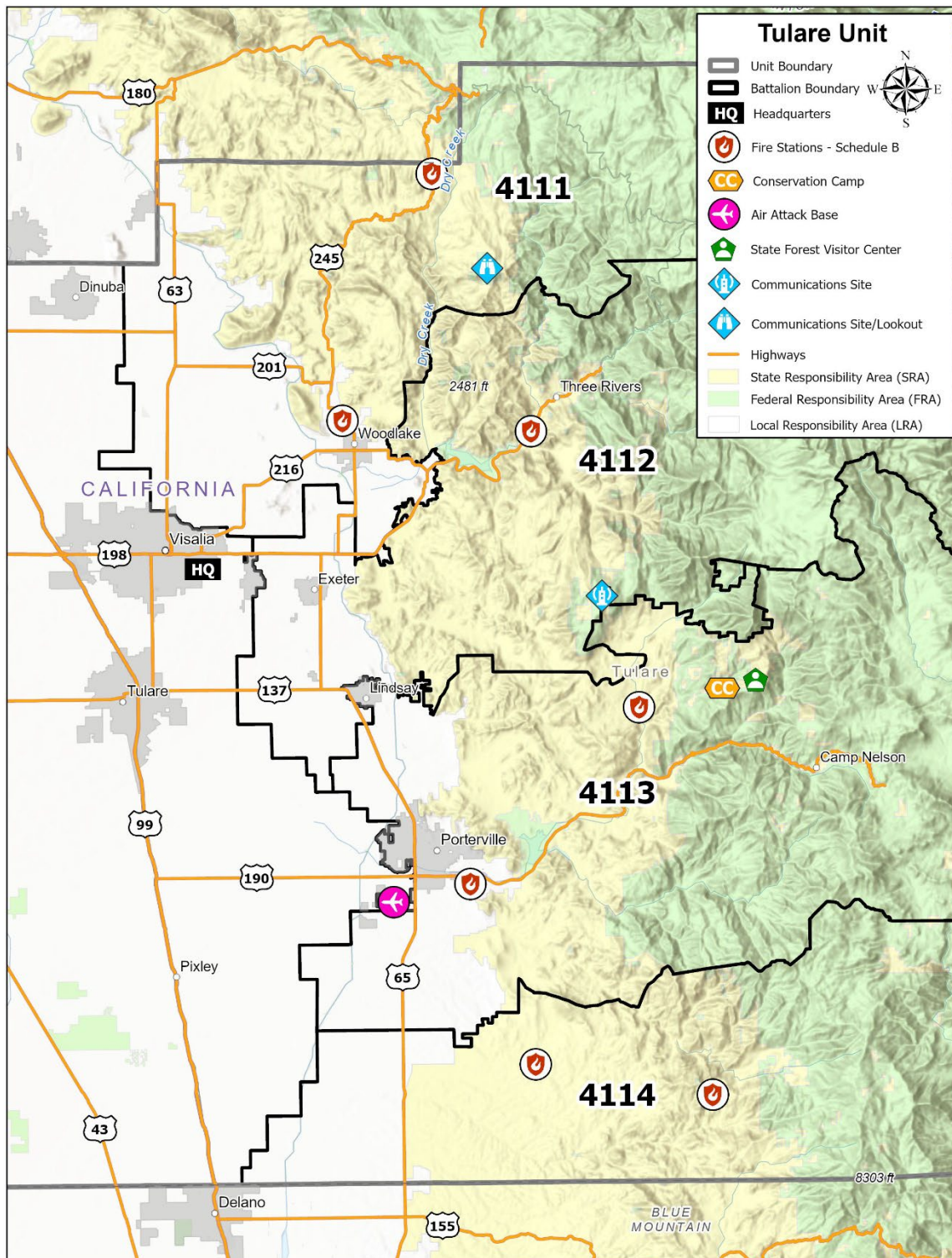
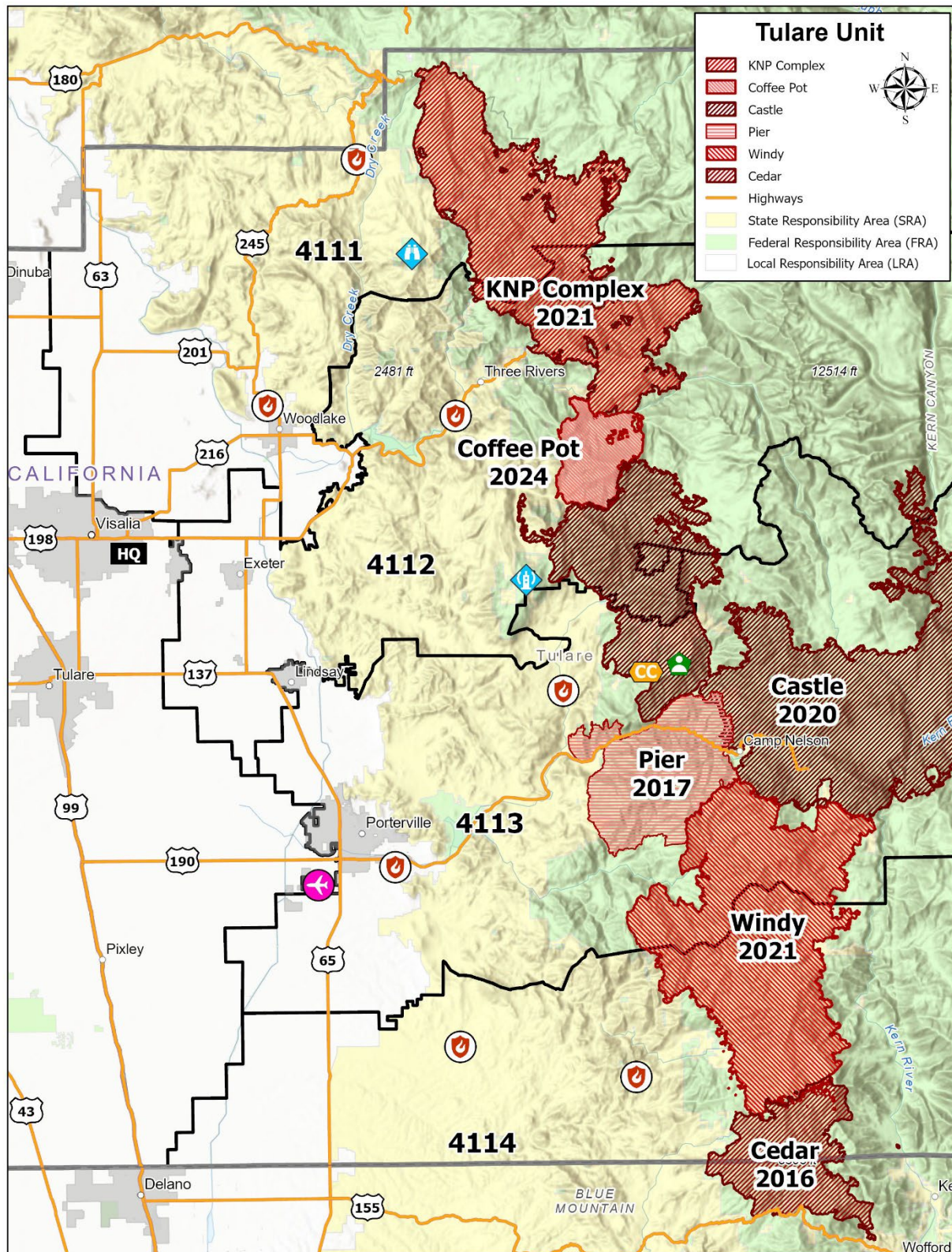


Figure 37 - Map of the Tulare Unit

Figure B: Unit Large Fire History Map (2016-2024)



UNIT ACCOMPLISHMENTS ANNUAL REPORT (2024):

Wildland Fire Prevention Engineering:

The Tulare Unit currently has 3 approved VMP'S with a combined total of 20,484 acres identified and active. The unit has 11 roadside and training burn projects that combine to make up 2,721 acres available for broadcast burning in the year of 2025. Unit maps have been updated with current response areas and Direct Protection Areas (DPA'S). Battalion maps have been produced identifying project locations and progress demarcations. Pre-Fire management is currently collaborating with local stakeholders and collaborators to produce and distribute brochures which include maps of escape routes within certain geographical areas of Tulare County.

Vegetation Management:

During the 2024 Calendar year, the Tulare Unit continued to strive and meet the Governor's, State Legislature and CAL FIRE's goals for treated acres. We, in the Tulare Unit started and/ or continued with various new and ongoing annual VMP, VTP and maintenance projects within the Unit. The Unit added an additional 1,105.35 total treatment acres with 796 broadcast burn acres and the remaining 309.35 acres being fuel reduction projects such as shaded fuel breaks, fire control road maintenance, handline construction and roadside burning encompassing frequent fire start locations along the main roadways throughout the Unit. The following projects contained the majority of acres treated: Gill Range Improvement Burn, Grouse Fire Control Road Right of Way project, Upper Grouse ROW, Merritt VMP, Porterville Development Center Fuels reduction, Lewis Hill and Rock Plant roadside burns, Posey VMP along with 7 ½ miles of handline cut along Hwy 198 around Lake Kaweah in the northern part of the Tulare Unit.

A total of 12,961 personnel hours and 4,479 equipment hours were recorded for the above projects. The scope of work consisted of thinning vegetation, mastication, manual and mechanical piling, limbing and bucking, lop and scatter, pile burning, and broadcast burning.

2024 / 2025 Annual DPA Review:

During the 2024 / 2025 DPA Review, CAL FIRE Tulare Unit and the Tule River Indian Reservation met and agreed upon a DPA change and TUU gave 822 acres of trust land (prior SRA) to the Tule River Indian Reservation. Additionally, CAL FIRE Tulare Unit gained 8,728 acres of direct protection area (DPA) in an agreement with the Kings Canyon National Park and Bureau of Land Management in the Three Rivers area that captures the bottom portion of Mineral King Road, Oak Grove, Hammond and parts of the Middle & East Forks of the Kaweah River where multiple private residences exist.