

Excerpt from Yuba County CWPP – 2014

Dobbins / Oregon House Fire Protection District (DOHFPD)

Within the Yuba Foothills, this district has experienced the most structure losses from wildfire in the last 20 years. The Williams and Pendola Fires both exhibited the extreme wildfire behavior that can be expected when the next large wildfire hits this area. Both of these fires were driven by strong, changeable winds and heavy vegetation. The vegetation in this district is primarily brush. Under the right conditions, the areas burned by the Williams Fire are ready to burn again.

The DOHFPD has an extreme level of both risk and fire threat. Factors contributing to this include: Narrow, overgrown private roads and long driveways, dense population, many unpermitted structures, absentee landowners, and large lots that are difficult for a single landowner to manage. Exceptions are irrigated pastures and grazed areas. Some large grazed parcels around Frenchtown, Oregon House, and Dobbins – especially along Rices Texas Hill Road and Yuba Ranch Way, and portions of Indiana Ranch Road – represent places where other residents may be able to seek shelter during a wildfire.

The following paragraphs identify some of the areas with the highest concentration of residences at risk from wildfire, and included, or adjacent locations that are relatively safe from wildfire. Some of the safer locations may be places to develop community safety zones.

The **CSA 2** area in the Southwest corner of Oregon House has some of the highest hazard within the District for a single large wildfire loss. Much of the community is served by a single access road (**Regent Way**). This area can be exposed to large fires starting in the Yuba River Canyon. Powerlines in the canyon both represent a potential ignition source, and also an obstacle to the use of aerial firefighting resources attempting to stop a fire at the top of the canyon. In the event of an east wind-driven fire, the primary access via Regent Way could be compromised, forcing residents to leave via **LaSalle Way and Manzanita Lane**, to the North. These narrow roads lack easements or turnarounds, and basically just follow the edges of property lines. Creating a safe secondary access to the CSA 2 area will require buying land or easements along these roads, widening them, and managing the dense vegetation along them. A fire driven by North winds could also cut off both the Regent Way and alternate way out along the NW corner of the community. A new fire access road has been in the works that heads South toward the UC **Sierra Foothill Research and Extension Center**, but this route is not signed or officially designated as an alternate evacuation route. In general, while the street names are well signed in the CSA2 area, many of the roads are overgrown, and the general layout and naming of the roads is confusing.

The **Renaissance Vineyard** was not surveyed during this project, but representatives attended public meetings, and told us that the property has large open areas that can be used to shelter area residents during a wildfire. The Vineyard property can be accessed off of **Dixon Hill Road and Candlewood Way** from the North, and via the main entrance off of **Rices Crossing Road** just across from **Regent Way**. Rices

Crossing Road has narrow sections that lack good brush clearance between the Vineyard and Rices Texas Hill Road, so the Vineyard may not be accessible for shelter for anyone coming from the Northwest if the fire is burning along Rices Crossing Road. The local Fire District should work with vineyard representatives to designate official evacuation areas, and that these areas be signed so that they can be easily located during an emergency.

The neighborhood along the **Dixon Hill, Candlewood Way, Yuba-Nevada Road Loop**, South of Texas Hill Road has narrow, overgrown, roads. This area would be highly exposed to fires driven by Southwest winds coming up the Yuba River Canyon. Yuba-Nevada Road has had some good thinning work done along it. Additional thinning work should be done in the unthinned gaps along this road. Also, residents in this area should focus on increasing defensible space around their homes, and be ready to evacuate quickly if a fire starts nearby. The local Fire District should develop an evacuation plan for the neighborhood that looks into the feasibility of using the Renaissance Vineyard below as a sheltering area.

The neighborhood off of **Ingersoll Drive**, near Lake Frances, has one road in and out, lacks turnarounds for fire equipment, and is surrounded by heavy vegetation. In addition to improving defensible space around the structures here, the local Fire District and Fire Safe Council should work with the Lucero Vineyard to the West of this development to determine the feasibility of developing a secondary evacuation route through their property.

In the heart of Dobbins, work should focus on maintaining defensible space around structures and mowing grass every spring. Meriam Road and Oregon Peak Road both have a number of seasonally occupied structures and a one-way-in-and-out situation. A fire starting near Marysville Road could trap residents above. The kids camp at the **Lake Frances** resort needs an evacuation plan if they don't already have one.

The **Lake of the Springs RV Resort at Lake Mildred** is largely within the footprint of the 1997 Williams Fire. It has heavy fuel loading, a midslope location, and is aligned with summer upslope SW winds. It has one major road in and out, and with heavy summer use it represents a place where an accidental ignition could quickly grow into a large fire in the Williams Fire burn scar. The Fire District should work with the resort to develop a fire prevention plan for the resort that would include mowing around campsites and posting wildfire hazard awareness signs. The resort also should be included in evacuation planning that takes place for the District.

The vegetation around the RV campground on Browns Valley Irrigation District lands at **Collins Lake** is currently in a firesafe condition.

The **Queen Ann Lane** area is steep and heavily vegetated with poor access and exposure to North and Westerly winds. The **Vavassauer and Winther Way** neighborhoods are one-way-in-and-out with heavy vegetation, and the neighborhood is located in a midslope location that is in alignment with Southwest afternoon winds; a fire starting in the **Frenchtown** area could quickly spread into the homes here. After about ¼ mile, both of these roads lack easements, and much of the roadway is overgrown with brush. Residents in this area should evacuate immediately if a fire starts below them.