

# FIRE & Water

2021



Gold  
Country  
Media



A supplement to Gold Country Media in partnership  
with Placer County Water Agency

# FIRE AND WATER

A supplement to Gold Country Media in  
partnership with Placer County Water Agency

**Gold  
Country  
Media**

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## Table of Contents

1	MESSAGE FROM PCWA GENERAL MANAGER
5	AUBURN CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT
7	U.S. FOREST SERVICE
8	PLACER COUNTY
10	PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC
12	CITY OF ROSEVILLE
16	CANYON KEEPERS
18	NEVADA IRRIGATION DISTRICT
20	CAL FIRE NEU UNIT/PLACER COUNTY FIRE DEPT
28	PLACER COUNTY WATER AGENCY



# A Message from Andy Fecko

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2021 edition of Fire & Water. This annual publication, produced by Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) in partnership with Gold Country Media, highlights the many challenges and opportunities associated with natural resources stewardship in the region. My hope is that Fire & Water not only provides valuable information for the upcoming fire season, but also a deeper appreciation of what your local utilities are doing to protect and enhance our communities.

For PCWA specifically, our primary focus in 2021 is responding to the critically dry conditions gripping much of California. While PCWA's water supply is sufficient to meet peak demands this year, we can never take this precious resource for granted. No one knows how much water 2022 will bring, and we are already witnessing concerning environmental conditions on some of our most important regional rivers and reservoirs.

As part of our commitment to being wise stewards of our water, PCWA has expanded its popular water-efficiency rebate program for our customers. We are also launching a new educational campaign to help our customers trade in their lawn for a fire-wise, water-wise landscape. Information on both programs can be found in this publication.

As done in previous years, we've invited our colleagues from other local agencies and citizen groups to contribute to the conversation about how our region is dealing with the most important issues facing Placer and Nevada counties.

Auburn City Fire Department shares its work on the American River Canyon Shaded Fuel Break with the help of grazing goats.

The United States Forest Service, Tahoe National



Forest, gives an update on prescribed burning as part of the French Meadows Forest Restoration Project.

Placer County introduces the county's new regional forest health coordinator, Kerri Timmer, in an in-depth Q&A.

Pacific Gas & Electric prepares you for Public Safety Power Shutoffs and other potential emergencies this summer and fall.

The City of Roseville provides an inside look at its Water Future Initiative - a proactive, comprehensive planning effort to diversify water supplies by implementing new or expansion projects over time to maintain resiliency for the foreseeable future.

Canyon Keepers provides an update on the organization and recreational opportunities this summer in the Auburn State Recreation Area.

Nevada Irrigation District discusses its fire prevention measures to protect the water resources of Nevada County.

The Placer County Fire Department/Cal Fire offers timely information about providing defensible space around your property and an update on the organization.

We are grateful for the participation of our local contributors and sponsors to provide this magazine to you and we hope you find the contents useful for your home, farm, or business.





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AFTER

BOTH PHOTOS/AUBURN FIRE DEPARTMENT • COURTESY TO THE JOURNAL



The concentration of flammable material in the fuel break before it was cleared six years ago would burn too hot to go near and even if a firefighter could get near the blaze it wouldn't make a difference, Fire Chief Mark D'Ambrogi said.

With the trees trimmed up and the brush cut back the area looks like a park and allows firefighters to set up an offensive front against a fire.



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## Grazing goats: Auburn City Fire Department continues to manage fire fuels

BY TRACI NEWELL

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED MAY 7, 2021

There are some new temporary neighbors in the Riverview Drive neighborhood in Auburn this week, grazing through the terrain specifically for its 24/7 all-you-can-eat buffet.

The Auburn City Fire Department continued its work on the American River Canyon Shaded Fuel Break with grazing goats, specifically targeting privately owned land that borders previously treated federal land to bolster protection of Auburn.

Through a grant fund from the Middle Fork American River Hydroelectric Project, the fire department hired Goat Works, a vegetation management company, to graze the area for fire fuels which have regrown since it was last treated.

“This grazing maintenance is about 20 percent of the

cost of mechanical thinning, and we are able to accomplish a tremendous amount of acreage,” said Tony D’Ambrogi, Interim Battalion Chief for the Auburn City Fire Department.

While they aren’t as fast as mechanically thinning the land, the goats are “quite productive,” D’Ambrogi said. This is the second time the department has utilized goats to manage wildfire fuel reduction.

“We can make a difference in this area,” he said. “It’s not going to be the same as fully mechanically treating the area with a chipper and everything, but they will make some difference in there.”

The goats will treat 40-50 acres in five neighborhoods around Auburn over the next few weeks, including





Riverview Drive (5-8 acres), Blackstone Court and Eagles Nest (5-plus acres), between Gold and Virginia Streets (13 acres), Tamaroo Drainage between Robie Drive and Marion Way (4-5 acres) and along Borland Avenue, south of Highway 49 (10 acres).

These might not be the only goats (and sometimes sheep) grazing in the area. Many area homeowners associations are utilizing grazing as a tool for defensible space.

"Defensible space is not only required, but that is really what makes it or breaks it when a fire comes," D'Ambrogi said. "The ember casts we've seen spotting up to two miles before. So, if the fire is across the canyon in El Dorado County and there is a good enough wind on it, there is no question we could have starts on this side of the canyon."

He said the defensible space provided by the fuel break allows firefighters a chance to stop the progression of a fire and make sure people are evacuated.

"That is what we are most concerned about – evacuation," D'Ambrogi said. "Let's get the life safely out of there and then we can do our job and actively engage the fire front."

While this past week was Wildfire Prevention Week, it's not the only work the Auburn City Fire Department has participated in lately. Earlier this spring, the department teamed up with the Placer Resource Conservation District and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to reduce fuel on 10 acres of land near the Aeolia Heights neighborhood as part of the Auburn Shaded Fuel Break. D'Ambrogi said the department is constantly working to protect Auburn from wildfire.

"When we do get these opportunities for grant funding, as a risk office, it is my job to eliminate this risk," D'Ambrogi said. "This is one way I can help. I will put it where the most risk is and where it is going to be most beneficial to the entire community of Auburn."

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# French Meadows Prescribed Fire Project

In May 2021, the U.S. Forest Service, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, began implementation of the French Meadows Prescribed Fire Project. Tahoe National Forest wildland firefighters, supported by additional crews from around California, accomplished over 131 acres of prescribed fire burning. This work was largely funded by The Nature Conservancy through a Partnership Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service.

The specific location for May's burning activity centered around Red Star Ridge, north of French Meadows Reservoir. Strategically, the 131 burned acres establishes an anchor point of treated fuels that extends from the top of the Red Star Ridge to the bottom. From this anchor point, burning can continue anew when conditions allow —most likely this upcoming fall. Overall, it was a great first step in the ambitious plan to reintroduce prescribed fire to over 7,500 acres within the boundaries of the French Meadows Prescribed Fire Project.

The French Meadows Prescribed Fire Project resides beneath the umbrella of the 28,000-acre French Meadows Project. The larger French Meadows Project is a fantastic example of a forest restoration project planned and implemented utilizing a shared stewardship approach to manage a portion of California's diverse

forests. The Nature Conservancy, Placer County, Placer County Water Agency, American River Conservancy, and the Sierra Nevada Research Institute all contributed to the French Meadows Project's design, planning, funding, and implementation.

## Fire Adapted Ecosystems

Fire is a vital ecological process within the Tahoe National Forest and across the Sierra Nevada. Historically, low and mixed-severity wildfires occurred frequently across the Tahoe National Forest. Just like nutrient and water cycles, the Tahoe National Forest's meadows, shrublands, forestlands, and riparian areas have evolved with fire; they rely on fire to remain healthy and resilient.

## How Fire Maintains Resiliency

Historically, low and mixed-severity wildfires reduced surface and ladder fuels and, because of their frequency, often reburned areas before forest fuels could accumulate too much. Prescribed fire can have the same effect and can:

- reduce hazardous surface and ladder fuels adjacent to communities;
- increase nutrient recycling;
- create and maintain wildlife habitat; and
- increase soil moisture for healthy forests and flowing streams.



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# Healthy forests are all of our responsibility

Placer County is a beautiful place to live, work and play. With this beauty comes great responsibility. Reaffirming our commitment to this responsibility, Placer welcomed a new regional forest health coordinator this year, Kerri Timmer. We sat down with Kerri to learn more about her role.

## **A big part of your job is managing Placer County's coordination with partner agencies working to restore the health of our forests. What's a good example of how improved coordination will really help?**

Planning. Working together across agencies and with multiple partners allows us to plan at a larger landscape level. Having a coordinated forest health plan across multiple jurisdictions and land managers allows us to take strategic advantage of funding and other opportunities when they come up, knowing that all the work knits together to meet agreed-upon goals across the larger landscape.

## **How would you describe the condition of our forests today?**

Our forests are not healthy, although actual conditions vary widely depending on land ownership and other factors. Many forested areas are overgrown, overcrowded and overly dense, and more people than ever find themselves living in or adjacent to communities that have recently been designated as high fire hazard areas. This new reality has upset the ecological balance necessary for a healthy forest. As a result, we are seeing accelerating tree death and greater incidences of large, damaging wildfires throughout the state.

Here in Placer, more than half the county is heavily forested. And because of the orientation of our county – from the forested high country to the valley floor – we have all the different forest types, each with its own needs and challenges.

## **Aside from increased wildfire risk, why are those conditions a problem?**

2020 was the worst fire season in California's recorded history. Five of the state's six largest fires in modern history occurred last year. And the forecast is no better for the coming year. So clearly we can't ignore the impact of unhealthy forests on wildfire risk.

But beyond that, these overcrowded conditions negatively affect the ability of our forests to adjust and maintain key ecological functions that support our natural and built communities, such as providing clean and abundant water supply, accessible recreational opportunities, diverse plant and animal habitat, bonds to indigenous tribal lands, wood-based products for daily life, and carbon storage to reduce greenhouse gas effects, to name a few.

## **What does a sustainable relationship with our forests look like and how do we get there?**

First, people need to feel safe in their homes and not be subjected to a seemingly endless barrage of emergencies, from red flag fire warnings to power outages to loss of the qualities that make Placer such a great place to live, work and play.

But to get there we need to address both sides: the forest health side and our own individual and community resilience to wildfire and its impacts. The county is taking a leadership role with projects like the Placer County Sustainability Plan; the Community Wildfire Protection Plan; partnerships with the Forest Service, CAL FIRE, Placer County Water Agency and others for forest restoration work and so much more. Community-based programs like fire safe councils, Firewise Communities and the Resource Conservation District's defensible space chipping program are also contributing to improved forest health and reduced wildfire risk.

## **How can community members help?**

One of the best things we can do is to strengthen our own individual stewardship ethic. Be aware and prepared should an emergency arise. Sign up for Placer Alert. Do whatever work you can to make your own house and property as defensible as possible. Serve as a model for your friends and neighbors. And if you have the time and inclination, get involved in the local fire safe councils or Firewise Communities efforts. Your concerns are important and your ideas are critical to achieving both forest and community resilience into the future.



# What does the red flag mean for you?

*It's Simple!*

## Red Flag Warning Awareness Program – a SIMPLE way to be prepared!

Placer County launched a new Red Flag Warning Awareness Program, where fire agency participants will display red flags in visible locations on red flag warning days to alert residents to times of elevated wildfire risk.

- S** Sign up for Placer Alert\* [placer.ca.gov/PlacerAlert](http://placer.ca.gov/PlacerAlert)
- I** Include a Go Bag\* in your plan [placer.ca.gov/GoBag](http://placer.ca.gov/GoBag)
- M** Monitor local first responders' social accounts
- P** Prepare for quick evacuation  
(\*Follow Placer County Sheriff Office's Facebook and Twitter for evacuation information\*\*) [placer.ca.gov/Evacuation](http://placer.ca.gov/Evacuation)
- L** Learn wildfire safety tips\* [bit.ly/RedFlagFireSafety](http://bit.ly/RedFlagFireSafety)
- E** Ensure you have a full tank of gas

\*These actions should be done BEFORE a red flag warning, but the flags can serve as a reminder to ensure these actions are completed. Learn more at [placer.ca.gov/RedFlagProgram](http://placer.ca.gov/RedFlagProgram)



**FIRE WARNING**

[PlacerAlert.org](http://PlacerAlert.org) | [ReadyPlacer.org](http://ReadyPlacer.org)

## Ready Placer: Preparedness starts at home

We all have a personal responsibility for our family's safety in a wildfire emergency. Here's how you can do your part to protect your family, neighbors and community:



### Know what to do in an emergency

Follow the SIMPLE steps to remain prepared – not only for yourself, but your family, pets, neighbors and community. A SIMPLE plan can help save lives!



### Take care of your land

The Placer Resource Conservation District offers a low-cost chipper program and advises landowners on restoration projects. Green waste recycling is available throughout the county, and CAL FIRE offers free defensible space inspections for your home.



### Get involved in your neighborhood

Fire safe councils and Firewise Communities are grassroots, neighborhood-led organizations that mobilize residents to protect their homes, communities and environments from catastrophic wildfire, while also making it safer for firefighters and first responders.

Visit [placer.ca.gov/FiresafeAlliance](http://placer.ca.gov/FiresafeAlliance) to get involved.

**Go to [PlacerAlert.org](http://PlacerAlert.org) and [ReadyPlacer.org](http://ReadyPlacer.org)**

Sign up for emergency alerts and learn more about what the county is doing to ensure we are prepared.



# Is your family prepared for any **EMERGENCY?**

CREATE YOUR OWN PLAN TO STAY SAFE.

## Emergency supply kit checklist

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking water                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-perishable food, including baby and pet food | <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Cash and credit cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tools and utensils                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone and portable charger | <input type="checkbox"/> Toiletries            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Batteries  | <input type="checkbox"/> Medication and eyeglasses         | <input type="checkbox"/> Important documents   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radio  | <input type="checkbox"/> Blankets and clothing             |  |

1



### UPDATE YOUR INFO FOR OUTAGE ALERTS

Update your contact information at [pge.com/mywildfirealerts](https://pge.com/mywildfirealerts) so we can reach you in an emergency.

2



### CONFIRM YOUR EMERGENCY EXITS

from your home and establish a location where your family or roommates can reunite after evacuating.

3



### PLAN FOR YOUR PETS

by including them in practice drills and helping them get comfortable with a leash or carrier during stressful situations.

4



### LEARN HOW TO OPEN YOUR GARAGE DOOR MANUALLY

in the event the door is unable to open automatically during an outage.

5



### CHECK YOUR STANDBY GENERATOR

and ensure that it is working properly because it can help avoid damage to personal property and keep emergency first responders safe.



To learn more ways to keep you and your community safe, visit [safetyactioncenter.pge.com](https://safetyactioncenter.pge.com)



# PREPARING FOR A PUBLIC SAFETY POWER SHUTOFF

During severe weather, high winds could cause tree branches or debris to contact electric lines and start fires. That's why PG&E may need to turn off power during severe weather to help prevent wildfires. This is called a Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS). While turning off the power helps prevent wildfires, we know it can be disruptive. We are working year-round to improve PSPS events for our customers and communities.

## HERE ARE 5 WAYS TO PREPARE FOR A PSPS:



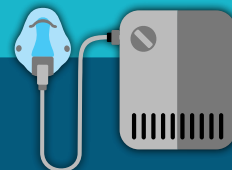
Make sure PG&E can reach you before a PSPS by updating your contact information at [pge.com/mywildfirealerts](http://pge.com/mywildfirealerts).

1



Pack or restock your family's emergency kit including food, water, batteries, radio and a first aid kit.

2



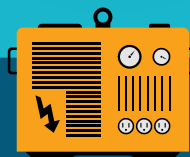
Make preparations for anyone in your family who depends on electricity for medical needs.

3



Practice manually opening your garage door.

4



Ensure any backup power sources are ready and safe to operate.

5



For translated support in over 200 languages, please contact PG&E at 866-743-6589.



To learn more ways to prepare for a PSPS and any emergency, visit [safetyactioncenter.pge.com](http://safetyactioncenter.pge.com)

# Making critical investments, leveraging partnerships in the spirit of water supply reliability

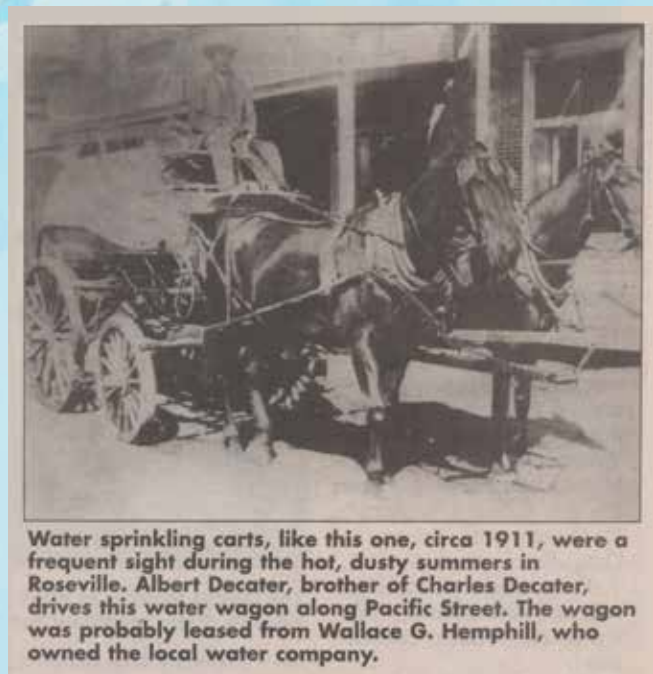
In 1934, Roseville Water Company, a privately-owned company, was purchased by the City of Roseville. Around that same time, initial funding provided water system improvements, including a new pipeline. Critical investments like this helped create a publicly owned water utility for Roseville and established a service level that supports its residences and businesses and is necessary for maintaining economic vitality and quality of life.

Since then and nearly 90 years later, Roseville is still making intelligent investment decisions by taking proactive steps to maintain a level of water supply reliability both in the near- and long-term. Prudent long-term planning for water supply resources is no different than your financial portfolio, where it is recommended that you look ahead, understand risk, and diversify where you can to reduce risk.

Roseville water managers are doing that exact thing as part of the Roseville Water Future Initiative – a proactive, comprehensive planning effort to diversify water supplies by implementing new or expansion projects over time to maintain resiliency for the foreseeable future.



*February 2021 where Roseville and other water agencies sign long-term water supply agreements with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.*



**Water sprinkling carts, like this one, circa 1911, were a frequent sight during the hot, dusty summers in Roseville. Albert Decater, brother of Charles Decater, drives this water wagon along Pacific Street. The wagon was probably leased from Wallace G. Hemphill, who owned the local water company.**

“Day in and day out, we are working to meet demands now so that customers can count on us when they turn on the tap,” said Sean Bigley, assistant director of water. “What also holds true is the need to evaluate various options to diversify our water sources over time and identify funding and existing infrastructure enhancements to access our expanded sources of supply.”

## Where we are

More than 50 years ago, Roseville agreed with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to obtain water from Folsom Lake. The agreement allowed Roseville to access surface water resources to support the community’s drinking water needs. Years later, Roseville negotiated an agreement with the Placer County Water Agency to access surface water resources from the upper Middle Fork American River. The amount of water available through these contracts – which are held in perpetuity – far exceed the demand currently. In addition to surface water resources, Roseville sought to diversify water supply and has developed additional





*Roseville delivers 1 billion gallons of recycled water annually to water parks and street medians, to offset drinking water resources.*

resiliency measures to reduce reliance on Folsom Lake over the last 30 years.

One way Roseville worked to decrease surface water demand was investing in recycled water in the 1990s. Recycled water is highly-treated wastewater that has been filtered and disinfected. Roseville was an early adopter of this technology, and for nearly 30 years, has been using this sustainable resource for irrigation and industrial uses.

Today, Roseville delivers 1 billion gallons of recycled water annually to more than 100 sites, including landscape watering at golf courses, parks, school athletic fields, and the cooling process at the Roseville Energy Park. Not only does the use of recycled water stretch drinking water resources, but it's also a drought-proof measure towards increasing water reliability.

In the early 2000s, Roseville started installing groundwater wells to offset surface water supplies. Roseville's groundwater program is unlike any other in the region because it uses Aquifer Storage and Recovery technology. Today, Roseville has six wells that can inject and store excess water in an underground aquifer through these specially designed wells and can extract water from the same well when needed. In 2019 and 2020, when surface water supplies were plentiful, Roseville replenished the groundwater basin by storing more than 600 million gallons of surface water - the equivalent of filling 900 Olympic-sized pools.



*Roseville uses groundwater well to extract and store water to increase water reliability.*

"Over the years, we have had trailblazers in our city who understood the notion of planning for years to come," Bigley said. "The work over the last century has allowed us to grow and prosper as a community. We can't stop that precedent, so we are going to keep going."

## Where we are going

As Roseville embarks on an even greater reliable water supply future, its Water Future Initiative includes a level of advanced planning and phased project implementation to account for:

- Continued climate changes that will likely lead to more extreme droughts in the future
- Increased regulatory pressures to increase existing supplies or to accommodate environmental considerations
- Building in redundancy to hedge against surface water supply impacts
- Service demand increase

Roseville is committed to ensuring reliability now and into the future by expediting key projects to increase access to surface and groundwater supplies.

Through long-term partnership with Placer County Water Agency, Roseville is working collaboratively to identify and develop new pipelines and expand interties (this is a piece of infrastructure that connects water services between multiple





water agencies.) These combined efforts will allow Roseville to convey water from the upper American River through a network of pipes, thereby reducing reliance on Folsom Lake infrastructure. This approach will minimize the risk for Roseville and provide a level of comfort during arid conditions.

“We lean into partnerships because it creates an economy of scale that helps deliver essential services to our customers,” Bigley said. “Placer County Water Agency understands the spirit of collaboration and getting things accomplished for the greater good of Placer County and the region.”

Roseville has also planned additional groundwater wells over the next five years to double the wells from six to 12. Given drought conditions this year, Roseville anticipates expediting two groundwater well projects within the next 18 to 24 months to bolster groundwater capacity. But the long-term goal is to have all wells online within five years, strategically placed throughout the city so that there is a level of redundancy in all portions of water service system. This built-out system means more access

to groundwater daily during dry conditions or can bank significantly more water in times of plentiful surface water supplies.

“Using surface water and groundwater interchangeably is a wise water supply management strategy,” Bigley expressed. “But the fact that we can also store water depending on water supply conditions allows us to use the basin as an underground storage system under our control, which is also advantageous when above-ground storage is infeasible in our community.”

## Efficiency to help with a resilient future

Roseville has been a proponent of water-use efficiency over the years. In addition to accessing more water, a component of a reliable future is stretching existing water resources no matter the water supply conditions. Roseville uses a multifaceted approach to use every drop efficiently, including:



• **Stopping leaks in the water distribution system.** Roseville examines more than 600 miles of water mains annually, using acoustic leak detection that listens for water leaking underground to make repairs.

• **Partnering with customers by providing tips, rebates, and other water-saving programs.**

Customers can use free services to upgrade their lawns to more water-efficient landscapes or seek assistance from water efficiency specialists through home audits to identify ways to reduce usage.

• **Modernizing metering systems** to have near-real-time information on leaks and give customers, over time, access to monitor their water usage and make adjustments as necessary.

Want to do your part by using water efficiently? Visit [Roseville.ca.us/savewater](http://Roseville.ca.us/savewater) to learn about programs, services, and one-on-one help to ensure that you're using water as wisely as possible.

For more information about Roseville's Water Future Initiative, visit [www.roseville.ca.us/waterfuture](http://www.roseville.ca.us/waterfuture).



Many water agencies, like Roseville, have free home audits to help customers realize water savings.



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## ASRA Volunteers, Canyon Keepers

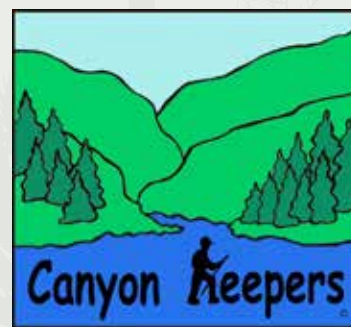
Founded in 1998, the Canyon Keepers is a volunteer organization assisting the Auburn State Recreation Area (ASRA) professional rangers by providing information and assistance to park visitors. Monthly Canyon Keeper meetings and hikes are open to the public. Other activities include a Jr. Ranger program, Confluence docent duties from Memorial Day through September, and helping maintain and improve hiking trails.

For more information or to receive email notification about ASRACK activities, email [asrack@canyonkeepers.org](mailto:asrack@canyonkeepers.org)

### Historic Bridges and Nature Tours

Led by knowledgeable docents, tours encompass the four currently existing bridges as well as the sites and remnants of historic bridges near the confluence of the North Fork and Middle Fork of the American River, below Auburn. These tours are conducted regularly throughout the year and include discussion of the plants and animals in the area.

**CanyonKeepers.org**







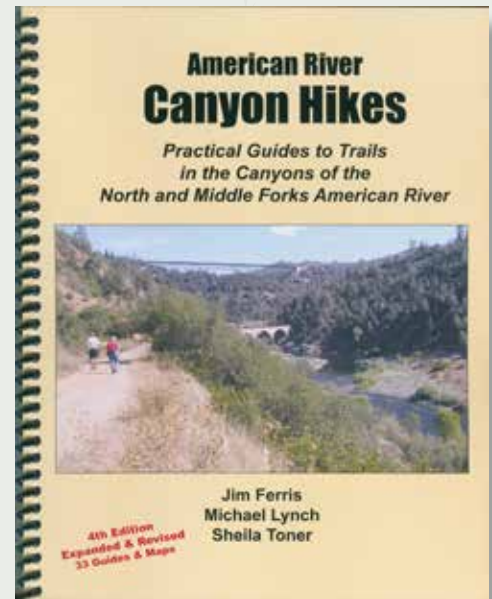
[parks.ca.gov](https://parks.ca.gov)



[canyonkeepers.org](https://canyonkeepers.org)

## Junior Ranger Program

Canyon Keepers, together with State Park naturalists, lead nature programs for children from 4 – 12 years of age. These programs are held on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Children learn about the plants, animals, and Native American life of the American River Canyon, plus other exciting topics. All programs are free, though some take place in areas that require a Day-Use fee. Please call or visit our website for more information.



## Monthly Meetings

Held the first Tuesday of the month, guest speakers present a variety of programs featuring local history, geology, ecology, and more. Check our website for times and location.

## Monthly/Interpretive Hikes

Guided hikes and nature walks are offered on various trails within ASRA and the nearby canyons. Check our website for schedules. Books are available at California Visitors Center at 1103 High Street, Auburn, CA 95603.





## We Partner for Fire Safety



### Reducing Fire Fuels

NID has partnered with CALFIRE, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, U.S. Forest Service and others to implement forest thinning.

NID has cleared more than 1,000 acres and efforts continue to remove dead and dying trees, small diameter trees, and shrubs that compete with larger trees for water. We are able to reduce the fuels for large fires and allow more water to flow through the watershed. When forests are selectively thinned, they grow faster and capture more carbon, which helps to reduce global warming and other effects of climate change.



### Clearing Around Power Lines

Keeping vegetation and hazard trees away from a primary power line is of utmost importance, and our team has been walking the line for years to manage vegetation and provide a safe clearing. Now, efforts have increased to maximize protection against wildfire.



## Providing Fire Hydrants

Throughout the District, NID has installed 2,551 hydrants to help protect neighborhoods in the event of fires. Water to the hydrants is supplied by the treated water system. Is there an NID fire hydrant near you? Check out our locator map at [nidwater.com](http://nidwater.com).



## Promoting Conservation

Conservation and water use efficiency is important to preserving our precious water resources. Water is needed for drinking water, household use, growing food, commercial and industrial uses, groundwater recharge and the environment.

NID practices and encourages wise use of water. Conservation resources, water efficiency tips, workshop information, incentives and more are available at [nidwater.com/conservation](http://nidwater.com/conservation).



Subscribe for news and information on NID's projects and programs at [nidwater.com](http://nidwater.com).





## Q & A With Brian Estes, Unit & Fire Chief



The men and women of the Placer County Fire Department (PCFD) have a proud history of serving our communities within Placer County. Through a long-standing Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement dating back to 1952, we integrate state and local firefighting resources into an effective and seamless fire department. From our eight career-staffed stations and five volunteer stations, we provide all risk, fire, and emergency medical services to a 475-square mile territory stretching from the dense urban valley floor to the crest of the Sierra. Your PCFD provides service to over 58,000 residents in unincorporated Placer County and protect over \$6.7 billion in private property and infrastructure. Last year, the Placer County Fire Department responded to over 11,000 calls for service.

### How does CAL FIRE and the Placer County Fire Department integrate their services?

As the largest all-risk fire department in the State, CAL FIRE provides service models to over 110 local governments across California, reducing the costs through contracting efficiencies,

consolidating dispatching services, and leveraging depth of resources.

In our agreement, Placer County provides the fire stations and fire apparatus and contracts with CAL FIRE for highly trained, professional firefighters, prevention services, and fire and EMS dispatching.

The biggest strength in our relationship with Placer County are the Value-Added Benefits that come with the CAL FIRE contract. By leveraging the resources from the State, Placer County and CAL FIRE enjoy a full scope of expertise in the mitigation of major incidents including wildfires, flooding, and disasters, while collaborating on community protection including evacuation planning and fire prevention efforts

### What are these Value Added Benefits between CAL FIRE and the PCFD?

The Placer County Fire Department staffs several specialized teams and programs including our Hazardous Materials Response Team, Technical Rescue Team, Swiftwater Rescue



Team, and in partnership with the Placer County Sheriff, our Tactical Paramedic Team.

CAL FIRE and PCFD work together to provide Advanced Life Support and Paramedic services, firefighting aviation operations, heavy equipment and hand crew operations, pre-fire planning and mitigation, loss prevention, fire prevention, arson investigation, fleet management, logistics, and Command and Control 911 dispatching services out of the Grass Valley Emergency Command Center.

## What are the biggest challenges facing the Placer County Fire Department into the future?

The PCFD is an amazing Fire Department and our support and trust from the Board of Supervisors and our Executive Office is second to none. We face many of the same challenges as our allied fire agencies in Placer County in that the costs of providing services and the demand for those services is ever increasing.

We are one of the busiest Fire Departments in the County with an annual increase in call volume of 5-7%. This, coupled with an increasing amount of recreation and visitors in our canyons and transportation areas adds to our service demands. Meeting these increased demands while revenue remains the same is a challenge for any Fire Department, but utilizing the depth of resources from our Cooperative Fire Agreement helps us navigate these challenges.

Damaging wildfires are one of the biggest threats to our communities. In Placer County, we have more habitable structures within the State Responsibility Area than any other County in the State. The protection of those lives, properties, and structures in our communities is my top priority as the State Unit Chief and the Placer County Fire Chief.

## What can the public do to help in this effort?

We have a robust network of community-based organizations including Fire Safe Councils and Firewise Communities. As we move forward, we need public efforts and objectives to be prioritized across the County, measurable and obtainable, and consistent with Fire Department priorities.

Be active, get engaged, and be a part of your community when it comes to fire safety. Sign up for Placer Alert, commit to defensible space around your home and property, and understand evacuation preparation and planning.

## What is the Future of the Placer County Fire Department?

I am very excited about the future of the Placer County Fire Department. The Board of Supervisors is committed to fire protection and wildfire prevention, and it is one of their identified strategic priorities for 2021. We have signed a multi-year agreement ensuring a long-term relationship between CAL FIRE and Placer County, and our newly established Loss Reduction Bureau is actively engaged in prevention, planning, and ordinance issues across our County.

We are committed to meeting the County General Plan direction for Fire Services and are upgrading our staffing levels and paramedic services across our entire service area. We are heavily engaged with new development to ensure we are prepared to provide properly funded and professional fire and EMS services to new development in the Western end of the County.

I am so proud to serve as your Placer County Fire Chief and lead our men and women who work the front lines every day. As a team, we are committed to the protection and service of our Placer County residents and we look forward to the future.





# Defensible Space and Home Hardening



**Creating and maintaining defensible space and home hardening are essential in increasing your home's chance of surviving a wildfire.**

## Defensible Space

Defensible space is the buffer that homeowners are required to create on their property between a structure and the grass, trees, shrubs, or any wildland areas that surround it.

This space is needed to slow or stop the spread of wildfire and it helps protect your home from catching fire—either from embers, direct flame contact or radiant heat. Proper defensible space also provides firefighters a safe area to work in, to defend your home.

## Defensible Space Zones

Defensible space consists of two zones extending 100 feet from any home or structure cleared of dead trees, brush, and vegetation.

Zones 1 and 2 currently make up the 100 feet of defensible space required by law. Assembly Bill 3074, passed into law in 2020, requires a third zone for defensible space. This law requires the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop the regulation for a new ember-resistant zone (Zone 0) within 0 to 5 feet of the home by January 1, 2023. The intensity of wildfire fuel management varies within the 100-foot perimeter of the home, with more intense fuels reduction occurring closer to your home. Start at the home and work your way out to 100 feet or to your property line, whichever is closer.



**THE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION  
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### Zone 0 – Ember-Resistant Zone

Zone 0 extends 5 feet from buildings, structures, decks, etc. The ember-resistant zone is currently not required by law, but science has proven it to be the most important of all the defensible space zones.

### Zone 1 – Lean, Clean and Green Zone

Zone 1 extends 30 feet from buildings, structures, decks, etc. or to your property line, whichever is closer.

### Zone 2 – Reduce Fuel Zone

Zone 2 extends from 30 feet to 100 feet out from buildings, structures, decks, etc. or to your property line, whichever is closer.

### Local Ordinances

Many local government agencies have local ordinances for defensible space or weed abatement. These local ordinances will often be more stringent than the State's minimum requirements listed above. Check with your local fire department or fire protection district for any additional defensible space or weed abatement ordinance requirements.



**LEARN MORE:  
READYFORWILDFIRE.ORG  
FIRE.CA.GOV**



# WILDFIRES DESTROY. CREATE DEFENSIBLE SPACE AROUND YOUR HOME.

[ReadyforWildfire.org](https://ReadyforWildfire.org)



## Are you doing the right thing—the wrong way?

Each year, CAL FIRE responds to hundreds of fires started by Californians using equipment the wrong way. If you live in a wildland area, all equipment must be used with extreme caution. Lawn mowers, metal-bladed trimmers, chain saws, grinders, welders, and tractors can all start a wildland fire if not used properly. Do your part to keep your community fire-safe.

## Here's how to do it the right way:

- Mowing
  - Metal blades striking rocks can create sparks and start fires in dry grass. Use caution.
  - Mow before 10 a.m., but never when it's windy or excessively dry
- Spark Arresters
  - In wildland areas, spark arresters are required on all portable, gasoline-powered equipment. This includes tractors, harvesters, chainsaws, weed trimmers, and mowers.
  - Keep the exhaust system, spark arresters and mower in proper working order and free of carbon buildup.
  - Use the recommended grade of fuel, and don't top it off.

## Plant and Tree Spacing

The spacing between grass, shrubs, and trees is crucial to reduce the spread of wildfires. The spacing needed is determined by the type and size of brush and trees, as well as the slope of the land. For example, a property on a steep slope with larger vegetation requires greater spacing between trees and shrubs than a level property that has small, sparse vegetation.

## Vertical Spacing

Remove all tree branches at least 6 feet from the ground. Allow extra vertical space between shrubs and trees. Lack of vertical space can allow a fire to move from the ground to the brush to the treetops like a ladder, which leads to more intense fire closer to your home. To determine the proper vertical spacing between shrubs and the lowest branches of trees, use the formula below, and see the Minimum Vertical Clearance chart on Page 23.

Example: A five-foot shrub is growing near a tree.  $3 \times 5 = 15$  feet of clearance needed between the top of the shrub and the lowest tree branch.

## Horizontal Spacing

Horizontal spacing depends on the slope of the land and the height of the shrubs or trees. See the Minimum Horizontal Clearance chart on Page 24 to determine spacing distance.



## Home Hardening

There are three ways your home can be exposed to wildfire – direct flames from a wildfire or burning neighboring home, radiant heat from nearby burning plants or structures, and flying embers. Flying embers from a wildfire can destroy homes up to a mile away and are responsible for the destruction of most homes during a wildfire. Taking the necessary measures to harden (prepare) your home can help increase its likelihood of survival when wildfire strikes. Below are ways to harden your home and make it more fire resistant.

### Roof

The roof is the most vulnerable part of your home. Homes with wood or shingle roofs are at high risk of being destroyed during a wildfire.

- Build your roof or re-roof with materials such as composition, metal, clay or tile. Block any spaces between roof decking and covering to prevent embers from catching.
- Remove accumulated vegetative debris from the roof.

### Vents

Vents on homes create openings for flying embers.

- Cover all vent openings with 1/16-inch to 1/8-inch metal mesh. Do not use fiberglass or plastic mesh

because they can melt and burn.

- Use Ember and flame-resistant vents (WUI vents).

## Eaves and Soffits

Eaves should be boxed in (soffited-eave design) and protected with ignition-resistant\* or non-combustible materials.

## Windows

Heat from a wildfire can cause windows to break even before the home is on fire, which allows embers to enter and start fires inside. Single-paned and large windows are particularly vulnerable.

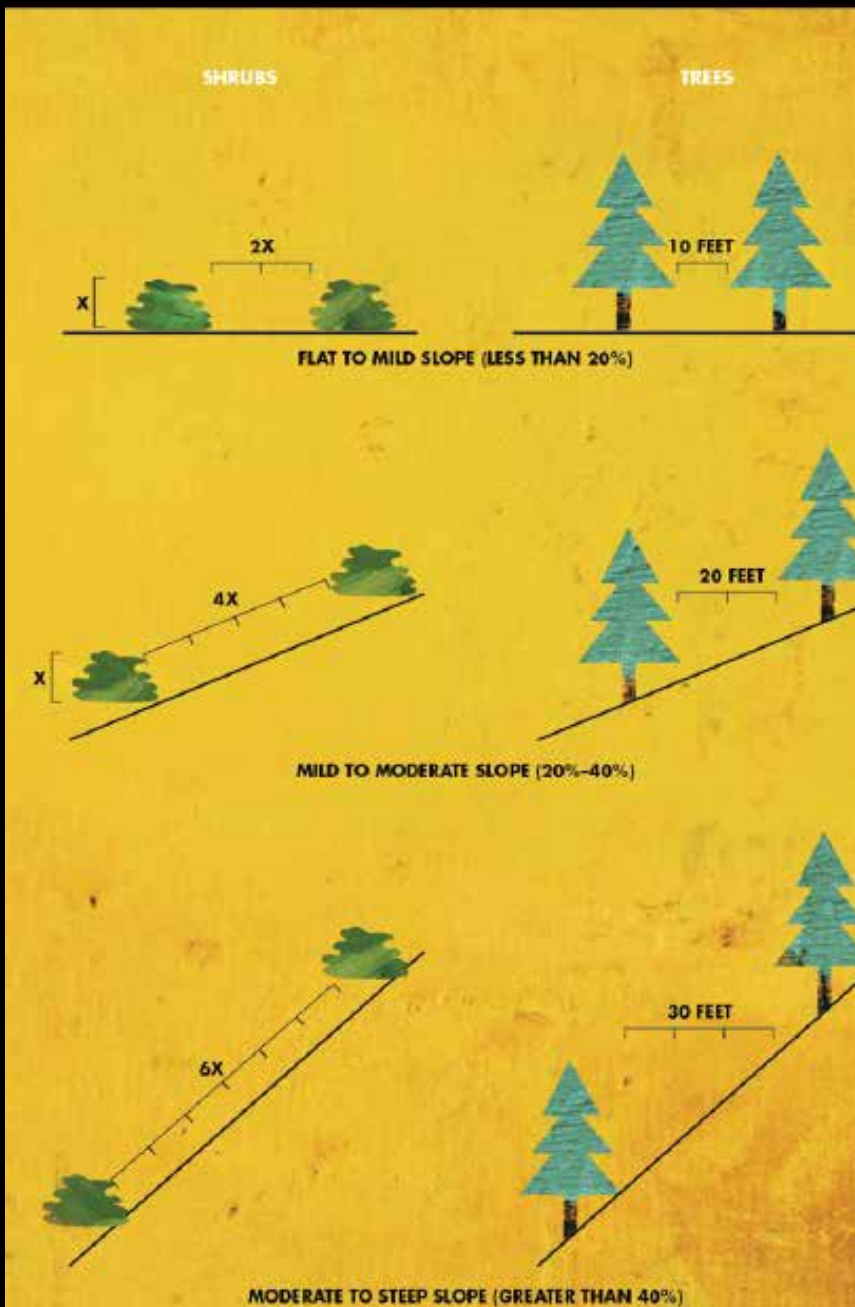
- Install dual-paned windows with one pane of tempered glass to reduce the chance of breakage in a fire.
- Consider limiting the size and number of windows that face large areas of vegetation.
- Install screens in all usable windows to increase ember resistance and decrease radiant heat exposure.

## Walls

Wood products like boards, panels, and shingles, are common siding materials. However, they are flammable and not good choices for fire-prone areas.

- Build or remodel your walls with ignition resistant\* building materials, such as stucco, fiber cement siding,





fire retardant, treated wood, or other approved materials. This is especially important when neighboring homes are within 30 feet of the home.

- Be sure to extend materials from the foundation to the roof.
- Smaller spaces, such as the roof-to-wall area, should have their siding replaced with a non-combustible material.

## Decks

Surfaces within 10 feet of the building should be built with ignition-resistant\*, non-combustible, or other approved materials.

- Create an ember-resistant zone around and under all decks and make sure that all combustible items are removed from underneath your deck.
- If a deck overhangs a slope, create and maintain defensible space downslope from the deck to reduce the chances of flames reaching the underside of the deck.

## Rain Gutters

Keep rain gutters clear or enclose rain gutters to prevent accumulation of plant debris.

- Install a corrosion-resistant and non-combustible metal drip edge for additional protection of the combustible components on your roof's edge.
- Use a non-combustible gutter cover to prevent buildup of debris and vegetation in the gutter.

## Patio Cover

Use the same ignition-resistant\* materials for patio coverings as a roof.

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## Chimney

Cover your chimney and stovepipe outlets with a non-flammable screen. Use metal screen material with openings no smaller than 3/8-inch and no larger than 1/2-inch to prevent embers from escaping and igniting a fire.

- Close the fireplace flue during fire season when the chimney is not being used.

## Garage

Have a fire extinguisher and tools such as a shovel, rake, bucket, and hose available for fire emergencies.

- Add a battery back-up to the garage door motor so that the garage can easily be operated if power is out.
- Install weather stripping around and under the garage door to prevent embers from blowing in.
- Store all combustible and flammable liquids away from ignition sources.
- Treat windows and vents in the garage the same way as if they were part of the house.

## Fences

Best practice is to separate your fence from your house or upgrade the last 5-feet of the fence to a non-combustible material to reduce the chance of the fence from bringing fire to your home.

## Driveways and Access Roads

Driveways should be built and maintained in accordance with state and local codes to allow fire and emergency vehicles to reach your home. Consider maintaining access roads with a minimum of 10 feet of clearance on either side, allowing for two-way traffic.

- Ensure that all gates open inward and are wide enough to accommodate emergency equipment.
- Trim trees and shrubs overhanging the road to allow emergency vehicles to pass.

## Address

Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road.

## Water Supply

Consider having multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach all areas of your home and other structures on your property. If you have a pool or well, consider getting a pump.

\*Ignition-resistant building materials are those that resist ignition or sustained burning when exposed to embers and small flames from wildfires. Examples of ignition-resistant materials include “non-combustible materials” that don’t burn, exterior grade fire-retardant-treated wood lumber, fire-retardant-treated wood shakes and shingles listed by the State Fire Marshal (SFM) and any material that has been tested in accordance with SFM Standard 12-7A-5.

## Useful Links for Home Hardening

- Low-cost Retrofit List
- Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide
- Take our Wildfire Survey to get a custom checklist
- Preparing Your Home - Fire in California
- Fire Resources and Information - Fire in California

For more information about defensible space, home hardening, and wildfire safety and preparedness, visit [ReadyForWildfire.org](http://ReadyForWildfire.org).

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## Fire-Wise, Water-Wise Landscaping

Defensible space is an area between your home and other structures where potential fuel (materials or vegetation) are modified, reduced, or cleared to create a barrier and slow the spread of wildfire toward a home.

Much of PCWA's service area is located in the wildland-urban interface, where beautiful forests meet new and existing neighborhoods. As the threat of wildfire becomes ever-more present with a changing climate, a new type of landscaping—one that is not only water-wise but also fire-wise—is emerging as a new tool for reducing the vulnerability of homes and property to wildfire.

### What is Fire-Wise, Water-Wise Landscaping?

Fire-Wise, Water-Wise Landscaping (also called “Firescaping”) is the practice of designing and maintaining

your yard in a way that reduces its vulnerability to wildfire. The goal is to create a landscape that is both beautiful and provides defensible space to protect your home and property from fire.

These landscapes can include many of the same traditional landscape elements that are important to living and enjoying your home, including places to entertain and play, and plants with varying colors, textures, flowers and foliage. The difference lies in the types of plants and their placement.

## Firewise Trailer Program

Free from the Placer Resource Conservation District

To assist communities in becoming fire safe, the Placer RCD Firewise Trailer is now available for community and neighborhood clean-up days. The trailer is full of tools such as pruners, rakes, weed eaters, loppers, weed wrenches, and hand tools. Educational materials regarding defensible space and wildfire prevention are also available for events. For information, please contact George Alves at [George@placerrcd.org](mailto:George@placerrcd.org)



Join us for PCWA Presents

## Fire-Wise, Water-Wise Landscaping

**Wednesday, August 25, 2021, from 12-1 p.m.**

A webinar and live audience Q&A exploring how to create a beautiful fire-wise, water-wise landscape at home.

### Featuring

- Rob Zaucha, Battalion Chief of the Auburn Fire Department



- Jeff Ambrosia of Yamasaki Landscape Architecture
- Kevin Marini, UC Master Gardeners of Placer County
- The experts from Green Acres Nursery and Supply

*Learn more and register at [pcwa.net](http://pcwa.net).*

### Landscape Design and Plant Placement

Design principles incorporate all of a landscape's features to create defensible space and fuel breaks, including driveways, lawns, walkways, patios, parking areas, boulders and rocks, pools, ponds, streams, and other areas. The overall approach is "less is more"—with plenty of space between plants, groups of plants, and other elements.

Design is often built around concentric fire-safety zones or circles with plants that become taller and less water intensive the further away from the home. Combined, the zones create 100 feet of defensible space around a home required by California law to prevent the spread of wildfire.

"The first five feet near your home is by far the most important area," said Kevin Marini of the UC Master Gardeners of Placer County. "Make sure there's no material that can catch fire in that area. As you move out 30 more feet, you can start incorporating perennials, bulbs and grasses. Beyond that, shrubs and trees."



Leaving space between plant groups is also important. "You can create islands of plant material with the same water requirements—called a hydrozone," said Jeff Ambrosia of Yamasaki Landscape Architecture. "Having proper spacing between these islands is important. If one island were to catch fire, space between the islands makes better defensible space."





## Plant Selection

A fire-resistant landscape features plants less likely to catch fire placed in ways to resist the spread of fire to a home. These plants can be damaged or killed by fire, but their foliage and stems are less likely to significantly contribute to the fire's fuel and intensity as long as they are properly maintained, pruned and watered. Fire-resistant plants are great in California, because they are often native and/or drought tolerant.

"All plants will burn," Marini said. "But there are certain

plants that have a growth habit, have a certain amount of water in their leaves, and have less oils and resins that make them fire-wise."

On the other hand, Fire-Wise, Water-Wise landscaping avoids the planting of evergreen shrubs and trees, as well as ornamental grasses and berries, within 30 feet of a home because they are typically more flammable.

Once planted, properly maintaining trees, shrubs and plants is just as important as their selection.

"Maintenance is crucial," Ambrosia said. "It's important to make sure that your irrigation system is running properly. It's also important to maintain the area around plants by removing deadwood, clearing the area around plants, and





making sure there aren't too many large clusters of plants that are encroaching on each other."

And, don't forget the mulch. "Mulch is important to preserving soil moisture and keeping weeds at bay," Ambrosia said. "Choosing the right mulch is also important. A lot of people like the look of shredded redwood—also known as gorilla hair—but it's by far the

most flammable of all of the bark mulches. Instead, choose something that has a fairly large scale to it. Just remember to keep mulch away from the closest five feet to the house."

*Want to learn more? Find information about fire-wise, water-wise plants, landscape design plans, mulch, irrigation rebates, and more at [pcwa.net/smart-water-use/fire-wise-landscaping](http://pcwa.net/smart-water-use/fire-wise-landscaping).*

## You may be eligible for **CASH** to replace your uncertified wood stove or fireplace!

Old wood stoves manufactured before 1990 waste firewood, pollute the air in your neighborhood, and create dust inside your home.

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This program is a collaboration between the Placer County Air Pollution Control District and the El Dorado Air Quality Management District

\*Must meet low-income eligibility requirements.



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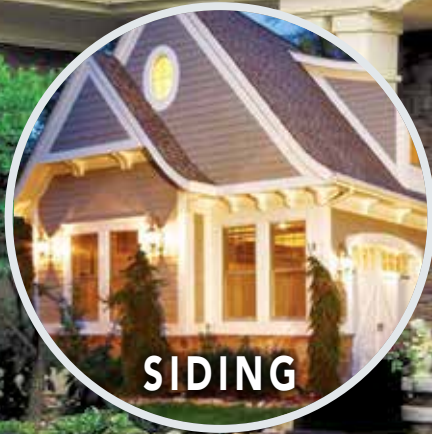
Learn more about rebates and apply online at [pcwa.net/rebates](https://pcwa.net/rebates) or by calling Customer Services at (530) 823-4850.

Rebate amounts subject to change. Rebates are available on a first-come, first-served basis until funding is depleted.



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