

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why do County staff need to perform surveys on my property?**

The Alpine County Community Development Department (County) is proposing fuel treatment projects in three locations of the county: Bear Valley, Manzanita, and Markleevillage. Cultural and biological surveys are required as part of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. The project is subject to CEQA as an undertaking by the County (a public entity) and to fulfill the requirements of the grant funding that was obtained to prepare the plan. Private landowners who conduct fuel reduction work on their private property are not required to complete these types of surveys.

### **What will survey personnel be looking for when surveying my property?**

Cultural resource surveys will be conducted on all undeveloped, unpaved, outdoor areas that are included in this project. Cultural resource surveys will involve a small crew of one to two archaeologists who will walk in lines on your property looking for cultural and historical resources. Common examples of cultural or historical resources include artifacts, buildings or structures, and debris such as bottles or coins. Cultural resources may relate to remains and sites associated with California's Native American societies. Additional examples of cultural resources are archaeological sites and artifacts from prehistoric and historic periods, human constructed or altered landscapes, and traditional cultural properties which are areas of the natural landscape that have cultural significance. Any cultural or historic resources found on your property will remain in place and detailed information about resources discovered must be kept confidential by law (see below).

Biological surveys will not be conducted on all properties. On applicable sites, a single biologist will walk specific locations of the site to verify the biological site conditions identified in an initial desktop review. The biologist will identify plant types, animal burrows, and nesting habitat and assess boundaries of vegetation communities, wetlands, and other water bodies to ensure that the project activities will not impact sensitive biological resources.

### **What happens if the surveyors find cultural resources or sensitive biological resources on my property?**

State and federal law requires that the location and nature of archaeological resource deposits must be kept confidential. Environmentally sensitive areas may be designated on the property and avoided during project implementation, if necessary.

Because the project is a public agency undertaking, different laws for protection of archaeological resources apply to the actions taken by the County than apply to actions taken by a private landowner. Archaeological resources are generally not protected on private lands. The conditions that apply to the County when performing the work to avoid archaeological

resources would not apply to a private landowner's actions. If resources are discovered, it should not affect the landowners' actions on their own lands.

The Endangered Species Act prohibits anyone from harming or killing an endangered wildlife species, even on private land. If potential for endangered or other special status wildlife species is discovered on your property, actions will be taken to ensure that these species are not harmed during performance of the work.

**What kind of fuel treatment might the County conduct on my property?**

Several types of fuel treatment methods may be implemented in the project areas, including mechanical methods and hand thinning. Mechanical methods may include mechanical mastication completed by excavator or similar equipment. Mechanical treatment methods would be used for larger scale vegetation removal activities. Hand thinning methods may be used for thinning stands of small-diameter trees and shrubs. Hand thinning treatments would include the use of powered hand tools, such as chainsaws, and non-powered tools, such as pruners and hand saws.

If you are concerned about the fuel treatment methods that would be used on your property or the amount of vegetation removal, please contact the County to discuss a potential scaled-back approach that meets the project objectives. In subdivisions, the focus of fuel treatment activities will be on creating defensible space around residences and other structures located in the wildland-urban interface. Within larger parcels, treatment activities will be focused on thinning fuels to support ecological restoration. Ecological restoration improves fire resiliency by creating forest conditions more closely associated with pre-fire suppression conditions and treating areas with excess fire fuel buildup.

**Will the fuel treatment on private property involve removal of my landscaping?**

No. Property owners can participate in fuel treatment activities at whatever level they like. Fuel reduction activities will be targeted in areas where excess wildfire fuel buildup and spreading of non-native invasive plants has occurred. Landscaping will not be altered during these fuel treatment activities.

**If I authorize surveys on my property, can I change my mind in the future about fuel treatment?**

Yes. If you are not sure if you would like to participate in the fuel reduction work, the County would still like to consider your property in the surveys and the environmental document. Completion of environmental surveys will allow the most flexibility for implementing fuel treatment activities and coverage within your property.

Property owners may exclude themselves from the project activities at any time by contacting the County; Zach Wood: (530) 694-1371 or [zwood@alpinecountyca.gov](mailto:zwood@alpinecountyca.gov). However, once a property is excluded from the project, it cannot be added back if surveys were not completed.

**If I choose to participate in the project, when would the work occur?**

At this time, there is no date set for when work crews would begin fuel treatment work. The County must complete the environmental review and the County Board of Supervisors must formally approve the project before any work may occur. Additionally, the County has not allocated any funding to do the fuel treatments at this time. Local funding or grant funding must be secured before the work can be contracted. Participating landowners would be informed of all major developments in the project implementation schedule.