

1 Introduction

California faces a dramatic increase in the number and severity of wildfires. Of the 20 most destructive wildfires in the state’s history, 18 have occurred since 2000, and 15 have occurred since 2015 (CAL FIRE 2024a). In recent years, California has seen its deadliest and most destructive fire season on record (2018) and its largest fire season on record, with 4% of the state’s total land burning in a single year (2020) (CAL FIRE 2024b).

This County-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP or Plan) has been developed for the County of Nevada (County), covering 623,213 acres within incorporated and unincorporated areas (Plan Area). The Plan Area is a rural Sierra Nevada community that is highly susceptible to wildfire due to wildfire-receptive vegetation conditions, weather conducive to wildfire ignition and spread, and varied terrain facilitating wildfire spread. Due to development throughout and within proximity to wildland areas, Nevada County has a very high risk of wildfire, including a very high likelihood of wildfire and a very high wildfire risk to homes (Scott et al. 2024). The County also has a history of large, damaging wildfires, including the 1988 49er Fire (36,343 total acres/185 homes destroyed or damaged), the 1994 Trauner Fire (536 total acres/12 homes destroyed or damaged), the 2001 Martis Fire, (14,127 total acres/4 structures destroyed or damaged), and the 2021 River Fire (2,619 acres/163 structures destroyed or damaged). Nearly 318,000 acres of the County (excluding federal land) are mapped as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs) (CAL FIRE 2023a, 2024c).

As a key component of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA), a CWPP serves as a mechanism for community input and identification of areas presenting high wildfire risk, as well as identification of potential actions that can be taken by the community to mitigate such risk. The CWPP process is intended to provide the community with a forum for identifying values at risk from wildfire, which may include people, property, natural resources, cultural resources, economic interests, and infrastructure. The identification of these values at risk influences the potential wildfire risk reduction actions identified in this CWPP.

This CWPP has been prepared by the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services (OES) with direct input from stakeholders, local wildfire experts, non-profit organizations, land managers, fire agencies, and community members. The purpose of this CWPP is to serve as a wildfire protection planning document that presents the community’s physical characteristics, wildfire hazard, assets at risk from wildfire, wildfire risk reduction approaches, and goals and action items intended to reduce wildfire risk in the Plan Area. The goals of this CWPP are to reduce wildfire risk, enhance community and firefighter safety, protect values at risk from wildfire, improve community awareness regarding wildfire risks, encourage cross-jurisdictional coordination, and improve evacuation routes and safety throughout the County.

1.1 Purpose and Need

The County recognizes the potential for significant loss of life, property, infrastructure, natural resources, and economic resources from wildfire. Annual expenditures associated with wildfire suppression in

California have steadily increased over the past 20 years. In 1997/1998 (fiscal year), expenditures totaled \$47.7 million; by 2021/2022 (fiscal year) expenditures had more than doubled, totaling \$1.176 billion (CAL FIRE 2022a). The purpose of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is to create a County-wide community-based plan focused on identifying and addressing local hazards and risks from wildfire, as well as identifying opportunities where actions can be taken to mitigate such risks.

The CWPP process aids the County in identifying wildfire risks to people, property, natural resources, community values, economic interests, and critical infrastructure, and suggests actions to reduce these risks. Community input, values, and perceptions help inform the CWPP recommendations. Additionally, the information presented in this CWPP is intended to increase community awareness about living within the wildland urban interface (WUI) and encourage residents to take preventive actions on their properties and with regard to their preparedness.

This CWPP demonstrates consistency with Policy Fire Hazards and Protection 10.7–10.10 of the County’s General Plan Safety Element (County of Nevada 2020a), which calls for enhancing fire safety and improving fire protection effectiveness through infrastructure and service improvements; reducing fire risk to life and property through land use planning, ordinances, and compliance programs; encouraging fire safety education and support programs to promote participation, voluntary compliance, and community awareness of fire safety issues; and reducing fire severity and intensity through fuels management.

As a component of the County’s Roadmap to Resilience, the CWPP is a five-phase process that evaluates the Plan Area’s fire environment, and the risk posed by wildfire and identifies actions to reduce the wildfire threat to the community. The five-phase approach to updating the County CWPP includes:

- **Phase 1:** Initial Outreach
- **Phase 2:** Wildfire Risk Assessment
- **Phase 3:** Land Management Plan
- **Phase 4:** Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- **Phase 5:** GIS Application

Intended users of this CWPP include the community, County government, non-government organizations, fire agencies, other agencies that own or manage land in the Plan Area, and neighboring jurisdictions. While this CWPP is intended to be a stand-alone document, the information and recommendations presented herein will be used by OES in evaluating wildfire risk mitigation needs on an ongoing basis.

1.2 Plan Goals

The County has identified five primary goals to guide the preparation of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and subsequent actions intended to reduce wildfire risk to the community. The CWPP goals provide a framework to achieve desired levels of wildfire hazard reduction, public and firefighter safety, and resource protection. The purpose is to enable the intended users of this CWPP to

make informed, adaptive decisions based on site-specific conditions. The goals of the CWPP are as follows:

1. Reduce wildfire risk throughout the County to enhance community and firefighter safety.
2. Enhance the protection of values at risk from wildfire.
3. Enhance and improve critical communications systems and public awareness of the increasing risk of wildfire.
4. Encourage communication, collaboration, and coordination of wildfire risk reduction actions with residents and community partners and across land ownerships and jurisdictions.
5. Improve evacuation outcomes throughout the County.

1.3 Forecast Zones and County-Wide Community Wildfire Protection Plan Organization

For the purposes of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), the Plan Area encompasses all incorporated and unincorporated areas within the County, totaling 623,213 acres (Figure 1, Plan Area Location). Given the significant variability in climate, fuels, weather, terrain, and communities across the County, the County was divided into four Forecast Zones (FZs) for the purposes of modeling wildfire hazard and risk as a component of the Wildfire Risk Assessment (WRA). FZ boundary delineations were based on hazard but aligned with community boundaries to keep community values and identities intact. Analysis at the FZ level better captures fire weather influences and better informs planning decisions related to fire management. For continuity with the WRA, these FZs were carried forward into the structure of this CWPP. The four FZs for the County are identified and summarized in Table 1 and depicted in Figure 2, Forecast Zones.

Table 1. Forecast Zones

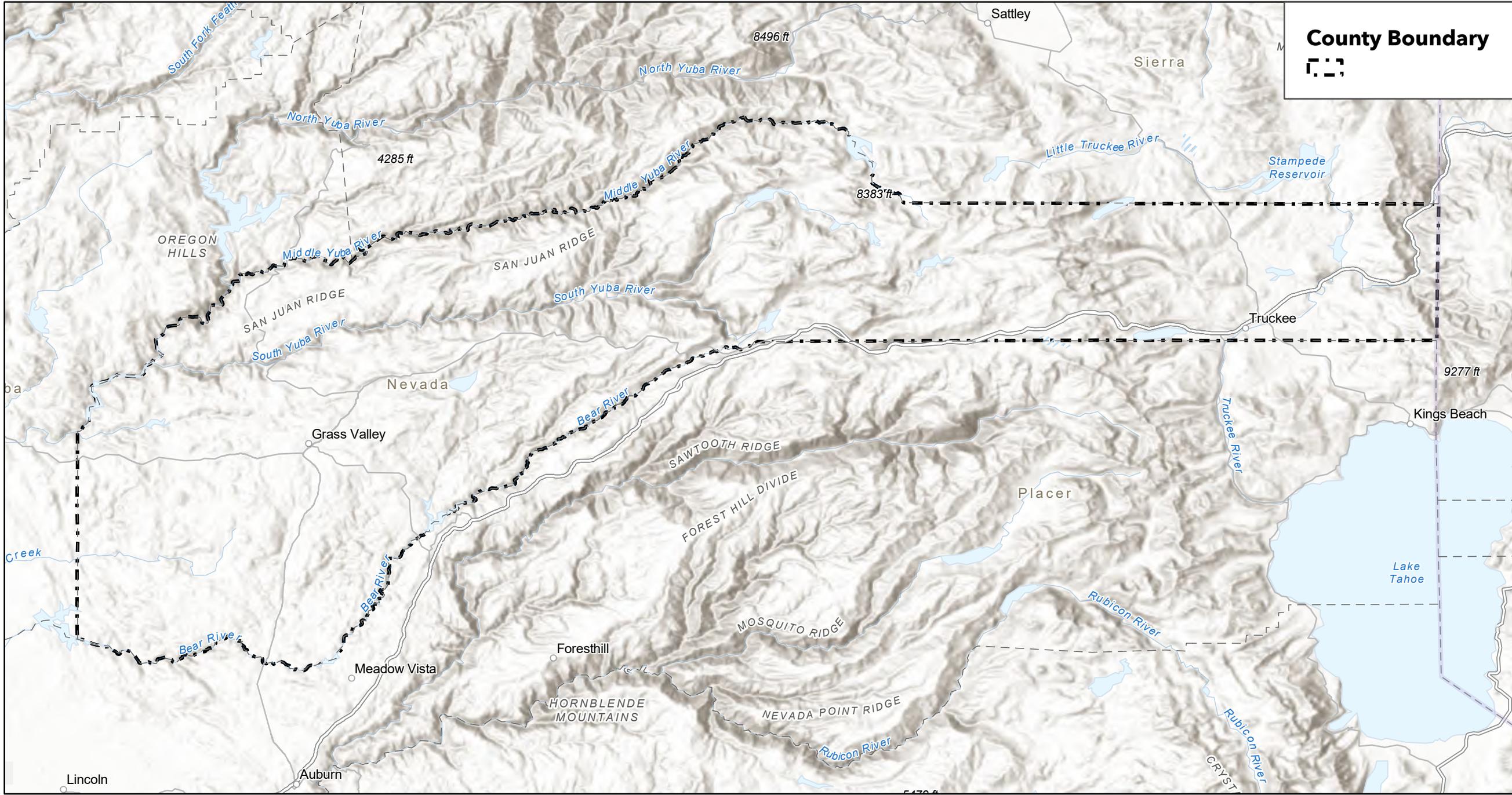
Forecast Zone	Total Acreage
Higgins/Penn Valley	143,715
Grass Valley/Nevada City	136,166
Tahoe National Forest Area	234,891
Truckee/Donner	108,438

1.4 Key Participants

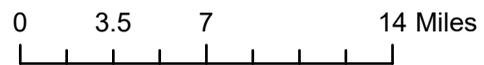
The County recognizes that implementation of the CWPP would not be possible without the support of the people, businesses, and organizations in the County, especially in the County’s Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZs), as well as the many federal, state, and local agencies that have jurisdiction in these areas. These participants are impacted by this Plan and must share in the responsibility for protecting themselves and their community. The County’s central engagement goal was to develop a CWPP that builds on input from key participants. This includes agency representatives and organizations with technical expertise that were engaged to help provide input on various components of the CWPP.

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Figure 1 - Plan Area Location



County Boundary

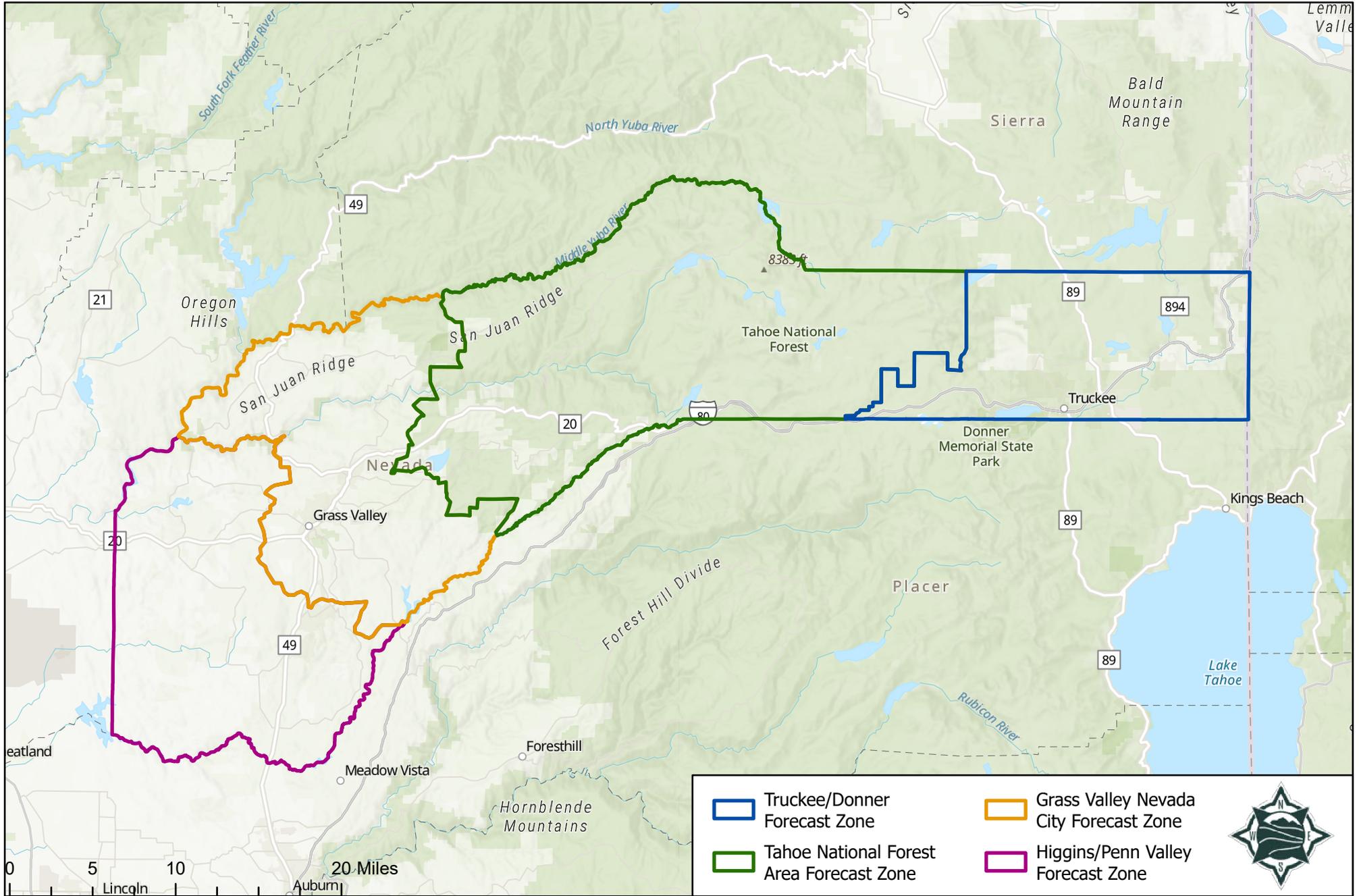


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Figure 2 - Forecast Zones

Figure 2



Office of Emergency Services

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1.4.1 Project Team

The Project team was created to provide input throughout the development of the CWPP. Project team tasks included helping develop CWPP vision/goals and public engagement strategies, identifying priority project areas, and assisting with other CWPP tasks when needed. The Project Team met four times throughout the CWPP development process. Project team members are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2. Project Team Members

Project Team Members	Affiliated Organization
Briana Bacon	Nevada County Resource Conservation District
Chris Friedel	Yuba Watershed Institute
Eric Horntvedt	Truckee Fire Protection District
Dillon Sheedy	Truckee Fire Protection District
Sean Scales	Nevada County Sheriff's Office
Mark Buttron	Fire Chief, Grass Valley Fire Department
Bob Womack	Town of Truckee
Richard Steffke	U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest
Gabe Foster	U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest
Rita Clipperton	U.S. Forest Service Tahoe National Forest
Anne Marie Holt	South Yuba River Citizens League
Sam Goodspeed	Nevada City Fire Department
Evan McLenithan	Nevada City Office of Emergency Services
Lindsay Ryan	Tahoe Donner Homeowners Association
John Groom	Tahoe Donner Homeowners Association
Ben Gwerder	Tahoe Donner Homeowners Association
Steve Garcia	CAL FIRE
Landon Haack	CAL FIRE
Daniel Joannes	Truckee/Donner Land Trust

1.4.2 Technical Advisory Committee

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was created to provide input for the Wildfire Risk Assessment (WRA) process. The TAC advised on the methodology of the Wildfire Hazard Assessment (WHA) and the WRA and provided ground truthing and technical expertise. The TAC was comprised of personnel from fire agencies with fire behavior modeling expertise and fire behavior knowledge specific to Nevada County (see Table 3 for TAC members). There were two layers of the TAC with varying levels of responsibility. The first layer consisted of the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Assistant Chief for the North Division Operations and the CAL FIRE Regional Unit Forester for the Nevada-Yuba-Placer (NEU) Unit. The second layer of the TAC consisted of the three CAL FIRE NEU battalion chiefs who serve Nevada County and the local fire chiefs of the fire protection districts in Nevada County. The first layer of the TAC convened three times throughout the WHA/WRA process (see Table 4 for TAC meeting dates). The second layer of the

TAC convened twice during the WRA process. The WHA was completed in June of 2023 and the WRA was completed in December of 2023. The draft WHA/WRA results were circulated to the TAC for review.

Table 3. TAC Members

TAC Participant	Title, Affiliated Organization
Craig Griesbach	Nevada County Office of Emergency Services
Paul Cummings	Nevada County Office of Emergency Services
Alex Keeble-Toll	Nevada County Office of Emergency Services
Alessandra Zambrano	Nevada County Office of Emergency Services
Landon Haack	CAL FIRE
Steve Garica	CAL FIRE
Sean Ryan	CAL FIRE
Jason Flores	North San Juan Fire Protection District
Tom Browning	North San Juan Fire Protection District
Eric Horntvedt	Truckee Fire Protection District
Dillon Sheedy	Truckee Fire Protection District
Jason Robitaille	Nevada County Consolidated Fire District
Mark Buttron	Grass Valley Fire Department
Sam Goodspeed	Nevada City Fire Department
Joel Tam	Higgins Fire District
Rita Clipperton	U.S. Forest Service Tahoe National Forest

Table 4. TAC Meetings

Meeting Dates	TAC Layer
February 23, 2023	First Layer
April 11, 2023	First Layer
June 19, 2023	All TAC Layers
October 10, 2023	First Layer
December 12, 2023	All TAC Layers

1.4.3 Stakeholder Team

The stakeholder team was created to support the project throughout the development of the CWPP. Stakeholder team tasks included providing feedback on CWPP's vision/goals, public engagement strategies, and priority project areas. The Stakeholder Team met twice throughout the CWPP development process. Stakeholder team members are shown below in Table 5.

Table 5. Stakeholder Team Members

Stakeholder Team Members	Affiliated Organization
Jeff Lauder	Sierra Streams Institute

Table 5. Stakeholder Team Members

Stakeholder Team Members	Affiliated Organization
Jamie Jones	Firesafe Council of Nevada County
Staff	Nevada County Recreation Department
Staff	Nevada County Public Works Department
Jason Robitaille	Nevada County Consolidated Fire District
Eric Rice	U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest
Kevin Mecham	U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest
Joe Griffith	U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest
Dan Patterson	U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest
Scott Beasley	Nevada County Coalition of Firewise Communities
Anne Graham	Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation
Nicole Miller	Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation
Trisha Tillotson	Nevada County Community Development Agency
Brian Foss	Nevada County Planning Department
Rich Adams	California State Parks
Eben Swain	Truckee River Watershed Council
Steve Poncelet	Truckee/Donner Planned Unit Development
Jeff Horn	Bureau of Land Management
Joe King	Sierra Pacific Industries
Lee Kolbasa	Liberty Utilities
Robb Etnyre	Truckee Tahoe Airport District

1.5 Document Organization

This CWPP covers all of Nevada County. The document is organized as such that Sections 1 through 6 provide a County-wide perspective of the CWPP and thus are relevant to all of Nevada County. Sections 1 through 5 include the introduction to the CWPP, background information about the Plan Area covered by this CWPP, the County Wildfire Risk Assessment, Project Priority Areas, and Community Engagement. Section 6 describes the County Wide Action Plan. Sections 7 through 10 each focus on one of the four FZs of the CWPP and act as small FZ specific CWPPs. Each FZ specific section follows the same structure including a description of the FZ, an analysis of the fire hazard, a discussion of the FZ’s High-Value Resources and Assets at Risk, community engagement results, and a FZ specific action plan.

In addition to this CWPP, there are accompanying annexes that focus on certain priorities within Nevada County. Annexes work together with this CWPP, with the County CWPP functioning as a broader umbrella document. Priorities identified in the annexes can also be considered priorities under this CWPP. There are four annexes included in the Nevada County CWPP (1) City of Grass Valley, (2) City of Nevada City, (3) Truckee Fire Protection District, and (4) Nevada County Resource Conservation District.

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