

Hannigan, Edith@BOF

From: Chuck Williams <chukwil@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2016 3:03 PM
To: Vegetation Treatment Program@BOF
Subject: VTP Draft EIR comments

Board of Forestry & Fire Protection
Attn. Edith Hannigan
Re: VTP Draft EIR comments

May 30, 2016

May I suggest Cal Fire consider using these methods of controlling fire which also aide wildlife:

BUFFER ZONING

With so much of California's biodiversity being fire dependent , it is a mistake for Calfire to not be involved with city and county planning departments on locating and maintaining firebreaks. Cities and counties have the ability to create buffer zoning around parks and nature preserves, which need fire occasionally to keep them healthy. Such zoning can keep homes and other development from being built so close to natural areas as to endanger them and make fire control more difficult.

Some of the types of uses allowed in such zones that would be more compatible with both fire and nature are: nature study, education and research centers; organic farms; environmental tourism, outdoor guides; so-called "green" cemeteries, which have native landscaping; rural residences built underground or of bermed-earth design that are essentially fireproof; and possibly even extreme bicycle routes and frisbee courses in areas where erosion and pedestrian conflict can be controlled.

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

In a similar fashion as with buffering nature preserves, Cal Fire could work in cooperation with other agencies and private land owners to create wildlife corridors between wildlife preserves with buffer zones allowing low impact uses immediately adjoining them and zones of moderate impact further away.

SMOKE MANAGEMENT & CARBON SEQUESTRATION

Burn piles that are lit on top instead of on the sides or bottom, create a whole lot less smoke pollution and CO2 release. This method could be added to Appendix J,VII. Mitigation of Smoke Management Plan.

If the burning piles are extinguished by smothering or water before they burn down to ash, a lot of charcoal will be created. Scattered around the area this carbon will be sequestered in the soil for many decades.

PATTERNED GRASS MOWING

For fire protection, many large fields of grass are either totally mowed every year (often more then once), or the perimeter is mowed in the same place every year leaving the rest of the field to build up a deep layer of dead fuel.

Most native grasses are perennial bunch grasses which won't produce many, if any seeds after their immature seed heads have been cut off. Therefore when they are cut (or eaten) off every year, the plant eventually dies out.

But the predominantly annual non-native grasses will regrow at a lower position after being cut off, and produce more seeds for the next year resulting in a field becoming totally non-native annual grasses which are not the best for grazing nor natural diversity.

A partial solution is to mow fire breaks in a different pattern each year so that some native bunches will be left unmowed and therefore able to produce seeds that year.

Then over the next 2-4 following years mow the firebreak in a different pattern so that any one bunch of native grass is given a chance to produce seeds by not having their heads cut off.

For example:

Year one— Mow a firebreak around the outer edge of the field .

Year two — mow zig zag across the field north and south.

Year three— mow zig zag east and west.

Year four — mow a five-point star in the field.

Year five — mow a spiral in the field.

Year six — start the sequence of patterns over or invent another design or ten.

Initial mowing can be done early but should leave 3/4 to 2/3 of the field uncut. Later in the season when the native grass has matured its seed (turned brown) a 2nd, complete mowing is OK and will not hurt the the native grass reproduction, but will help lower the fire danger.

This patterned mowing has been seen to increase the number of wildflowers present. If there are no native grasses in the field to start with, this method will not work unless native grass seed is brought in. Also, if there are perennial non-native grasses present (like Harding Grass or European Fescue), patterned mowing may not be as effective unless they are first removed.

Thank You,
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