

# Fire in the Mountains

*The Sierra Nevada has experienced increasingly destructive wildfires in recent decades. In the past decade alone, over 2 million acres have burned.*

## Bigger, More Damaging Wildfires

Before European settlement, fires occurred often in the Sierra Nevada, but they had a low intensity and low environmental impact. With practices of aggressive fire suppression, forests have become overgrown and unhealthy. At the same time, more people moved to the Sierra Nevada making fire management even more complex, and losses more dramatic.

These factors have created forests that are prone to high-intensity, very damaging wildfires that are difficult to control.

Changing climate patterns suggest warmer temperatures for longer periods of time, which may increase frequency and intensity of fires.

### Bigger and more damaging wildfires

#### Results in:

- Loss of life and property
- Loss of wildlife habitat
- Loss of productive forestlands
- Degradation of water and air quality
- Release of large amounts of carbon into the atmosphere
- Diminished recreational opportunities
- Diminished capacity of forested lands to store water and carbon

## Healthy, Vibrant Forests and Communities

Sustainable forests and communities require reducing vegetation, or forest fuels, to create defensible space. This is part of fire risk planning. These measures will reduce catastrophic fire in the Sierra Nevada.

Fewer catastrophic fires result when these excess fuels are removed from forests. These fuels may then be used to create wood products or to produce renewable, clean energy from the “biomass.”

The recycling of this organic biomass can create green jobs which in turn help local economies.

### The benefits of planning ahead

#### Protects:

- Communities
- Life and property
- Habitats, water and air quality
- Recreation opportunities
- Carbon storage (sequestration)

#### Reduces:

- Potential for large, damaging fires
- Health impacts of poor air quality
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Forest fuels

*There are no winners when catastrophic fire occurs.*

**Sustainably managed forests, sound planning and public education will greatly reduce the risk of large, damaging fires.**