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News Media, Inc.



FIRE & WATER

2024



A supplement to Gold Mountain California News Media in partnership with Placer County Water Agency

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Message from Andy Fecko, PCWA General Manager

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2024 edition of Fire & Water. This annual publication, produced by Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) and Gold Country Media, highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with natural resources stewardship in our region.



For PCWA, the union between fire and water is clear. Sixty-five percent of California's water supply comes from the forested watersheds of the Sierra Nevada. Nothing causes more degradation to this water supply than a mega forest fire. We have experienced several such fires in recent years. My hope is that, through wise stewardship, we will prevent another.

Our goal with this edition is to provide a deeper appreciation of what is required to ensure the reliability and sustainability of our ecosystem and water resources. As in previous years, we've invited colleagues from other local agencies and citizen groups to join the conversation. We are grateful for the participation of the Placer County Fire Department/ CalFire NEU, Auburn Fire Department, County of Placer, City of Roseville, City of Lincoln, Nevada Irrigation District, Pioneer Energy, Protect American River Canyons, Canyon Keepers, and Friends of the Auburn Ravine.

I trust the information included will be useful for your home, farm, or business. Enjoy!



PLACER RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU HELP THE LAND?



We help Placer County residents through the following programs and more:

- **Placer County Chipper Program:** chip your downed woody debris for \$80/hr!
- **Shaded Fuel Breaks:** implementation and maintenance along the I-80 corridor.
- **Backyard Garden Technical Assistance:** free backyard garden advice, planning, and troubleshooting.
- **Landowner Technical Assistance:** free advice on concerns such as erosion, irrigation, and soil health.
- **PCWA Storage Tank Rebate:** up to \$1000.
- **Placer Prescribed Burn Association:** keep up to date on safe and legal burning and educational opportunities in Placer County!
- **Pollinator Habitat Funding for Working and Public Lands:** we'll cover the cost of plants and materials!

Conserve and steward your land for future generations! Learn more about these programs and others by scanning the QR code.



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WHERE DOES YOUR WATER COME FROM?

- P** These are two critical pump stations that bring PCWA water from the American River to our canals and treatment facilities to deliver water to our customers.
- M** This is one of 11 delivery points for PCWA's contract with PG&E for water from the Yuba River. These points deliver water to communities from Alta down to west Placer County.
- G** **Groundwater Supply:** Two wells provide 2,000 acre-feet; three more are planned.
- Sacramento River Supply:** Proposed RiverArc Project along the Sacramento River. 35,000 acre-feet of Central Valley Project Water.
- Yuba River Supply:** PG&E's Drum-Spaulding Hydroelectric Project. 125,400 acre-feet of contract water.
- American River Supply:** PCWA's Middle Fork American River Hydroelectric Project. 120,000 acre-feet of water rights.





Learn more about where your water comes from and what it takes to deliver high-quality drinking water to over 44,000 homes and residents in Placer County in PCWA's annual reports.



Consumer Confidence Report



Year End Report





CAL FIRE AVIATION EMBRACES EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

Governor Newsom has pronounced, “We’re putting more planes in the sky and boots on the ground than ever before to protect Californians from the threat of devastating wildfires.” CAL FIRE is stepping forward to embrace new and emerging technologies in our fight against devastating wildfires.

CAL FIRE is converting seven Lockheed C-130H aircraft into powerful 4000-gallon air tankers which will be strategically positioned across the state to immediately respond to fires as soon as they are reported. The C-130H air tankers will bolster our fleet of 23 Grumman S-2T 1200-gallon air tankers and 16 Rockwell OV-10 Air Tactical aircraft and demonstrate CAL FIRE’s commitment to being the world’s leading firefighting aviation program.

In the past four years, CAL FIRE has also taken delivery of 13 new Sikorsky S-70i “CAL FIRE Hawk” large helicopters capable of delivering up to 1000 gallons of water on fires during the day or night. Night vision technology is now being utilized to fight fires during the night, giving firefighters a much larger impact during night hours when fires typically burn with lower intensity.



THE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION SERVES AND SAFEGUARDS THE PEOPLE AND PROTECTS THE PROPERTY AND RESOURCES OF CALIFORNIA



CAL FIRE has coordinated with local offices of the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Regional Water Quality Control Board for input, site-visits, and project design.





NEW TECHNOLOGY FOR FIGHTING WILDFIRE

Technology is rapidly changing and CAL FIRE is putting it to work to fight wildfires. New advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and fire modeling software allow fire managers to predict fire spread and direction based on predicted weather, winds, and topography giving them the ability to create more accurate fire and evacuation maps and adapt plans to meet future forecasts.

Fire detection is also benefiting from AI and now allow emergency dispatchers to identify smoke from a network of over 1000 cameras that are spread across the state. AI computers constantly monitor the cameras and notify dispatchers as soon as a new smoke column is noted. This process occurs within a few seconds of new smoke emerging and is often faster and more accurate than traditional staffed fire lookouts.

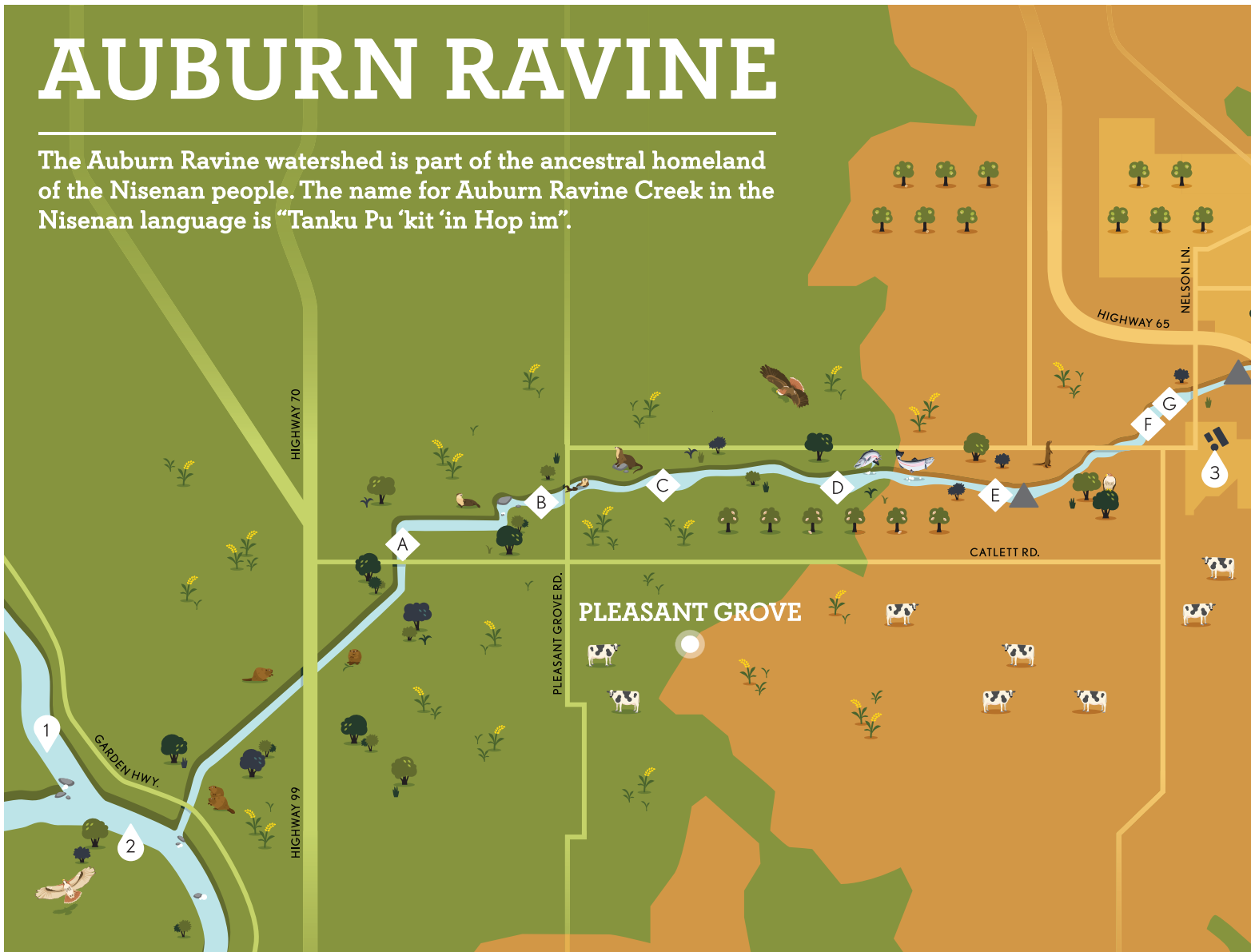
Advanced technology isn't limited to just ground-based actions. Drones, or 'Unmanned Aerial Systems' (UAS) are being utilized by firefighters to fight fire from the sky. Firefighters are now utilizing drones to provide valuable intelligence on wildfire intensity, spread, and location. Drones can be used to find spot fires before they have a chance to grow and become new, larger fires. Drones are even being used to start backfires, something they can do during day or night hours. This allows firefighters to work just as effectively, but from much safer locations.



CAL FIRE AVIATION PROGRAM

AUBURN RAVINE

The Auburn Ravine watershed is part of the ancestral homeland of the Nisenan people. The name for Auburn Ravine Creek in the Nisenan language is “Tanku Pu ‘kit ‘in Hop im”.



AUBURN RAVINE: A HARD-WORKING CREEK

Auburn Ravine is a beautiful foothill and valley stream flowing nearly 34 miles from the City of Auburn through Ophir, Newcastle, and Lincoln. Continuing west across the valley floor it enters the Sacramento River near Verona, providing benefits to people, fish, and wildlife along the way.

WATER FROM HERE, WATER FROM THERE

During the fall and winter, most of the water in Auburn Ravine comes from rain that falls across its 79 square mile watershed. In the spring and summer, most of the water that you see in the creek is water that has been imported from the Bear, Yuba, and American Rivers.

HOW IS WATER IMPORTED?

The water is imported by an extensive system of dams, canals, pipes, and pumps that convey water down from the mountains and into the creek. Four organizations manage this system*, providing a reliable supply of water and electricity for homes, businesses, and agriculture while fulfilling their responsibility to be good environmental stewards, and allowing access for public recreation where feasible.

CHINOOK SALMON LOVE THE RAIN

The fall and winter rains provide enough water for hundreds of large Chinook Salmon to swim up the creek to lay their eggs in Lincoln and further upstream. Then, in late winter and spring, thousands of baby salmon swim downstream to the Sacramento River and on to the Pacific Ocean. Three or four years later when they are about 3 feet long, the salmon come back to Auburn Ravine to lay their eggs and create another generation.

WATER FOR ALL

The imported water is used for orchards, farms, ranches, golf courses, and parkways. In the summer so other fish and steelhead trout, lamprey, beavers, otters can survive. Birds like Heron, Great Egret, Wood Stork, Swainson's Hawk rely on the riparian habitat along it. Other animals like bobcats, deer, mink, and moose also rely on the riparian habitat.

* Nevada Irrigation District (headquartered in Nevada County), Pacific Gas and Electric Company, Placer County Water Agency, and South Sutter Water District.

Discover Auburn Ravine - A Hidden Gem in the Heart of Our Community

Auburn Ravine is a beautiful foothill and valley stream, flowing almost due west from the City of Auburn through the charming landscapes of Ophir, Newcastle, and Lincoln. It then crosses the valley floor and enters the Sacramento River near Verona, with a total length of about 34 miles. Along its journey through the foothills and communities, Auburn Ravine provides numerous benefits to people, fish, and wildlife.



YOU ARE HERE	BEAVER	FISH SCREENS ON CANALS OR PUMPS	AITKEN DAM	WILDLIFE HERITAGE FOUNDATION FLOODWAY
RICE CROPS	OTTER	SEASONAL DAM	NEW MOORE DAM	VILLAGE 1 FLOODWAY
RANGELAND	HAWK	PERMANENT DAM	NELSON LANE DAM	CHAPARRAL CATARACT
ALMOND ORCHARDS	SALMON	COPPIN DAM	GOLD HILL DAM	AMERICAN RIVER TUNNEL
WALNUT ORCHARDS	MINK	DAVIS DAM	FEATHER RIVER	OPHIR CATARACT
MANDARIN ORCHARDS	STEELHEAD TROUT	TOM GLEN DAM	SACRAMENTO RIVER	PG&E WISE POWERHOUSE
WINERIES	DEER	AKT DAM	LINCOLN WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT	Nina Wolf DESIGN
NURSERY STOCK	STREAM GAUGE			QUESTIONS? Scan the QR code below for more information.



Beneficial Uses of the Auburn Ravine:

- Water for farms, ranches, and orchards.
- Water for landscaping and recreation.
- Water for fish and wildlife.

This map is the result of a partnership between PCWA, NID, the City of Lincoln, and Friends of the Auburn Ravine. In developing this map, we received valuable input from local residents, the agricultural community, the Nisenan, environmental organizations, City and County departments, and fish and wildlife agencies.



Scan the QR code to watch the video about the Auburn Ravine and new educational signage installed in the Lincoln community.

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keeps local dollars in
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Ways to save this fall:



Lighting

Replace light bulbs with LEDs for a quick and easy way to reduce energy. Switch off lights not in use or install motion sensors so lights turn off automatically.



Maintenance

Establish a maintenance schedule for your appliances to ensure they are running efficiently. Pioneer offers a \$75 rebate for air conditioner tune-ups, now through September.



Heating and Cooling

Install smart thermostats to adjust temperatures and set to 68 degrees in winter and 76 degrees in summer. Keep windows and doors closed when heating or cooling is running and use fans to circulate air.



Load Shift

Avoid using energy during peak pricing hours between 4 and 9 p.m. Shift schedules to avoid these hours or reduce the number of appliances running during these times.



Water

Consider low-flow aerators to decrease the gallons used per minute. Repair leaky faucets to reduce the amount of water wasted when not in use.



Insulation

Install proper insulation within your building to reduce leakage of temperature-controlled air to the outside. This can include ensuring windows and doors are properly sealed.



Equipment

Upgrade equipment to more energy-efficient models. Turn off equipment when not in use.



Evaluate

Seek expert help and have an energy audit performed at your home or business to learn additional ways to save energy and reduce monthly costs.

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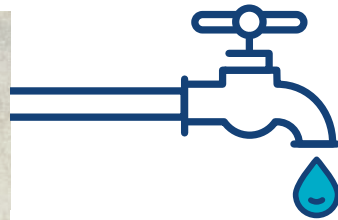
How Roseville ensures a steady water supply



Since acquiring a water company in the early 1900s, Roseville has prioritized comprehensive water planning to ensure reliability and quality.

Rooted in the railroad boom, Roseville's expansion relied on essential utilities for economic prosperity. Over the years, we have diversified our water portfolio to include surface, recycled, and groundwater sources.

However, today's climate challenges include prolonged droughts, severe wildfires, unpredictable snowpack reliability, and erratic rainfall patterns. Recognizing these threats, we acknowledge the imperative to adapt and pursue climate-resilient strategies and projects to ensure a steady water supply for homes and businesses amidst environmental shifts.



Our water system by the numbers

Operate a **100 million gallon** per day water treatment plant

Maintain more than **700 miles** of pipes, nearly **6,000 hydrants**, and **8 water tanks** that equal **44 million** gallons of available stored water

Manage **7 active groundwater wells** and **3 pump stations**

Deliver more than **1 billion gallons** of recycled water for irrigation and industrial uses

What does water reliability mean?

"Water reliability means having enough resources to prevent shortages during droughts or other major emergencies," said Richard Plecker, Environmental Utilities Director. "It also means our customers can rest easy knowing that water will be there when they turn on the tap."



Water reliability also entails proactive planning for security, climate change resilience, and meeting growing city needs. To that end, Roseville and neighboring water managers are bolstering infrastructure and expanding water sources and delivery methods.

“Planning and preparation are essential for our commitment to the City and the local economy,” noted Sean Bigley, Assistant Director of water and wastewater. “Investments in water reliability projects enable us to capture, store, and use water locally that would otherwise be lost, ensuring Roseville’s resilience, reducing strain during droughts, and lessening environmental impacts.”


While Roseville’s water supplies are more reliable than many Californian communities, growing uncertainties surround our water supply resources.

Our sources of water today

Our water comes from three main sources. This mix is like having a diverse investment portfolio—ensuring reliability regardless of water supply conditions.




Surface water: Primarily sourced from Folsom Lake, about 98 percent of our water comes from surface sources. We’ve secured partnerships and contracts, including an indefinite agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and water from the Placer County Water Agency, providing 66,000-acre feet of available surface water. One acre-foot of water can provide enough water for two households annually.

 **Take a tour! Uncover how we treat and deliver water to homes in Roseville.**

Groundwater: Our groundwater program, initiated in the early 2000s, bolsters our water supply resilience. We use seven operational wells during dry spells or store water when surface water sources are abundant. For instance, in 2021, we employed our wells to supplement supply during a dry period, matching the previous year’s stored amount. In 2023, we successfully stored 2,134 acre-feet of water underground, equivalent to providing enough water for over 6,000 homes for a year, available if needed.



 **How do we bank and extract water from the ground?**

Recycled water: We use highly treated wastewater for plant irrigation and maintaining green spaces like parks and sports fields. Through a network of purple pipes, we distribute over one billion gallons of recycled water annually, primarily used for landscaping and cooling the city’s power plant.



Adapting to changing realities to secure a resilient water supply future

We're addressing water supply limitations by optimizing surface water and groundwater usage to combat climate change impacts, upgrade infrastructure, and implement projects to safeguard our community's economic prosperity and quality of life.

"Water supply diversity isn't a new concept," said George Hanson, Water Utility Manager. "However, studies and first-hand experience with weather extremes show that we need to rethink our approach by exploring partnerships, investing in more infrastructure, and taking bold steps that result in greater system reliability. These efforts will be hard but not impossible."

Efforts underway include:



Accessing and storing more water underground

Two new wells came online last year, and two more are currently under construction as part of our ongoing groundwater program. Our target is to have 11 wells operational by 2032.

This expansion is crucial for water supply reliability as these wells supplement surface water during peak demand periods like summer, droughts, or emergencies. They also allow us to store surplus water from Folsom Lake and capture runoff, such as early spring snowmelt, which would otherwise flow into the Pacific Ocean.

Like traditional snowpack storage, this groundwater storage method stores water directly beneath us, ensuring a more reliable water supply for Roseville's future. Additionally, regional efforts are underway to scale up this approach using existing aquifer capacity (the equivalent of two Folsom Lakes), essentially creating an underground reservoir.



Enhancing surface water access and reliability

Folsom Lake, crucial for Roseville's water needs, serves various functions like water quality upkeep, flood prevention, and Delta protection. Yet, fluctuating allocations from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation present challenges. To address this, we're enhancing water access on the American River, supporting Sacramento River initiatives, and promoting new storage solutions.

- Through collaboration with the Placer County Water Agency (PCWA), we're planning and ultimately constructing a pipeline to transport water from PCWA's Middle Fork Project to our Granite Bay treatment plant. This project will reduce dependence on Folsom Lake by providing direct access to raw surface water, securing 10 million gallons daily.



- Roseville is part of a coalition working on developing Sites Reservoir in Maxwell, California. Although we won't draw directly from it, this reservoir, with a capacity of over one million acre-feet, will alleviate pressure on Folsom Lake, enhance statewide water reliability, and minimize environmental impacts on the Lower American River.
- The RiverArc project proposes diverting water from the Sacramento River to various agencies, including Roseville. With new pipelines and a treatment facility, this project is projected to yield 185 million gallons daily, strengthening regional water supplies.

These initiatives are in different planning and development phases and will require time. However, once operational, they will significantly contribute to meeting the urgent demand for increased water availability.



Contact us for assistance:

We can help. Whether water is abundant or scarce, we offer information, training, rebates, and tools to make your home and garden efficient water users.

**Call (916) 774-5761
or visit Roseville.ca.us/savewater.**



How you can help

Water supply management, droughts, and water efficiency are all part of any water supply strategy. As Roseville invests in bolstering its water supply portfolio, we ask customers to use water carefully by reducing water use where possible.



Outdoor watering

In the Sacramento region, most daily water use is dedicated to lawns and landscaping, with about a third of this water being lost to overwatering and evaporation. However, there are many ways to save water at home, and focusing on outdoor water conservation can have the most significant impact.



Fixing leaks

Ten percent of homes have leaks that waste 90 or more gallons daily. If you have an unusual spike in your water bill, your home could have a leak. A leaking or running toilet is the most common leak inside your home, followed by dripping faucets and showerheads. Outdoor leaks can be easy to miss but shouldn't be ignored because the water wasted can be significant.



Placer County Launches Program to Boost Wildfire Resilience in Forested Communities

The Regional Forest Health (RFH) program was launched in 2021 under the Department of Agriculture, Parks, and Natural Resources to act on the Board of Supervisors’ directives around forest and community wildfire resilience planning, prioritization, and outcome tracking. Approximately 75% of Placer County’s 961,433 acres are forested or part of communities near forested lands, also known as Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) communities.

While Placer County hasn’t experienced a so-called “mega” wildfire in recent history – one characterized by exceptional size, intensity, duration, and scale – its forested watershed lands and communities face an escalating wildfire threat due to climate change and other factors. With current conditions, it’s becoming increasingly likely that a large,

damaging wildfire will impact the area in the foreseeable future. This highlights the need to accelerate preparedness and mitigation measures and is why concerted efforts are underway with local, regional, state, and federal partners to boost the resilience of Placer County communities, resources, and critical infrastructure – such as water and power.

As part of its longstanding commitment to community and watershed resilience, Placer County is developing a comprehensive three-phase wildfire and forest resilience plan.



Phase 1: Countywide Action Plan

The first phase creates a 10-year countywide action plan using the Land Tender tool, a scientifically grounded platform for wildfire risk evaluation, priority mapping, and fuel reduction planning and tracking. Land Tender helps to identify critical assets, assess wildfire risks, and generate scenarios highlighting areas where fuel reduction activities can achieve the most significant protection outcomes.

Phase 2: Localized Assessments and Partnership Building

In the second phase, the RFH team will scale down the geographic scope from the countywide level to smaller jurisdictions, such as Fire Safe Councils, Firewise Communities, homeowner associations, and other community groups, to reflect their localized priorities and needs. By using Land Tender to assess smaller geographic areas, the RFH team can support partners' individual project development efforts, identify areas where local priorities align with countywide objectives, and help build partnerships for future collaborative project work.

Phase 3: Regional Coordination

The third phase involves coordination with neighboring counties to foster a regional approach to wildfire and forest resilience. By asserting joint leadership at the state and federal levels, the region will be better positioned to achieve necessary policy and resource objectives in support of ongoing wildfire resilience work.

Through this comprehensive three-phased approach, Placer County is positioning itself to fulfill state and federal agency funding prerequisites, expand opportunities for successful landscape-scale project design and implementation, and seamlessly collaborate with partners by defining areas of consensus for future work.

Key outcomes from such work include

protecting and strengthening forest and community resilience by reducing excess fuel, providing safe firefighting staging areas, moderating fire behavior, and establishing fire-resilient ecosystems. Implementation of the plan will also support collaborative wildfire mitigation efforts like home hardening, defensible space, and emergency preparedness initiatives. Additionally, the County is exploring biomass utilization alternatives like mass timber construction and biomass energy production to repurpose materials from forest thinning in sustainable and economically beneficial ways.

Through this comprehensive approach using the Land Tender tool to guide collaborative planning, prioritization, and project design, Placer County is well-positioned to collaborate with partners like the Placer County Water Agency to access state and federal funding for this critical wildfire resilience work.

We encourage community members to stay engaged as we embark on this vital initiative to safeguard Placer County's forests, communities, and precious resources for years to come.





'Healthy forest' work reduces wildfire risk in popular Sierra destinations



NID takes preventive action

Wildfire is the single largest threat to our region's forests, the long-term functionality of Sierra watersheds, and ultimately, our favorite recreation destinations and communities.

During the past several years, the Nevada Irrigation District (NID) has partnered with state and local agencies on projects that focused on hundreds of acres in the foothills and headwaters of the Sierra Nevada, the district's water source. Much of the work has involved removing hazardous fuels, thinning, chipping and grinding fuels in efforts to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. These projects have helped to reduce the potential for excessive erosion and foster ecosystem health and recovery.

NID recognizes an urgency to complete these forest health and watershed projects on its property, which is among the most popular recreation destinations in the state.

It's about the impacts of a warming climate and a statistic associated with the increasing draw of Sierra recreation. In Nevada County, 80 percent of all wildfires are human-related.

The county stretches from just north of Auburn parallel up the Highway 80 corridor to Truckee. Popular recreation destinations include Sierra lakes owned and managed by NID, such as Bowman, Jackson Meadows, and a slew of smaller lakes: Milton, French, Faucherie, Sawmill, and Jackson. In the foothills, Scotts Flat and Rollins reservoirs are popular stopovers for camping and fishing. The entire region features beautiful landscapes and pristine waterways, which is a major, increasing draw for recreation. That makes the region prime for wildfire.

"Where the people are, fires start," says Greg Jones, NID's assistant general manager. "It is vital that we do the work to strengthen our watersheds now. Forest management projects are essential for protecting the watersheds in our care."



NID has taken action at several locations, including around the campgrounds at Rollins and Scotts Flat reservoirs in the foothills. Most recently, the district partnered with the USDA Forest Service and Tahoe National Forest to receive a planning grant for a 3,000-acre forest management project to return the Middle Yuba headwaters region to a healthier state.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) has made much of NID’s forest management work possible through its financial support.

Scotts Flat Reservoir Forest Health and Wildfire Risk Reduction Project

The water is blue, and the trees are green. It’s an example of building a healthy watershed



Nearly \$1 million in grant support from the SNC has made possible forest management at Scotts Flat Reservoir, just outside Nevada City.

The Scotts Flat Reservoir Forest Health and Wildfire Risk Reduction Project has been a seven-year effort to reduce understory ladder fuels and to thin the forest around the reservoir. Here, forested lands meet campgrounds, residential communities and critical water system infrastructure in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

NID has completed more than 500 acres of forest treatment to create a “shaded fuel break” by thinning excess trees and reducing ground fuels. Shaded fuel breaks allow fires to burn cooler, reduce the probability of an upper canopy crown fire, and create zones where fires can be more easily contained before reaching nearby communities.

The project involved selective logging of larger trees; crews then removed trees with a diameter of less than 10 inches, chipped and spread the material over the Scotts Flat project area. To preserve habitat for wildlife, some medium to large diameter trees, shrubs, standing dead trees, and flowering hardwoods were retained.

The forest at this site now reflects a mixed-species composition and a mixed age distribution with improved functionality compared to pre-treatment conditions. Before treatment, there were 2,205 trees per acre; post-treatment the count is 110 trees per acre.

“These changes in the characteristics of forest stands indicate the success of the project in reducing stand density, which decreases wildfire severity and risk of ignition, increases carbon sequestration rates, and improves forest health,” says Neysa King, NID’s environmental resources administrator. “And healthy forests provide more water and are more resilient to wildfire and climate change.”



Pre-treatment



Post - treatment



Keeping Placer County Safe

City of Auburn Adopts New Ember-Resistant Zone Ordinance to Enhance Fire Safety



John Rogers | Fire Chief
City of Auburn Fire Department

For information on Ember Resistant Zone requirements and improving fire safety, please scan the code or visit auburn.ca.gov:

Ember Resistant Zone



Introduction

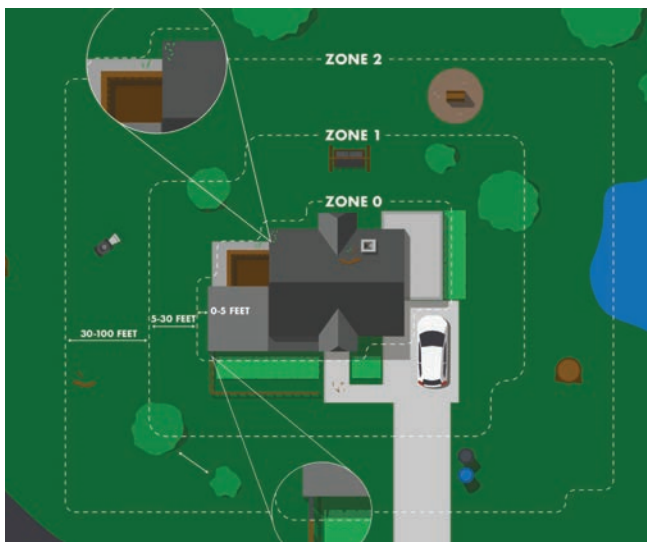
Wildfires have been a persistent threat to communities throughout California, with recent years witnessing some of the most destructive fires in the state's history. In response to the growing danger, the City of Auburn has taken proactive measures to protect its residents and properties.

On July 10, 2024, the City of Auburn adopted new regulations, outlined in Auburn Municipal Code Section 100.87 Subsection D. This ordinance was amended to include an Ember-Resistant Zone (ERZ) requirement for all new constructions within the city. The revised ordinance took effect on July 10, 2024. This initiative aims to create a safer environment by reducing the risk of homes igniting due to flying embers and direct flame contact.

Chief John Rogers of the City of Auburn Fire recently discussed the new ordinance and its implications. The City of Auburn is committed to reducing wildfire risks in Placer County, aiming to enhance wildfire resilience in the region.

Q: Why is the new defensible space ordinance important for the City of Auburn?

A: Auburn’s landscape, with its mix of historic structures and proximity to forests, is particularly vulnerable to wildfires. Significant wildfire risks exist in many areas, like those near the American River Canyon, due to dense vegetation and topography. The new defensible space ordinance will ensure new buildings and structures throughout the city maintain clear spaces around structures for enhanced safety and fire prevention.



Q: What does the new ordinance say, in plain language?

A: The ordinance mandates that any new building or structure construction must have a five-foot radius clear of all vegetation and combustible material. This area, known as the Ember-Resistant Zone (ERZ), creates a buffer to prevent ignition from flying embers and direct flame contact.

Q: What is the purpose of the ERZ?

A: The ERZ, or Zone 0, is the most important of all defensible space zones. It encompasses the first five feet around structures, including outbuildings, attached decks, and stairs. The ERZ aims to prevent fire or embers from igniting materials that can spread to your home. The goal is to reduce the likelihood of structure ignition by

minimizing the potential for direct flame contact, ember accumulation, and radiant heat exposure.

Q: Who is affected by this ordinance?

A: The ordinance applies to anyone building a new structure within the City of Auburn. Although existing structures are not impacted, the Auburn Fire Department (AFD) will continue to educate the community and strongly encourage current property owners to voluntarily implement the ERZ.

Q: What are the most important things for residents and businesses to know about this new ordinance?

A: Removing flammable materials and vegetation near your home is scientifically proven to be the most critical aspect of creating defensible space. Property owners should start at their homes and work outward when improving defensible space. For additional information, property owners are encouraged to visit the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety’s website: IBHS Wildfire Research. Adhering to the ordinance helps property owners meet insurance requirements, ensuring they can maintain coverage.

Q: What can residents do to comply or in light of this?

A: Residents of homes not built to comply with the new ERZ can voluntarily start working on compliance with the updated Ordinance 100.87 – Fuel Modification Standards. The insurance industry may require policyholders to remove combustible materials from their properties. If science continues to support the benefits of ERZs and home hardening, more areas may update their building requirements and fuel modification standards.

Q: What actions or recommendations do you have for residents at their homes or businesses?

A: Residents should regularly remove flammable and combustible materials from their properties, even if only a little at a time. Research other fire safety programs such as Firewise and Fire Safe Councils. AFD encourages residents to engage in open dialogues with their neighbors about defensible space and other fire safety topics.



Promoting communication and collaboration within the community enhances overall preparedness and helps ensure that everyone is informed and proactive about fire safety measures.

Q: How does the Auburn Fire Department participate in this initiative?

A: AFD will ensure compliance with the revised ordinance for all new constructions through the plan check and review process. Additionally, AFD supports residents by offering fire safety education and messaging at every opportunity. The department provides free educational home assessments to help residents identify and mitigate fire hazards around their properties. These assessments include recommendations for creating defensible space and improving home safety. City of Auburn residents can request assessments here: [Home Assessments](#).

Q: How has AFD been a leader in this initiative?

A: AFD is one of the first departments in Placer County to implement ERZ standards for new construction. The insurance industry also requires customers to remove flammable materials from the ERZ to maintain or obtain coverage. Special thanks to former Auburn City Councilman and current State Fire Marshal Daniel Berlant

for his efforts in bringing this ordinance update to our attention and his commitment to keeping Auburn and California safe from wildfires.

Q: Where can people go to learn more?

A: Here are some valuable resources for more information:

Auburn Fire Department Defensible Space Requirements



Auburn Fire Department Home Page



CA Fire Safe Council Defensible
Space Brochure



Firewise USA Community Program:
Placer County OES Website



CALFIRE Ready for Wildfire Website



NFPA Preparing Homes for Wildfire



Greater Auburn Area Fire Safe Council
Meeting Schedule



CALFIRE/IBHS Demonstration Burn
Information Video



Sierra West

Land Development, LLC



Tree and Brush Clearing
Land Improvement
Masticating
Fire Breaks
consultations LTO#A11698

530-637-1122

Don't Let This Happen To You!



Protect your home and property from threatening wildfires.
Establish Defensible Space Now!

**"Protect, Beautify, Establish
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Treated area within the French Meadows Forest Restoration Project



Expanding Horizons: PCWA's Commitment to Watershed Stewardship and Fire Prevention

PCWA has committed to good stewardship of natural resources since our inception in 1957. Traditionally, this meant protecting rivers we rely on to supply our customers with water. But recently, our mission has expanded to include the watersheds high above our water facilities, in the forested mountains of Placer and El Dorado counties.

PCWA's Middle Fork Project, built by the people of Placer County in the 1960s, consists of two major reservoirs, French Meadows and Hell Hole, which capture rain and snowmelt from over 1,000 square miles of mountain watershed. While storing this water is a very important part of our mission, we also must ensure the system that moves water from our reservoirs to your tap is operated and maintained to very high standards. This helps ensure a reliable supply of water.

The Rim Fire in 2013 and King Fire in 2014 marked the onset of very large, very high-intensity wildfires in California. For PCWA, the King Fire showed just how damaging and costly these megafires can be to our infrastructure and the rivers we rely on. Ten years after the King Fire, PCWA is still dealing with the aftermath.

While fires like the King, and more recently the Mosquito Fire, can damage PCWA facilities, the real damage occurs in rainy seasons after the fire. Landslides, debris flows, and dead trees make their way down rivers and into our reservoirs and hydroelectric facilities. This material piles up quickly, filling valuable water storage space and hampering operations. Expensive dredging is then required; PCWA recently spent over \$5 million to dredge just a portion of one small reservoir to remove fire debris.

We think there is a better way. Rather than repair damage after a fire, why not prevent damage by working in watersheds to reduce fire intensity?

Since 2016 PCWA has led an effort at French Meadows Reservoir to treat 22,000 acres of the watershed through forest thinning and prescribed fire. Our program — in partnership with the County of Placer, the US Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, and others — does not eliminate the chance of fire. But this kind of environmental stewardship significantly reduces fire intensity and therefore reduces or prevents costly downstream damage to water systems.



For our next watershed project, we are applying lessons learned from French Meadows to the Long Canyon area. This is an important watershed that is tributary to the Rubicon River and flows directly into our Ralston Afterbay, presenting a significant debris flow risk that threatens water supply and hydroelectric facilities.

Long Canyon is severely overstocked with small, dense trees that are prime fuel for the next big fire. Our stewardship work here will remove brush and small trees, while leaving large, older trees that are much more fire-resistant and provide better habitat. This will not only reduce our fire risk but improve the ecosystem as well.

And there is yet another step in our stewardship story in the works.

Together with a private sector technology company, we are working on building a very low-emission biomass facility to utilize the material we are removing from overstocked forests to power our new Ophir Water Treatment Plant. This woody biomass is primarily trees and brush that are too small for a sawmill, but if cut and left on the forest floor would still become fuel for the next fire. We hope to create a regional hub to dispose of this biomass, and use the energy to power our newest water treatment plant near Auburn.

I am so proud of our PCWA team for leading this innovative work with our external partners. Managing fire and watersheds is new to our Agency. But it is vitally important to ensure our water supplies are here for our children and all future generations.



Sediment in Ralston Afterbay following the King Fire

PCWA General Manager Andy Fecko Recognized for Water and Wildfire Leadership

Andy Fecko, General Manager of the Placer County Water Agency (PCWA), was recently honored with the 2024 Excellence in Water Leadership Award by the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA). This prestigious award acknowledges Fecko's outstanding commitment to water resource issues, particularly his innovative approach to reducing fuel load in our National Forest lands.

In response to the devastating Kings Fire in 2014, he spearheaded the creation of the French Meadows Forest Restoration Project—a groundbreaking public-private partnership focused on ecological thinning within the Tahoe National Forest. This initiative, covering 30,000 acres, serves as a model for successful forest management in California, built on collaboration and sustainability.

In addition, Fecko also served on the Federal Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, which delivered comprehensive policy recommendations to Congress, addressing various aspects of the wildfire crisis.

Fecko donated the \$5,000 award to a local program for high school students, emphasizing his commitment to nurturing the next generation of leaders aligned with water and wildfire initiatives.



Protecting the American River

The 7 Principles Of Leave No Trace Outdoor ethics for natural sites



Plan ahead and prepare

Travel and camp on durable surfaces



Dispose of waste properly

Leave what you find



Minimize campfire impacts

Respect wildlife



Be considerate of others

Siete Principios No Deje Ninguna Huella Ética al aire libre para sitios naturales



Planifique con anticipación y prepárese

Viaje y acampe sobre superficies durables

Deseche los residuos de forma adecuada



Deje lo que encuentre así como es

Minimice los impactos de las fogatas

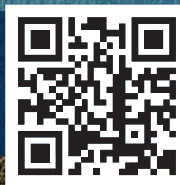


Respete la vida silvestre

Sea considerado con otros visitantes



www.Parc-Auburn.org



www.CanyonKeepers.org



SUMMER STRONG



Low-water use plants are tough enough to handle the hottest days

Placer County Water Agency is proud to partner with UC Master Gardeners of Placer County to showcase a selection of Summer Strong, water-wise flowers, shrubs, and trees that are not only stunning but also adapted to our local environment.

Find these water-wise plants at the NEW UC Master Gardeners of Placer County Demonstration Garden at the Loomis Library and Community Learning Center.



California Fuchsia
Epilobium canum (or Zauschneria cana)
Red Hot Blooms Late Summer and Fall



'Winnifred Gilman' Cleveland Sage
Salvia clevelandii 'Winnifred Gilman'
Gorgeous, Aromatic Flowers



'Valley Violet' California lilac
Ceanothus maritimus
Buzz-Worthy Native



Western redbud
Cercis occidentalis
A Four-Season Sensation



De La Mina Verbena or Cedros Island Verbena
Verbena lilacina 'De La Mina', Glandularia lilacina
A Butterfly Buffet



'Margarita BOP' Penstemon
Penstemon heterophyllus 'Margarita BOP'
Spring Wildflowers

Level Up Your Sprinkler System

PCWA has rebates to make your sprinkler system more efficient and your yard healthier.

Smart Irrigation Controller:

- up to **\$250** for residents
- up to **\$2,000** for businesses

Drip Irrigation and Sprinkler:

- up to **\$500** for residents
- up to **\$2,000** for businesses

Find out more at
pcwa.net/rebates



PLACER COUNTY'S PREMIER WATER RESOURCE AGENCY

Yesterday

With a rich history spanning more than 65 years, Placer County Water Agency (PCWA), was created to secure a reliable, locally controlled water supply for the vibrant communities of Placer County. By 1967, with the construction of two reservoirs on the American River, a significant milestone was achieved in providing a reliable source of water supply that our communities can depend on.

Today

PCWA is Placer County's largest water service provider, delivering reliable, high-quality water to our vibrant communities across 1,500 square miles. From supplying the needs of residents and business, to the cities of Roseville and Lincoln, to the region's agricultural pursuits, PCWA has distinguished itself by consistently providing the region reliable, high-quality water.

Additionally, our Middle Fork American River Project is an invaluable contributor to the state's power supply, recreational opportunities, and environmental stewardship, protecting and enhancing Placer County's unique natural resources.

Tomorrow

Ensuring an enduring supply of water and energy remain a key priority for PCWA as Placer County's highly desirable quality of life continues to be a magnet for growth.

