

ENFIA Interpreter

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A Message from the President

By Larry Moore

“As president of ENFIA I have given the usual President’s message space in the Interpreter to Lester Lubetkin , retired EDNF Recreation Officer/Geologist and valued ENFIA member to discuss the Caldor Fire and the rehabilitation work on the forest that is currently being done and will continue into the future.”

On a hot, dry August day about one year ago, a spark flared into the 221,835 acre inferno that we came to know as the Caldor Fire. This fire burned for over 68 days and during that time, the fire destroyed over 780 homes, 18 businesses and at times had more than 4,500 firefighters battling the blaze. This wildfire has certainly



changed the way many of us visit and use the Eldorado National Forest. Some areas are inaccessible, some areas are now just large tracts of standing charred trees, and some areas have actually moved to a more “fire resilient” condition.



And in many areas, the wildflower displays have been outrageous. Some areas that had been dense manzanita and ceanothus patches are now a riot of color as a blanket of annual and perennial wildflowers have exploded.



As we come to the one-year anniversary of this devastating wildfire, we in ENFIA have an opportunity to recognize that fire can be a key component of a healthy Forest or can lead to catastrophic results. Under past conditions, fires helped to maintain the health of the forest. And even today, fires can be a valuable tool to keep our forests healthy. But in many areas, the forests are too dense and prone to high intensity wildfires.

In this issue of the Interpreter, you will learn more about the Caldor Fire and what the Eldorado Forest is doing to move towards recovering from the Caldor Fire. I hope that we will find ways to assist the Eldorado Forest in educating Forest visitors and the general public about the role of fire in the Forest, be it prescribed fire or wildfires.

Wildfire – This is an unplanned and unpredictable fire burning in vegetation, caused by either humans (campfire, spark or arson) or naturally (such as lightning). Most wildfires are fought under full suppression, meaning all efforts are put towards extinguishing the fire in a safe and expedient manner.

Prescribed fire – These are planned fires designed by specialists to meet specific objectives, such as reducing hazardous fuels or encouraging certain plants to grow. Burn plans identify – or prescribe – the best conditions under which trees and other plants will burn to get the best results safely. A prescription is a set of conditions that considers the safety of the public and fire staff, weather, and probability of meeting the burn objectives.

Managed fire – This term refers to a naturally ignited fire in a remote area that does not pose a risk to life and private property. The Fire Incident Commander (IC) may designate a planning area where the fire could burn to improve the forest's health and wildlife habitat. A series of trigger points are identified that may result in full suppression.

A Perspective on the Caldor Fire from Eldorado Forest Supervisor Jeff Marsolais

By Lester Lubetkin

We reached out to Eldorado National Forest Supervisor Jeff Marsolais to learn more about the impacts of the 2021 Caldor Fire and to hear about the great work that the Eldorado Forest is undertaking to restore the fire footprint. Here are excerpts from that interview:



ENFIA: What has been the impact of the Caldor Fire on the Eldorado Forest?

JM: The Caldor Fire had major impacts on the natural environment, but also on the public services and recreation opportunities this part of the Forest provided, impacts on the communities we serve and on the Forest's employees. The Eldorado Forest is not just a "drive-through" forest, but is a beloved area in which people from a broad range of communities come to recreate, enjoy the unique dispersed activities, take in the scenic vistas, as well as grazing and woodcutting. We have a lot of employees that have worked on the Forest for a long time, and they are devastated to see the projects they had worked on over the years lost, including trails, healthy landscapes and fuel reduction projects.

ENFIA: How would you describe the goal of the Caldor Fire Restoration Plan?

JM: The Caldor Fire Restoration Plan will implement the Forestwide

Wildfire Resiliency Strategy, which in turn is built on the many past successes Forest staff have completed over the last 20 to 25 years. A key goal is the desire to restore fire to the landscape. This will be done using a POD (Potential Operational Delineations, potential locations where fire suppression is likely to be effective) strategy, which looks at how to break up the landscape to have a better chance of catching future wildfires.

The Caldor Fire burned about 180,000 acres within the Eldorado National Forest. The remainder of the wildfire burned through private land and a portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. Of that 180,000 acres, about 90,000 acres burned in high severity, mostly in the area around Grizzly Flat and to the east. High severity means all or nearly all of the trees were killed. But a significant part of the fire area burned at moderate to low severity, meaning that the fire actually was beneficial in some of these areas. Our goal in the areas with lower intensity burn will be to keep the areas in a fire resilient condition.

ENFIA: And how do you see the Caldor Fire Restoration Plan proceeding?

JM: We are at a unique time where we have significant resources

available - including federal, local and state funding. So, I expect a focused and aggressive effort to jumpstart the landscape. In areas of high severity fire, we will have full-scale restoration, meaning removing dead trees and planting seedlings. But this will be done using the current science, including GTR 270 (Postfire Restoration Framework for National Forests in California; USFS Pacific Southwest Research Station General Technical Report 270). We are already working on regaining public access into the area of the fire, such as in the Grizzly Flat area and the Forestwide roadside hazard tree mitigation project.

We are working on the first step of the environmental analysis and expect to have the “Proposed Action” released in late-Fall (for the full Caldor Fire Restoration Plan).

ENFIA: Once the Plan is completed, how long do you think implementation will take?

JM: We hope to have a decision on the Restoration Plan, based on the environmental analysis, by the end of 2023. We will work to meet public service needs up front - that includes reasonable access for the public, remove hazards, get campgrounds, trails and other public facilities open and usable. But also move to restore the Forest. The Eldorado Forest

grows trees well, and we will move to get reforestation going. We are already planting trees in some areas, while also avoiding planting trees in a way that might create long term future fire hazards. Our tree planting also includes planting a mix of tree species to avoid creating a monoculture.

Partnerships are going to be a big part of the implementation of the restoration. We will be identifying “ecological resilience blocks” - these will be the PODs I mentioned earlier. And we want to work with partners to help in key places, like meadows, forested areas, and waterways. There are a lot of groups that have an attachment to the Eldorado Forest and we want to engage them as part of the solution to restoring the Caldor Fire footprint.

ENFIA: What do you envision the area of the Caldor Fire will look like in 10 years? In 20 years? In 50 years?

JM: Right from the beginning, we are working to address urgent and emergency needs, such as restoring access to the Forest, removing hazards and repairing damage caused during the fire suppression efforts. 10 years out, I expect visitors will still see the fire impacts in places. There are some areas we simply can’t restore right away. But in those lower severity burned areas, the Forest will

look healthy and evidence of the Caldor Fire will be barely visible. One of our objectives is to get fire back on the landscape, so evidence of fire will be visible, but this will be of a low intensity, creating a more open forest and a mosaic of vegetation.

50 years out, my hope is that the Caldor Fire will just be a memory and that our communities will remember how people came together to deal with the fire and the aftermath of restoring the communities and the Forest.

ENFIA: What role would you like to see ENFIA play in the restoration and recovery of the Caldor Fire area?

JM: One area that ENFIA could play a key role is in interpreting and educating the public about fire and wildfire. It is not just a “binary” decision between suppress or don’t suppress. Prescribed fire will be a critical part of the future management of the Forest. Helping the public understand about the role of fire in the ecosystem will be essential.

ENFIA and the Eldorado Forest have a long and productive relationship. And ENFIA members have deep roots in the community. I hope that ENFIA can help to identify issues and concerns raised in the community and bring them to light, so that we can all

be informed and move together to restore this burned landscape. I also hope that ENFIA can reach out to underserved communities to help them enjoy the restored Caldor Fire area.

A Forest Recovers from the Caldor Fire

By Lester Lubetkin

How does a forest recover from a devastating wildfire like the Caldor Fire? The answer is multifaceted and depends on a lot of factors. Eldorado Forest staff are in the midst of that process and will be for many years to come. And there is the opportunity for folks to help in a variety of ways.



Caldor Fire area where all of the trees were killed.

Immediately after the fire (and in some cases, even while the fire was still burning), Forest staff worked on emergency repairs to reduce the immediate impacts from the wildfire and suppression efforts, such as

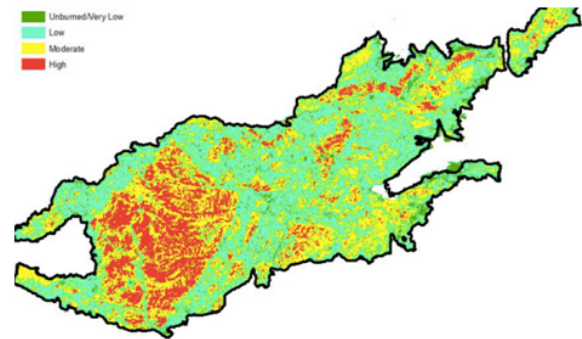
making sure dozer lines didn't cause erosion, mulching burned areas with highly erosive soils, protecting cultural sites from damage, etc. This is all part of the Burned Area Emergency Response (or BAER) process.

And then there has been the removal of hazard trees along the major roadways leading into the Eldorado Forest and near other infrastructure, like campgrounds and trailheads. As you travel around the Forest, you will see large piles (decks) of logs that are awaiting disposal, be it for milling into lumber or chipping for other uses. This roadside hazard tree removal will go on for some time. Not to mention the hazard tree removal work being done by PG&E, AT&T, EID, the El Dorado County Resource Conservation District, Sierra Pacific Industries, Sierra At Tahoe and many others.

But the really heavy work is just beginning. As Dan Smith, Eldorado Forest's Caldor Fire Recovery Team Leader explains it, the Eldorado Forest had been working on a forestwide Resiliency Strategy when the Caldor Fire hit. Now they are using that strategy to help inform restoration planning. Restoration will likely be a mix of treating some of the most degraded areas, while also helping to maintain some areas that

the fire helped to bring into more natural conditions.

There is a concept of "natural range of variation" (also referred to as NRV), which is a way of considering the ecological conditions over a reasonable span of space and time, usually based on pre-European influences. By considering the natural range of variation, foresters can determine whether the Caldor Fire brought the forest condition closer to a natural condition, or whether the fire has caused the forest to be outside of natural conditions. Under natural (pre-European) conditions,



Map showing the soil burn severity across the Caldor Fire area.

the forest would be a mosaic of vegetation patches, ranging from openly spaced trees to brush fields to meadows to young stands of trees.

This summer, the Eldorado Forest will begin the first step in the environmental analysis by releasing a "proposed action" This document will describe the various measures the

Forest intends to implement in order to restore the Caldor Fire area. One of the key considerations in this proposal will be how best to treat the landscape so that fire can be restored to its natural role. The document will include maps showing where work is proposed, tables describing what will be done in different areas and will describe many of the requirements and guidelines to ensure that the restoration efforts protect the broad range of resources out on the Forest.

Everyone is encouraged to take a look at this document and provide your thoughts and suggestions to the Eldorado Forest staff working on this massive effort. Your input, along with that from others, will be used to help guide the restoration planning and future implementation. This will also be a great opportunity to help with interpretation of wildfire and forest restoration.



View of the Caldor Fire area in which you can see a mosaic with some patches in which most trees were killed and other areas where the fire burned the understory and left the trees in a more healthy condition.

More about the Caldor Fire will be in the next issue of the ENFIA Interpreter.

Grants

By Larry Moore

ENFIA received a grant from the California Alpine Club to help with updating our aging solar installation at Carson Pass. Thank you to Stan, Bruce and Phil for their work on this project. We are hoping to install it in late July/ August to provide a more reliable source of power for our POS system, the lighting and weather information station.

ENFIA has received an El Dorado County Non-Profit Organization COVID-19 Economic Impact Grant administered by the American Rescue Plan Act and the El Dorado County Economic Development Division and Board of Supervisors. The purpose of the Grant is to mitigate the negative economic impacts of the Pandemic, as our 7 retail outlets at the Ranger District Offices, Carson Pass and Crystal Station were not able to remain open during the pandemic and seriously affected our financial wellbeing.

ENFIA is very honored and grateful for these Grants to allow us to continue to provide our services on the Eldorado National Forest for the enjoyment of the public.

Camping A Family Affair

By Robyn Sandperl

There are some places that just have a magical quality. Sometimes it's the beauty in nature, and sometimes it's who you're with. Most of the time it is both of these things.

My family has been camping at Loon Lake in Eldorado National Forest for 27 years. Loon Lake has it all; pristine views, cool water, great camping spots, and plenty of hiking!



Sunset 2022

The group has changed over the years, but basically started as a lot of teachers savoring the last few days of summer before returning to work. For some, it began before kids, or at least before so many. Kids were added along the way, people divorced, some remarried, more kids were added, and we all got older.



Loon 1998

Activities have also changed throughout the years. Short hikes with kids in backpacks morphed into longer hikes from the Desolation Wilderness Trailhead. Geocaching and scavenger hunts have now changed into kayaking, hiking and telling stories around the campfire.

Now the kids are all adults. A few are married or have significant others. We hope to add the next generation into the mix. Retirement is the talk around the fire, and a lucky few are there already.



Loon 2021

As we all get grayer and talk turns to aging and health I feel very fortunate to have family and this group of friends who all love Loon as much as I do!

Retail Round-Up Fall 2022

By Keli Gwyn, Retail Coordinator

What's been going on in retail? Plenty. So much so that I kinda got carried away gushing about all the happenings at our June Board meeting. Not to worry. I'll just hit the highlights here.

Some leave the best news for last, but since I have so much of it, let's start with this: All of the retail outlets in the forest have reopened! Yes. As of August 3, when my husband, Carl, and I make our delivery at Amador Ranger Station, all seven locations will have merchandise, Square set-ups, and ENFIA-provided internet connections. Since I've waited two and a half years for this day to come, to say I'm happy would be an understatement.

Despite supply issues—which I can assure you are very real—I've been able to keep each location stocked. Visitors often remark how pleased they are with what we have to offer. I know they like our merchandise because it's been flying off the shelves. Those brisk sales have enabled us to pass last year's sales figures by, and we still have several months to go. If things continue as they have been, we'll end the season in good shape, with plenty of merchandise to keep the USFS locations going in the off-season and a healthy bank account to cover those ongoing operational expenses.



In my previous article, I told you custom merchandise would be arriving soon. It did, and it's been well received. As I write this, the new Carson Pass Fingerprints of America shirt is the number two grossing item at the Station, surpassed only by the ever-popular Mokelumne Wilderness map. The Carson Pass Happy Place shirt, which arrived later in the season, features a stunning photo of Round Top viewed from Frog Lake that was taken by our talented president, Larry Moore.



The new Square system has been humming along, and the Carson Pass docents and USFS staff have become quite proficient at using it. Thanks to Square, I have access to sales reports galore. I can explore by location,

category, item, and more. I watch the numbers so much that Carl teases me, saying that Square is my new favorite video game. If you like numbers too, I'll share a few forest-wide facts with you. As of the end of July, we'd sold nearly 300 books, 600 maps, and 700 clothing items, which include shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and bandanas.

That's impressive, but one little sub-category—Souvenirs: Stickers—holds the record for numbers of items sold at over 900! Those little vinyl creations are more popular than I could have imagined. I'm so glad our Carson Pass Retail Lead, Lisa Irving-Peterson, suggested carrying them.



I could share even more good news, but I promised I wouldn't go on forever, so I'll end with thanks to all of my fellow ENFIA members and our USFS colleagues, who have made this great season happen. You're the best!