


TRAILS AND FIRE

The Intertwined Nature of Trails



Trails, whether winding through remote wilderness or traversing developed landscapes, play an essential role in both the fire-prone forests and the recreational opportunities in Del Norte County. These trails are not just vital for fire management, including suppression efforts and prescribed or cultural burns; they also serve as pathways for outdoor recreation—offering access to hunting grounds, off-roading adventures, mountain biking, and scenic hiking routes. The trails that crisscross Del Norte County can and have served dual purposes, providing both recreation, fire access routes, and control lines.

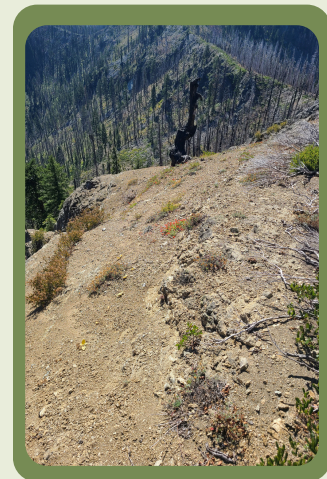
Del Norte County's rugged and often remote terrain presents significant challenges for fire crews responding to wildfires. Trails—whether they're established hiking paths or old logging roads—become critical access points that allow fire crews to deploy resources quickly to contain and suppress fires. In nonwilderness areas, wider trails allow the use of heavy equipment, such as fire engines and bulldozers. In contrast, narrower wilderness trails still provide critical access for crews on foot, whether using the trail for access to catch a quickly spreading wildfire, or for containment lines themselves.

For example, in areas like Elk Camp Ridge or Island Lake, trail systems can be pre-identified and used as predetermined fire control lines to help contain wildfires. These trails can be maintained to be aesthetically pleasing for recreation while acting as barriers, helping slow the spread of wildfire. Additionally trails can act as containment lines for the Del Norte Fire Safe Council's Prescribed Burn Association (PBA), or other federal, tribal, and state agencies to use prescribed fire, reducing the time and resources needed to prepare these routes.

The Recreational Component

While these trails serve as critical resources for fire management, they are also beloved by recreational users. Del Norte County's vast trail networks provide access to prime hunting areas, scenic hiking routes, mountain biking, and off-roading trails for ATVs and four-wheel-drive vehicles. These trails offer recreational enthusiasts access to the heart of Del Norte's wild landscapes—whether that's for hunting elk or deer in the fall, hiking among the towering redwoods, or riding on your wheel of choice through the rugged backcountry.

The dual use of these trails for both fire management and recreation offers a unique opportunity to engage the community in preserving and maintaining them. The more trails are maintained for recreational use, the more useful they become as fire control lines. For hunters and off-roaders, these trails provide not just access to recreational opportunities but also serve as line of defense for their communities, helping protect both the landscape and the wildlife they seek to enjoy. For hikers and mountain bikers, these trails provide a wilderness experience that will be open year after year.





TRAILS AND GOOD FIRE



Lands around Del Norte County are beginning to use prescribed fire and cultural burning as tools for wildfire resilience and ecosystem restoration. Prescribed burns help reduce hazardous fuels and restore forest health, while cultural burns, led by Indigenous people, are essential for maintaining biodiversity and cultural stewardship of the land.

Trails play a critical role in these efforts and they are often left by the wayside. For example, the Elk Camp Ridge and French Hill trails provide control lines for prescribed burns and wildfire, allowing fire crews to safely manage fire behavior. These trails are already familiar to fire crews and recreational users alike, making them ideal for use in planned burn operations and wildfire, but not if they aren't maintained. These trails are also often located in areas that make them convenient for both fire control and access.

By integrating recreational trails into the planning process, these areas can be safely burned without disrupting access. Unfortunately, many of our trails have been neglected for decades effectively blocking recreational and fire access. Opening trails for continued use is important for firefighters and recreation.

The Future of Del Norte's Trails

To further enhance the role of trails in fire management and recreation, the Del Norte Fire Safe Council has applied for a Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) proposal. This funding would be used to maintain and improve trail systems in key areas, enhancing their utility both for fire suppression and prescribed burns, as well as for recreation. The RAC proposal aims to improve trail infrastructure, ensuring that fire crews can easily access remote areas during fire events and that recreational users have safe, well-maintained trails to enjoy.

The proposal also seeks to maintain key trails in areas heavily used by hunters, hikers, and off-roaders, providing multiple benefits to the community. By investing in these trail systems, Del Norte Fire Safe Council is creating a more fire-resilient landscape while ensuring that the outdoor activities residents and visitors cherish are preserved.

The Role of Prescribed Fire

As mentioned earlier, Del Norte trails are more than just pathways through the wild—they are essential tools for both fire management and recreation. These trails, which provide access for recreation, can also serve as critical fire predetermined boundaries for prescribed and cultural burns.

The dual purpose of these trails highlights the importance of maintaining them for both safety and enjoyment. With the support of the RAC Committee, the Del Norte Fire Safe Council will be able to maintain and improve these trail networks, ensuring that they remain valuable for both fire management and recreational use. In a county where wild landscapes and outdoor recreation are deeply intertwined, these trails provide a pathway not only for fire crews and recreational enthusiasts but for a more resilient and balanced future.





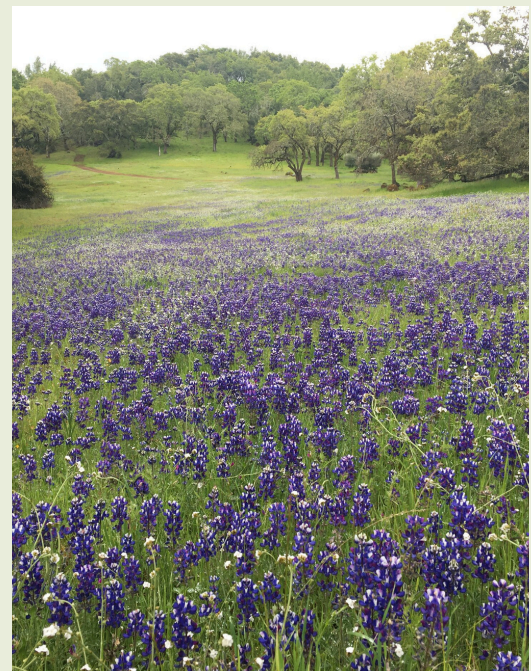
PROJECT UPDATES

Del Norte Prescribed Burn Association



On September 28th, 2024, the Del Norte Fire Safe Council (DNFSC) made a significant stride toward wildfire resilience by officially forming the Del Norte County Prescribed Burn Association (PBA). The PBA aims to support local landowners, and communities in using prescribed fire as a safe and effective tool to reduce hazardous fuels, restore ecosystems, and protect properties from the growing threat of wildfires. The formation meeting was held at the Rock Creek 'Ranch House,' where stakeholders from across the county gathered to discuss the importance of reintroducing beneficial fire into the landscape.

The meeting also served as an opportunity to begin outlining the goals of the PBA and foster collaboration between landowners, the U.S. Forest Service, CALFIRE, local fire departments, Tribal Nations, and community members. Following the initial discussions, attendees viewed the documentary film *Elemental*, which explores the critical role fire plays in maintaining healthy forests and ecosystems.



The establishment and support of the Del Norte PBA reflects the DNFSC's commitment to empowering local residents with the knowledge and resources needed to manage fire on their lands. Prescribed fire, a practice with deep cultural roots in the region, is increasingly recognized as a key strategy in reducing wildfire risk and maintaining forest health.



Our Boots on the ground...



Brad
DNFSC Crew Leader

Having the river, forest, and coast so close is what drew him to this area. This job gives him the opportunity to help our communities out, while also working outdoors. In his free time Brad enjoys the river, family, hunting, and sports.



Patrick
Lead Sawyer

Has lived in the area since childhood, appreciating the outdoors and tight-knit communities. With this job, he aims to enhance fire safety and protect homes and forests. His favorite activities include hunting, fishing, camping, spending time by the river, and assisting community members.



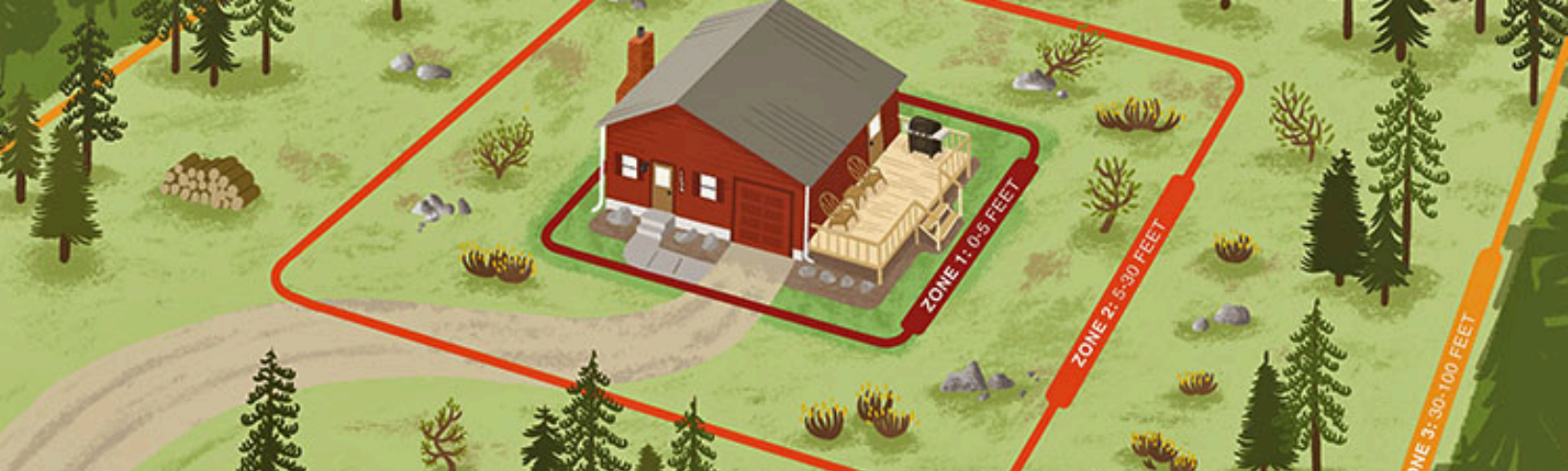
McKenzy
Wildfire Resilience Crew Member

Enjoys the area's natural resources like rivers and redwoods. She hopes to gain life skills from the job. Her favorite activities include hunting, summer river visits, hiking, and exploring national parks.



Isaac
Wildfire Resilience Crew Member

Loves the slower pace and fishing in the area. He aims to support communities through his job. His favorite after-work activities include snowboarding, fishing, riding a mini-bike, playing video games, and spending time outdoors.



THIS MONTH'S CHORE

Start Cutting! Start Stacking! Start Piling! But maybe no burning just yet.

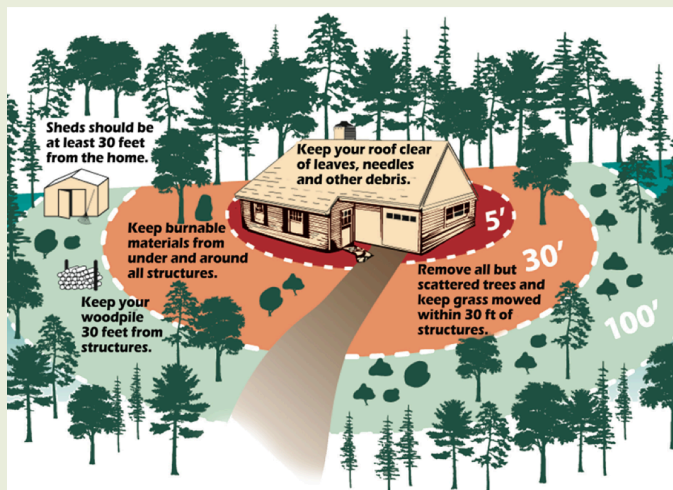
Start to Prepare Your Defensible Space Now

As the days grow shorter and the cooler weather sets in, now is the perfect time to get a head start on creating and maintaining your defensible space. By cutting back overgrown vegetation and stacking branches, brush, and other debris, you'll be ready when the burning season arrives. Defensible space helps protect your home and property from wildfire, and the earlier you start, the more prepared you'll be.

Here's how to get started:

1. Clear a 5-foot zone around your home: Remove dead vegetation, dry leaves, and other easily ignitable materials.
2. Trim low-hanging branches and thin trees. Ensure no tree branches are within 10 feet of structures or other flammable materials.
3. Stack cut materials neatly and away from your home. Keep piles manageable and ready for burning or disposal.
4. Stay informed: Follow local guidelines on when burning is allowed and the best practices for a safe burn. For more information visit <https://readyforwildfire.org>

By taking these steps now, you'll ensure a safer, more resilient property, giving you peace of mind when fire season approaches. Like changing the oil in your car, your defensible space is an ongoing process.





UPCOMING MEETINGS

Del Norte Prescribed Burn Association

The Next PBA Meeting - October 28th

As part of the ongoing effort to build community engagement and support for the PBA, local residents are hosting another meeting on October 28th, 2024, at the Hiouchi Community Church. This meeting will focus on building capacity within the PBA, including leadership roles, and how landowners can get involved in future prescribed burns.

All members of the community, landowners, and interested partners are invited to attend. Your participation is crucial to making the Del Norte PBA a success and helping us achieve a more fire-resilient landscape in our region.

For more information about the upcoming meeting or the Del Norte Prescribed Burn Association, please visit the DNFSC website.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SERVICES, OUR
PROJECTS, AND HOW YOU CAN BE MORE FIRE SAFE
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBPAGE.

WWW.DELNORTEFSC.ORG

THE SCHEDULE COME VISIT US!

FIRE EXPO
HOME DEPOT, CRESCENT CITY
OCTOBER 12 (10 AM - 4 PM)

DEL NORTE PBA MEETING
HIOUCHI COMMUNITY CHURCH
OCTOBER 28TH

VISIT
WWW.DELNORTEFSC.ORG
FOR MORE DETAILS

We never expect but greatly appreciate donations.

The Del Norte Fire Safe Council is a 501-c3
non-profit organization.
All charitable gifts are tax-deductible per IRS tax
rules and our EIN is 94-3413884

We accept donations at www.delnortefsc.org

or by check:
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Po Box 1135
Crescent City, CA 95531



We appreciate your help!