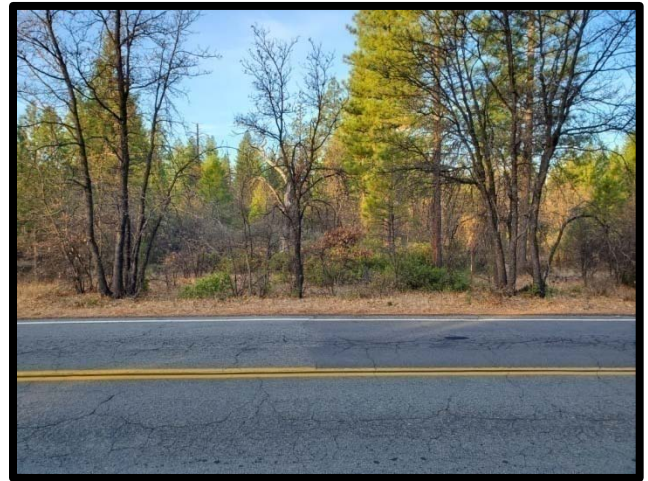


DAY/LASSEN BENCH COMMUNITY AREA WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT



Prepared for the Day/Lassen Bench Community
May 2020



Site Visits conducted:

2019 through 2020

Reviewed by Day/Lassen Bench
Chair & McArthur Fire Chief: May 2020

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Disclaimer

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1. INTRODUCTION and BACKGROUND

Introduction

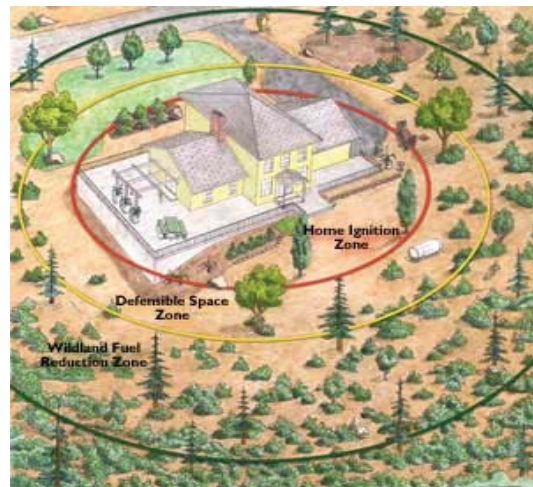
The Firewise Communities/USA® recognition program is designed to provide an effective wildland fire management approach for preserving wildland living aesthetics. The program can be tailored for adoption by any community and/or neighborhood association that is committed to ensuring its citizens maximum protection from wildland fire. The following community assessment is intended as a resource to be used by the Day/Lassen Bench residents for creating a wildfire safety action plan. The plan developed from the information in this assessment should be implemented in a collaborative manner, and updated and modified as needed.

In October of 2008, the community of Day/Lassen Bench was recognized as the first “Firewise Communities/USA®” community within Lassen County. Day/Lassen Bench lies within a wildland-urban interface (WUI), an area that figures prominently in wildland fire discussions. The Day/Lassen Bench area consists of the community of Day and is located within Shasta, Lassen and Modoc Counties. The area known as the Oakwoods Estates Homeowners Association (HOA) lies within northwestern Lassen County. For purposes of this document, the Day/Lassen Bench community is a planned development and Oakwoods Estates HOA both consist of single family residences amongst tall trees and brush surrounded by undeveloped public land under the jurisdiction of the Lassen National Forest and Bureau of Land Management as well as private timber lands, making this a good example of a WUI community.

The potential for catastrophic wildland fire has been recognized in the Day/Lassen Bench Community. Various efforts have been made over the years to reduce hazards on residential lots and state laws are followed regarding the creation and maintenance of defensible space on all lots with structures. Nevertheless, fire remains a priority safety concern throughout the community.

2. Definition of the Home Ignition Zone

The community of Day/Lassen Bench is located in a wildfire environment. Wildfires will happen—exclusion is not a choice. The variables in a fire scenario are when the fire will occur and where. This assessment addresses the wildfire-related characteristics of the Day/Lassen Bench community. It examines the area’s exposure to wildfire as it relates to ignition potential. The assessment does not focus on specific homes, but examines the community as a whole.



A house burns because of its interrelationship with everything in its surrounding home ignition zone—the house and its immediate surroundings. To avoid a home ignition, a homeowner must eliminate the wildfire’s potential relationship with his/her house. This can be accomplished by interrupting the natural path a fire takes. Changing a fire’s path by clearing a home ignition zone is an easy-to-accomplish task that can result in avoiding home loss. To accomplish this, flammable items such as dead vegetation must be removed from the area immediately around the structures to prevent flames from contacting them. Also, reducing the volume of live and dead vegetation will affect the intensity of the wildfire as it enters the home ignition zone.

3. Scoping

The Day/Lassen Bench Fire Safe Plan Area is defined as a corridor either side of Day Road beginning at its intersection with State Highway 299 on the south and ending at the conclusion of the county maintained roadway 13 miles to the north. The area consists of single family homes on small lots as well as single family homes on larger parcels and ranches in the outlying areas. In addition, there are several partially developed as well as undeveloped properties within the area. There are no commercial services, stores or businesses presently in the community. The closest full facility communities are McArthur, approximately five miles west of the junction of Day Road and State Route 299 and Fall River Mills, 3 miles further west. Included in this assessment are observations made while visiting the area. The assessment addresses concerns of the fire dangers existing within the Day/Lassen Bench community and with regard to the critical fire conditions within the surrounding area. The assessment also addresses the ease with which home ignitions can occur under severe wildfire conditions and how these ignitions might be avoided within the home ignition zones of affected residents. Day/Lassen Bench Community residents can reduce their risk of destruction during a wildfire by taking actions within their home ignition zones. This zone principally determines the potential for home ignitions during a wildland fire; it includes the house and its immediate surroundings within 100 to 200 feet.

The result of the assessment is that wildfire behavior will be dominated by the lands under the jurisdiction of Federal agencies as well as the residential characteristics of this area. The good news is that by addressing community vulnerabilities, residents will be able to substantially reduce their exposure to loss. Relatively small investments of time and effort will reap great rewards in wildfire safety.

4. Wildland Fire Characteristics that Could Threaten the Area

Fire intensity and spread rate depend on the fuel type and condition (*live/dead*), the weather conditions prior and during ignition, and the topography. Generally the following relationships hold between the fire behavior and the fuel, weather and topography.

- Fine fuels ignite more easily and spread faster with higher intensities than coarser fuels. For a given fuel, the more there is and the more continuous it is, the faster the fire spreads and the lighter the intensities. Fine fuels take a shorter time to burn out than coarser fuels.
- The weather conditions affect the moisture content of the dead and live vegetative fuels. Dead fine fuel moisture content is highly dependent on the relative humidity and the degree of sun exposure. The lower the relative humidity and the greater the sun exposure, the lower will be the fuel moisture content. Lower fuel moistures produce higher spread rates and fire intensities.
- Wind speed significantly influences the rate of fire spread and fire intensity. The higher the wind speed, the greater the spread rate and intensity.
- Topography influences fire behavior principally by the steepness of the slope. However, the configuration of the terrain such as narrow draws, saddles and so forth can influence fire spread and intensity. In general, the steeper the slope, the higher the uphill fire spread and intensity.

Fire behavior on the reviewed landscape would be mostly surface fire with some pockets of torching. Torching trees both increase fire intensity and become excellent generators of embers for spotting. Embers or firebrands are produced from burning needles, leaves, bark, twigs and cones, when natural vegetation burns. Embers tend to be carried aloft by the superheated air of the blaze and can then be carried long distances in advance of the actual flame front by even light winds. It is not uncommon to find glowing embers a mile ahead of the main fire.

If the conditions are right, embers can be produced in a relatively short time by even a modest wildland blaze. These tend to fly like incendiary snowflakes, eventually settling to the surface and even “drifting” to form small clumps. If they land on a combustible material, they can cause a new ignition even though the main fire is still a long distance away. This is the way that “spot fires” are ignited. This is also the primary threat to residences.

For purposes of this assessment, there are two viable scenarios for a severe wildland fire event, a) a major blaze in lands adjacent to the community, producing large quantities of windblown embers, and b) a lightning strike without precipitation and the rapid onset of downdrafts.

Subsequent spot fires, torching tree, ornamental shrubbery and burning structures in the interiors of developments could produce additional quantities of embers, contributing to further ignition potential.

5. Site Description

This portion of the report describes certain elements of the community of Day/Lassen Bench, as it relates to fire issues. The first map (*Figure 1*) shows the Day/Lassen Bench and Oakwood HOA vicinity map. The Day/Lassen Bench community location is approximately 41°11'26"N, 121°22'24"W, and the Oakwoods Estates HOA lies in close proximity.

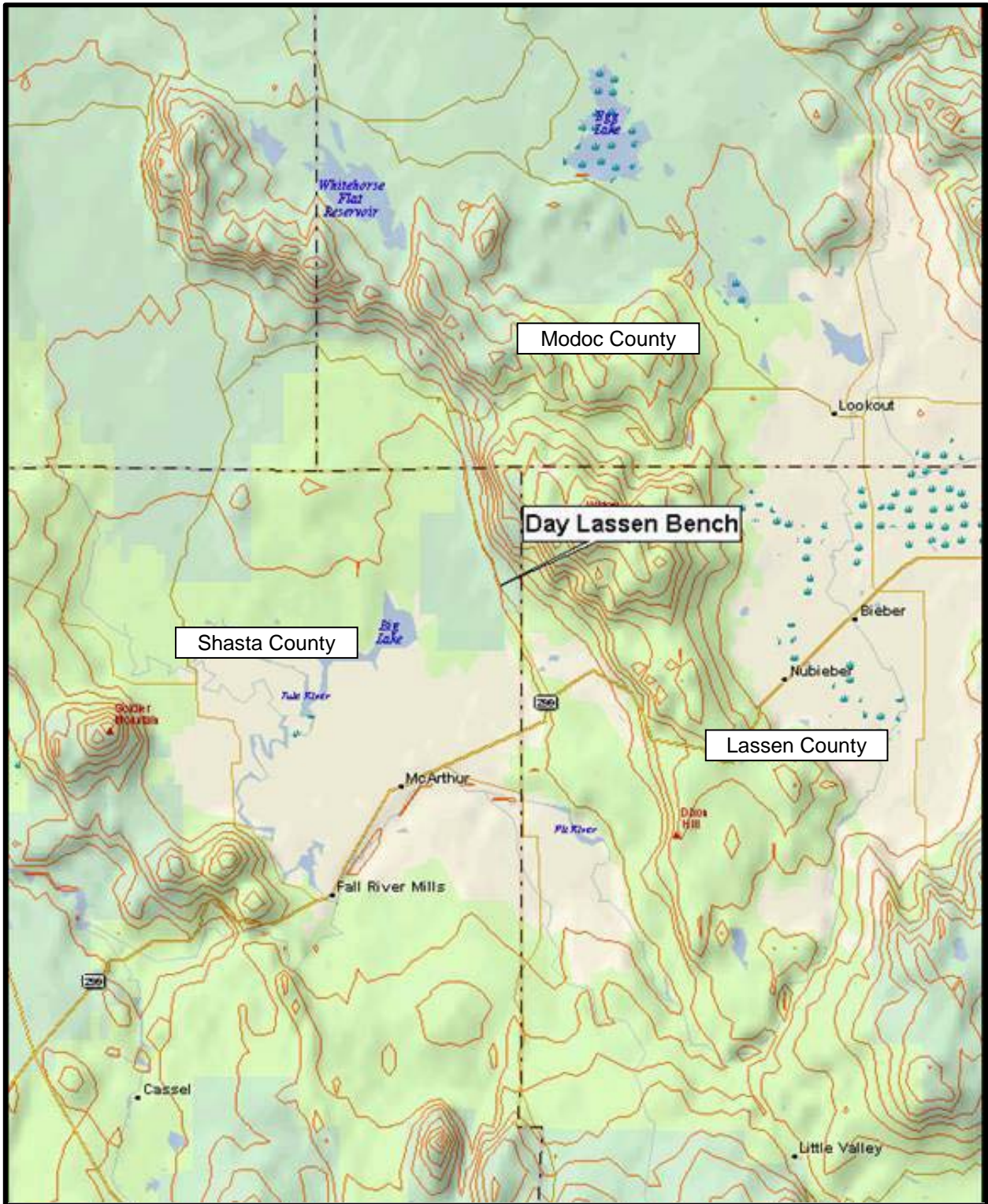
5.1 Overview

Day/Lassen Bench is a small unincorporated community located in the northwestern corner of Lassen County, northeastern corner of Shasta County and the southwestern corner of Modoc County California. It is located 115 miles northwest of Susanville, the Lassen County Seat. The area is approximately 5 miles west of town of McArthur, CA located in Shasta County. The community of Day/Lassen Bench resides along the entire length of the paved section of Day Road but the larger cluster of homes are within the northern portion of Day Road. There is also a home owners association located to the southern portion of Day Road called the Oakwoods Estates HOA. The nearest larger and most convenient market area is to the west in Shasta County at McArthur and further west to Fall River Mills.

5.2 Topography

Day/Lassen Bench homes and properties sit at an elevation between 3,400 and 4,000 feet. The area (*see figure 2*) is comprised of a relatively flat narrow bench that abruptly rises some 300 feet above the Fall River Valley on the west slope of the Big Valley Mountains. Along Day Road the bench widens into dense mixed conifer and oak forestland then into large meadows and lava flows on the west which eventually slopes back down to the valley level. The community is located in an inter-mountain valley setting of the southern Modoc Plateau physiographic province. The Cascade, Sierra Nevada and Great Basin physiographic provinces are all within a relatively close distance.

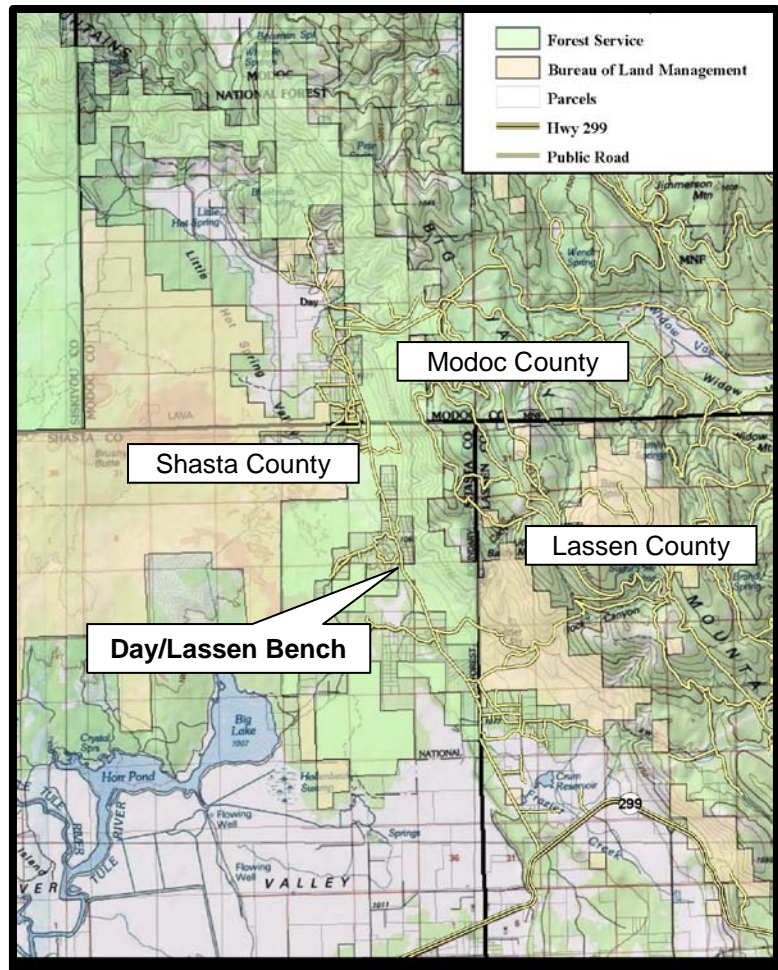
FIGURE 1– Day/Lassen Bench Vicinity Map



5.3 Ingress/Egress Route(s)

The only paved road into the community, Day Road, starts from California State Route 299 and continues north for 13 miles to the end of the County maintained road, and is located across the Shasta, Modoc and Lassen County borders. The road is 13 miles in length before reaching the end of the paved road. The roads throughout the community are unpaved gravel/dirt roads. Proper road signage is noted throughout the area providing good support for fire/rescue apparatus. In addition homes have proper numbering displayed proximately throughout as well. Due to there being one way in and one way out, should a fire event sweep through this community, egress for residents and unimpeded access for fire apparatus could be an issue.

FIGURE 2– Day/Lassen Bench Community Topography and Local Roads



5.4 Description of Properties within the Area

The typical home within the Day/Lassen Bench area are comprised of approximately 85% single family home with the remainder consisting of Mobile/Manufactured homes. Ownership of homes in the area consists of private single family homes as well as ranches. Lot sizes are noted as primarily greater than 1 acre in size.

5.5 Vegetation

Day/Lassen Bench consists primarily of privately owned properties. Directly to the West, East and North are large tracts of public land administered by the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Beyond the public land to the north and East are large tracts of privately owned industrial timber production land. Private land holdings are comprised of rural residences, cropland, rangeland, and timber land. Landowners are mostly full time residents who are mix of working and retired people. A combination of sagebrush, grass and oak woodlands, with scattered juniper and pine, dominate the southern portion of the community corridor. About 2 miles north of State Highway 299 the dominate vegetation transitions to mixed conifer/eastside pine up to the community of Day. To the west lies the BLM managed Timbered Crater Wilderness Study Area (17,000 acres). To the east are areas of

mixed conifer and land converted to chaparral due to large fires in the past 50 years. The mixture of natural and agricultural habitat surrounding the community provides important winter range for mule deer as well as year-round and seasonal habitat for avian and other terrestrial wildlife.

5.6 Protective Zones

A substantial protective zone runs north to south along the western portion of Day from Schneider Ranch north to the Lorenzen Ranch providing a protective zone adjacent to the community. In addition, along the southern portion of Day Road to the west is substantial open space in an area known as the Winter Fall Ranch.

5.7 Demographics

The year-round resident population within and immediately surrounding the community of Day and Oakwoods Estates HOA is approximately 400 to 450 people. These areas have some structures that can be classified as second homes so the population fluctuates to higher levels in the summer. There are about 200 homes in the community and several ranches in the outlying areas. The community is divided by Lassen County, Shasta County and Modoc County boundary lines as indicated on the map (*see figure 1*).

5.8 Local Fire Department

There currently is no local fire department under the jurisdiction of the Day/Lassen Bench area however, the McArthur Fire District, located approximately 5 miles to the west of the area provides fire service coverage for the area and houses some apparatus at a sub-station located on Day Road, within the community. McArthur Volunteer Fire Department provides fire suppression and emergency medical services within the service area (*see figure 5*). The sub-station typically responds to twelve wildland fires and four structure fires in an average year.

FIGURE 3– McArthur Volunteer Fire Department Main Station



5.8.1 Personnel

The McArthur Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief states that there are 7 volunteer firefighters.

5.8.2 ***Equipment at Main Station and Substation***

Equipment located at the main station (*see figure 3*) includes the following apparatus:

Table 1a: McArthur Volunteer Fire Department Main Station Apparatus List

Equipment	Gallons	Drive
2007 Rosenbauer/International WUI Fire Engine	650	4 X 4
1995 Kenworth Water Tender	4,000	6 X 6
2018 Ford Patrol Truck		4 X 4
1999 Ford Utility Truck		4 X 4

Equipment located at the Day Substation (*see figure 4*) includes the following apparatus:

Table 1b: McArthur Volunteer Fire Department Day Substation Apparatus List

Equipment	Gallons	Drive
1989 Pierce Engine	650	4 X 2
2009 Patrol Truck	250	4 X 4

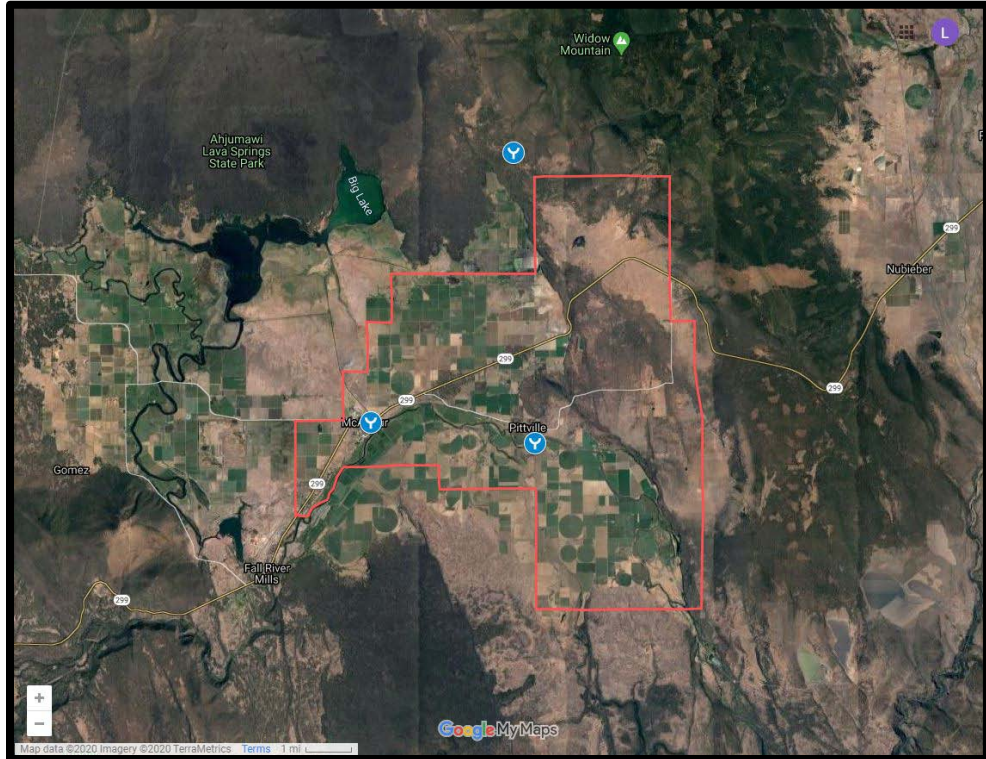
Department resources include firefighter gear for all responders (*i.e., protective clothing, breathing apparatus, and radios*), necessary firefighting tools and appropriate medical response equipment.

There are mutual aid agreements in place with other nearby agencies to supplement the McArthur Volunteer Fire Department force. Such support in the event of a major structural fire would typically come from other agencies as well as the Modoc National Forest and CAL FIRE. Fire protection for the WUI surrounding Day/Lassen Bench area would be through the Lassen National Forest Hat Creek Ranger District, the Bureau of Land Management and CALFIRE.

FIGURE 4– McArthur Fire Substation in Day



FIGURE 5– McArthur VFD District Map



5.8.3 Fire District ISO Rating

The Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) is the principal supplier of statistical, actuarial and underwriting information for the property insurance industry. ISO fire insurance ratings serve as an industry standard, a foundation upon which most insurers build their coverage programs. Their ratings are based on several factors including:

- The quality of the fire department
- The water supply and hydrant system
- Communication systems
- Building codes
- Property inspection programs.
- Community fire prevention programs.

ISO ratings range from 1 to 10, with 1 being perfect. Since the ISO ratings are used by insurance companies to set insurance premium rates, the lower the ISO fire rating, the lower the premium.

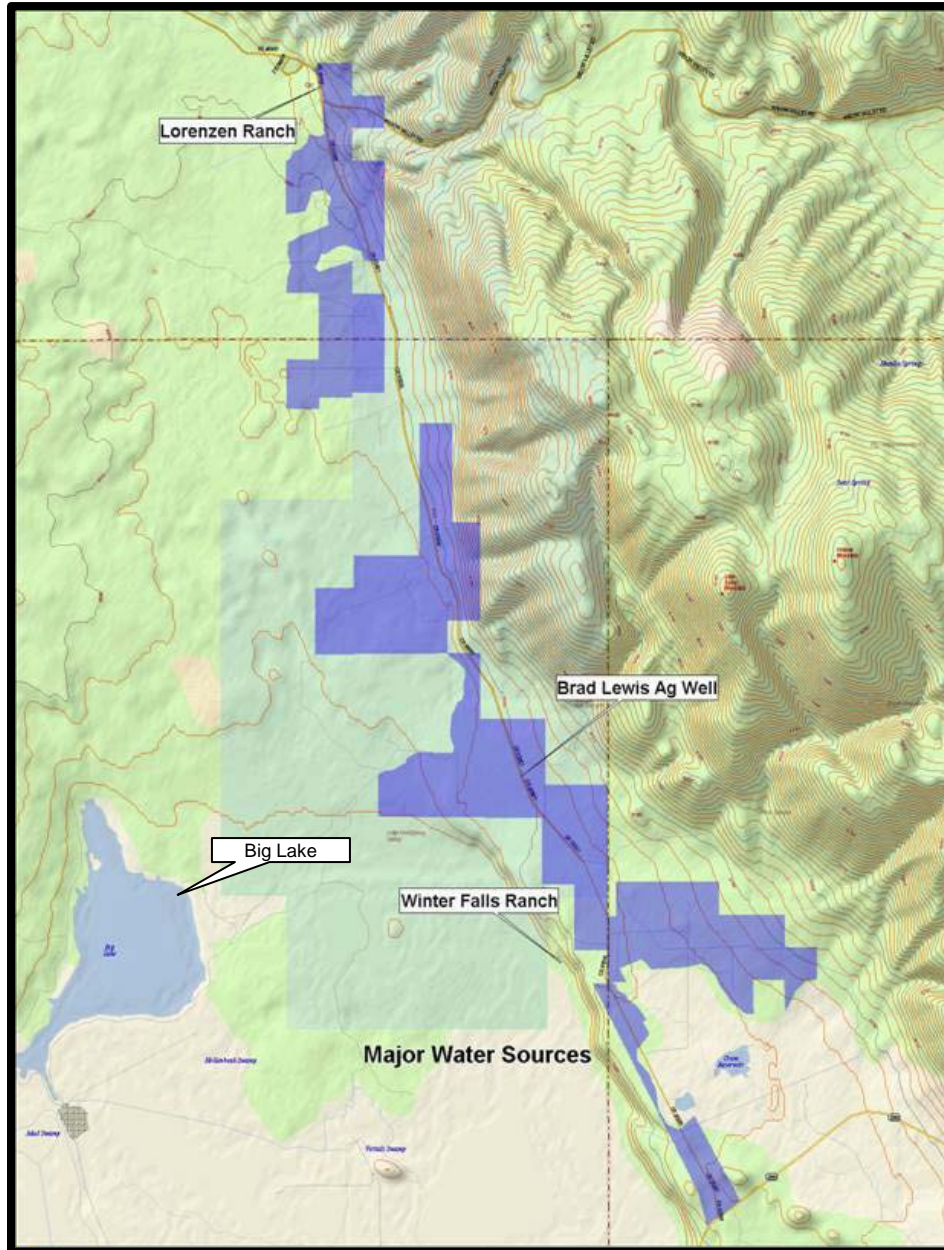
ISO has updated the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule to include "extra credit" for fire departments who conduct community fire prevention programs. The Firewise[®] program will help with this effort.

- McArthur Volunteer Fire Department currently has an ISO rating of 5\5Y.

5.9 Water Supplies

There is no fire hydrant system throughout the community of Day/Lassen Bench or the adjoining Oakwoods Estates HOA. Water resources for fire suppression needs are positioned in three strategic locations, the Lorenzen Ranch to the north, the Winter Falls Ranch to the south and the Brad Lewis agricultural well between the two. All above noted water resources are located along the Day Road vicinity (see figure 6). Domestic water is supplied by individual private wells. Additional water for firefighting purposes can be obtained at Big Lake located west at the end of Big Lake Road off of Day Road.

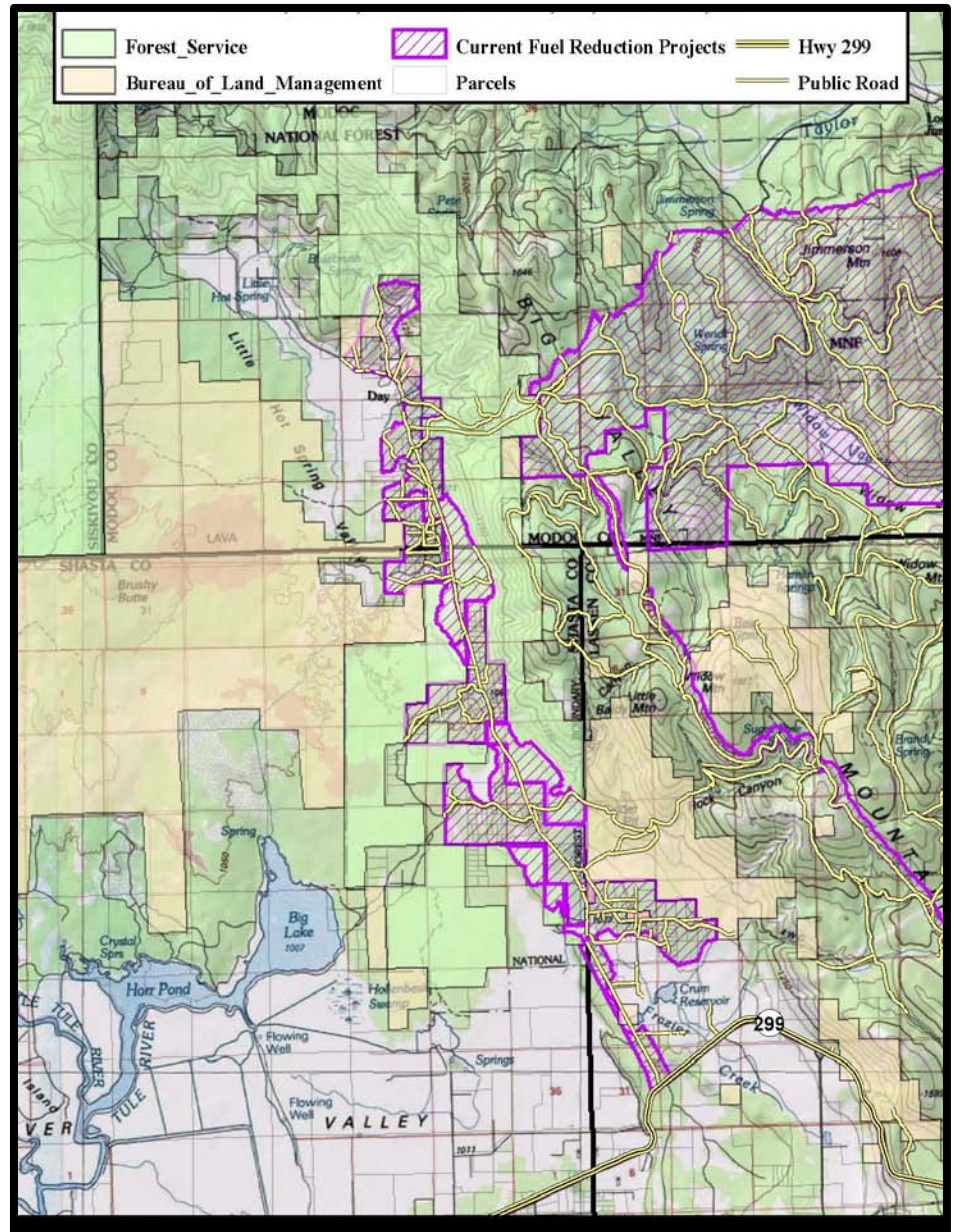
FIGURE 6– Day/Lassen Bench Area Water Resources Map



5.10 Day/Lassen Bench Treatment History

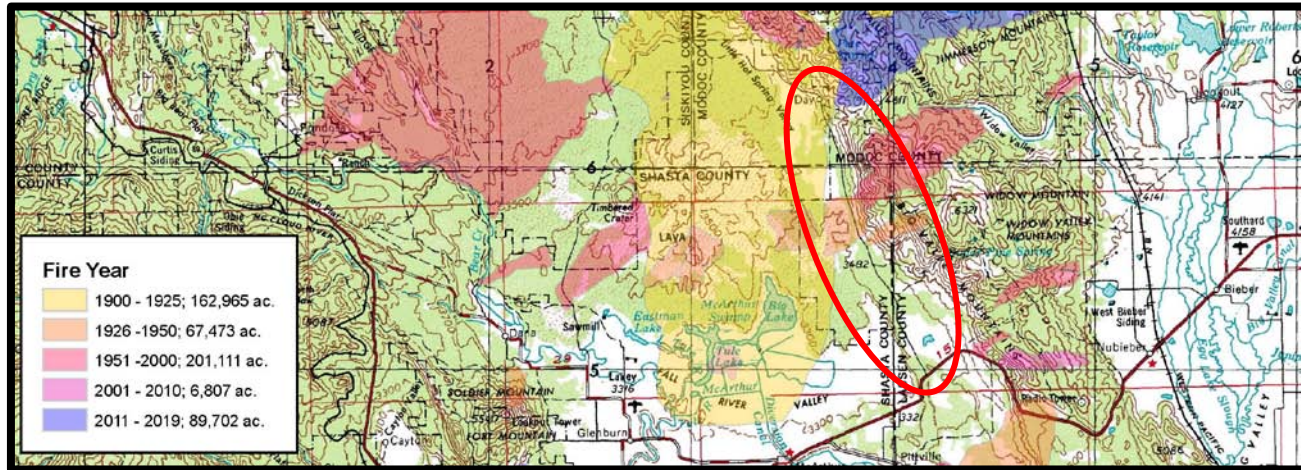
Since 2004, Day/Lassen Bench Fire Safe Council, in partnership with Lassen Fire Safe Council has removed over 2,000 acres of hazardous fuels. Continuation of treatments (see figure 7) are currently being conducted on an additional 800 acres within the community. In addition, 15,000 acres of hazardous fuels removal is currently being conducted on Big Valley Mountain adjacent to the community.

FIGURE 7– Day/Lassen Bench Current Fuels Reduction Projects Map



5.11 Day/Lassen Bench WUI Area Fire History

FIGURE 8—Area Fire History Map



NOTE: Day/Lassen Bench community area is highlighted in Red above.

Fires in the area, as you can see, are not necessarily a common occurrence however, when they do occur, they can be devastating to those with homes living in the area. As with any community, actions prior to a wildland fire event along with measures taken before an occurrence can be very effective to community resiliency.

5.13 CAL FIRE, FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONE RATING

Periodically, Cal FIRE reviews and updates its statewide assessment of general fire hazards within and near the State Responsibility Areas (SRAs). This assessment generates fire hazard severity zone ratings (FHSZ). The 2007 CAL FIRE "Fire Hazard Severity Zone" (FHSZ) map for the region rates most of the Day\Lassen Bench area as a High fire hazard risk area with surrounding areas in close proximity to the community rated from Moderate to Very High risk.

6. Assessment Procedure

A team approach was taken in preparing this assessment of fire hazards and risks in Day/Lassen Bench area. Relevant background data was initially collected by several team members identified in the Introduction to this document.

Several site visits were conducted in 2019 and in 2020. Team members conducted a visual review of the community. Observations were noted of both favorable and unfavorable conditions and are found in subsequent sections. Conducting the inspection(s):

- Dan Douglas, Consultant, Community Assessment Specialist,
- Tom Esgate, Managing Director, Lassen Fire Safe Council, Inc., and,
- Leah Sandberg, Fire Prevention Specialist, CAL FIRE

7. Observations

This report groups the issues into physical zones, starting at the structure and working outward from there.

Home Ignition Zone:

- **Roofing Materials** - Greater than 75% of homes in the area have metal or Class A asphalt or fiberglass shingles.
- **Soffit Vents** - Greater than 75% of homes have non-combustible soffit vents with mesh or screening.
- **Siding** – 25 to 50% of homes have non-combustible siding.
- **Skirting** - Greater than 75% of homes have skirting underneath raised floors/decking.
- **Attachments** - 25 to 50% of homes have no wooden attachments.
- **Windows** - Greater than 75% of homes have multi-pane windows.
- **Leaf/Pine needle litter** – Greater than 75% of homes have cleaned and maintained their roofs and gutters.
- **Gutters** – 50 to 74% of homes had no gutters observed. Of those that did have gutters, Greater than 75% have metal gutters installed.

Immediate Zone:

The “Immediate Zone is considered the area within 0 to 5 feet from the home and the homes furthest attachment(s). Items that were considered were:

- 1.) Is there dead vegetation, dried leaves, pine needles and ground debris near foundations.
 - 2.) Has “hardscaping” been used around perimeters to keep them free of litter/debris such as stone, concrete, or gravel walkways.
 - 3.) Have wood mulch products been replaced with non-combustible crushed stone/gravel options.
 - 4.) Are there trees/shrubs next to home and/or are there branches overhanging the roof or within 10 feet of chimneys.
- Greater than 75% of homes have treated vegetation and created a combustible free area.

Intermediate Zone:

The "Intermediate Zone is considered the area 5 to 30 feet from the furthest exterior point of the home. Items that were considered were:

- 1.) Are there fuel breaks such as driveways, walkways/paths, patios, and decks.
 - 2.) Are lawns and native grasses maintained no higher than 4 inches within this zone.
 - 3.) Is vegetation in the area spread out.
 - 4.) Have "ladder" fuels been removed so a surface fire cannot reach the crowns of trees and have trees been pruned 6 to 10 feet from the ground. If trees are shorter, then no more than 1/3 of tree height
 - 5.) Are plants, trees and lawns watered to keep them from becoming dry.
- 50 to 74% of homes have treated vegetation.

Extended Zone:

The "Extended Zone is considered the area 30 to 100 feet from the home and could be up to 200 feet or more considering the slope of the property. Items that were considered were:

- 1.) Are there heavy accumulations of ground litter/debris.
 - 2.) Is there dead plant and tree material that should be removed.
 - 3.) Are storage sheds and/or other outbuildings in the zone clear of vegetation and are there any mature trees that have small conifers and shrubs growing between them or is the space maintained.
 - 4.) Do trees 30 to 60 feet from the home have at least 12 feet between canopy tops and is there 6 feet between canopies of trees located 60 to 100 feet from the home.
- 50 to 74% of homes have treated vegetation.

Common/open space areas or adjacent public lands:

The entire Day/Lassen Bench community area is adjacent to wildland with accumulated fuel however, the community is very active in the removal of the hazardous fuel load within and adjacent to the area. Private large land owners adjacent to the area are also removing heavy fuels from the lands as well. In addition, public lands within the area are also being treated as the responsible agencies are able.

8. Summary of Observations

This summary of our observations indicate that the community, as a whole, have been very active in creating defensible space around their homes and property. When the first review of the community was conducted back in 2008, the entire area was in dire need of work and appeared daunting at the least. That being said, it is apparent to us that the community has taken their responsibility seriously and has mitigated the area to the best of their abilities. Multiple agency and non-profit corporations have stepped in as well and provided hazardous fuel removal treatments within and surrounding the area. However, there are still several property owners in the area that have refused to participate in the opportunities to have their properties addressed with regard to hazardous fuel removal projects. It is these properties that pose a significant risk to the community.

9. Recommendations

Utilizing the findings of our observations we have identified several actions and steps the area can take to reduce the risk from wildfire. We have prioritized the recommendations based on the potential fire threat to homes. Our recommendation is that residents address hazards at the home first and then work your way outward into the three Home Ignition Zones. Use these recommendations to create your site's Action Plan.

- 1.) 80% of homes observed had a roof free of leaf litter and pine needles. Encourage residents to remove the debris and to annually maintain their roof especially during the fire season.
- 2.) Make sure there are no "ladder" fuels within 100 feet of your home that could allow a ground fire to reach the crown of surrounding trees.
3. Encourage property owners that have not removed hazardous fuel loads on their property to do so.
4. Work with residents to improve the number of homes that removed flammable materials 0 to 5 feet from their home.
- 5.) Continue work to do work to insure the opening of the tree crown to a minimum of 12 feet between trees from 30 to 60 feet from the home and 6 feet or more from 60 to 100 feet from the home.
- 6.) Encourage property owners that have accumulated significant wood, hay material, etc. within their property to provide a safe zone surrounding these items so as not to become a hazardous source of fuel load which would create a hazard to the community.
- 7.) Continue work on "hardening" the home when able by replacing gutters with metal, closing areas under homes with skirting, adding fire resistant siding material to homes, replacing windows with multiple pane windows and enclosing soffits/vents with 1/8 inch screening or fire approved vent products.
- 8.) Work with Federal, State, and County agencies to develop an additional community evacuation route.

Exhibit A

Day/Lassen Bench Firewise® Community Assessment - Action Plan

Day/Lassen Bench Community Action Plan

Upon the development and subsequent adoption of the Day/Lassen Bench Community Assessment document discussion was held regarding the need to develop a “Community Action Plan”. The Community Action Plan is a list of actions the community can take in order to systematically address the recommendations presented in the Assessment.

A community meeting was held in the summer of 2019 to develop and approve the list of actions that are reasonably achievable by the community.

The Day/Lassen Bench Community Action Plan consists of the following:

- 1.) **Establish schedule for addressing projects as noted in the 2020 Community Assessment** – Work to complete each item listed in a timely manner as fiscally reasonable to recognize areas of fire preparedness issues within the community
- 2.) **Continue to clear debris around homes** – Homeowners with significant amounts of debris surrounding home and property should work to clear debris so that firefighters have adequate access to all sides of home. For those homeowners that are unable to do work without assistance, the community should work together to assist those homeowners in the removal/relocation of hazardous debris.
- 3.) **Annual Firewise® Activity Days** – Conduct annual “Firewise® Activity Day(s)”. These annual events are activities provided to bring the community attention to the need to create and maintain the individual homeowner and property owners’ defensible space. At a minimum, Day/Lassen Bench community area will conduct at least one Firewise Day event per year.
- 4.) **3 Year Review of Community Action Plan** – This is an opportunity to review the Community Action Plan, to update the plan and to make any additions to the plan that would be relevant to the overall community safety from wildland fires.
- 5.) **Hazardous Fuels Removal** - Continuation of hazardous fuels removal within the community including USFS and BLM lands.
- 6.) **One Way In – One Way Out** - Developed ingress and egress within the Day/Lassen Bench community is limited to Day Road where it meets State Highway 299 on the south. If a substantial fire were to establish in the central part of the community, residents’ only option on the north end of the community would be to shelter in place at the Lorenzen Ranch wet meadow in Day. Lassen Fire Safe Council, Inc., as the primary coordinator for the community treatments, has agreed to engage with the appropriate agencies that would coordinate evacuations in the event of a major fire. The goal of this engagement would be to help develop better protocols for evacuation notification.