



# SUCCESS STORIES



**Western Bark Beetle Initiative, Region 5  
STRIVING FOR HEALTHY FORESTS  
A Partnership between Forest Health Protection and the Sequoia National Forest**

## Protecting Camp Nelson

Nestled in the Sequoia National Forest, the citizens of Camp Nelson and Pier Point Springs breathe easier knowing that their communities and surrounding forest are being protected by cooperative efforts of the Tule River/Hot Springs Ranger District and Forest Health Protection. Surveys of the community and adjoining forested areas revealed vegetation composition that was highly conducive to bark beetle activity and extreme fire behavior. Approximately 90% of the forested areas were overstocked with understory trees less than six inches in diameter. Previously logged stands were dominated by an overstory of ponderosa pine, black oak, and incense cedar. Areas that have never been logged had an average of 750 stems per acre, dominated by white fir. Mortality from recent insect infestations have significantly added to existing fuel loads. These conditions can easily generate high intensity fires that are difficult to suppress and often result in stand-replacing fires.

All acres of the 2005 Camp Nelson Urban Interface project are located in wildland-urban interfaces, with the Tule River running through the middle. Primary objectives of the project were improving residual tree health, providing community protection, improving human health and safety hazards, and protecting critical Pacific Fisher habitat – including the only verified dens in the Forest. Interdisciplinary efforts between forest health, fuels, wildlife, and fire with additional assistance and funding from Forest Health Protection resulted in the treatment of over 750 acres encompassing Camp Nelson. Treatments cost roughly \$500 per acre due to hand labor required in sensitive areas and difficult terrain. The resulting stand conditions are now much more resistant to wildfires, insects and disease. Improvement in tree health and protection of wildlife habitat, private property, and resource integrity were greatly improved. In

addition to treatments directly adjacent to structures and private property boundaries, strategically placed area treatments (SPLATS) were placed beyond the immediate community as natural boundaries against wildfires. Removal of highly flammable vegetation in small, scattered pockets provide an effective fuelbreak and control area for firefighters (*see Figure 1*).



**Figure 1. Thinning general forested areas surrounding the community of Camp Nelson.**

All treatments consisted of hand cutting and piling, or mechanical mastication of small trees and thick brush. Average stand basal area was reduced from a high of 250 down to 130-230. Generated slash was chipped or burned on site. These treatments along with future plans to conduct a prescribed underburn will significantly the risk of catastrophic fire. This project has vastly improved stand conditions by reducing fuel loads, promoting health and vigor of residual trees, and greatly reducing susceptibility to potential insect infestations.

*For more information, call Beverly M. Bulaon, (209) 532-3671.*

