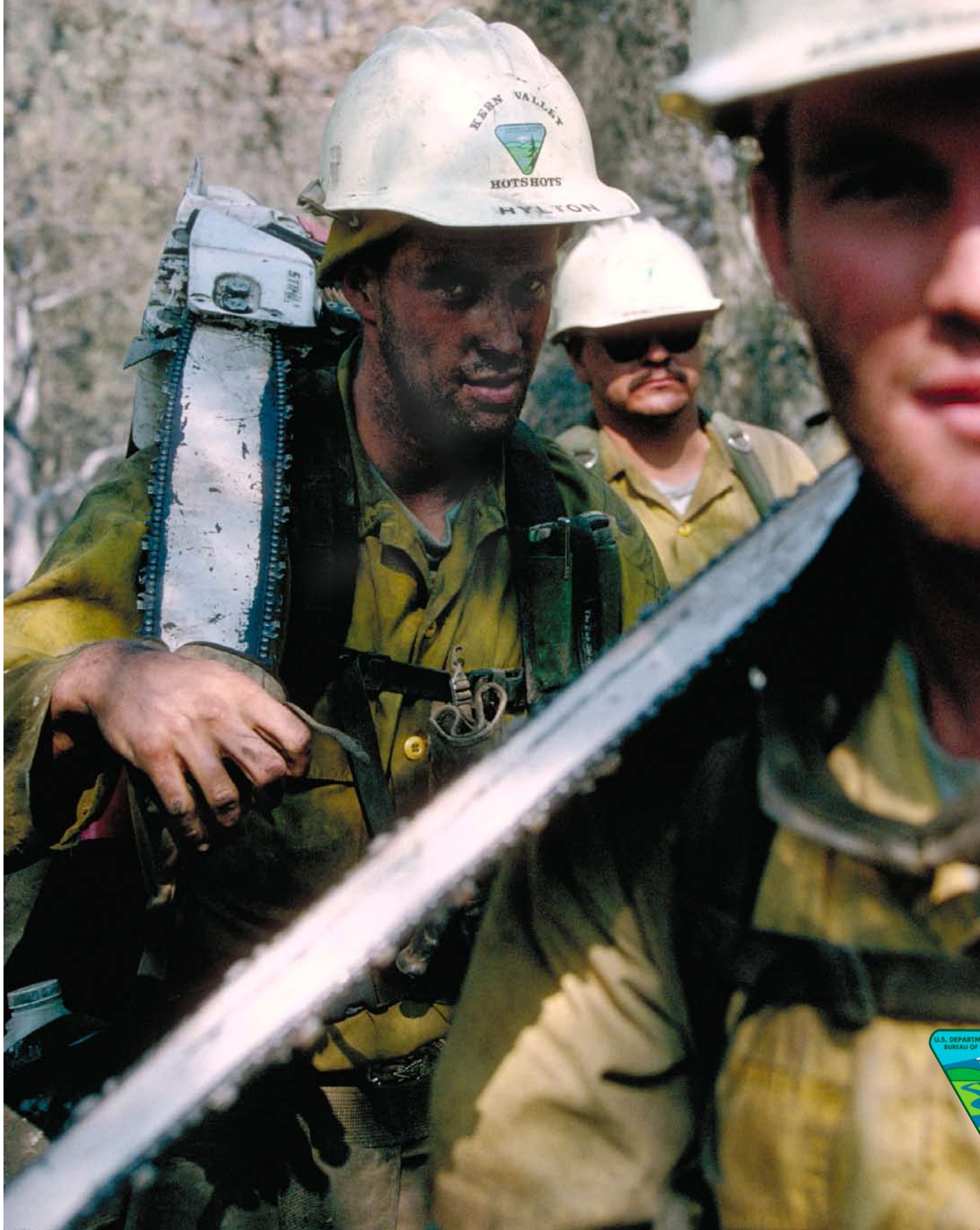


# Wildfire Protection

BLM



California 2009



# California's Wildland Fire Challenge

Protecting people, property, and resources from wildfires is a challenge in any State. However, an extremely unusual set of factors make doing this critical job in California even more difficult and complex:

- 38 million people
- 2,309 identified communities at risk
- increasing development in the wildlands
- unusual and ever-changing weather conditions, including droughts and "Santa Ana winds"

The bad news is that sometimes these factors reach critical mass, such as the 2007 fire season, one

of the worst in history, with 1.6 million acres burned, 8,881 fires, 3,830 homes and structures burned, and numerous lives lost. The good news is California's Federal, State, and local wildland firefighting agencies have formed extraordinary partnerships to fight fires, and, together with local communities, to prevent or lessen fire danger.

The **California Fire Alliance** provides statewide oversight. Made up of agencies' top officials and the California Fire Safe Council, the Alliance sets policy, coordinates development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP), and provides grants to implement plans.

Thanks to the interagency **Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement**, Californians probably have the best coordinated fire suppression effort in the country, with the State divided into "direct protection areas" where one agency takes the lead in initially attacking fires, drawing on the resources of the others as necessary.

Fighting fires is becoming more expensive in California each year.

There is a statewide consensus in California that preventing fires not only saves lives and property but is much more cost-effective than fighting them.

California's 192 local **Fire Safe Councils** do this critical work, along with other community based groups, who utilize their CWPPs to reduce fire threats by clearing brush, reducing fuels, and preparing for emergencies. These councils contribute "sweat equity" and matching funds, but are dependent upon State and Federal grants. While BLM's available grants have reached \$3.0 million in 2008, grant applications exceeded \$20 million. To date, BLM has assisted more than 450 communities-at-risk in 51 of California's 58 counties. BLM also receives Federal funds

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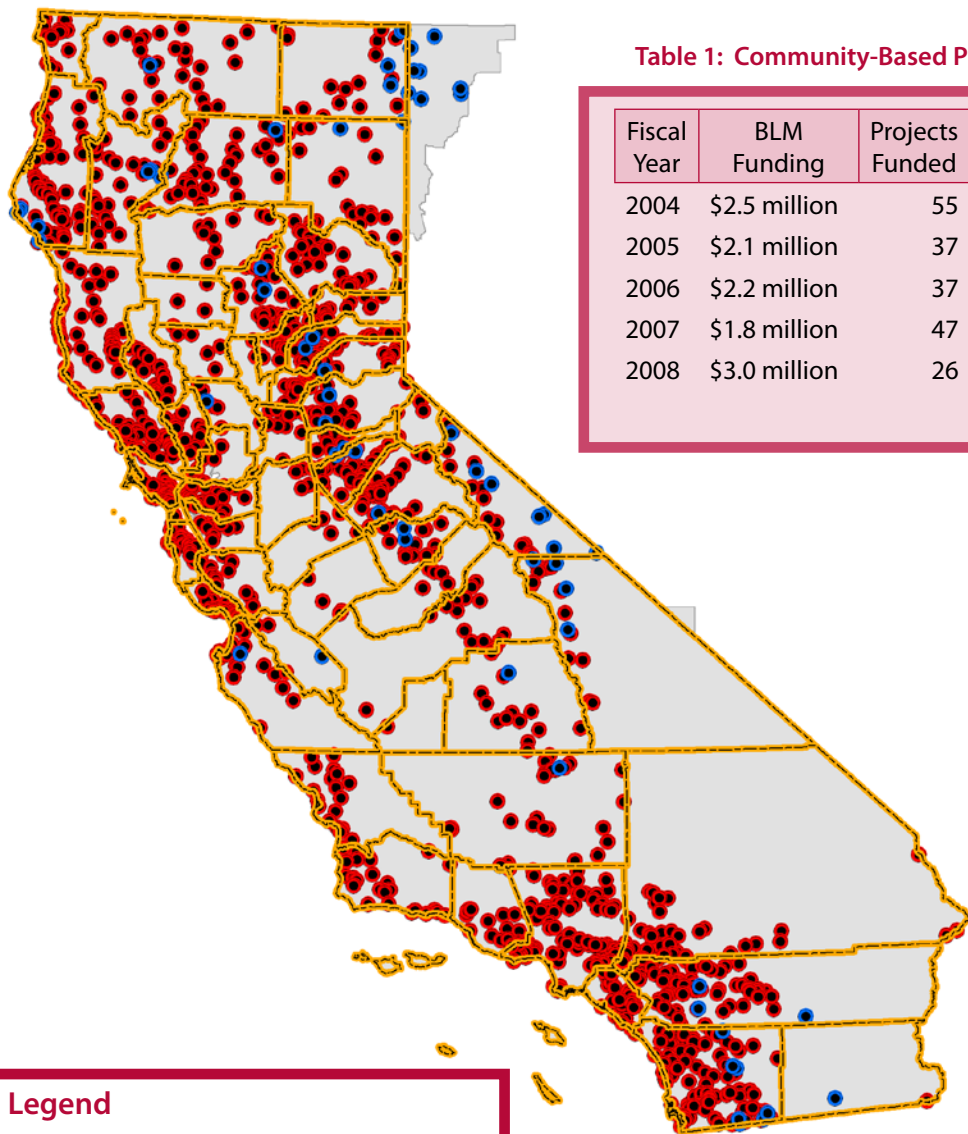
to reduce fuels on the 15.2 million acres of public land it manages in California through prescribed burns, mechanical means, or hand crews.

Finally, helping Californians "**Take Responsibility**" for fire safety is the theme of a new 2009 public education campaign sponsored by BLM. The aim of the publicity campaign is to encourage Californians to protect their homes from wildfires by creating defensible space.

# BLM Funds to Protect California Communities

**Table 1: Community-Based Project Funding**

Fiscal Year	BLM Funding	Projects Funded	Private Acres Treated
2004	\$2.5 million	55	9,185
2005	\$2.1 million	37	11,253
2006	\$2.2 million	37	8,081
2007	\$1.8 million	47	10,086
2008	\$3.0 million	26	5,665



## Legend

- State Designated Communities at Risk
- Federal Register Communities at Risk
- County Boundaries

**Table 2: Wildfire Costs**

Year	Suppression Cost	Fires	Acres Burned	Structures Lost
2004	\$12,134,238	291	32,373	0
2005	\$11,480,023	265	33,057	45
2006	\$15,949,273	300	59,927	254
2007	\$17,568,674	183	31,841	2,505
2008	\$23,221,103	176	45,055	88

This chart shows only costs, fires, acres, and structures lost on or involving BLM public lands. Fatalities are handled by local emergency agencies.

# Fire Safe Projects that Work

## Residents Assistance Program

Stephanie Row's home survived the Camp Fire in 2008. About 106 dwellings were destroyed in Concow (Butte County) where she has lived for 42 years. After receiving a newsletter and inquiring about the Residents Assistance Program, Stephanie's home was evaluated and 100 feet of defensible space around her home was created, just months before the Camp Fire burned nine homes on her street as well as all of her five acres. Stephanie received a call from a friend at 2:00 a.m. to evacuate and fled her home. Luckily her defensible space was in place. The Residents Assistance program was funded by a BLM grant.



Thanks to the Residents Assistance Program, Stephanie Row's home survived the Camp Fire in 2008.

## Fuels Reduction in Mammoth Lakes

BLM, the Inyo National Forest, and Mammoth Lakes Fire Department shared resources to reduce fire fuels in the town of Mammoth Lakes. At a town clean up day, residents brought pine needles and branches to a transfer station to be chipped. The Mammoth Lakes Fire Department demonstrated how to use a chipper to reduce fuels to create defensible space. The chips were recycled and offered to the residents for dust abatement. This effort motivated property owners to reduce hazardous fuels before the 2008 fire season.

## Prescribed Burn at Laguna Mountain

The BLM worked with local fire departments, residents, partners, and other land managers to reduce wildfire risk on public lands and surrounding communities with a prescribed burn in the Laguna Mountain area of San Benito County. The burn was a 50 acre unit part of a multi-year program of 470 acres. The goal was to reduce hazard fuel loading, improve wildlife habitat, and protect landowners from destructive wildland fires. A mosaic burn pattern was used to increase native ecosystems, improve the quality of the watershed, and provide for public and firefighter safety. The project was a huge success.



BLM chipper used to reduce fire fuels.



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