

ANNUAL REPORT & WORKPLAN TEXT

EMC-2022-005: Decay Rates and Fire Behavior of Woody Debris in Coastal Redwoods

This research investigates the effectiveness of the current FPRs in mitigating the wildfire hazard and risks for “normal” fire scenarios (i.e., conditions in which an initial attack is more likely to be successful) or in which fuel treatments have a higher likelihood of being effective. To that end, this study will look at industrial timberland slash treatments (lop and scatter) along public roads (specifically targeting Title 14 CCR 917.2 and Technical Addendum #2 – Cumulative Impacts, H. Wildfire risk and hazard (2-4)) to determine if the rules are adequate to decrease fire behavior.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS, PRELIMINARY RESULTS HERE

To date, the first season of fieldwork completed, the grad student has outlined the decay rate sampling protocol, the second season of fieldwork has begun and one of the sites (Red Tail) has received its prescribed burn in May and June of 2024. A second site (Thompson Gulch) is projected to be burned in July of 2024 while the remaining burn sites will be in Fall of 2024.

During the 2023 field season, it was decided to include collecting data in unentered second-growth sites to understand the ‘natural’ inputs of woody material and to establish a baseline for what level of material would ‘naturally occur’ in an unmanaged scenario. This change was determined necessary to fully understand the effectiveness of the treatments. This change doubled the number of plots that were originally estimated for the project, as each managed plot has an unmanaged control plot for comparison. This increase in sites has pushed the project into a second field season for data collection but the overall project is still on track for completion. Due to the increase in field collection, data has not been analyzed.

The project is progressing as planned with the addition of plots to collect, and funds have been encumbered in the first two fiscal years (2022/23, 2023/24), with the project performance period ending March 31, 2025. The next steps include the completion of fieldwork, analysis, and write-up. The write-up is still anticipated to extend past March 31, 2025, to June 2025 as stated in the project proposal. The project is on track to give a final report to the EMC in the Summer of 2025 with outreach to a broader audience afterwards.