

Climate change has rendered the term “fire season” obsolete, as wildfires now burn on a year-round basis across California.



Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project (ESCCRP)

*Planning for a more resilient
future in the Eastern Sierra*

Photo: Jerry Dodrill

Outline

- The Need
- What's Proposed
- Comparable Projects Statewide
- Statewide similarities/differences
- What's at Risk
- Opportunities & Challenges



Photo: U.S. Forest Service

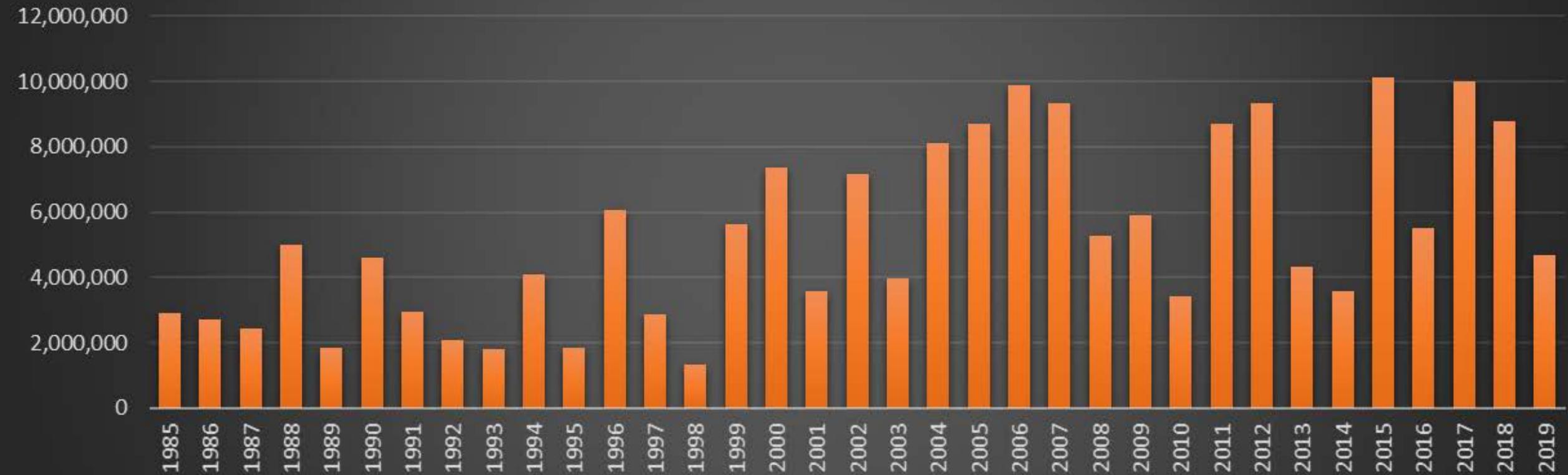
Total Number of Fires 1985-2019

Number of Fires-Nationally



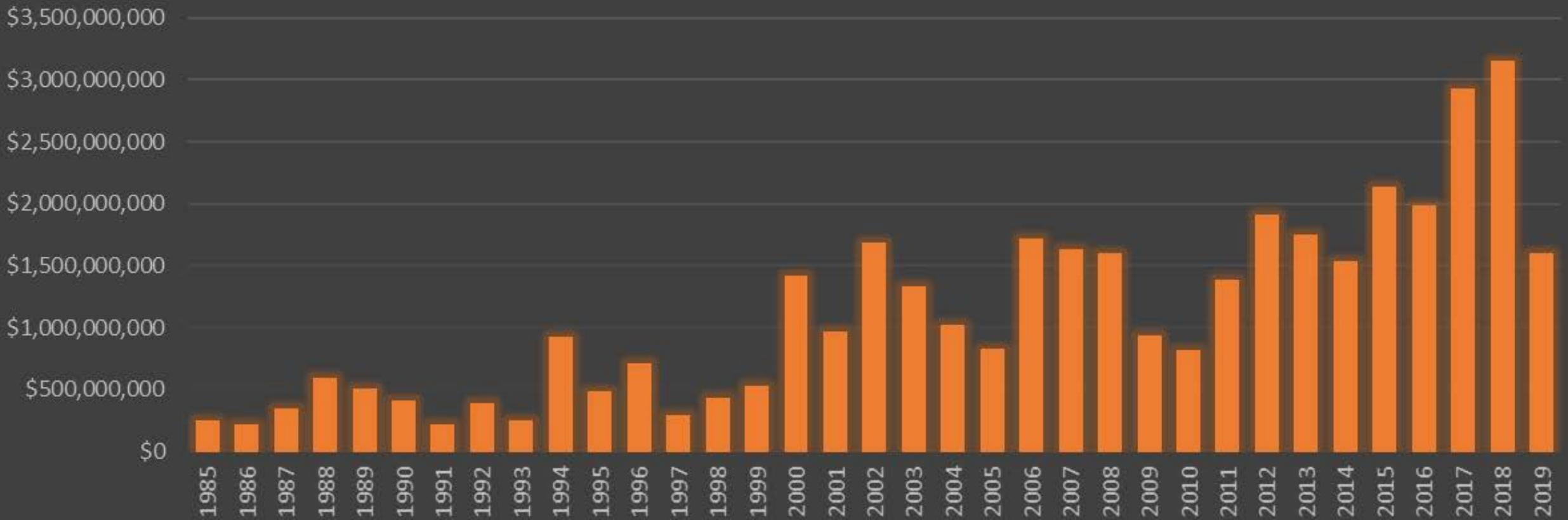
Annual Acres Burned 1985-2019

Annual Acres Burned- Nationally



Annual Federal Fire Spending 1985-2019

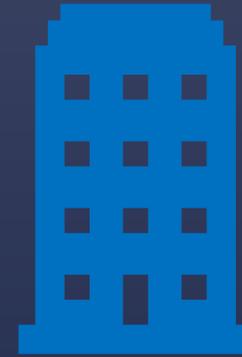
Annual Federal Fire Budget



California National Ranking (2019 Fire Season)



1st in Number of Fires (8,194)



1st in Estimated # Properties at
Risk (2M+)

Supporting Policies & Plans

National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (2009)

- Restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes
- Creating fire-adapted communities
- Providing safe and effective fire response

Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-05-19 (January 2019)

- Recognizes the current trajectory of wildfire in CA , citing that 6 of the top 10 most destructive, costly and deadly fires in the State's history have occurred in the past two years.
- Acknowledges that our arrival at this position is due to a combination of factors that include fire exclusion, poor forest management policies, and a rapidly changing climate which has exacerbated drought and accompanied by historic bark beetle epidemics.
- Pledges \$1Billion in GGRF funds over the next 5 years in California for forest management.



Supporting Policies & Plans



Sierra Nevada Conservancy & USFS WIP(2015)

- Recognizes forests in the Sierra Nevada as critical to California's water supply
- Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program- recently funded in East Subregion
- Provided directed grant funds specifically to address fuels planning in the Eastern Sierra (ESCCRP)

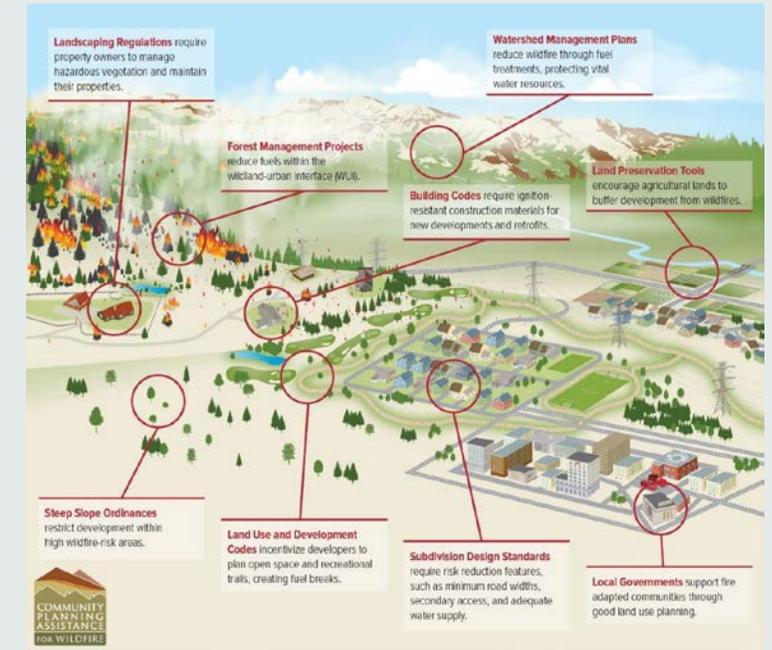
INF Land Management Plan 2019

- Emphasizes a landscape approach to fire and smoke management & need to restore appropriate fire return intervals across ecosystems
- Provides direction for watershed restoration including healthy, connected riparian areas
- Supports renewable energy

Supporting Policies & Plans

Mono County CWPP-2009/Update 2018

- Identifies risk at community level
- TOML ratings high-extreme



Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire- Final Recommendations for Town of Mammoth Lakes- 2018

- Calls out altered fuels, evac concerns, hazardous wind and weather patterns
- Encourages interagency collaboration need for update to General Plan and CWPP

ESCCRP: What's Proposed

Fuels
Treatments on
55,000 acres of
Inyo National
Forest Lands
surrounding
Mammoth
Lakes



Eastern Sierra Climate and Communities Resilience Project

Working together to promote resilient landscapes, build fire adapted communities, and provide for safe and effective wildfire response.

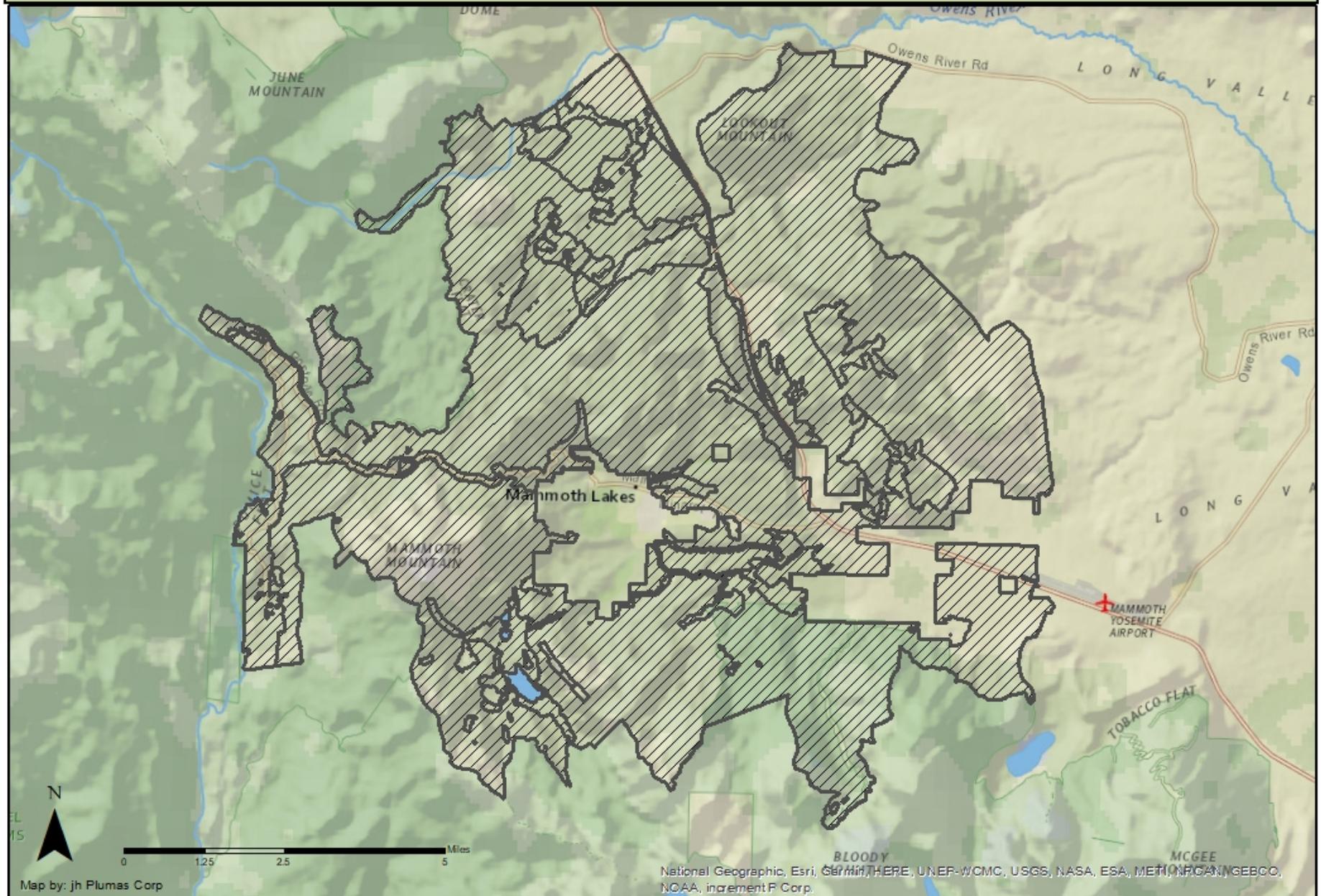




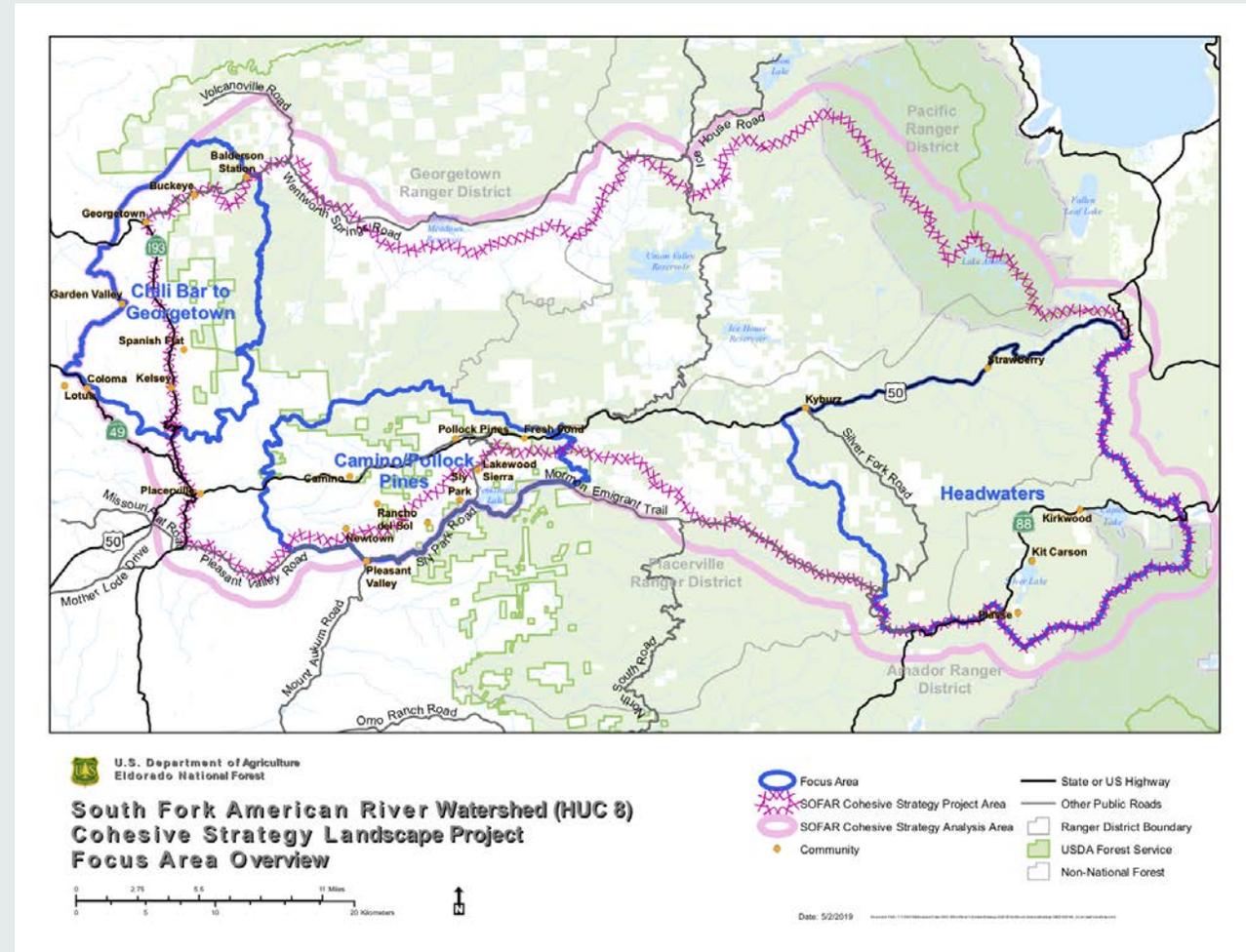
Photo: Jim Stimpson

Initial Tasks:

- Convene Stakeholders
- Refine Project Boundary
- Define Goals and Objectives
- Needs Assessment
- Ad Hoc Focal Teams
 - Education/Outreach
 - Finance/Marketing
 - Operations- Treatment Rx
 - Research- GHG/Water benefit
 - Biomass Utilization
- Proposed Action
- Draft RFP for Environmental Surveys

Comparable Projects Across CA

- Dinky Landscape Restoration Project (2010)
154,000 acres Sierra National Forest
- Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative 2.4 million acres
 - Tahoe West 60,000
 - North Yuba Forest Resilience Project 15,000
 - Caples Ecological Restoration Project (6,800 mech, 4,400 Rx)
 - French Meadows 28,000 (Middle fork American)
 - Sagehen Experimental Forest
- South Fork American Restoration Project-
250,000 acres Eldorado National Forest





Similarities across the Sierra

NEED TO BUILD:

Resilient Landscapes

Fire Adapted Communities

Safe and Effective Wildfire Response

Sustainable Economy

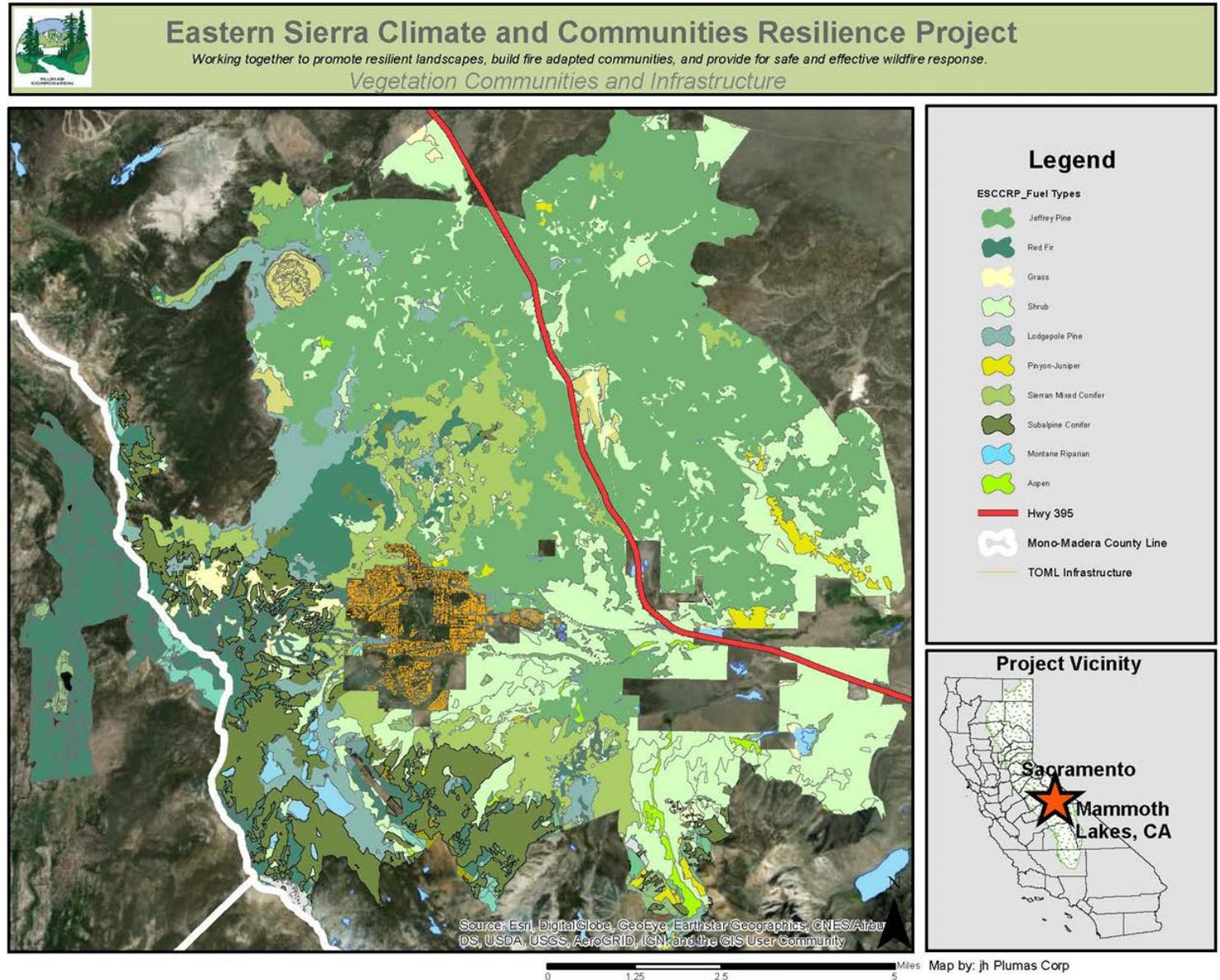
Protect Valuable Natural Capital

- Water Resources
- Unparalleled Viewsheds
- Carbon Sinks
- Wildlife Habitat
- Clean Air

100+ Years of Fire Exclusion

ESCCRP-How we are different

- Dominated by Federal lands
- Adjacent wilderness proximity
- Single focal community
- Weight of regional economy
- Concentration of visitor services infrastructure
- County's main tax base
- Eastern escarpment- wind prone landscape
- Direct urban-rural connection with Los Angeles
- World's largest Jeffrey Pine forest
- Lower production forests
- No current market for forest products



What's at Risk?



Annual Visitor Use in 2018
\$600 M

Majority of Visitor Services Infrastructure

Local Government Tax base

MMSA

Multiple small businesses along Hwy 395

Regional Economy

Clean Air

Wildlife habitat

Biodiversity

Carbon sequestering forests

Recreation

Valuable Ecosystem Services

Mammoth Lakes

San Joaquin Valley

Los Angeles

Water Supply

Unparalleled Scenic Beauty

Vs.

Moonscape shrub dominated landscapes

Pristine Viewsheds

Worst case scenarios keep escalating...

Unprecedented?

RIM

2013

112 structures
No fatalities
\$1.27 million
257,314 acres

CARR

2018

1,604 structures
8 fatalities
\$1.65 billion
229,651 acres

CAMP

2018

18,804 structures
85 fatalities
\$16.5 billion
153,336 acres
52,000 evacuated



Recent most destructive Sierra wildfires

Rim – 257,314 (2013)

Round- 7,000 (2015)

Rough – 151,623 (2015)

Ferguson- 96,901 (2018)

Donnell- 36,450 (2018)

1992-Rainbow Fire

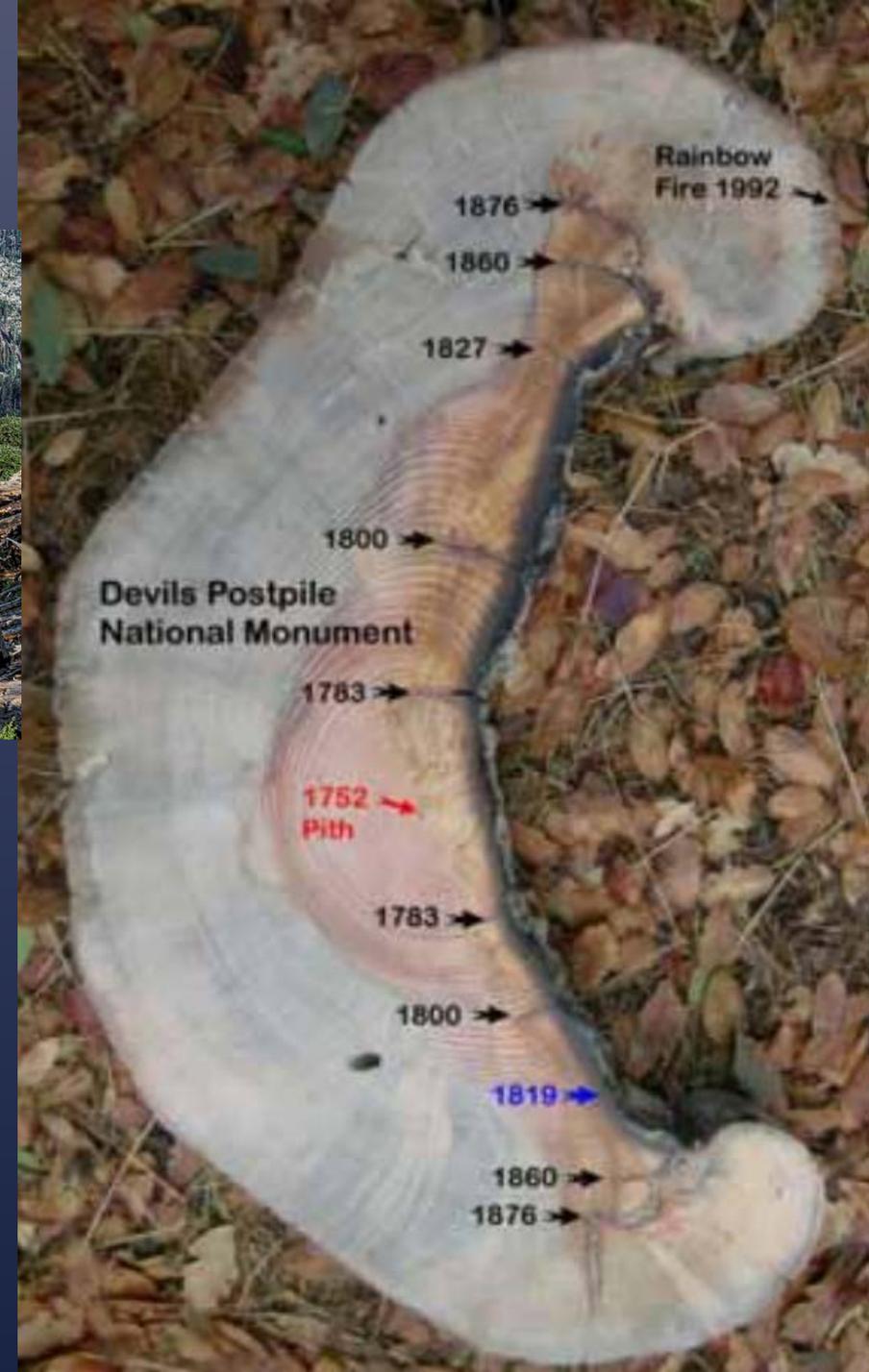


August 20, 1992- 60+ mph winds fanned fire to 6,000 acres in 24 hours

Sept. 8, 1992 8347 acres had burned, much at high severity

Leading up to Rainbow, fire had been absent for over 100 years

Long term persistence of shrubs in high severity patches



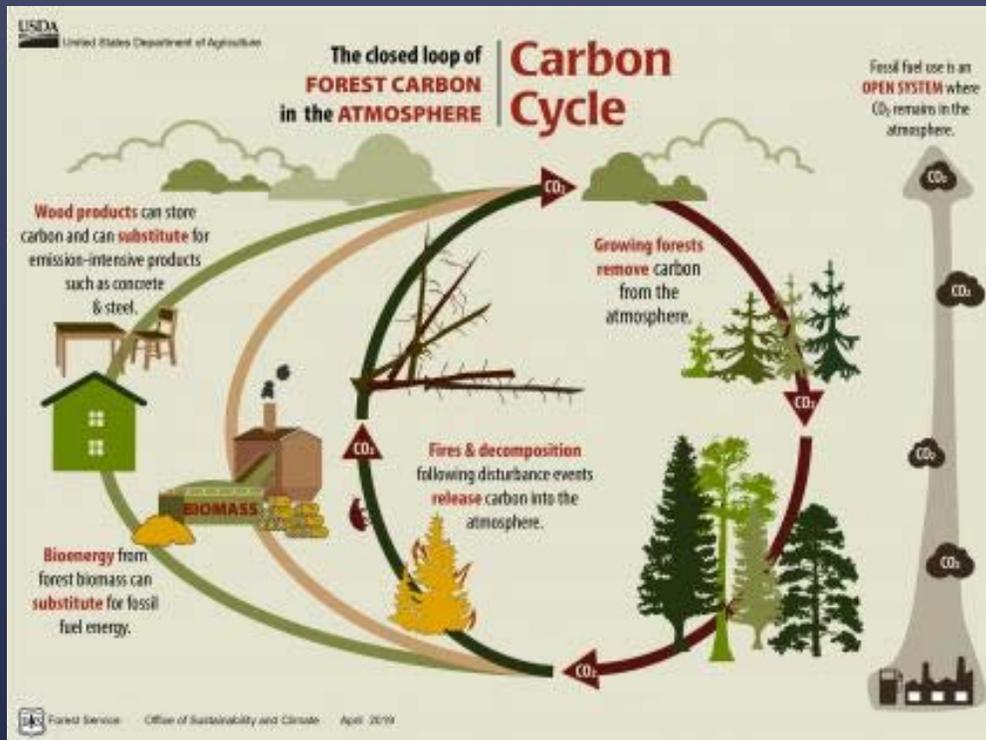
ESCCRP- Opportunities and Challenges

- Public education
- Fundraising
- Implementation timing/capacity
- Research and Monitoring
- Dynamic forest changes during project planning horizon (beetle, fires)
- Biomass solution



Biomass Utilization

- Recognized a critical gap in Eastern Sierra by a multitude of agencies for years
- Mono County efforts in 2014
- TOML- Current solid waste recycling RFP
- INF Fuels Pace & Scale- yields of approximately 350,000 BDT- 15-20 years
- SB1122- BioMat Program (20 cents/kWh)
- Current SCE Power Safety Shutoffs
- Current fuels work underway leaves biomass sitting or slated for burning
- Recent proposal to NFWF to solve for solution shortages





*As we stand on the precipice
of a new wildland fire
paradigm, we have the
opportunity to define it, not
be defined by it.*

THANK YOU!

Janet Hatfield

Plumas Corporation Project Manager

(760) 914-3131

Janet@plumascorporation.org