

Nevada County Evacuation Plan. Meeting between OES and highlighted FWCs.

Wednesday, July 3, 2024 9:00am – 10:00am

Facilitator Worksheet/Meeting Minutes

1. Introductions:

NCSO-Emergency Ops Center Coord	Lieutenant Mike Vingom
OES	Alex Keeble-Toll Paul Cummings
OES Defensible Space Inspector	Ricky Martinez
NevCo CDA/Roads/Public Works	Patrick Perkins
Banner Mountain FWC	Maureen “Mo” Graber Jeff Peach
Cascade Shores FWC	Christina Trimble (absent)
Greenhorn FWC	Paige Lettington Enrique Manzanilla Diane Marshall Bill Ryerson Paul Tebbel Jan Weaver
You Bet FWC	Kristen “KC” Cook Kris Stoeckle

2. Questions:

A	Can the Ladriss Evacuation Modeling Software be used to model a scenario where two, or more, Study Areas are evacuated simultaneously?
---	--

	<p>Lt. Vingom: Yes. Ran a new study using 19 zones. It is very unlikely that 19 zones would get an evacuation order at once, so that scenario he ran would be something like the worst case as far as vehicles and time. This estimates 9,600, people with 12,000 vehicles, could be evacuated within 2 hours and 19 minutes. This model used the following evacuation centers: Nevada Union High School, Bear River High School, Fairgrounds, and the Rood Center.</p> <p>KC proposes adding Colfax to this scenario list (because data is just for Nevada County Vingom recommends using Bear River Bridge). Colfax couldn't be included because the contract with Ladriss only covers our county, but she could run it herself using the Bear River bridge on the Nevada-Placer border.</p> <p>Ladriss services in on contract. There are no additional fees to run new scenarios. The study used the Nevada County fairgrounds as the evacuation point to maintain consistency.</p>
B	<p>Did the Ladriss effort consider in its scenarios the influx of recreational visitors during the fire season. Specifically, Scotts Flat and Rollins lakes?</p>
	<p>Lt. Vingom: No. There is a notation in the study about visitors but it is difficult to assess the different "what if" scenarios. However, they can run the models.</p> <p>They might be able to run a scenario with visitors if they estimated numbers.</p> <p>Paige: In case people haven't made the connection; the Evac Simulator on the Ready Nevada County dashboard is powered by Ladriss, so it's essentially the same modeling tool the county is using (although they have more options at their disposal).</p>
C	<p>Were secondary private egress routes factored into the Ladriss effort?</p>
	<p>Lt. Vingom: The study notated some opportunities but lacked detail. The notations were limited to resident egress off private roads. Ladriss can model different road blockages.</p> <p>Lt. Vingom recommends using the Ready Nevada County evacuation map planning tool to run specific scenarios.</p>

3. Discussion Topics:

A	Next steps and funding strategies for priority projects. How to get on priority list?
---	---

Alex Keeble-Toll:

The study identified 5 high risk communities. The needs are mostly costly capital improvement projects. Large grants are driven by the funding source. OES is utilizing the study's appendix to develop their "portfolio" options. For example, the latest round of micro-grants considered these 5 high risk areas applications which improved evacuation processes. For example: the You Bet radio antenna was approved.

OES considers the intersection of wildfire hazard (climate topography, and fuels) and high value resources and assets (community lifelines, community health, natural resources) when identifying priority areas in which to pursue grant funded projects. For example: If you look at projects that have been implemented or are currently funded there is essentially a "ring" of shaded fuel breaks around city centers. Preventing loss of life and property is a priority - the, greatest benefit/impact of lives is heavily weighted. Currently the gap in this ring is the ridge east of our FWCs, extending from Rollins Lake up to Hwy 20. That ridge has the intersection of all three high value resources and assets as defined by the CWPP (which is due out in March 2025). OES is aware there is also a gap in the Chalk Bluff/You Bet area.

OES is currently working on its FY 2024 spending plan. This will include US Forest Service grants. It is expected this will result in 59 individual \$20,000 microgrants. Due federal restrictions around funding (procurement policies etc.) oversight will be provided by OES.

Enrique Manzanilla:

Is there an opportunity to combine multiple projects, in similarly placed areas, into one CEQA?

Alex Keeble-Toll:

We has considered this approach for our CWPP and decided against it as it can disadvantage some communities. That is, for some projects there can be an "easy" pathway to CEQA compliance either because of the type of project or the absence of important species etc. When a larger project area is considered the standards for meeting the requirements of CEQA can make it more difficult to get the "easy" projects on the ground. Our stakeholders have told us that they prefer not to be combined together due to this reason. They do not want to be required to meet that level of review in order to be combined within a larger project.

The good news is OES will be getting additional project staff to assist with activating large projects. OES is taking a project specific approach as opposed to a programmatic approach. That said, OES acknowledges that large projects are more effective and efficient. Please also be advised that FEMA funded (HMGP) grants are intended for projects of at least \$5 million dollars.

B	Priority Projects/Focus areas for all FWCs:
1	<p>Moving ahead with the Shaded Fuel Breaks along major evacuation routes: Idaho Maryland Greenhorn Bennett Brunswick Banner Lava Cap Banner Quaker</p>
	<p>Lt. Vingom: Acknowledged. However, there is not currently site level specific plans.</p> <p>Jeff Peach: We are concerned with some project complexity due to city limits. For example, Idaho Maryland Road is lined with multiple absentee owners. Many are out of area corporations. When trying to address evacuation and defensible space issues, we run into confusion between city/county jurisdictions.</p> <p>Lt. Vingom: Correct. There are jurisdictional issues between city governments and policing services. This does not necessarily cross over to fire districts.</p>
2	<p>Evaluate and implement a shaded fuel break project along Chalk Bluff/You Bet ridge area.</p>
	<p>KC: This is the eastern side of the county that runs from Rollins Lake to HWY 20. This would be a highly effective shaded fuel break.</p> <p>Alex Keeble-Toll: The July 9 Board of Supervisors meeting will include a Good Neighbor Agreement (GNA) between the county and the US Forest Service. We see this as an opportunity to address a significant amount of land as such a large amount is controlled by the US Forest Service.</p>
3	<p>Evaluate rebuilding the Steep Hollow Bridge to provide another evacuation route.</p>

	<p>KC: The repair would allow Lowell Hill Road to connect to I-80; evacuating residents to Reno and Rocklin. This would result in a “net new” evacuation capacity. A highly significant win for an evacuation plan that benefits the entire county.</p> <p>Patrick Perkins: The Steep Hollow Bridge was washed out over 20 years ago. It is no longer on the Caltrans roads list. It would be very difficult to get attention/funding for a road that no longer “exists”. Additionally, bridge repair is a significant cost. Caltrans looks at cost/benefit when addressing such requests. As our residents are used to pulling each other out of vehicle accident sites, our county road risks are underreported. This is the data that Caltrans uses to determine project funding. Due to these circumstances the best approach would be to lobby representatives about the bridge to get it back on the radar.</p> <p>Enrique Manzanilla: Could Ladris propose a scenario in order to produce data to support the value of such a project?</p> <p>Lt. Vingom: No. As the road does not exist within the data set we cannot run that scenario. However, it is recommended to lobby public officials starting with local Board Supervisors and encouraging them to take it to state level.</p>
4	Upgrade relevant codes and enforcement policies.

KC:

Requirements on property owners along evacuation routes should mirror current requirements. PRC code is 10x15 for vehicle access; not evacuation. For safety, defensible space should be the same for county and private roads.

Ricky Martinez:

There have been improvements in this area. There is a new ordinance for parcels of 1 acre or less. However, we only have 2.5 staff to address citations and abatement. The legal process is very lengthy. We can only address the "worst of the worst."

KC:

We have an opportunity to join forces with OES Defensible Space. The FWC are available to communicate, educate, and bring awareness. We just need the county to provide the best practices story for our distribution.

Enrique Manzanilla:

If OES will prepare a best practices document we can share it out via our FWC networks.

Paul Cummings:

We can use grant programming to address this need.

Jeff Peach:

Lower Idaho Maryland Road is a good example. Such dense forest. If we had a best practices document to send to landowners we could solicit more compliance.

Alex Keeble-Toll:

We could utilize the CWPP and the Land Management Plan as a locally vetted peer reviewed best-practices opportunity. The material coming from these planning processes could be developed into Best Practices literature. However, the goal for this educational document is March of 2025.

Diane Marshall:

Ricky, what we need are stories to share. Like the homeowner who refuse to comply and had a \$40,000 lien placed on their property. We need stories of consequences/accountability.

Ricky Martinez:

We are working on an abatement case currently. We may have a story to share soon.

Lt. Vingom:

Education, and focusing on those willing to comply is a faster/better road. This is not an issue we can fine or legislate to gain ground. We can get more accomplished by educating and encouraging neighbors to comply. Using micro

5	The role of private roads and signage in evacuation.
	<p>Lt. Vingom: The is difficult to address as we do not know where the fire will start. Signage could be directing residents directly into the fire. You might consider “road direction” as opposed to “evacuation route” signage. Also, residents who own the easement have sensitivities to signs directing the public through their private road during non-emergency situations.</p> <p>Patrick Perkins: If you do decide to post signs, please contact me for the county road sign standards. We use Zap Manufacturing to produce our signs and they know our standards. These standards include high contrast, high reflective, and sign size.</p> <p>Lt. Vingom: We acknowledge that such signs, in certain remote areas, can be very helpful to first responders. It is easy to get lost in the middle of the night in some of these remote areas.</p>
C	If Time Permits...Additional Project Considerations
1	<p>Greenhorn -Evaluate use of Roundabout at Brunswick/Idaho-Maryland intersection</p>
	<p>Diane Marshall: This is a dangerous intersection. Many ignore posted signs and drive across Brunswick to travel from one side of Idaho Maryland to the other. A roundabout would slow traffic and provide safe way to cross over Brunswick.</p> <p>Lt. Vingom: The county cannot address this issue as that area falls within Grass Valley city limits. Please take this up with the city and ask that they consider this area as a “bottleneck” during an evacuation.</p> <p>Patrick Perkins: It is unlikely a roundabout at this location will happen due to the grade and slope. Traffic cannot slow enough coming down the hill into a proposed roundabout. It would be unsafe.</p> <p>Diane Marshall: In that case can a flashing light (like Bennett) or a traffic signal (like Loma Rica) be considered?</p>
2	<p>Cascade Shores -Evaluate improvements to Pasquale -Evaluate improving county dirt road that connects Cascade Shores to HWY 20</p>

	<p>Mo Graber: (On behalf of Christina Trimble) Similar to KC request for a “net new” evacuation route; can the county owned dirt and gravel road connecting Cascade Shores to HWY 20 be improved so it can be used as a viable evacuation route option?</p> <p>Patrick Perkins: I am very familiar with this road haven driven a dirt bike through it on multiple occasions. It is a very rough road and easy to get lost. It would be unsafe to propose this as an evacuation route in its current condition.</p> <p>The improvements required would be extremely costly. It may be better to consider the Highway Safety Improvement program which provides access to millions of dollars for established roads, in need of improvement, like Pasquale.</p>
3	<p>Greenhorn -Evaluate improving the eastern leg of Greenhorn Rd -Evaluate the Study’s proposal to connect Greenhorn to Lava Cap Mine Rd -Develop the Study’s proposed Jones Ridge evaluation</p>
	<p>Enrique Manzanilla: Regarding Lost Lake Road. This private road connects two county roads. Will the county consider improving, or taking over, this road to ensure a safe evacuation?</p> <p>Patrick Perkins: Generally, no. However, Greenhorn might consider a coordinating a “Permanent Road Division” special district to address this need. It would require the road be brought up to county standards and the residents agree to a special annual tax to fund county maintenance services.</p> <p>Patrick handed out material on this process to the group.</p>
4	<p>You Bet -Educate visitors about wildfire prevention, preparedness, and response issues</p>
	<p>Ran out of time. Item not discussed.</p>

Previously posed questions that have received answers from Lt. Vingom:

Question 1:

Has the County ever designated private roads as secondary evacuation routes?

The County has not designated private roads as secondary evacuation routes. There are many reasons why defining an “evacuation route” is not a current best practice. However, regardless of the terminology it seems your inquiry may be more geared towards whether the County would ever declare domain over a private road and require

it be maintained and open for emergency egress. For a variety of reasons, this is a very unlikely scenario. The goal of the 20-year-old study you reference, and the current evacuation study is to identify options and opportunities around evacuation not to designate evacuation routes.

Question 2:

What are the rights of property owners, along secondary evacuation routes, to control and manage access; especially during an emergency?

The County does not have requirements for private roads to maintain access as “secondary evacuation routes” as the County does not designate roads as evacuation routes. Absent recorded deeds of easement, private property rights allow a property owner to restrict or prevent people from traversing on their property. I would refer you to consult an attorney and/or surveyor for questions about easements.

If a landowner is willing to allow permanent access across their parcel, they can grant that access via an “Easement Deed”. In short, a surveyor would prepare a description of the area where access would be allowed, and that document would then be recorded. This may be something your Firewise Community can proactively work towards.

Question 3:

What is our legal vulnerability to residents who allow egress through their property during an emergency evacuation?

You mentioned a concern of one property owner requiring the Firewise Community to provide evidence of liability coverage specific to their property. In general, it is our recommendation that communities refrain from using the terminology “evacuation route” when identifying critical ingress/egress points in their community as it implies that that road will always be available in an evacuation. However, I would recommend consulting a lawyer for more specific recommendations around liability.

Question 4:

Might funding for improvements for private road made available to address circulation delays in the interim?

OES recognizes that there are challenges and limitations with evacuation improvement especially on private roads. This was the motivation behind including the Community Appendix in the Evacuation Study. OES has been incorporating the results from the Community Appendix into programs. This includes the deployment of the second round of Firewise Microgrants and the Winter Storm Hazardous Vegetation Clean-up that allow for work to be done on private roads and improve private road conditions.

The Nevada County OES Defensible Space Inspectors are also using the study data to focus on areas with the highest risk for conflagration. We recognize that much of the work that needs to be done is on private property. We are continuing to seek funding to develop programs to provide mechanisms for communities to improve their ingress and egress. We appreciate that community groups like Greenhorn FWC are working to position themselves to strategically leverage opportunities like the Evacuation Study, Microgrants, and the CWPP.

