



Canyon Fire: All hands on Deck

It started late on Thursday, August 8, 2024 in the area of Buchanan Road & Canyon Drive, Tuolumne City, in the bottom of the North Fork of the Tuolumne River canyon. By midnight residents in east Tuolumne City, Tuolumne Me-Wuk Rancheria and Ponderosa Hills were evacuating. With steep terrain, heavy brush and limited access, this fire had very high potential to become catastrophic, spreading to many communities.

Initial attack resources from CALFire, Stanislaus National Forest, Tuolumne Fire District and Tuolumne Rancheria Fire Department immediately responded and a Unified Management (CAL Fire & Stanislaus National Forest) was quickly established. Firefighters worked through the night to hold the forward progress of the fire. The next morning brought in the aircraft, more resources, mellow winds and increasing humidity. By Saturday, the fire was 25% contained (line around it) and the size had been held to 80 acres. On Wednesday, August 14 the fire was 100% contained at 85 acres. For 6 days firefighters, worked day and night to protect life and property of our residents. Thank you to the management teams, engine operators, aircraft pilots, dozer operators, water tenders, Sheriff's officers, hand crews, and so many more. No Structures were lost, no injuries or fatalities occurred. Thank you for keeping us safe.

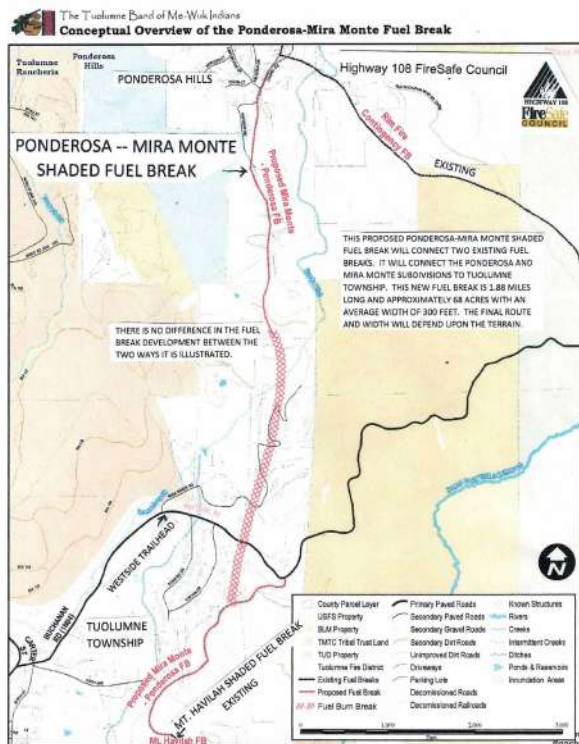
But wait, there is more to the story.

In 2019, the Tuolumne Fire Safe Council received a \$420,000 Grant from the Dept. of Forestry and Fire (CAL FIRE) to construct the **Ponderosa-Mira Monte Shaded Fuel Break**. The purpose of this fuel break was to connect two existing shaded fuel breaks: Rim Fire Contingency and Mt Havala Shaded Fuel Breaks. The grant ran from 2019-2023. The project was 1.9 miles long.

The north end of the Ponderosa-Mira Monte Fuel Break starts where the Rim Fire Contingency Fuel Break connects to Chapel Drive in Ponderosa Hills by Mt Provo. It then goes south along the canyon ridge through the Mira Monte subdivision, across Westside Trail and Buchanan Road, and connects with the Mt Havala Fuel Break at the top of Lady Washington Mine Road (the hill between Tuolumne City and the river canyon).

Special thanks to Stephen Johnson, Project Manager, for making this fuelbreak a reality.

The Canyon Fire was stopped on the Mira Monte section of the fuel break. This particular area was completed in December of 2021 and January of 2022. The fuel reduction work included brush removal, some tree removal to create spacing to discourage crown fires, and limbing low branches of the remaining trees. By reducing fuels, the fire slows and loses intensity (cools). These fuel breaks create openings where aircraft drops and crews can safely attack the front of the fire by dropping retardant and water, cutting line, and backfiring.



Retardent line, back burning along Ponderosa/Mira Monte Fuelbreak.
Blazing Bull Pine on Buchanan Road.

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Last but not Least

Contributions of the Mira Monte Firewise Community

The Mira Monte Firewise Community, formed in 2020 is composed of individual property owners working together to maintain and further reduce flammable fuels on their properties. Each year they coordinate and work to tackle a project, and incrementally they have made progress to reduce fuels in their neighborhood. In addition to weed eating and hiring local businesses to reduce fuels on private property, the Mira Monte Firewise Community has coordinated with Hwy 108 Fire Safe Council, Tuolumne City Fire Department, Tuolumne Rancheria Fire Department, CALFire, Tuolumne Parks and Recreation and the Greater Valley Conservation Corp on a variety of fuel reduction projects within the fuel break area.



Crews working private property, located just above the Westside Trail on the morning of August 9th.

Residents of the Mira Monte Firewise Community dodged a bullet with the Canyon Fire. The outcome could have been completely different if they didn't have the Ponderosa-Mira Monte Shaded Fuel Break and neighbors each doing their part on their personal property. By maintaining individual properties, they are contributing to the community as a whole. That being said, they know the firefighters were the true heroes of this positive outcome. Their quick action and Herculean efforts saved many surrounding communities from a wildfire catastrophe.

Last year they removed low hanging branches from the road so fire trucks could access their narrow road and they installed green reflective house signs so fire fighters could identify residences. This spring thanks to a grant with the Tuolumne Fire Safe Council, they coordinated with Greater Valley Conservation Corp to remove dead brush, logs, and other vegetation along Mira Monte Road. In addition, they weedeated property at the bottom of Mira Monte, which was invaluable for firefighters working on the Canyon Fire to safely stage their engines.



The work of the residents in Mira Monte Firewise Community and the strategic placement of the Ponderosa/Mira Monte Fuel Break provided firefighters with areas of reduced fuels to attack and hold the flames of the Canyon Fire.

**The moral of this story is:
CREATING DEFENSIBLE
SPACE WORKS!**

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<https://tuolumnefiresafe.org/>