

# PRESCRIBED BURN PLAN FOR THE LAKE MATHEWS RESERVE

## OVERVIEW

### 1. Project Background and Justification

- Habitat management for Stephens' kangaroo rat and other species covered by the Lake Mathews Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (MSHCP/NCCP, 1995)
- Reduction of fuel loads (non-native grasses) to minimize risk of uncontrolled wildfire on natural lands.
- Support CalFire's wildland fire training by conducting the large-scale prescribed fire within Fire Management Units (FMUs).

The Lake Mathews Reserve is governed by a Reserve Management Committee comprised of MWD, RCHCA, USFWS, and CDFW. Their purpose is to jointly manage the Reserve for the benefit of 65 species covered by the Lake Mathews MSHCP. Native grasslands with a high abundance of forbs provide habitat for many of those covered species. Unfortunately, in today's Reserve non-native grasses and weeds dominate the landscape and exclude native species. Prescribed burns are one tool the Reserve employs to manage non-native weeds and promote native grasses and forbs in order to enhance habitat for covered species. In addition to species benefits, prescribed burns reduce the load of flash fire fuels which when left unchecked can build up over time and create dangerous wildfire conditions detrimental to public safety. MWD and the RMC included a Fire Management Plan within the management plan for the Reserve that takes into account all the various governing documents and agreements.

### 2. Project Scope

- Identification of proposed burn areas, based on the accumulation of non-native grasses and the potential for burning to improve habitat for native wildlife.
- Avoidance areas within burn units will be identified and protected with fire lines (e.g., cultural sites, riparian areas, tree groves), approximately 10 feet wide, using weed-whackers and approx. 12-in. center line cut to bare soil. Fire retardants may be used in some cases, applied directly to protect trees and other vegetation.
- Cal Fire crews will use incendiary devices to initiate controlled burning and then will strategically direct burning in dense grasses through the burn units.
- Coordination with MWD will ensure appropriate road closures, notifications to property owners, and preparation of responses to inquiries from the public.
- All field work will be performed by Cal Fire crews under the direct supervision of the Reserve Manager

We anticipate burning approximately 163 acres, split between 2 areas (see attached map). The burn areas lie within 2 different fire management units (FMU 1 and 2). The areas feature relatively flat terrain with some rolling hills. The landscape is mostly comprised of non-native grasses with a few patches of Riversidean Sage Scrub (RSS). There are also a few isolated cacti and juniper.

### 3. Goals and Objectives

- Improve public safety and MWD operational security by reducing non-native flashy fuel loads.
- Enhance habitat for species covered by LM MSCHP including the Stephen's kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*).

### 3. Contact Information

1. RCHCA
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  - b. Brian Shomo, RCHCA Director, [bshomo@wrcog.us](mailto:bshomo@wrcog.us), (951) 840- 8070
2. MWD
  - a. Alex Marks, Environmental Compliance, [amarks@mwdh2o.com](mailto:amarks@mwdh2o.com), (714) 514-5802
  - b. John Orsornia, Team Manager WSO, [jorsornia@mwdh2o.com](mailto:jorsornia@mwdh2o.com), (951) 710-5570
  - c. Maria Lopez, Water Quality, [mlopez@mwdh2o.com](mailto:mlopez@mwdh2o.com), (951) 252-7436
3. CalFire
  - a. Matt Escandel, Fire Captain, [matthew.escandel@fire.ca.gov](mailto:matthew.escandel@fire.ca.gov), (951) 238-9373
  - b. Alberto Gonzalez, Environmental Scientist, [alberto.gonzalez@fire.ca.gov](mailto:alberto.gonzalez@fire.ca.gov), 951-238-9593

### 4. Implementation Plan

The proposed burn is tentatively scheduled to occur during the week of October 9 -12 2023. Burn dates may be delayed due to the availability of Cal Fire or the presence of unfavorable weather conditions.

Pre-burn preparations have been carried out by CalFire inmate crews, California Conservation Crews and RCHCA staff. Preparations have included the establishment of fire lines and buffer around sensitive areas. CalFire's archeologists surveyed all proposed burn areas to ensure all culturally sensitive resources are protected and undisturbed by both the preparation and the burn. The entire perimeters of all proposed burn areas have been prepared by the installation of a fire line. The fire line consists of a 10ft. of mowed vegetation with a 2ft. dirt scrape. All sensitive biological areas including RSS, cacti, trees, and rock outcrops will have a 10 foot mowed buffer and a 2ft scratch line surrounding them.

Each burn should be completed in a single day; however a second day may be needed if the weather is cold and damp. Typically, the Reserve staff, CalFire personnel, and any invited guests begin with a pre-burn briefing at 0600. The briefing covers topics such as safety, weather, expected fire behavior, sensitive resources, and the fire's purpose, goals, and objectives including habitat enhancement for rare species and public safety.

After the briefing, the Incident Commander (IC) begins calculating the Probability of Ignition (PIG). The scale ranges from 1-100. Typically, the fire can begin when the PIG reaches 30 but ideally around 40 to 50. After ignition, the fire's effects are continually analyzed in real time and adjusted accordingly to ensure the project's goals and objectives are met while remaining within the thresholds for air borne particulates set by the Air Quality Management District in the pre-approved Smoke Management Plan (SMP).

The fire will be completed and/or extinguished by 1300. Fire personnel will remain onsite for the remainder of the day to snuff out any smoldering embers or suppress isolated flare ups.

## Supporting Authorizations for the Use of Prescribed Burns as a Habitat Management Tool in the Reserve

- Lake Mathews Reserve Fire Management Plan (MWD, 1995)
- General Settlement and Release Agreement (Audubon lawsuit affirmed approval of the Fire Management Plan)
- MSHCP/NCCP
- RMC approval of 2023/2024 annual work plan
  - State of California Standard Agreement (form RM75)

## **5. Timeline/Schedule**

- a. (see following page for detailed daily schedule)

# Lake Mathews Reserve

## Prescribed Burn Schedule

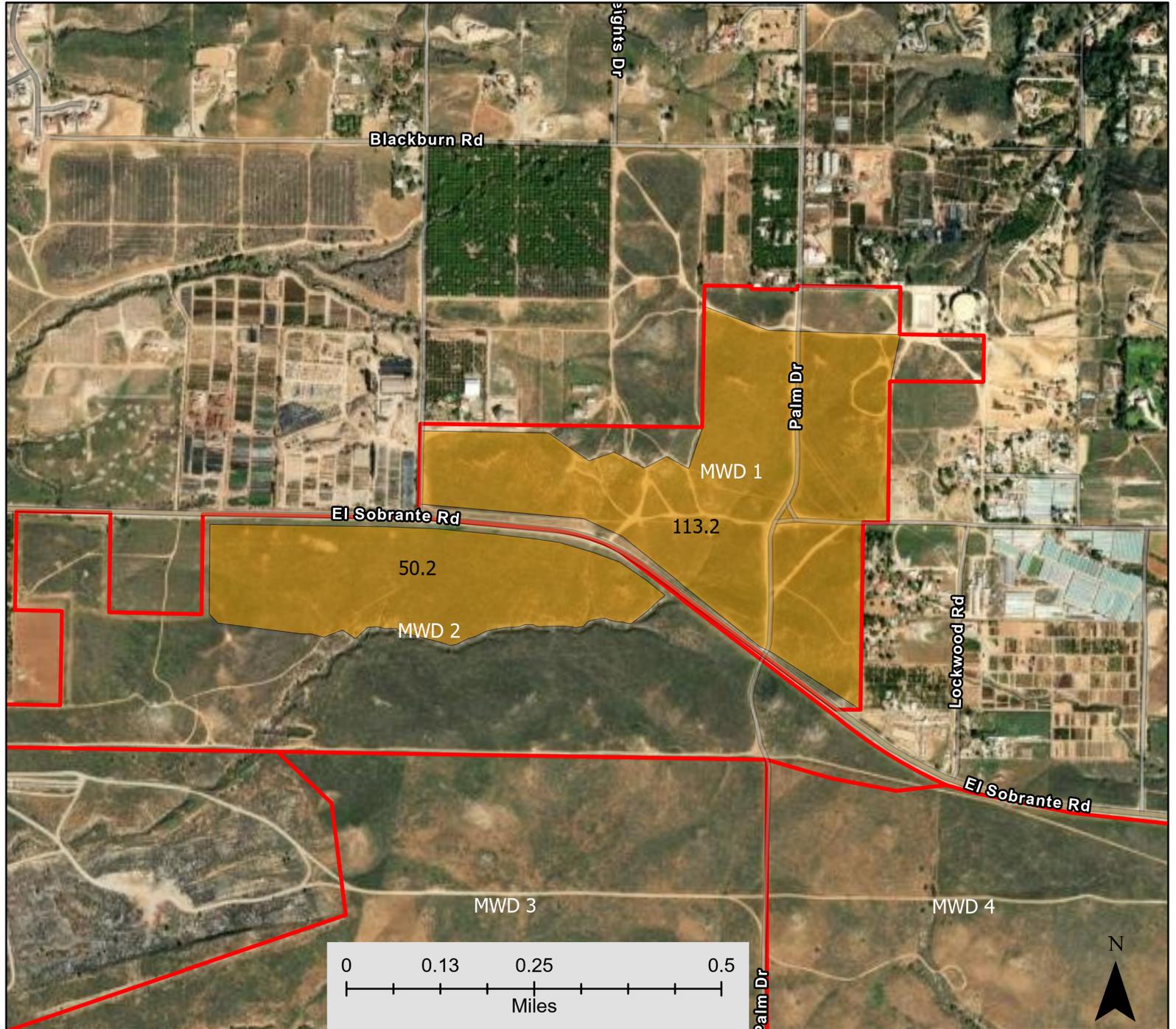
<b>6:00 am</b>	Arrival - CalFire personnel, LMR Reserve Staff, MWD and any invited guests arrive at Lake Mathews Reserve Gate 6.
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6:30 am to 7:00	Command Briefing – Incident Commander and Reserve Staff will conduct a briefing identifying any known safety hazards, burn objective & goals, sensitive areas of concern
7:00 am to 8:00 am	Burn Conditions Test - Weather conditions noted, Probability of Ignition (PIG) calculated, test burn, burn strategy developed based on the ground real time conditions
8:00 am to 12:30 am	Burning (October 9 - 12, 2023)
12:00 pm to 12:30 pm	Break for lunch
1:00 pm to 5:30 pm	Calfire crews remain on site to conduct mop-up of any remaining smoldering sites and extinguish any flare ups that may occur
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm	Reserve Staff evaluates burn success and document any negative findings by walking the burn areas
5:30 pm	All personnel leave for the day

### POCs

Harry Sandoval, RCHCA Natural Resources Manager – Reserve Manager, 951-206-3260  
 Matt Escandel, CalFire Fire Captain, 951-238-9373

# Lake Mathews Reserve October 2023 Prescribed Burn Area



**Burn Area (Acres)**

- 50.2
- 113.2
- FMU

