

Alpine/Viejas | 2023

Community Wildfire Protection Plan



San Diego County



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PREFACE: WHAT IS A COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN?

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are blueprints for preparedness at the neighborhood level. They organize a community's efforts to protect itself against wildfire, and empower citizens to move in a cohesive, common direction. Among the key goals of Alpine/Viejas Fire Safe Council CWPP, which was developed collaboratively by citizens, and federal, state and local management agencies, are to:

- Align with the with the San Diego region's cohesive pre-fire strategy, which includes educating homeowners and building understanding of wildland fire, ensuring defensible space clearing and structure hardening, safeguarding communities through fuels treatment, and protecting evacuation corridors
- Identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatment
- Recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect the community
- Recommend measures to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan

Note: The CWPP is not to be construed as indicative of project "activity" as defined under the "Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, Chapter Three, Projects Subject to CEQA." Any actual project activities undertaken that meet this definition of project activity and are undertaken by the CWPP participants or agencies listed shall meet with local, state, and federal environmental compliance requirements.

The Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County produced this report in partnership with the San Diego County Fire Safe Council. Funding is provided by a National Fire Plan grant from the Cooperative Fire program of the U.S. Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council. In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

SECTION I: SNAPSHOT OF THE COMMUNITY

Each community in San Diego County has a unique history and identity. Below is a description of what sets this area apart, including its landscape, preparedness, and firefighting resources.

A. OVERVIEW

The Alpine Fire Protection District, Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians, and Alpine community members joined together to form the Alpine/Viejas Fire Safe Council. The communities of Alpine and Viejas are located in San Diego's inland east county with an area of approximately 40 square miles in the foothills of Cuyamaca Peak and Mt. Laguna. The population of the District and Viejas community is approximately 18,000 people who primarily live in single family dwellings.

In addition, there are several multi-family apartment complexes, mobile home parks, and shopping centers throughout the communities. The Viejas Hotel and Casino is a multi-story hotel and casino complex located on Willows Road.



B. LANDSCAPE

TOPOGRAPHY

The communities of Alpine and Viejas lie in the foothills of Cuyamaca and Mt. Laguna. Generally, there is a steady increase in elevation as you travel from west to east. The lowest elevation is in Peutz Valley at 1000 ft with the highest elevation is on Viejas Mountain at 4000 ft.

Most of the undeveloped land is covered by chaparral. A few exceptions exist: non-native vegetation dominates in the populated areas; some grassland exists in Wrights Field and on the Viejas Reservation; and riparian and bottomland vegetation grows along the Sweetwater River and Viejas Creek.

The condition class of this vegetative fuel is Fire Behavior Fuel Model 3. Fire Behavior Fuel Model 3 means that approximately one-third or more of the stand of vegetation is dead or nearly dead. Multi-year droughts have contributed to dead fuel loading of more than 50%. Oak and pine trees in the area have been and are subject to beetle infestation. The southeast portion of the planning area experiences oak mortality as high as 30%. Level 3 fuels are fires in this grass group display the highest rates of spread and fire intensity under influence of winds.

FIRE HISTORY

- Laguna Fire – September 1970. Burned 175,425 acres, 382 homes, 8 deaths. Santa Ana conditions.
- Viejas Fire – January 2001. Burned 10,353 acres, 10 homes.
- Cedar Fire – October 2003. Burned 280,278 acres, 2232 homes, 15 deaths. Santa Ana conditions.
- Horse Fire – July 2006. Burned 16,681 acres. Prevailing wind conditions.
- Witch Fire – October 2007. Burned 197,990 acres, 1040 homes, 2 deaths. Santa Ana conditions.
- Harris Fire – October 2007 Burned 90,440 acres, 206 homes, 5 deaths. Santa Ana conditions.
- West Fire – July 2018 Burned 504 acres, 39 homes, 0 deaths. Santa Ana conditions.
- Valley Fire – September 2020 Burned 16,390 acres, 32 homes, 0 deaths. Moderate winds conditions.

KEY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Water systems and waterways
 - Sweetwater River
 - Viejas Creek
 - Alpine Creek
 - El Capitan Reservoir
 - Palo Verde Lake (Reservoir)
 - Little Lake (Palo Verde)
- Residential Structures
 - 4500 homes
- Protected Habitat
 - Areas of Thorn Mint and Quino Checkerspot Butterfly on Wrights Field

- Landmarks
 - Wrights Field
 - New County Park (adjacent to Wrights Field)
- Businesses
 - Over 600
- Historical Sites
 - Women's Club
 - Benjamin Arnold House (Kasitz Kastle)

MAPS

The sponsor of this CWPP has included a series of maps depicting the site and situation of the Alpine Community (Appendix B). The following maps are visual aids from which community members can assess and make recommendations.

1. Area Communities Map
2. Fire Hazard Severity Map
3. Fire History (2000-Present)
4. Evacuation Map

C. FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES

Everyone plays a role in protecting Alpine and Viejas from wildfire. Below are the primary agencies responsible for firefighting and community emergency response:

Agency	Function
US Forest Service	Wildland protection of federal lands
CAL FIRE/San Diego County Fire Protection District	Structural, wildland, and emergency medical services
Alpine Fire Protection District	Structural, wildland, and emergency medical services
Viejas Fire Department	Structural, wildland, and emergency medical services
California Highway Patrol	Road closures, assists in evacuations
San Diego Sheriff's	Road closures, issues evacuations

SECTION II: COLLABORATION

Strong working relationships are critical in ensuring that our communities are well-prepared. This section describes those key partners and their roles in developing this CWPP.

A. KEY PARTNERS

The Alpine/Viejas Firewise Community led the development of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), with guidance and support from several partners. The development team included representatives from the agencies described in the table below.

Organization	Roles / Responsibilities
Alpine Fire Protection District	Oversee development of CWPP and decision-making, community risk and value assessment, preside over public and agency level meetings
United States Forest Service (USFS)	Conduct community risk and value assessment, develop community protection priorities, and establish fuels treatment project areas and methods
CAL FIRE	Conduct community risk and value assessment, develop community protection priorities, and establish fuels treatment project areas and methods
San Diego County Fire Protection District	Issues building construction permits through development services.
California Department of Transportation (Cal Trans)	Continue to implement 5-year plan for vegetative fuels management along Interstate 8 corridor
Viejas Fire Department	Conduct community risk and value assessment, develop community protection priorities, and establish fuels treatment project areas and methods. Provide input regarding tribal land hazards and treatments.
Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Program	Support for Curbside Chipping and Defensible Space Assistance Programs, help with Outreach Programs, mapping assistance, funding for the creation and maintenance of fuel breaks.
Back Country Land Trust	Work to remove invasive flammable Arundo from waterways in Alpine and adopt Wright's Field: North and South Fuel breaks
Alpine SD Firewise USA	Nationally recognized home ignition zone reduction program to support public education, workshops, outreach to public, provides home inspections on fuels reduction and defensible space

SECTION III: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION

Understanding wildfire risk is a key building block in preventing the loss of property and life. This section discusses efforts to build awareness, starting with the individual.

A. PRIORITIES

Our priorities are:

- Provide education on defensible space and home hardening.
- Educate community members on the benefits of community-wide defensible space (Firewise USA).
- Educate the public on Ready, Set Go, specifically regarding understanding the difference between an Evacuation Warning & Evacuation Order (Ready, Set, Go!).

B. COMPLETED AND / OR ONGOING PROJECTS

Some examples of completed projects are:

- Distribution of educational materials such as Ready, Set, Go!, “Protecting Your Home From Wildfire”, AVFSC Brochure, “Home Alone”, and “Going, Going, Gone”. These materials educate community members on topics such as defensible space, home hardening, evacuation preparedness, local programs, evacuation plans for school age children, and palm tree safety.

C. FUTURE PROJECTS

Some examples of future projects are:

- Participate in the Alpine Fire Protection District’s Open House to connect with community members and share about our programs.
- Host a Wildland Urban Interface Workshop and/or Last Chance Survival Simulation Workshop in partnership with the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County.
- Participate in community events whenever possible to share about our new Fire Safe Council.
- Present about our programs and message to community organizations, service groups and faith-based organizations, and homeowners’ associations to grow our stakeholder network.
- Pop-Ups outside Baron’s Market to share our message and programs.
- Participate in SDG&E’s Wildfire Preparedness Events in the Park.
- Send direct mailers of New Evacuation Plan to all Homeowners and Businesses in our footprint.
- Develop and deploy a website to be used for registration for all defensible programs and for general information about wildfire issues in the community.
- Develop an email distribution list for the Alpine and Viejas communities.
- Publish articles in the Alpine Sun.



SECTION IV: STRUCTURAL HARDENING

Long before a wildfire sparks, there are numerous steps that residents can take to protect their homes and other structures. This section describes some of those efforts.

A. PRIORITIES

Many homes in Alpine were constructed prior to many of the current wildfire safety codes, particularly regarding attic ventilation, roofing materials, and window design. The local authority having jurisdiction (LAHJ) strongly encourages homeowners each year to use a Sunrise Powerlink Mitigation Grant to retrofit each of these concerns.

In addition to encouraging homeowners to make direct improvements to their homes, the LAHJ also encourages them to reduce their homes' ignitability by:

- Increasing the distance between the fuel bed and a structure to lessen direct flame impingement and to reduce the likelihood that flying embers initiate a structural fire.
- Removing flammable infrastructure such as fences, decks, and flowerbeds in Zone 0 (within 5 feet of the home).
- Inspecting their private water storage tanks annually.

B. Completed and / or ongoing Projects

While the Sunrise Powerlink Mitigation Grants Program is not a program of AVFSC, it complements our existing DSAP and Chipping services to make our community more wildfire resilient. AVFSC continues to promote this program and refer community members to this resource.

As of 2023, parcels located in the Alpine Community are eligible to apply for Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Grants. The objective is to assist homeowners in home hardening existing features which may not be WUI rated. Provide education on items to retrofit or replace making the home more resilient against wildfire. These projects are ongoing, homeowners may be in process of replacing single pane windows for dual pane single glass tempered windows, replacing hollow core exterior doors, replacing wooden garage doors, or retrofitting the attic vents, to reduce ember intrusion.

C. FUTURE PROJECTS

Alpine/Viejas Fire Safe Council will continue to promote the Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Grants Program. This program assists homeowners with the creation and maintenance of defensible space around structures as well as support with home hardening projects. Examples of home hardening projects include, replacing shake shingle roof to Class A fire rated, replacing wood garage doors with non-combustible metal, retrofitting existing attic vents with ember

resistive vents, installing exterior wall coverings, replacing windows with dual pane single tempered, and upgrading skylights, decks, and patios to WUI compliant. Residents in Alpine have been eligible for grants each year since 2012. Grants will be available until 2056.

SECTION V: DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Creating a buffer between buildings and the grass, trees, shrubs, and other wildland areas surrounding it are essential to improving survivability. This section looks at efforts to build this key layer of protection.

A. PRIORITIES

- Continue to educate homeowners on new and existing requirements for defensible space.
- Continue to provide services to the community to assist with defensible space creation and maintenance, such as our Defensible Space Assistance Program (DSAP) and Curbside Chipping Programs.
- Promote adaptive ways to link existing fuel breaks created over the last decade and create a maintenance schedule.

B. COMPLETED AND / OR ONGOING PROJECTS

- Provide Defensible Space Assistance for low-income, disabled, and/or elderly residents who may not be able to complete the work themselves due to physical ability or income restrictions.
- Provide Curbside Chipping to assist residents with the disposal of vegetation they've cleared when creating their defensible space. We do this through our established Curbside Chipping Program, residents must complete an application and service is provided in predetermined neighborhood zones.
- Continue to issue weed abatement notices to notify homeowners when they are not in compliance with current defensible space codes.
- Provide educational Home Ignition Zone assessments to educate community members on their structure vulnerability.
- Collaborate with weed abatement contractors for low-cost or free defensible space work.

C. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Create new and support maintenance of existing defensible space around buildings.
- Identify residents located in the fire district to assist them through the Defensible Space Assistance Program (DSAP).

SECTION VI: FUELS TREATMENT

Fuels are combustible materials such as grasses, leaves, plants, shrubs and trees that feed flames. This section describes efforts to treat and manage these materials in the community.

A. PRIORITIES

- In partnership with our fire agency partners, we will work to identify the amount of fuel breaks that are crucial for the safety of the Alpine and Viejas communities.
- Create and maintain a continuous and cohesive community wide fuel break.

B. COMPLETED AND ONGOING PROJECTS

Project Name	Responsible Agency	Method	Acres	Status
Ranches of Palo Verde	Ranches of Palo Verde FSC	Mastication	100	Complete 2007, Homeowners maintain
Sweetwater	Viejas/USFS/GAFSC	Mastication	74	Complete 2008
Alpine Community Defense Project	USFS, GAFSC	NEPA Study	545	Complete 2018
Anderson	USFS/GAFSC	Cutting/Pile burning/Spraying	100	Complete 2023
Sweetwater	USFS/GAFSC	Cutting/Pile burning/Spraying	100	Complete 2018
Wright's Field (1) North (2) South	GAFSC/AFP	Cutting/Mastication	35	Complete (1) 2019 (2) 2020
Viejas Extension	GAFSC/AFP	Cutting/Mastication/Spraying	14	Complete 2020

C. FUTURE PROJECTS

Our immediate focus will be on a planning strategy that links together existing and future fuels reduction projects. These linkages will provide contiguous corridors of protection along a perimeter of the Alpine area, especially in the north and east of each of our local communities. Areas that might be linked include defensible space projects around groups of homes and evacuation routes; natural and/or manmade fuel breaks that have been made through agency efforts; and burned areas. Priority will then be given to those areas that can achieve the greatest degree of protection with the limited resources available.

SECTION VII: EVACUATION PLANNING

Identifying key corridors in and out of a community – as well as temporary safe refuge areas – is essential to being prepared for evacuation. This section provides an overview of the PACE system (primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency) used to plan ahead.

Evacuation planning is a dynamic process subject to the nuances of each community. Below is an overview of the Alpine/Viejas communities' key ingresses and egresses, as well as designated evacuation corridors, Temporary Safe Refuge Areas, completed projects, priorities and future projects.

A. OVERVIEW OF INGRESS AND EGRESS

1. Alpine Blvd – Is an arterial means of egress running east and west. Has direct access points to freeway on ramps at Dunbar Road, Tavern Road, W. Willows and E. Willows Roads.
2. Arnold Way – Is two lane access road connecting Alpine downtown and densely populated areas with multiple multi-family apartments. Feeder to East and West.
3. Victoria Drive – Is a two-lane loop road serving all of homes north of the freeway.
4. S. Grade Road – is a two-lane loop road that serves all neighborhoods south of the freeway. It turns in to Victoria Road at Alpine Blvd and connects to Arnold Way on the west.
5. Harbison Canyon Road – segment two lane road that connects on Arnold Way and extends south towards community of Dehesa.
6. Tavern Road – major freeway on ramp and off ramp. Access points on the north are Victoria Drive and south of the freeway connects Alpine Blvd, Arnold Way and S. Grade Road.

B. DESIGNATED EVACUATION CORRIDORS AND TEMPORARY REFUGE AREA(S) (TRA)

Using the PACE system, the Community of Alpine has these options designated for use during emergencies (see Appendix B for maps)

Primary – Alpine Blvd and Interstate 8 freeway, Tavern Road

Alternate – Arnold Way, Victoria Drive, South Grade Road, Harbison Canyon Road

Contingent – All additional connecting roads

Emergency – None

Temporary refuge areas:

- Albertsons Parking lot: 2955 Alpine Blvd, Alpine
- Joan MacQueen Middle School: 2001 Tavern Road, Alpine
- Los Coches Creek Middle School: 9669 Dunbar Lane, El Cajon
- Queen of Angels Church: 2583 W. Victoria Drive, Alpine
- Shadowhills Elementary School: 8770 Harbison Canyon, Alpine
- Sycuan Casino: 5469 Casino Way Dehesa
- Viejas Casino: 5000 Willows Road, Alpine
- Viejas Recreation Center: 1B Viejas Grade Road, Alpine
- Viejas Outlet Center: 5005 Willows Road, Alpine

C. PRIORITIES

The key priorities for maintaining evacuation access for residents and visitors to Alpine:

- Prioritize education about the community's Evacuation Plan, even when there have not been any recent wildfire events. During outreach events, specific tools such as the Evacuation Education Card will be referenced.
- Work with San Diego County and Caltrans to maintain roadside brushing on the four major evacuation routes.
- Educate and encourage homeowners to comply with all roadside clearing codes.

D. COMPLETED AND / OR ONGOING PROJECTS

Alpine Viejas FSC has completed an updated PACE Evacuation Plan for our community. Additionally, we have determined multiple temporary refuge areas that can be utilized during an evacuation. We will continue to provide education to our community on these routes and work with partners to develop plans for vegetation maintenance on them.

E. FUTURE PROJECTS

We plan to prioritize outreach and education regarding our PACE evacuation plan at community meetings and events. Residents will be informed of the multiple evacuation routes in Alpine through our updated evacuation maps.

SECTION VIII: OTHER MITIGATION & PREPAREDNESS PROJECTS

There are countless ways that communities can act to protect themselves ahead of wildfires. This section details additional past, current and future efforts underway that were not previously mentioned.

A. PRIORITIES

The main priority is to continue implementing fire-code compliant address signs across our community. These signs make it easier for first responders to find your home in poor visibility conditions.

B. COMPLETED AND / OR ONGOING PROJECTS

None at this time.

C. FUTURE PROJECTS

We will work to install 2,000 approved reflective address marker signs during the next few years.

SECTION IX: SIGNATURES

This plan must be approved by the following key parties: the local Fire Safe Council president, the chief of the primary responding fire agency and chair of the CWPP review committee. This section includes these signoffs.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan, as developed for Alpine/Viejas:

- Was collaboratively developed and meets the intent of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) in emphasizing the need for agencies to work collaboratively with communities in developing hazardous fuel reduction projects, and places priority on treatment areas identified by communities themselves in a CWPP. Interested parties and federal land management agencies in the vicinity of this CWPP have been consulted.
- Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment that will protect areas within this CWPP.
- Recommends measures to reduce ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.
- Is intended for use as a planning and assessment tool only, utilizing a compilation of community issues/goals and projected fire mitigation strategies. The CWPP is not to be construed as indicative of project “activity” as defined under the “Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, Chapter Three, Projects Subject to CEQA.” Per the Community Guide, Section 3.1.1, “CEQA only applies to public agency decisions to approve, or actions to carry out, a discretionary project.” Any actual project activities meeting this definition of project activity and undertaken by the CWPP participants or agencies listed shall meet with local, state, and federal environmental compliance requirements.
- Assists and encourages compliance with current county and state fire code standards.

X DocuSigned by:
Jason McBroom
6CA073CCE090457...
Jason McBroom, Fire Marshal
Certified Wildfire Mitigation Specialist

SAN DIEGO COUNTY COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PREVENTION PLANS REVIEW COMMITTEE:

This CWPP was reviewed and recommended for approval by the San Diego Community Wildfire Protection Plan Review Committee as demonstrated by the signature below.

X DocuSigned by:
Donald H. Butz
B04F023526B04F8...
Don Butz, President
Fire Safe Council of San Diego County

The CAL FIRE Unit Chief has final signing authority on CWPPs in San Diego County. The signature below attests that the standards listed in the section above and the content of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan are proposed to be met and mutually accepted.

X DocuSigned by:
Tony Mecham
69A84432E235429...
Tony Mecham, Unit Chief
CAL FIRE San Diego Unit

Participating State, Local, or Tribal Fire Agency Representatives:

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Brian Boggeln, Fire Chief
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Kyle Smith, District Ranger
Descanso District

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Robert Pfohl
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Robert Pfohl, Fire Chief
Viejas Fire Department

SECTION X: APPENDICES

This section includes important additional information that complements other portions of the plan.

APPENDIX A: MEETING TRACKING DOCUMENTS

This CWPP was developed for the greater community of Alpine, through a series of community meetings. The Alpine/Viejas members who contributed to the document include the following:

Key Contributors to the Projects implemented in this CWPP are:

Jason McBroom	AFPD
Scott Grasmick	USFS
Eric Just	CAL FIRE
Al Herrera	Cal Trans District-11
Anthony O'Boyle	SD County Sheriff
Bonnie Burchill	Sunrise Powerlink Fire Mitigation Program
Murali Pasumarthi	Traffic Engineering Manager

FIGURE 2: FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY MAP

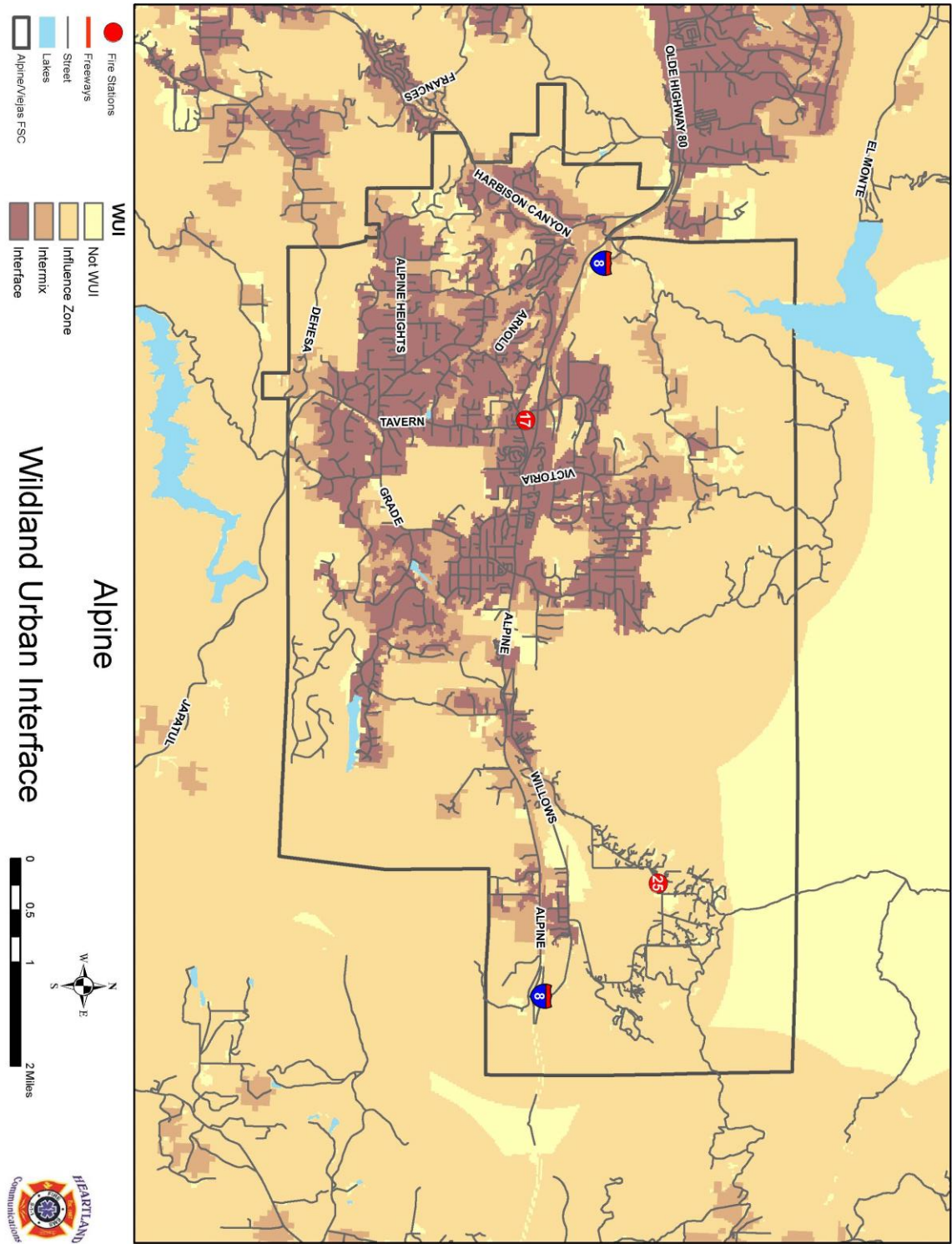


FIGURE 3: FIRE HISTORY 2000-2019

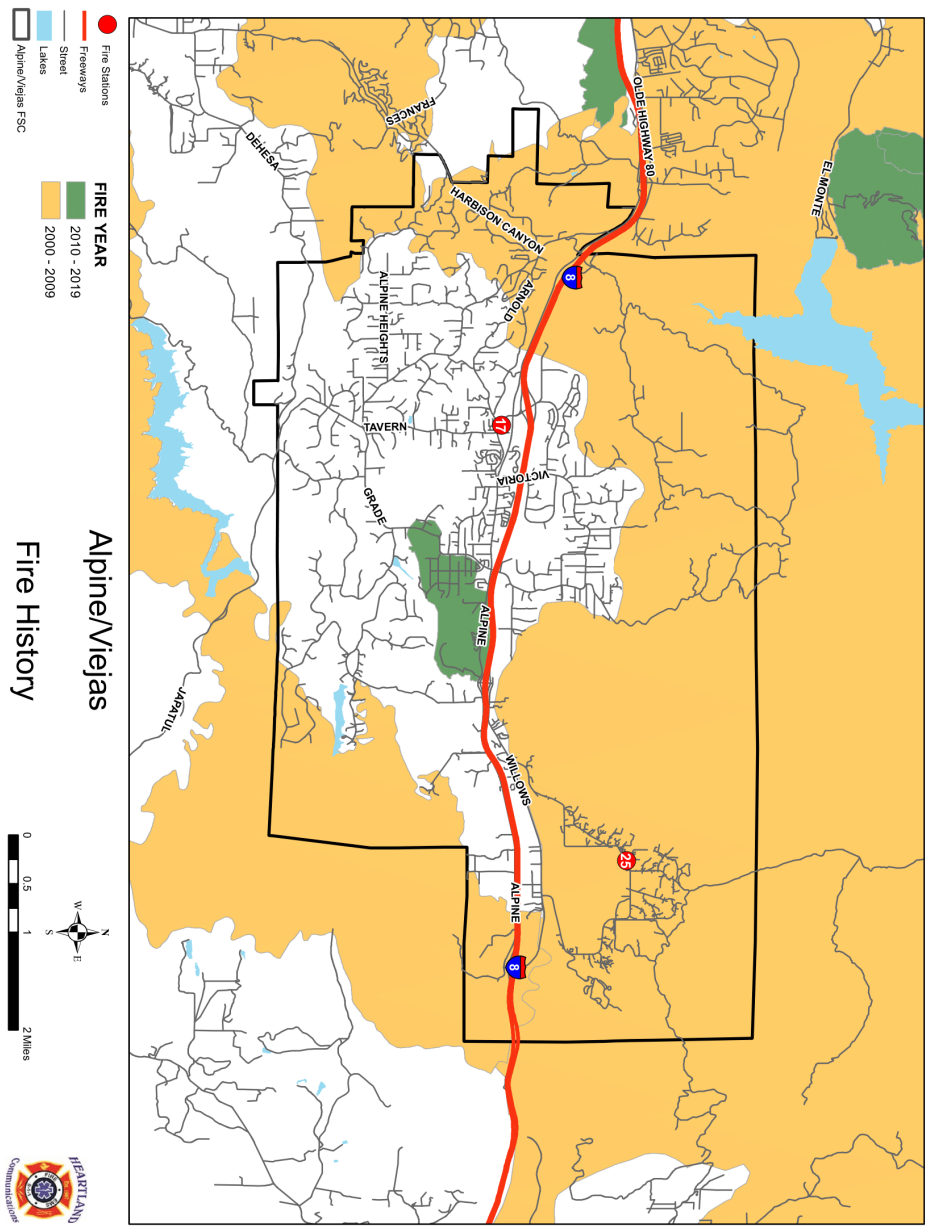


FIGURE 4: EVACUATION MAP

