



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



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The McClatchy Analysis and Destined to Burn Series... The Rest of the Story

Tahoe City, Calif. April 11, 2019 – A collaborative effort to put a spotlight on policy issues affecting fire prevention was released by the Sac Bee today in a series titled “Destined to Burn.” But there is more to the story.

The Sac Bee released the McClatchy Analysis to put a spotlight on policy issues to encourage conversations in the halls of the state Capitol about policy supporting defensible space and safer building standards. The series highlights areas of concern, actions to be taken, and risks to be aware of using data provided by Cal Fire. What today’s Associated Press release did not address was the rest of the conversation from our interview. The article is a call to action, using the Camp Fire as the wakeup call for California. The story failed to tell that the Tahoe Basin had our wakeup call in 2007 after the 2007 Angora Fire. It missed the opportunity to share the successes that the Basin has experienced as a result of the collaboration, policy changes, code enhancements, and other efforts that were borne of Angora’s devastation, and should serve as a road map for the rest of the state.

The Tahoe Basin set the bar for what California can accomplish with the momentum growing in the aftermath of the Camp Fire. The Basin consists of two states, five counties, ten fire agencies and some of the strictest environmental regulations in the state. In 2007 the California-Nevada Tahoe Basin Fire Commission was formed and the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team was organized as a result of Angora. For the past 12 years steady progress has been made in the Basin through the implementation of a multi-jurisdictional fuel reduction and wildfire prevention strategy. An unprecedented level of cooperation by federal, state, and local entities has been instrumental to achieve progress through a continuous-cycle Fire Adapted Community approach; creating a fire-resistant built environment, increasing the amount of defensible space in Tahoe’s communities, expanding fuels reduction treatments, and improving efficiency in the use of prescribed fire. *As a result, over 33,000 acres of Defense Zone Initial Entry Projects have been treated with approximately 3,000 acres treated each year since these efforts began.*

We discussed local fire prevention efforts and the challenges we face with so many vacation homes. We offer free defensible space inspections to assist residents with education and resources to keep their homes fire resistant. It’s difficult to educate visitors about our fire restrictions and why they need to be respected and followed. Visitors want to go to the forest and have a camp fire with their family, and as such those recreational fires continue to be the number one cause of fires in the Tahoe Basin. Since the 2017-2018 season, the District has doubled its efforts developing pre-incident attack plans, evacuation guides, and notification systems.

California *is* destined to burn, as it did pre-European settlement, and we have to use managed fires to eventually reduce the occurrence of disaster fires. We hope this Sac Bee series achieves its intent. The work that we’re doing in the Tahoe Basin is improving our odds, but there is much work to be done. Waiving building restrictions in the interest of the state’s housing crisis is waiving safety. Insurance companies need customers, and rather than abandoning California, we hope to see insurers incentivize homeowners to retrofit homes with fire resistant material, and we hope to see grants that will also help with these efforts.

For more information visit tahoe.livingwithfire.info. #####