

**Cal-IPC Symposium 2005**  
**DISCUSSION GROUP: FIRE, FUEL TREATMENTS, AND WEEDS**  
**Friday, October 7, 2005**

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The session opened with people briefly introducing themselves and stating their general area of interest. Two topics surfaced as being of greatest interest: 1) fuelbreaks/fuel treatments as sources of weed spread; and 2) fire as a tool for weed management.

Joanna reviewed the major themes that emerged from last year's fire working group:

- Fuelbreaks and the potential for spread of invasive plants
- Invasions caused or exacerbated by fire
- How to use fire to reduce invasives.

**Discussion Then Continued as Follows:**

Rolland Mathers of Shelterbelt Builders, Berkeley, wanted strategies for battling with local fire departments over the definition of fuelbreaks and fuelbreak designs; i.e. was it always necessary to go down to mineral soil or could unmowed, standing annual grass be left in pockets.

Similar concerns in San Diego where private land owners are getting vegetation information from fire departments and are even threaten with fines if landscaping/grounds maintenance does not meet fire department specifications.

Someone mentioned Maria Alvarez of Golden Gate National Recreation Area found perennial grass weed invasion into fuelbreaks was less severe where fire crews trimmed coastal sage brush to 8 cm, not all the way to the ground.

East Bay Regional Parks Comment: Repercussion from Oakland Hills Fire was the creation of assessment districts to reduce fuels and set species targets. Fuel reduction is the # 1 priority so only after this need is met can they take new and different steps.

One difficulty is current Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) fuelbreak design is they don't plan for extreme fire conditions.

Joanna Clines: Central Sierra fuels crew actually work with her and want to know what vegetation she (botanist) wants in her fuelbreaks. Vegetation one of the characteristics considered when designing fuelbreak.

Rob Klinger: Helpful to break this issue into WUI and wildland situations. Some literature about planting in fuelbreaks is available in Forest Service documents. A lot of anecdotal informal available as well.

Bonnie Davis: erosion control straw can be an ignition source. Caltrans projects worrisome.

Jim Dempsey of Caltrans (*note: this should be either Jim Dempsey of state parks or Jim Hanson of Caltrans*): fuel management drives work in right of ways. How low can you mow without wiping out native populations. Interested in a planned fuel break.

Dale Schmidt: El Portal. Isn't enough literature to help you plan your fuelbreak system. So he focuses on highest flammable plants under normal fire conditions. You need to get on-the-ground fire guys to help you make fuelbreak decisions.

Various opinions expressed by group as to value of fire department vegetation knowledge. Agreed fire guys know what burns under what conditions but are less knowledgeable about what comes in after fire or fuelbreak construction.

Not all Fire Departments buy into the same beliefs. In many counties bare mineral soil is the preferred option because of Type I and II Engines (city vehicles) limitations.

Rob Klinger: large issue of trade offs: to what extent do you want to emphasize weeds vs. homes.

Rob Klinger: Write down these bigger issues and post them on a listserv so folks can continue the discussion.

Fuelbreaks as weed vectors vs. necessity of fuelbreaks. Can you protect communities while still dealing with invasive species. Issues differ in WUI and forest systems.

Does anyone know of a video for homeowners on why scotch broom is bad around their homes? with footage of flaming broom? Or literature that compares fire performance of natives vs invasive species?

Bill Baxter—gorse photos or fire footage?

Fire Safe councils provide landscaping info for homeowners. Should include information on invasive species.

Dale Schmidt: Fire fuel modeling problematic when dealing with invasives because existing models don't include weed species. El Portal is also trying to get video footage of fire in "under represented" fuel types.

PSW Redding—modeling masticated fuels

Perhaps Cal-IPC can disseminate more info regarding weeds and fuelbreaks.

Maintenance of fuelbreaks is a critical component of success.

Need to promote weed issues to fire departments and Firesafe Councils.

### **Topic Shifted to Fire as A Management Tool/ Fire for Weed Control**

Question: after burning coastal scrub last fall, vicia and *Holcus lanatus* invaded. What should we do next?

- coastal scrub/fire interval information is available in the literature.
- frequent fire return intervals easily convert this habitat type to weedy grasslands.
- past history is important to know before embarking on fire management of existing community. might inform what to expect from seedbank.

- literature suggestion: Walter Wessman and John Oleery. coastal Sage Scrub structures and fire Impacts.

Question: Prescribed burning: Is it worth it to Manage Grasslands?

- Janet Klein: for managing woody weeds in savannah/woodlands, handcrews/herbicides gave better results than prescribed burning;
- know the historic fire regime before embarking on burn program;
- have clear goals and objectives: what are you trying to accomplish?
- define terms correctly: prescribed burning/broadcast burning/ etc.

Question: can you manage *Phalaris aquatica* with fire?

- Denali Beard at State Parks has some information.
- 1 agency has burned it and sprayed the resprouts. Only in the 1<sup>st</sup> year so no results yet.

Rob Klinger: Cal-IPC could establish a database on what people are finding when they burn weeds. Quantitative data would be great but even qualitative data would be good to know. How do different species respond in different area?

- database vs listserve? most people agreed they are already on too many listserves. would prefer to go to database at their own convenience.

Closing Thought from Kyle Merriam: using fire to control invasives often promotes weed invasion.

Next big topic that should be discussed within Cal-IPC: using fire as a site prep for restoration.

Should have Integrated Vegetation Management, not just Integrated Pest Management.

### **Flip Chart Notes**

- Fuelbreaks Potential to Spread Weeds
  - Urban Interface
  - Forested Systems
  
- Need better information on what natives can be planted into fuelbreaks and where.
- Collaborate with Fire Safe Councils
- More Information needed for public
- Great to have video of scotch broom burning and threatening homes/
- Encourage fuel modeling for more common invasive species.
- Need to underscore the importance of fuelbreak maintenance.
- Establish a database for quantitative studies and observational reports of weed species response to fire and fuelbreak system performance. Put on Cal-IPC website.

### **Post-script**

Rob Klinger is pursuing the database idea with input from Steve Schoenig. In a recent email, Steve made the following suggestion:

“I think compiling data on post-burn invasives response is a great idea. One simple way to utilize existing infrastructure is to have these fire reports put into the NRPI/CalWEED database at UCD-ICE and then make sure they are tagged as a group to allow a restricted display and search on a CalIPC webpage/portal.

Another way more powerful way to proceed is a new database hosted on the CalIPC website. Probably could be done with a small but not insignificant amount of programming effort and the effort of someone knowledgeable to set things up from a program side.”