

APPENDIX 5: PIONEER/VOLCANO PLANNING UNIT COMMUNITY FEATURES

CONTENTS

Pioneer/Volcano Community Features	102
5.1. Social and Political Setting	102
5.1.1. Cultural Resources.....	102
5.1.2. Population and Demographics	102
5.1.3. Community Legal Structure and Jurisdictional Boundaries	103
5.1.4. Infrastructure	103
5.2. Public and Industrial Fire Management.....	104
5.2.1. USDA Forest Service: Eldorado National Forest (ENF).....	104
5.2.2. USDI Bureau of Land Management: Mother Lode Field Office.....	104
5.2.3. Industrial Lands	105
5.3. Community Planning Context	105
5.3.1. Land Use Goals and Objectives.....	106
5.3.2. Land Use and Development Trends	106
5.4. Community Infrastructure to Address and Implement Objectives.....	107

PIONEER/VOLCANO COMMUNITY FEATURES

5.1. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SETTING

The Planning Unit is not a cohesive community but rather a series of large and small subdivisions. In some areas, significant distances separate individual subdivisions. Routes of travel to the urban areas can define community identity. This separation and individual community identities make it difficult to work collectively to solve common problems. The only community group actively working to coordinate and share information among the various homeowner association and special districts is the Upcountry Community Council.

5.1.1. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Much of the reason for living in the Planning Unit is related to the natural beauty of the area. Spectacular scenery is virtually everywhere. In addition to the landscape, several other assets enrich the area's ambiance. These are:

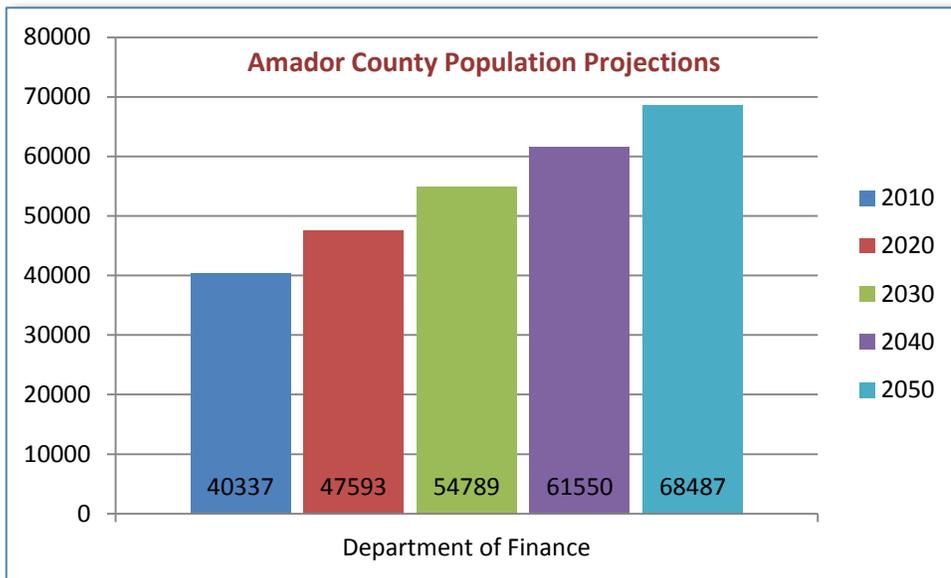
- Molly Joyce Park
- Pioneer Park
- Historic buildings in the community of Volcano

5.1.2. POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The Pioneer/Volcano Planning Unit is the most populous of all nine Planning Units. There are approximately 3353 homes with an estimated population of 4713. There is an abundant supply of undeveloped parcels that eventually will develop adding additional structures and humans to the area. All alternatives for land use zoning proposed in the County General Plan update include residential zoning for the Highway 88 corridor. This area will likely continue to be one of the most desired living areas in the county.

The California Department of Finance projects an increase of over 25,000 additional residents by 2050 (see chart next page). The average project increase for each decade between 2010 and 2050 is 7032.

Figure 1 Population Projections



5.1.3. COMMUNITY LEGAL STRUCTURE AND JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES

All of Pioneer/Volcano Planning Unit is unincorporated. Two local fire departments, Amador Fire Protection District and Lockwood Fire Protection District provide structure fire protection to the area (see *Appendix 6 – Fire Protection Organizations for additional information*). The Amador Water Agency provides domestic water to a portion of the Planning Unit. Police services are the responsibility of the Amador County Sheriff.

5.1.4. INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation infrastructure in the Planning Unit varies greatly. Since many of the subdivisions were developed before the County adopted more stringent subdivision requirements, these early subdivisions lack adequate roads for fire protection. These narrow, at times unpaved roads hinder evacuation and make access for fire apparatus difficult.

Similarly, these early subdivisions lack water for firefighting. Some residents have installed water tanks but this is sporadic at best. One community has installed community water tanks expressly for fire protection. Areas served by hydrants have fire flows estimated at 500 GPM or less. Most of the hydrants have not been tested to determine actual fire flow.

Road signage in older subdivisions is poor or completely lacking. Likewise, address signage is non-standard and of poor quality. Address signage is also non-standard and of poor quality in newer subdivisions.

Telephone infrastructure can be interrupted if one of the thirty remotes controlling ring tones is destroyed. These remotes are vital to the Reverse 911[®] notification system.

PG&E distribution lines are located throughout the area and are vulnerable to large-scale damage from wildfire.

5.2. PUBLIC AND INDUSTRIAL FIRE MANAGEMENT

5.2.1 USDA FOREST SERVICE: ELDORADO NATIONAL FOREST (ENF)

Eldorado National Forest has only forty acres within the Planning Unit. These forty acres are used as an emergency helicopter Landing Zone (LZ) for medical helicopters and other emergency helicopters. Even though the Forest has little land within the Planning Unit, it plays an extremely important role in wildfire protection of Pioneer/Volcano Planning Unit.

Eldorado National Forest is one of the major cooperators in the construction of the Cooperative Fire Defense System (See Plate 17 – Landscape scale Fire Defenses). In addition, the Forest plans and implements major fuel reduction projects in key areas of the Nation Forest annually. Finally, the Forest is developing a system of Strategically Placed Area Treatments (SPLATS) on the lands it manages. These SPLATS are designed to slow the spread of wildfire so that firefighters can affect control of the fire.

These systems and projects are extremely important to the residents of living along the Highway 88 Corridor east of Pioneer and along upper Shake Ridge Road east of Lockwood junction. These areas are the first affected by wind driven wildfire originating on the National Forest and inter-mingled private holdings.

5.2.2. USDI BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT: MOTHER LODE FIELD OFFICE

The Bureau of Land Management manages 2050 acres of land within the Planning Unit. The entirety of the Pioneer/Volcano Planning Unit is within BLM's Mokelumne Fire Management Unit (FMU). The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires BLM manage public lands to:

- protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values;
- preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition;
- provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals;
- provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use;
- regulate the use, occupancy, and development of public lands

To meet these requirements, BLM's management plan includes the following actions:

- Conduct fuel reduction treatments to create fire-safe communities, protect private property, achieve resource management objectives, and restore ecosystem health.
- Use prescribed fire to reduce fuel hazard.
- Reduce heavy fuel loading by treating (prescribed burning, vegetation mastication, or manual treatment) at least 500 acres each year.
- Reduce hazardous fuels in WUI areas and communities at risk. *Prioritize fuel hazard reduction projects specified in community-based plans.* Prioritize fuel reduction projects to benefit both communities at risk and significant natural and cultural resources.

BLM has been one of the major funding sources for many of the Amador Fire Safe Council's projects since the Council was formed.

5.2.3. INDUSTRIAL LANDS

Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) manages approximately 1562 acres within the Planning Unit. In addition to managing for timber production, SPI actively manages much of this acreage for fire protection to adjoining residential properties.

5.3. COMMUNITY PLANNING CONTEXT

In 2005, the Amador County Board of Supervisors adopted a countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This plan was prepared by the Amador County Fire Safe Council and was funded by a grant from the Bureau of Land Management. The primary thrust of this plan is a fire defense system designed to defend against the historic large wildfire occurrence in mid to upper Amador County.

Following adoption of the 2005 CWPP, the Fire Safe Council prepared an action plan (*Steps to Implementation*) that included a general risk analysis of the nine planning units identified in the CWPP. The three highest at risk areas of the county are the Pioneer/Volcano, Up-country, and Pine Grove Planning Units.

Because of the risk analysis and previous public and private priorities, most of the effort constructing these fire defenses has been concentrated in these three areas. For purpose of identification, these are referred to as the "Cooperative Fire Defense System". This system includes projects on public and private lands. These projects are funded from public and private funds. Many of these projects involve more than one agency or organizations.

In 2006, all of the projects identified in the CWPP were incorporated into the Amador County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. This additional plan is required by the Federal Emergency

Management Agency (FEMA). This plan has been prepared to meet the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) requirements in order to maintain Amador's eligibility for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Pre-disaster Mitigation (PDM) and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs (HMGP). More importantly, this plan and planning process lays out the strategy that will enable Amador County to become less vulnerable to future disaster losses.

All projects identified in the 2005 CWPP are incorporated into the Pioneer/Volcano Planning Unit Conservation and Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CCWPP). All projects identified in the Volcano Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2005) are also incorporated.

5.3.1 LAND USE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Amador County is in the process of updating its General Plan. Five alternative Land Use Maps are being considered. All five include zoning for residential development along the Highway 88 corridor. This area already is zoned for residential and business. As the vacant lots and undeveloped land zoned residential develop, more homes and people will be exposed to the risk of wildfire.

To minimize this risk and consistent with the goals and priorities in the 2005 CWPP, land managers of public and private lands have been developing the elements of the Cooperative Fire Defense System. These agencies and private companies are Sierra Pacific Industries, Pacific Gas and Electric, the Eldorado National Forest, the Bureau of Land Management, CAL FIRE, and the Amador Fire Safe Council. In addition to these agencies, private foresters have been including fuel reduction recommendations in management plans developed for private landowners.

To improve the coordination of all these efforts the Fire Safe Council sponsors an annual meeting of all agencies and large private land managers. This meeting allows all participants to see what progress has occurred over the past year, what is planned for the next cycle, and what remain to be done.

5.3.2. LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

The following is from the 2005 CWPP and is still valid today.

“Current land use and development in Amador County is shaped by customs and cultures, as defined in the Land Use Element of the General Plan and the Forest Reserve Act of 1891. The noted customs and cultures are mining, timber, agriculture, grazing, hunting, fishing, federal leaseholders, transportation, tourism, and watershed management. The Federal Reserve Act of 1891 created our national forests by authorizing the President of the United States to reserve timberlands on the public domain and prevent them from passing out of the possession of the Government. Today, the Eldorado National Forest covers about 22

percent of Amador County. Together, the customs and cultures and the establishment of the national forest land in Amador County provide the mold for today's land use and development trends.

GENERAL LAND USE CATEGORIES		
Land Use	Acres	%
Urban & Suburban (Residential, Commercial & Manufacturing)	108,619	29
General Agriculture (<i>Williamson Act - 1 Residence/40 ac.</i>)	94,028	25
Other Agriculture (<i>EBMUD, JVID, Non-Williamson Act</i>)	43,582	11
Timber Production (<i>Non-USFS/BLM</i>)	29,524	8
Federal Lands (<i>USFS, BLM & Mokelumne Wilderness</i>)	100,328	27
Total County	376,081	100
Source: Amador County Planning Department files, September 2003.		

*In over 70 percent of the County, residential growth is either prohibited (e.g. federal lands), or limited to large acreages. However, the major development trend is toward greater densities of homes where development is permitted. This is being driven by many factors including Amador County's desirable climate and rural ambience, proximity to major job markets, and general population growth. The growth of residences is particularly noticeable in and around the incorporated cities and in the urban/forest intermix zone. The Amador County Development Policy states, "Future residential development will be encouraged to take place in the form of farms, ranches, and estates throughout the county or through expansion of existing towns and villages..." The increasing density of residences in the intermix zone is particularly important due to the extreme wildfire hazard in this area."*¹.

5.4. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE TO ADDRESS AND IMPLEMENT OBJECTIVES

Numerous groups and organizations capable of implementing the actions suggested in this plan exist in the Planning Unit. These groups are:

- Homeowners Associations
- Road Associations
- Recreation Associations
- Individual property owners
- The Amador Fire Safe Council
- The Upcountry Community Council

The Upcountry Community Council in particular has the potential to assume community leadership for those actions that can be achieved by residents without government funding.

The Fire Safe Council can apply for grants to achieve some of the costly items such as better road and address signage, community water tanks, and fuel reduction on vacant lots.

¹ Amador County Fire Hazard Reduction Plan (2005), also known as the Amador County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and the Amador County Generic Community Wildfire Protection Plan