Amador Calaveras Consensus Group (ACCG)
Request for Project Support | Submission Form

(Link to download word version of the submission form)

Instructions: Complete this form when seeking project development engagement or support from the ACCG. Before completing this form, please review the ACCG Project Development & Support Process (see flowchart) and ACCG Project Endorsement Guidelines (see guidelines). Contact the ACCG Administrator with questions: Megan Layhee, meganl.chips@gmail.com.

1. Submission Date: 5/18/2022

2. Project Name:
   McKays Strategic Fuelbreak Project (DM #61982)

3. Organization/Entity Requesting Support:

   Stanislaus National Forest, Calaveras Ranger District

4. Project Proponent Contact (name, phone, and email address):

   Carinna Robertson
   209-459-9247
   carinna.robertson@usda.gov

5. Committed Project Partners:
   Calaveras Amador Forestry Team, (Cal Am), Calaveras County Resource Conservation District (RCD)

6. Grant Program (if applicable) or Prospective Funding Sources:
   SNC Funding

7. Name and address to whom the Letter of Support from the ACCG should be addressed:

   Possibly 2 letters of support: 1 to the Forest Supervisor and 1 to SNC in support of the grant funding.

   Beth Martinez (Acting) Forest Supervisor
   19777 Greenley Road
   Sonora, CA 95370

8. Due Date for Letter of Support: June 22, 2022

9. Project Budget Total Amount: $1.5M-$2M

10. Project Dollar Amount Being Requested through Grant Program (if applicable): $1.5M-$2M

11. Has this project been presented to the ACCG before? If so, describe prior engagement with the ACCG about this project.

Yes, the project was presented to the ACCG roughly 10 years ago, then recently was presented again a few in Nov. 2021. The project received support for an environmental review by specialists for management requirements and extraordinary circumstances. After receiving some feedback we opted to not use the existing older NEPA as originally proposed. The planned actions for the McKays Strategic Fuelbreak project as a wildfire resilience fuels reduction project fall within the guidelines set forth in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-171) amended Title VI of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 Section 605 of HFRA (16 U.S.C.6591d). Section 605 establishes a categorical exclusion (CE) for hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands. A hazardous fuels reduction project that may qualify as an CE under this authority is a project that is designed to reduce the risk of wildfire, promote stands that are resistant to insects and disease and that are designed to maximize large old-growth trees Section 605 of HFRA (16 U.S.C.6591d). This CE with Decision Memo (DM) will be used to accomplish a hazardous fuels reduction project in an insect and disease treatment area that was designated by the Secretary under HFRA section 602(b) by March 23, 2018. Section 605 of HFRA (16 U.S.C.6591d).

12. <u>Project Details</u>

a) Describe the specific location of the project, the existing condition of the landscape, the project's purpose and need/ goals and objectives, the work that will be performed and the project acreage.

The McKays Strategic Fuelbreak project area is located in Calaveras County, on the Stanislaus National Forest, Calaveras Ranger District. The project area is located along and off of the McKays Dam Rd. (4N38) and is also accessible from 5N35 (LEGAL - T4N, R15E Sec. 2, 3, 4, 9, and 10; T5N, R15E Sec. 27, 34, and 35).

Current conditions in the Mckays Strategic Fuelbreak project area are characterized by heavy understory of shrub and dead surface fuels among the mixed age tree stands which have increased levels of tree mortality in recent years due to drought, disease,and bark beetles. Tree mortality in the project area is spreading rapidly and surviving trees remain susceptible to future disturbances such as drought, outbreaks of insect and disease, and high intensity wildfire. As tree mortality increases, the fuel loads have become higher than desired conditions. Strategic fuelbreaks prove to be the first line of defense and strategic locations for wildfire managers to help protect communities.

The purpose of the Mckays Strategic Fuelbreak project is to:

1) Increase the mixed conifer ecosystems' resilience to current and future large-scale disturbances (drought, insect, disease, high severity wildfire).
2) To extend and connect the multi-jurisdictional cooperative fuelbreak.
3) To provide for community, public and firefighter safety by mitigating hazardous trees and reducing fuel loads.

In order to meet these objectives, the following needs have been identified:

1) Reduce hazard trees, ladder fuels, surface fuels, and maintain and improve the historic strategic fuelbreak.

2) Utilize prescribed burning consisting of pile burning, jackpot burning and/or broadcast burning to reduce fuel loads and improve resilience to the landscape.

The proposed action includes approximately 1,088 acres of hazardous fuels reduction treatments which vary across 3 different treatment activities (Table 1). Acres shown in Table 1 are **not** cumulative; each treatment may be applied over the same ground. 100% of the 1,088 proposed treatment acres occur within the WUI:

- 766 acres are in the WUI defense zone of which 494 acres overlap the California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*) protected activity center (PACs),
- 322 acres are in the WUI threat zone of which 123 acres overlap the California spotted owl PACs,
- 154 acres are in the California spotted owl Home Range Core Areas (HRCAs), and
- The remaining 317 acres occur outside the PACs and HRCAs.

Table 1: Summary of hazardous fuels reduction treatments.

TREATMENT ACTIVITY	METHODS	ACRES [1,2]
Hazardous Fuel Reduction and Prescribed Fire	Treatments include the mechanical removal, mastication, or hand thinning of non-merchantable trees between 3" and 12" DBH. These trees and some built-up dead surface fuels would be removed, piled and burned, masticated or transported off-site for biomass fuel for electric cogeneration plants. Prescribed burning intended to be used for future maintenance.	1,088
Mechanical Tree Thinning and Forest Health Improvements	Dead and dying trees up to 30" diameter at breast height (dbh) will be felled using conventional ground-based systems and removed to be decked at a landing location, piled and burned, transported off-site for biomass fuel for electric cogeneration plants, or sold as sawlogs. Mechanical tree thinning would reduce the likelihood of fire moving from the ground into the tree canopy, open the canopy up for retardant application and reduce the intra-stand spread of insects and disease.	1,088
Hazard Tree Mitigation	Hazard trees of any size which are threats to private homes, property boundaries, power lines, roads and other infrastructure as defined by the Hazard Tree Identification and Mitigation (Forest Health Protection Technical Report # RO-22-01) (approved March, 2022)—would be felled and removed to be decked at a landing location, piled and burned or transported off-site for biomass fuel for electric cogeneration plants or sold as sawlogs. Conventional ground mechanical equipment would be used during implementation. In areas where trees may not be removed mechanically due to slope conditions (i.e. >35%), access issues, or resource concerns, hazard trees would be felled and left. Branches would be limbed, and the resulting slash piled and burned. These treatments will be generally 250 feet from either side of the road centerline. Hazard tree mitigation will be designed to 1) reduce the threat to private property, powerlines,	784

	roadways, and infrastructure, and 2) provide efficient movement of suppression resources and an opportunity for fire retardant to be applied over the treatment area.	

b) Describe the local Environmental benefits of your project. Please reference the *ACCG Principles and Policies* in your response (See Principles and Policies document).

This project will protect and enhance water and soil quality, reduce the frequency and intensity of wildfires that threaten the community and ecological resources, and will reduce forest fuel loads to manageable and sustainable levels.

c) Indicate with an X which of the following local Community and Economic benefits your project will provide (See Principles and Policies document*).* The following checklist is intended to help ACCG members understand the community and economic benefits of individual projects and to provide opportunities for dialogue aimed at enhancing and promoting such benefits, when possible. Please check all boxes that you believe apply to some extent.

X *Provides local, sustainable jobs with fair compensation.*

X *Supports and strengthens locally-owned businesses.*

X *Includes bid preference for local contractors. Local refers to those areas within the ACCG planning area boundary which generally align with Amador and Calaveras counties and Alpine County. It also refers to those adjacent foothill counties of El Dorado and Tuolumne. Regional refers to the broader Sierra Nevada and foothills.*

X *Supports local investment, purchasing and ownership of forest enterprises.*

☐ *Includes job training and/or certification opportunities.*

X *Provides local community education and engagement opportunities.*

X *Reduces potential damage to life and property by promoting the creation and maintenance of fire-safe communities.*

X *Protects critical infrastructure and uses such as water and power, roads, sewer, communications, etc.*

X *Enhances or protects drinking water quality.*

X *Enhances or protects healthy forest-based activities such as recreation, hunting, and fishing, etc.*

☐ *Creates or expands uses or local markets for "underutilized" forest products (i.e., biomass, firewood, mushroom foraging, etc.).*

- ☐ *Uses local and regional networks and markets to optimize local benefits (e.g., firewood sold locally in stores and distributed to those in need, Christmas trees, fiber board & wood-shaving facilities, etc.).*
- X *Includes community engagement and education in planning and implementation.*
- X *If cultural resources present, engages tribal representatives early and consistently from conceptual planning through implementation and monitoring to ensure respect and sensitivity to Native American cultural sites, practices, resources.*
- X *Protects historical or locally important sites.*
- X *Protects and/or enhances scenic beauty.*
- X *Incorporates cooperative partnerships that increase effectiveness and local competitiveness.*
- X *Includes an assessment of community and economic benefits.*

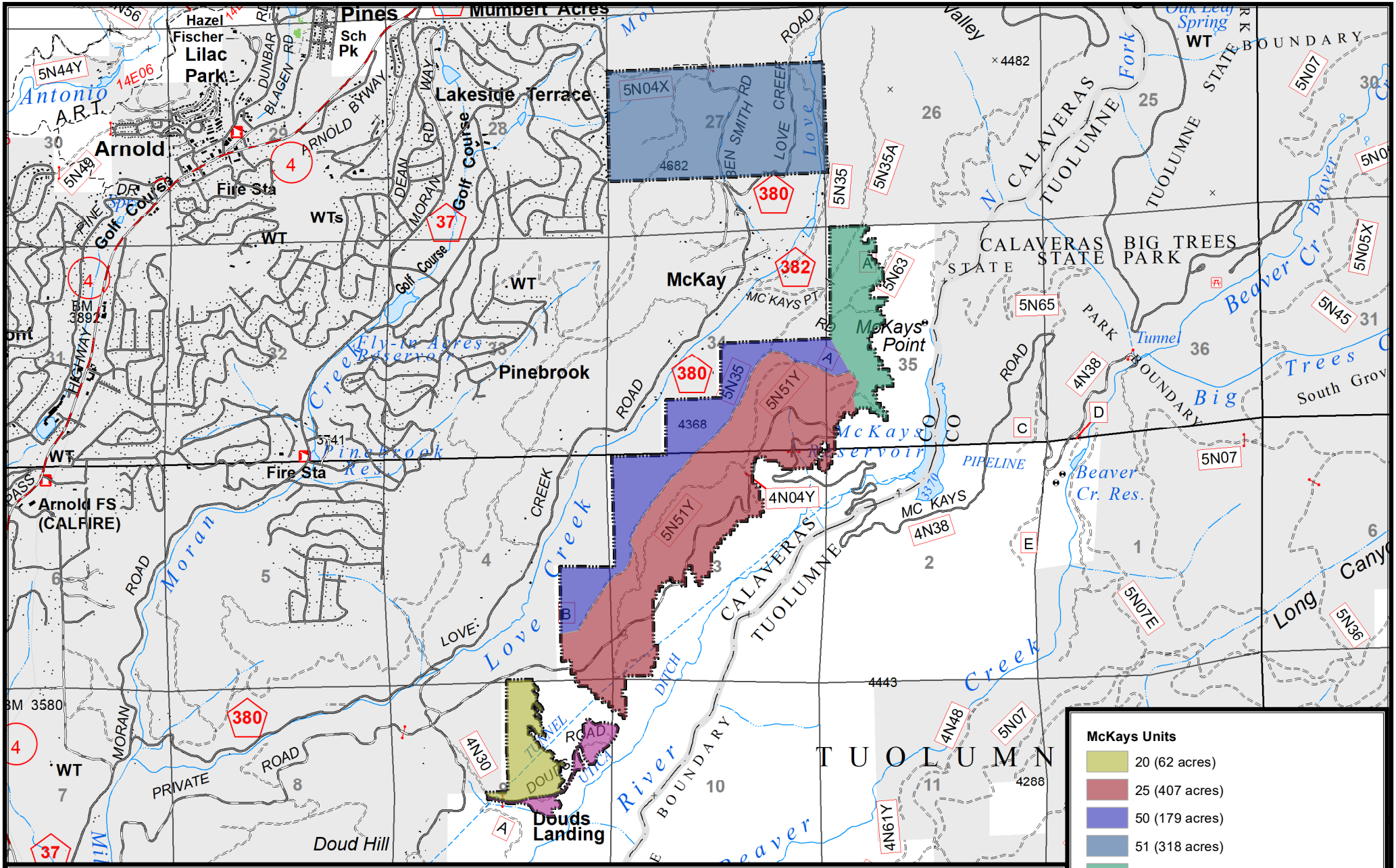
13. Describe desired outcomes/future conditions that the project achieves/supports.

    Our desired outcome and future conditions are for us to achieve a defensible fuelbreak that will protect our Hwy 4 community.

14. Describe the status of environmental documentation (NEPA/CEQA/other).

    The NEPA is complete, but the District Ranger – Ray Cablayan is waiting for a letter of support from the ACCG before signing.

15. Attach project map and any other supporting documentation that would enhance the ACCG's understanding of the project.



McKays Strategic Fuelbreak Project
Calaveras Ranger District
Stanislaus National Forest

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

McKays Units

- 20 (62 acres)
- 25 (407 acres)
- 50 (179 acres)
- 51 (318 acres)
- 71 (99 acres)
- 430 (23 acres)

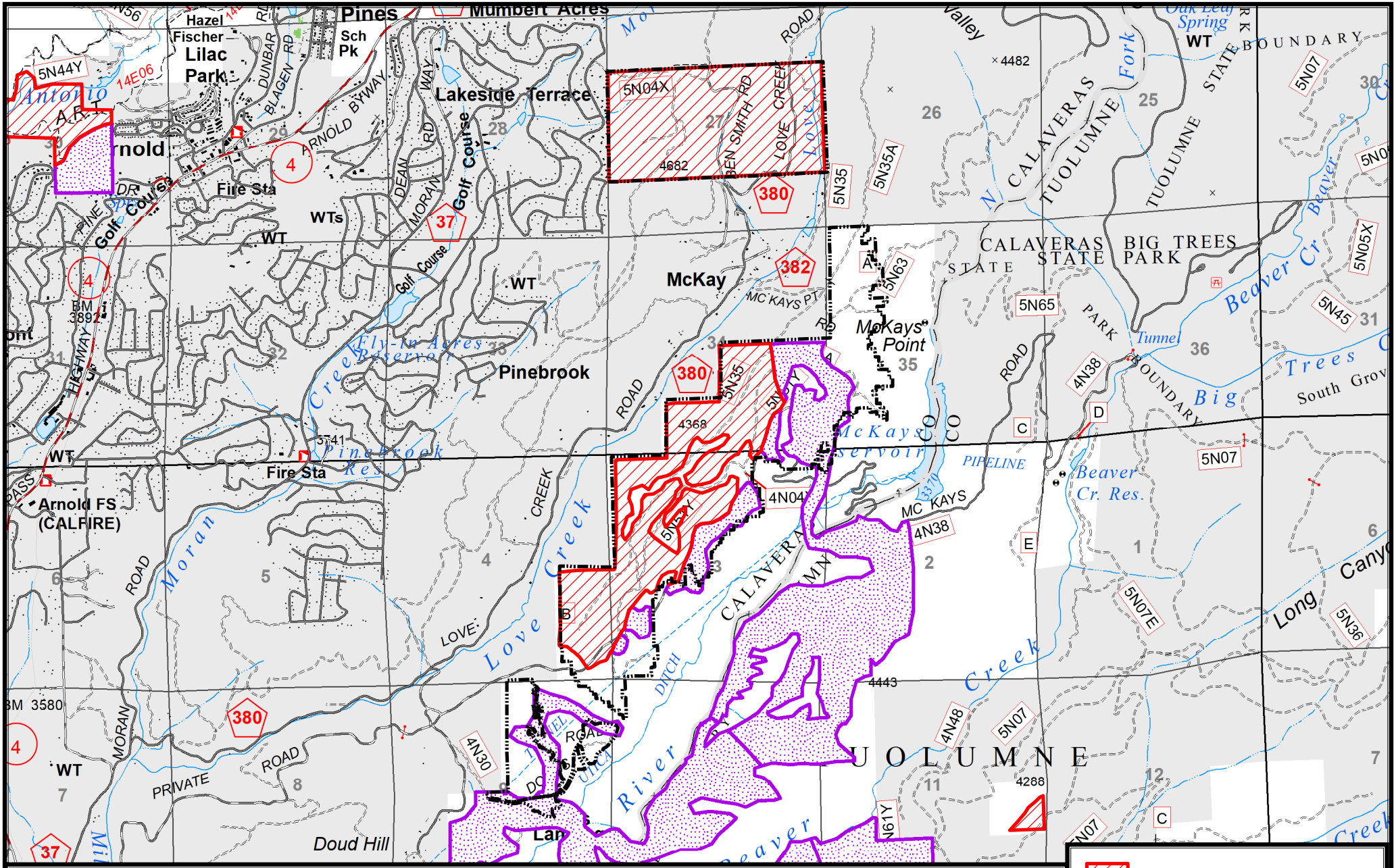
Project Area

- Mckays Strategic Fuelbreak Boundary

Ownership

- NON - NF
- NATIONAL FOREST

N



McKays Strategic Fuelbreak Project
Calaveras Ranger District
Stanislaus National Forest

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

CA_Spotted_Owl_PACs
CA_Spotted_Owl_HRCAs

Project Area

Mckays Strategic Fuelbreak Boundary

Ownership

NON - NF
NATIONAL FOREST

N