

McKays Strategic Fuelbreak

North Fork Stanislaus River Canyon
East of Arnold, Calaveras County

Project Proponents

Calaveras Amador Forestry Team

Pat McGreevy, Jan Bray, Kaylee Dillashaw & Laurie Plautz

Calaveras Country Resource Conservation District

Sid Beckman

Calaveras Ranger District, Stanislaus National Forest

Carinna Robertson, Resource Management Officer

Hwy 4 Wildfire Defense System

The McKays project area is 1,088 acres on USFS land located on the north rim of the North Fork Stanislaus River Canyon.

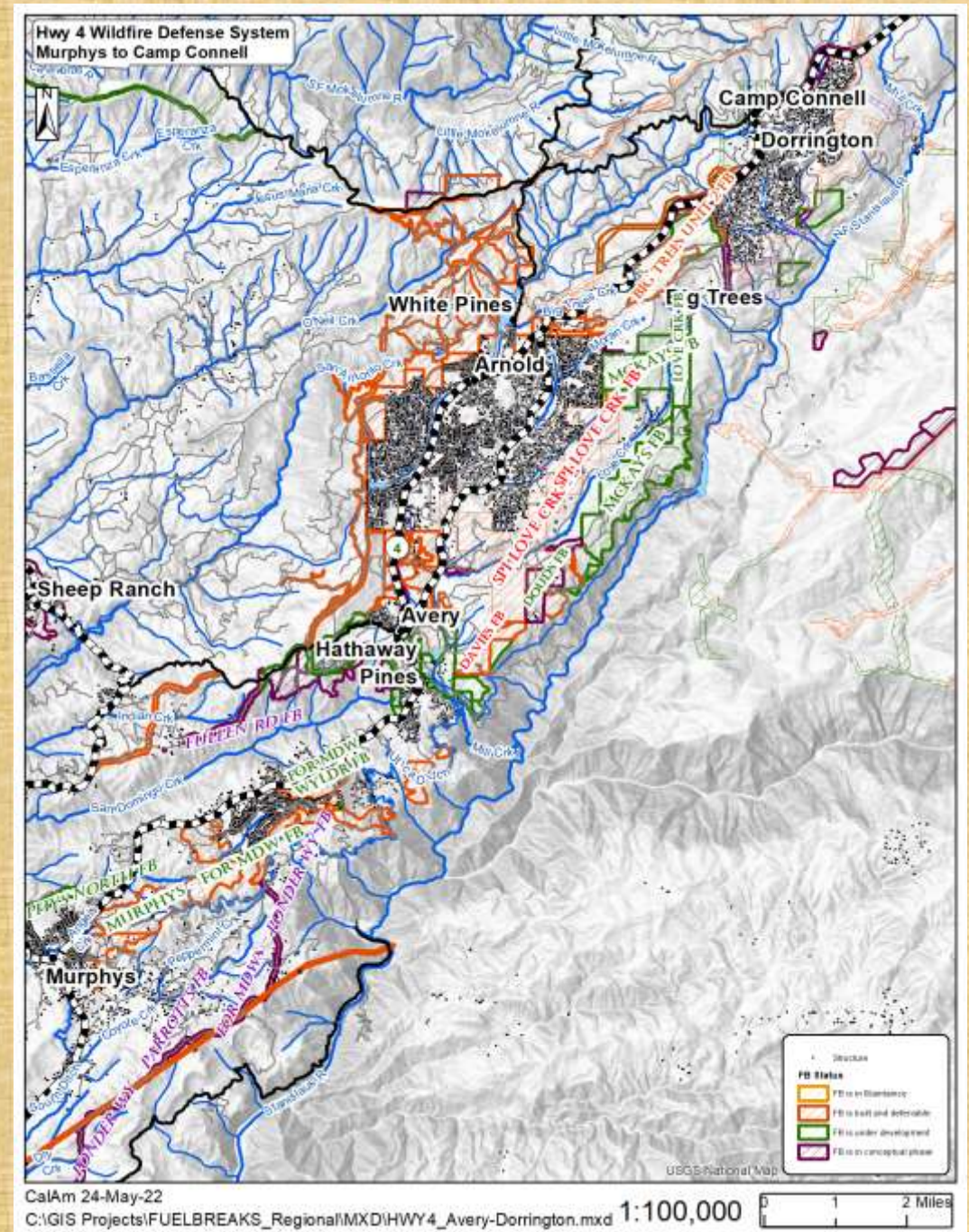
It is part of the Hwy 4 Wildfire Defense System, an integrated series of fuel reduction projects that stretch from Murphys to Camp Connell, 40 miles. The System protects 7,000 structures, community infrastructure, industrial timber, Calaveras Big Trees State Park (CBT) and the Stanislaus National Forest (STF).

The System crosses various ownerships, small parcel owners, big ranches, HOAs, Calaveras County Water District, Utica Water and Power Authority (UWPA), Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI), CBT and the STF.

System is conceived, planned and managed by CAL FIRE, Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council (CFFSC), Calaveras County Resource Conservation District (CCRCD), CBT, SPI, STF and the Calaveras Amador Forestry Team.

Fiscal Agents include CFFSC, CCRCD and CHIPS.

Financial support is provided by CAL FIRE and the STF.



McKays Vicinity Map

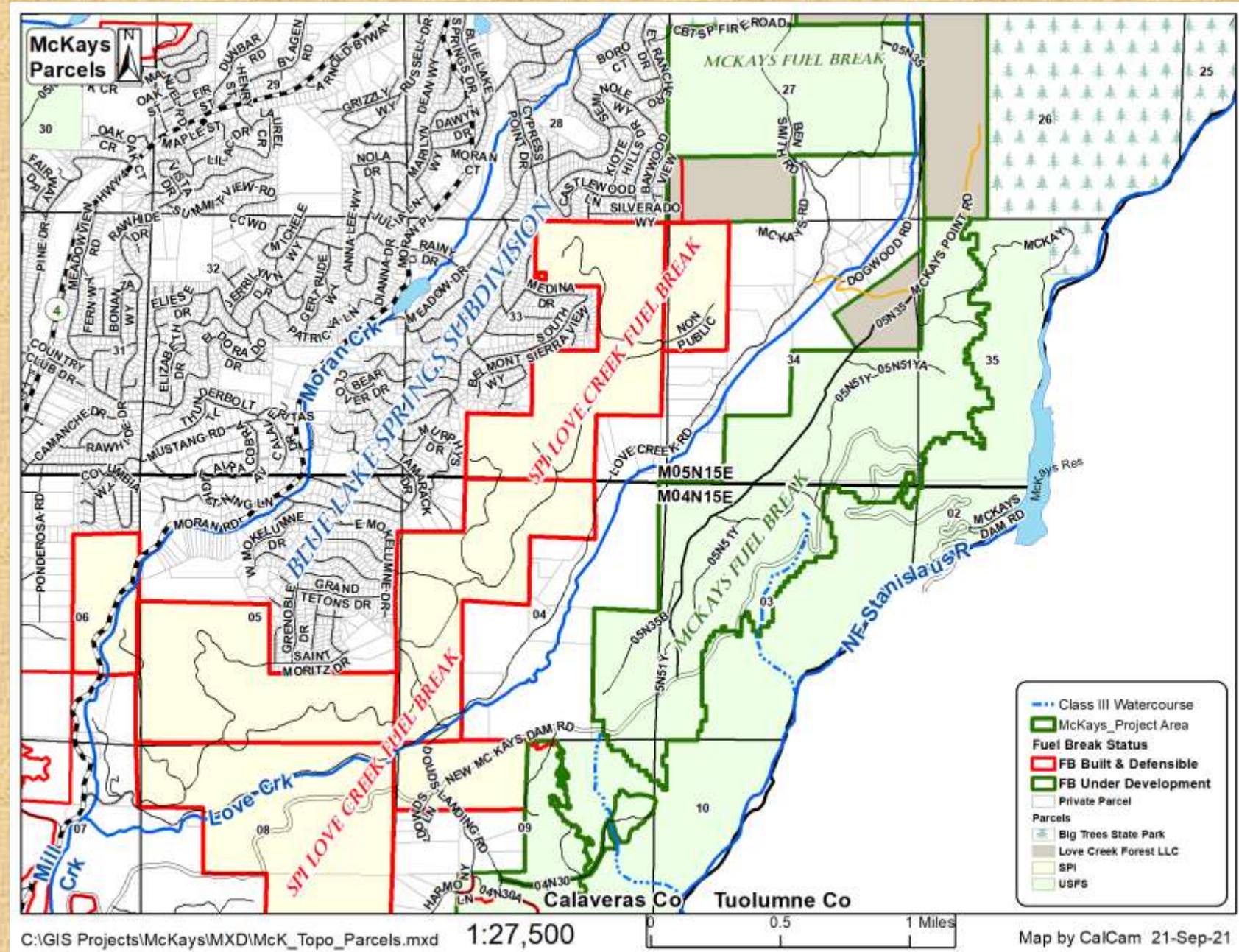
McKays is a landscape scale fuel break on 1088 acres of USFS land that was designed to be the first line of defense in the protection of Arnold and Avery against wildfire emanating from the Canyon.

Love Creek is located on the northwest of McKays and it is a forested environment with a high fuel load on private property with residences and other improvements.

SPI land to the northwest of Love Creek is the second line of defense. SPI treated this land after the 2012/17 drought driven tree mortality epidemic and planted conifers. SPI has provided Arnold and Avery with substantial wildfire protection!

CBT and the Smith Ranch are on the north and they have vegetative management plans.

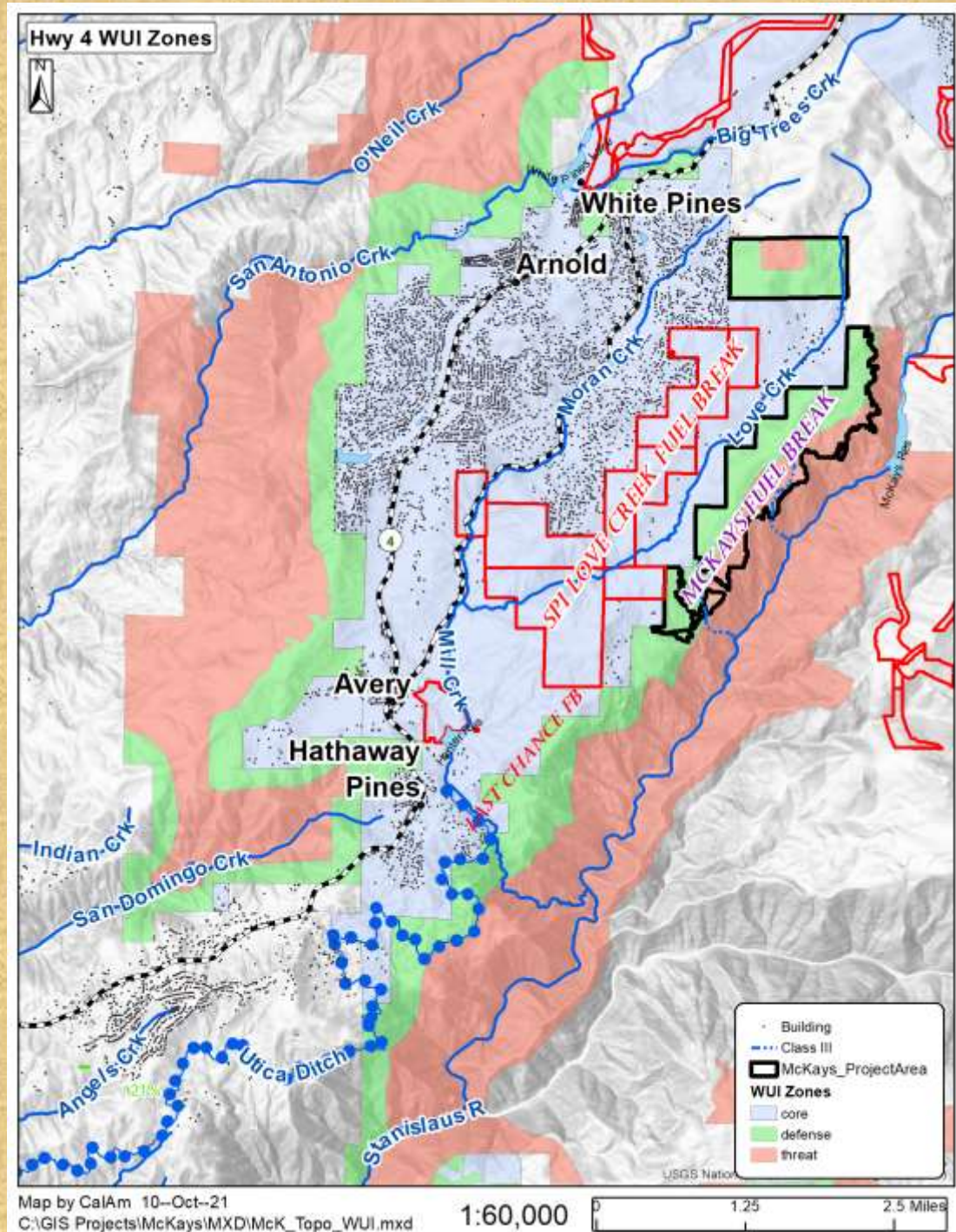
Douds Landing, a rural residential area, is on the south and it is in dire need of fuels reduction!



McKays WUI Map

McKays Fuelbreak is entirely inside the Wildland-Urban Interface Zones:

- Defense Zone= 766 acres
- Threat Zone= 322 acres



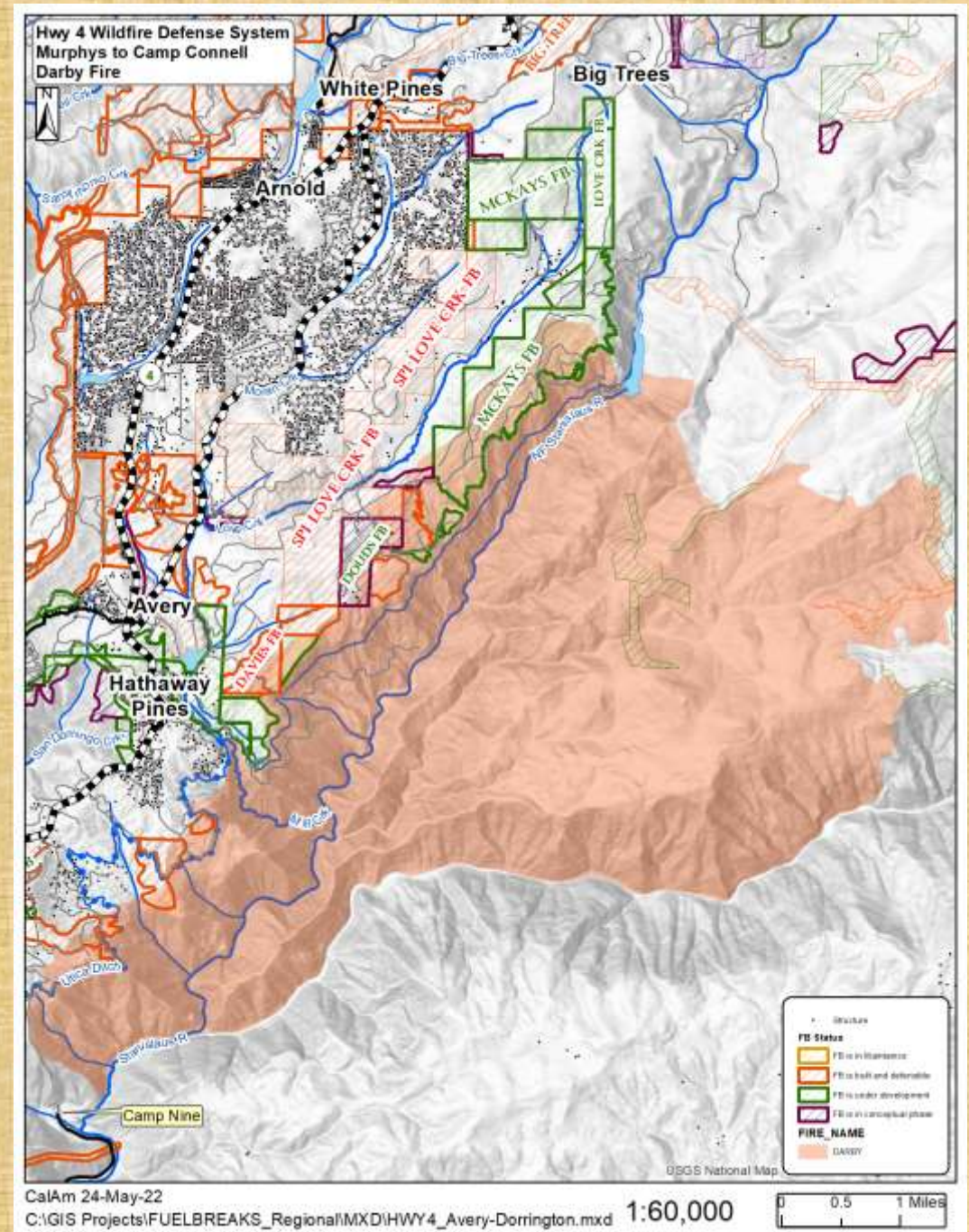
Darby Fire

9/5/2001 Darby Fire started deep in the NF Stanislaus Canyon at Camp Nine.

9/11/2001 to 9/13/2001- All flights in the U.S. were grounded in response to the 911 attacks and ground suppression continued without air support.

9/24/2001 Darby Fire contained after burning 14,280 acres.

Note – 10-20,000 acre fires were “large catastrophic wildfires” 20 years ago. In 2022, this acreage has increased 10-fold and more, with the 2021 Dixie Fire scorching nearly 1 MILLION acres. Following this trend, maintenance of the McKays Fuelbreak is imperative to the protection of the Highway 4 communities.



Darby Fire September 2001

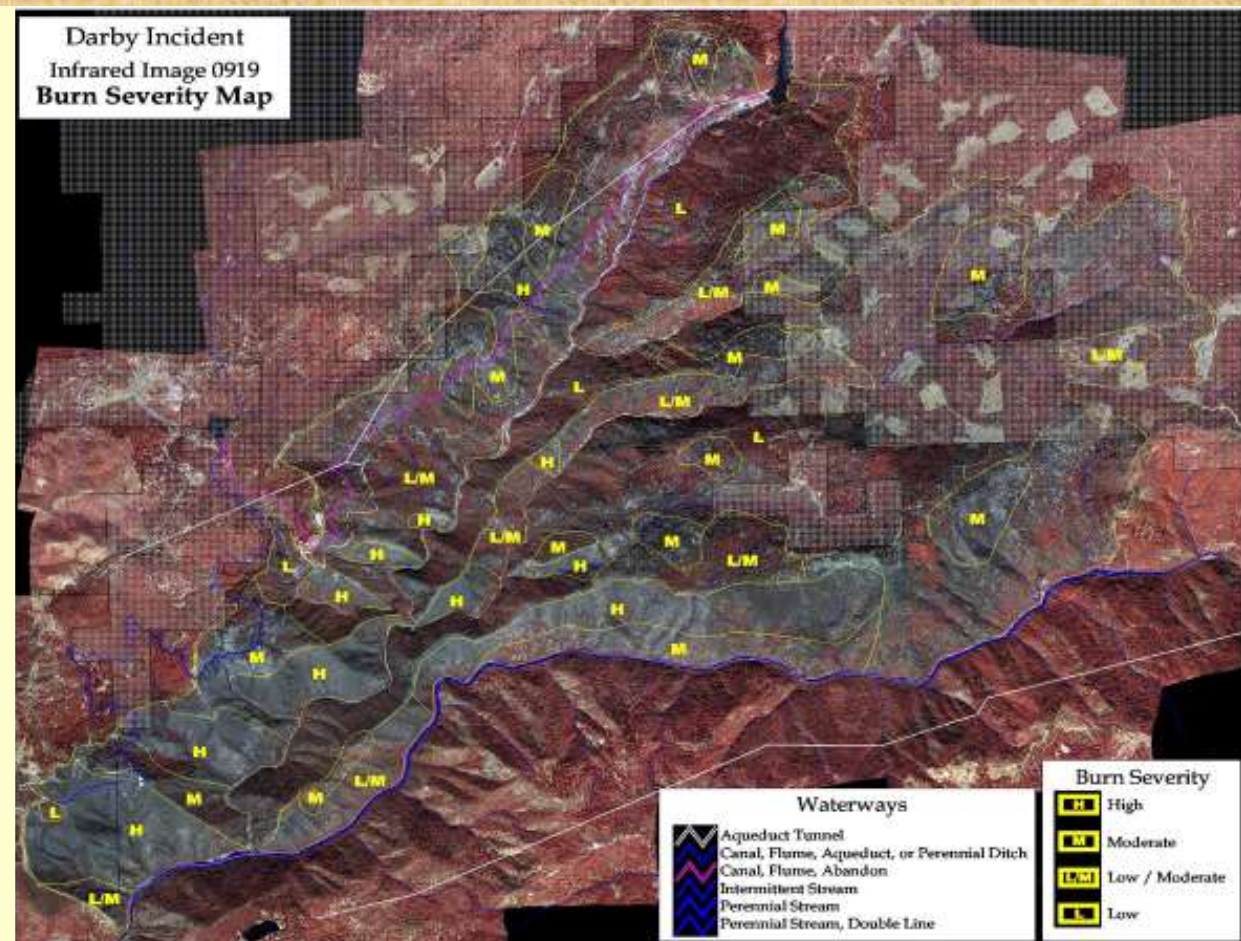
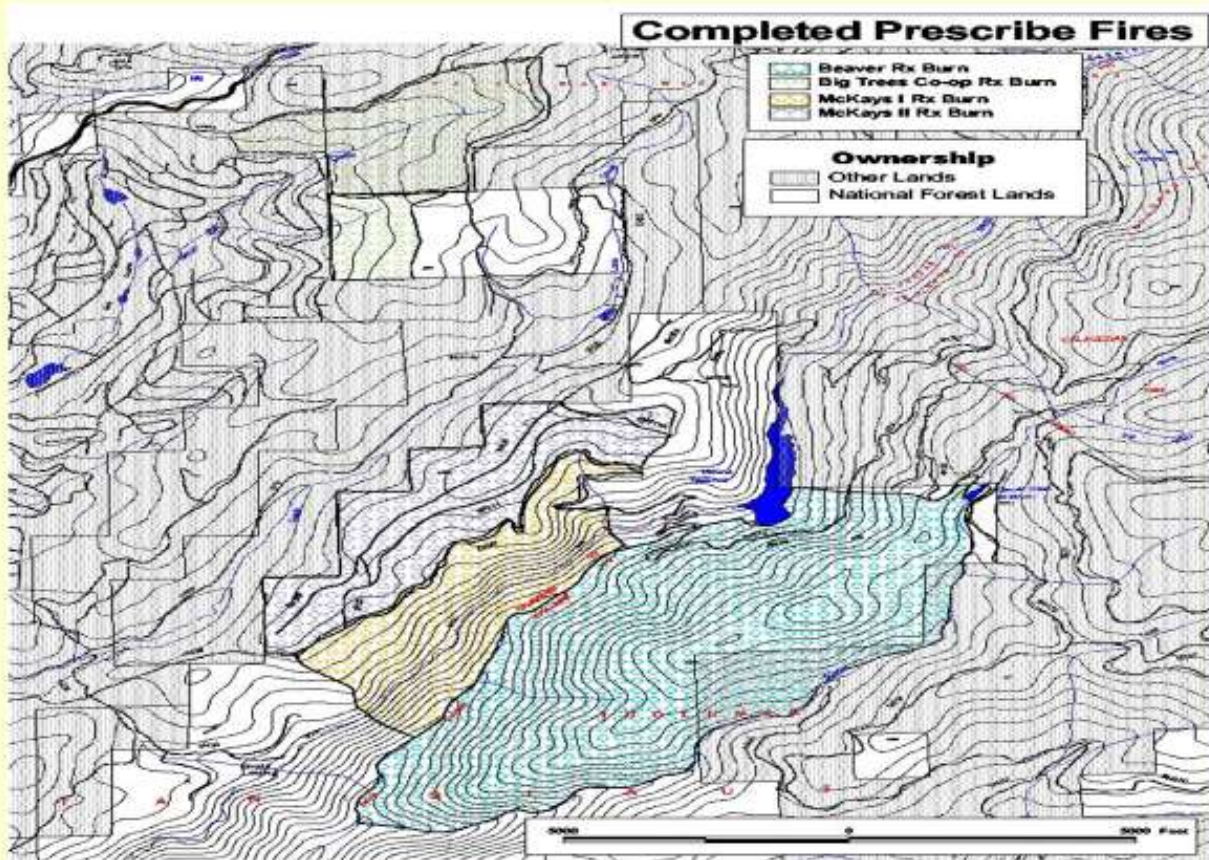
McKays Wildfire Defense System in 1990s

- 1992 McKays I, 600 ac burned on slopes >50% down to river
- 1994 McKays II, 600 ac
- 2000 Big Trees Co-op, ? ac
- 1997 Beaver Creek, 1298 ac (Not in McKays project)

Post Darby Burn Severities

McKays project area is in the upper, center following the Aqueduct Tunnel.

Burn severities were minimized by the Rx Burns a decade earlier.



Darby Fire Footprint

Moderate burn
intensity area

Burn scars on big
trees along road
5N51Y in 2021



McKays Strategic Fuelbreak: Post Darby Management

- 2002 Brown Darby EIS was signed with focus on the Darby footprint.
- 2012 Mastication and hand thinning/piling but treatments stalled for lack of resources.
- 2016/17 Area heavily impacted by drought related beetle epidemic without mitigation for lack of funds.
- 2022 Abundant snags with logs remaining onsite and in ~100 burn piles. Surface and ladder fuels have accumulated during the decade since the Darby Fire.
Incidence of beetle infestation is on the rise.

McKays Strategic Fuelbreak: An Optimistic Timeline

2021

- Aug Drafted initial dossier and project maps
- Sep Drafted Project Information Form (PIF) for STF review

2022

- Jan Categorical Exemption (CE) drafted and sent to the STF Interdisciplinary Team for Review
- May Calaveras County Board of Supervisors approves Master Good Neighbor Authority agreement with the STF
- May Calaveras District Ranger executes Decision Memo authorizing CE
- May Protocol Surveys for California Spotted Owls (CSO)
- Jul CalAm Team submits grant application to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) to fund implementation
- Dec SNC Board awards grant application
- Dec Competitive bidding process for fuels reduction contractors

2023

- Jan Select contractors and execute contracts for fuels reduction services, registered professional forester and project manager
- Jan-Dec Ground operations with a pause during fire season
- Mar-Jul Protocol Surveys for CSO to lift Limited Operating Periods if possible

2024

- Jan-Dec Continue ground operations

2025

- Jan-Mar Finish ground operations and close implementation grant

Estimated PACE & SCALE: 3.5 Years for 1,000 Treated Acers