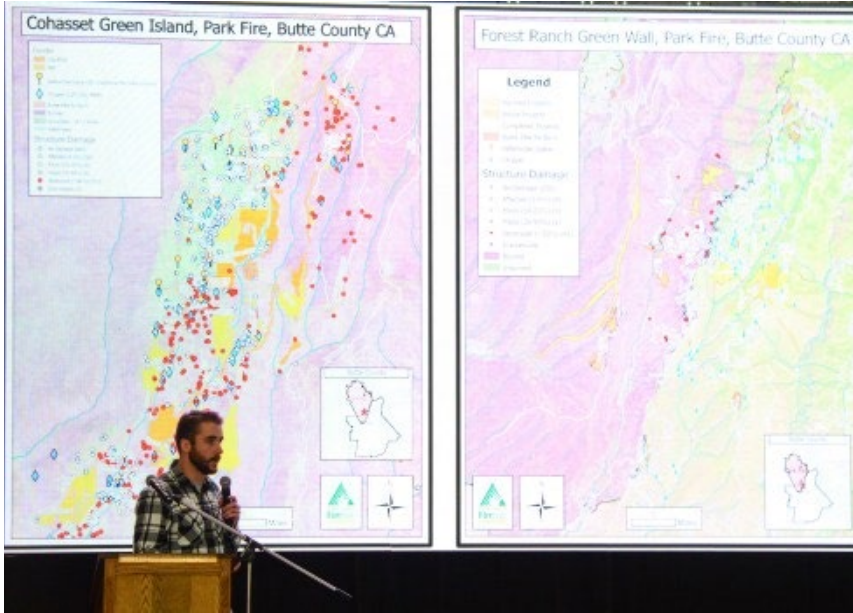


# Butte Fire Safe Council holds 18th safety summit



Butte Fire Safe Council Executive Director Taylor Nilsson speaks about the effects of recent wildfires in front of maps that show the spread of the Park Fire in Cohasset and Forest Ranch during a workshop by the council Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024 in paradise, California. (Dan Reidel/Enterprise-Record)

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PARADISE — The Butte Fire Safe Council held its 18th wildfire safety summit on Wednesday at the Paradise Elks Lodge and hosted more than 100 residents and stakeholders to present past, current and future projects.

Taylor Nilsson, executive director for the council, said during his presentation that work has been done on 3,094 acres in Butte County.

“As an organization, we currently have over 20 active grants that we’ve been working with over the past year,” Nilsson said. “We’ve been working on 50-plus projects.”

A large portion of that work was done in Magalia where fire crews treated acres of land. These projects included pile burns, prescribed burns and creating fire breaks for the community. Clipper Mills saw 470 acres treated followed by 401 in Cohasset, 231 in Berry Creek and 226 in Forest Ranch. Other communities that saw forest and land work included Stirling City, Paradise and Forbestown.

Nilsson presented maps of Butte County going back to the year 2000 to emphasize the impacts wildfires have had throughout the region including that of the Camp Fire, the Dixie Fire and the more recent Park and Thompson fires.

Videos documenting instances of wildfire affecting the public were also presented to the attendees, one in particular focused on the impact that a herd of goats and a masticator had in creating a fire break near a home in north Oroville during the Thompson Fire. The fire break created a barrier, protecting the home of a couple.



Cal Fire-Butte County Chief Garrett Sjolund, left, and Butte County Supervisor Doug Teeter watch a video extolling the benefits of prescribed burns Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024 at a Butte Fire Safe Council workshop in Paradise, California. (Dan Reidel/Enterprise-Record)

Don Hankins, who has been on the council for 17 years and oversaw a tribal burn at Chico State in December 2023, spoke on the importance of having these gatherings.

“It’s a place for people to come together and share ideas for their community,” Hankins said. “I can think of, specifically for Forest Ranch, some of the things that we’re currently acting on now are things that we discussed over a decade ago. So some of these things take a long while to happen but it’s these kinds of events where the incubation of those ideas come together.”

One aspect noted in the presentation was the work done previously in the Cohasset and Forest Ranch areas as well as in Chico where a fuel break was created in Bidwell Park just west of where the Park Fire started. Despite the scope of the blaze, there were no deaths reported as a result of the Park Fire.

Currently, the Fire Safe Council in partnership with Terra Fuego are conducting pile burns on 109 acres around Magalia and the Magalia Reservoir.

Hankins said the summit also allows for inspiration based on completed, large-scale projects.

“I think that’s really the strength of these kinds of meetings is that it brings people together from across the community and they can hear the success stories, hear the inspiration and then be able to act on it,” Hankins said.

The theme consistently has been stewardship of the land and being able to reintroduce what is often referred to as good fire to the forests, which historically have adapted to fire.

“We have to steward our land, and I think that’s what the message here is starting to come to,” Hankins said. “It’s realizing that as individuals, as community partners including agencies

and landowners, we have to come together and work together on this because no one organization is going to be able to handle all of it.”

### **Community partners**

While the Butte Fire Safe Council hosted the event, the room was filled with people from other organizations and agencies such as Terra Fuego, Butte County, the town of Paradise, Cal Fire and the Butte County Fire Department, and more.

All projects to some degree are conducted between more than one group and often times with various landowners whether it be on private land or public land.

Annie Rafferty, director of workforce training and development at Butte College, said her department is strongly connected to the collaborative effort and provides various forms of support including training and facilitation.

“We also have our utility line clearance arborist training and our utility vegetation management pre-inspection training so we partner and collaborate on how we’re upskilling those workers to be able to contribute to our fuel reduction,” Rafferty said.

Rafferty noted that the college has its own web of partnerships that allow for additional resources.

“As a community partner, the community college plays that role with workforce development and training, and they invite that into an event such as this with our community partners,” Rafferty said.

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