

## **10.9. Community at Risk: Molalla Rural Fire Protection District #73**

The Molalla Fire District has been identified as a Community at Risk (CAR) by Oregon Department of Forestry. The District has participated in the Clackamas County CWPP planning process to evaluate capabilities to prevent, prepare for and respond to potential wildfire events.

### **Molalla Fire District Description**

Molalla Rural Fire Protection District #73 (MRFPD #73) is an Oregon special service district that provides fire suppression, prevention, investigation, public education, rescue, and ambulance transport services. (MRFPD #73) is approximately 101 square miles with an ambulance service area (ASA) of 350 square miles covering a portion of the neighboring fire agencies and wilderness.

The District operates from three stations: Station 82, the headquarter station in the city of Molalla; Station 81, four miles to the north on Highway 213 near the small community of Mulino; and Station 85, five miles south on Sawtell Road.

### **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)**

Molalla's Fire District is a rural area on the eastern edge of Clackamas County adjacent to large tracts of federal, state and private forests. The terrain is steep, causing access and communication limitations. The Molalla River Corridor attracts thousands of visitors every year. Campers, hikers, anglers, ATV users, hunters and other visitors to this area can potentially start wildfires that could carry from public land to the residential communities.

This area is characterized by rural residential homes surrounded by heavy fuels and steep slopes. In addition, many of the neighborhoods here have only one way in and one way out with narrow, steep driveways and poor address signage. Heavy and continuous fuels dominate this area, so fires that begin on public land or on smaller private residential lots can quickly threaten the communities and natural resources that thrive in the Molalla Fire District.

The Bureau of Land Management, private industrial landowners and small woodland owners have many heavily forested landholdings that are adjacent to homes in the Wildland Urban Interface. As Molalla Fire targets the residential communities for creating defensible space, there is an opportunity to engage private, state and federal partners in reducing fuels on this adjacent public land. This has been identified as an action item.

### **Molalla Fire District Wildfire Hazards**

The Clackamas County CWPP wildfire hazard assessment assisted Molalla Fire in identifying areas that may be at higher risk to potential wildfires. Map #4 illustrates the overall wildfire hazard risk in the Molalla Fire District and will be used to help target areas for wildfire prevention activities.

### **Structural Ignitability**

Molalla Fire promotes the creation of defensible space, use of fire-resistant roofing and building materials, and community preparedness in the WUI. Molalla Fire works with the City of Molalla and Clackamas County to integrate these concepts at the regulatory level by providing input on access and water requirements for new development.

The City of Molalla contracts with Clackamas County for land use planning and building permit services. This presents some difficulties for the Fire District because the County does not always contact the District for input on fire flow and access for new lots of record. Molalla Fire also does not have access to the County's Velocity Hall System which catalogues pending and approved building permits. The need for enhanced communication between Clackamas County and Molalla Fire has been noted in the Molalla Fire CWPP Action Plan.

## **Emergency Response**

Emergency response is challenging in the Molalla Fire District because staff are almost entirely volunteer (36), with only 11 paid staff. A major wildland urban interface fire in Molalla would quickly exceed the resources and capabilities of the District. For this reason, Molalla Fire has mutual aid agreements in place which allows for the sharing of resources across the county in the event of a large scale disaster including wildfires.

Although the District is able to support annual wildland fire training (S-130 and S-190), it would like to offer S-215 and S-290 to senior staff. Also, the lack of live fire experience makes it difficult to retain wildland qualifications. Molalla Fire is working directly with NAFT, USFS and ODF and other land managers to identify and take advantage of opportunities to participate in live fires.

Because Molalla Fire does not have a hydrant system that extends to rural areas, it is important to begin identifying and improving potential water sites. This is especially important for homes that have long narrow driveways that will not support water tenders. ODF has been working with Molalla Fire to improve address signage in the many of the most vulnerable areas and potential water sites could be added to these signs.

In the event of a large wildland fire, evacuations may be necessary. This rural area presents some difficulties due to the large number of one way in and one way out roads with poor addressing. Molalla Fire has been working with ODF to improve address signage in vulnerable areas, and will continue to work with the Clackamas County Fire Co-op to implement address signage in the Communities at Risk. There have also been changes to the road system that are not currently reflected in County maps such as Boyles and Iromer Roads. More coordination and outreach is also needed to ensure that evacuation procedures are developed and understood.

Burning of yard waste and debris is challenging in the Molalla Fire District because backyard burning is allowed in all areas. Molalla Fire tries to be consistent with neighboring jurisdictions' Backyard Burning programs but does not have staff or resources to strictly regulate burning in Molalla. The District is also home to many Christmas tree operations that have authority to burn an incredible amount of material all year long regardless of fire severity or air quality restrictions. Molalla Fire would like to work with ODF to develop a better strategy for dealing with Christmas tree waste such as a chipper cooperative.

## **Community Outreach & Education**

Molalla Fire is dedicated to fire prevention, but has limited staff and capacity for a wildland fire outreach program. Molalla Fire is a member of the Clackamas County Fire Prevention Cooperative which is a consortium of structural and wildland fire protection professionals that work together to deliver programs such as team teaching in the grade school fire safety programs, safety fairs with car

seat inspections, community and school programs, and fire safety house displays. Molalla Fire would like to increase capacity in its outreach program for fire prevention and for recruiting potential volunteers.

### **Local Communities at Risk (CAR's)**

Molalla Fire also recognizes that there are smaller-scale Communities at Risk that have unique wildfire hazards to be addressed at the more local scale. Communities that have been identified as being particularly vulnerable to wildfires are illustrated in Map#16 and listed in Table 10.9-1.

Molalla Fire professionals considered the following factors to determine the local CARs including:

- Need for defensible space
- Access limitations (narrow driveways, lack of address signage, one way in/one way out)
- Steep slopes that can hinder access and accelerate the spread of wildfire
- Lack of water available for wildland fire fighting
- Heavy fuels on adjacent public lands
- Potential ignition sources from recreationists and transients
- Agricultural and backyard burning
- Lack of community outreach programs to promote wildfire awareness
- Communications difficulties

### **Fuels Reduction**

Fuels reduction projects can and should be accomplished at the local scale, which is the creation of defensible space around homes, as well as the landscape scale to extend vegetation treatments onto adjacent forested land and natural areas. Molalla Fire will facilitate cooperation between public and private organizations to ensure that fuels reduction work occurs strategically and benefits homeowners as well as adjacent public and private lands.

To ensure that landscape-level treatments are paired with projects to create defensible space around vulnerable communities, priority fuels reduction projects have been overlaid with the Communities at Risk Identified by Molalla Fire (Map# 16).

Fuels Reduction Priorities include:

Sawtell Road  
Salo Oaks

Blue Road

### **Molalla Fire District Action Plan**

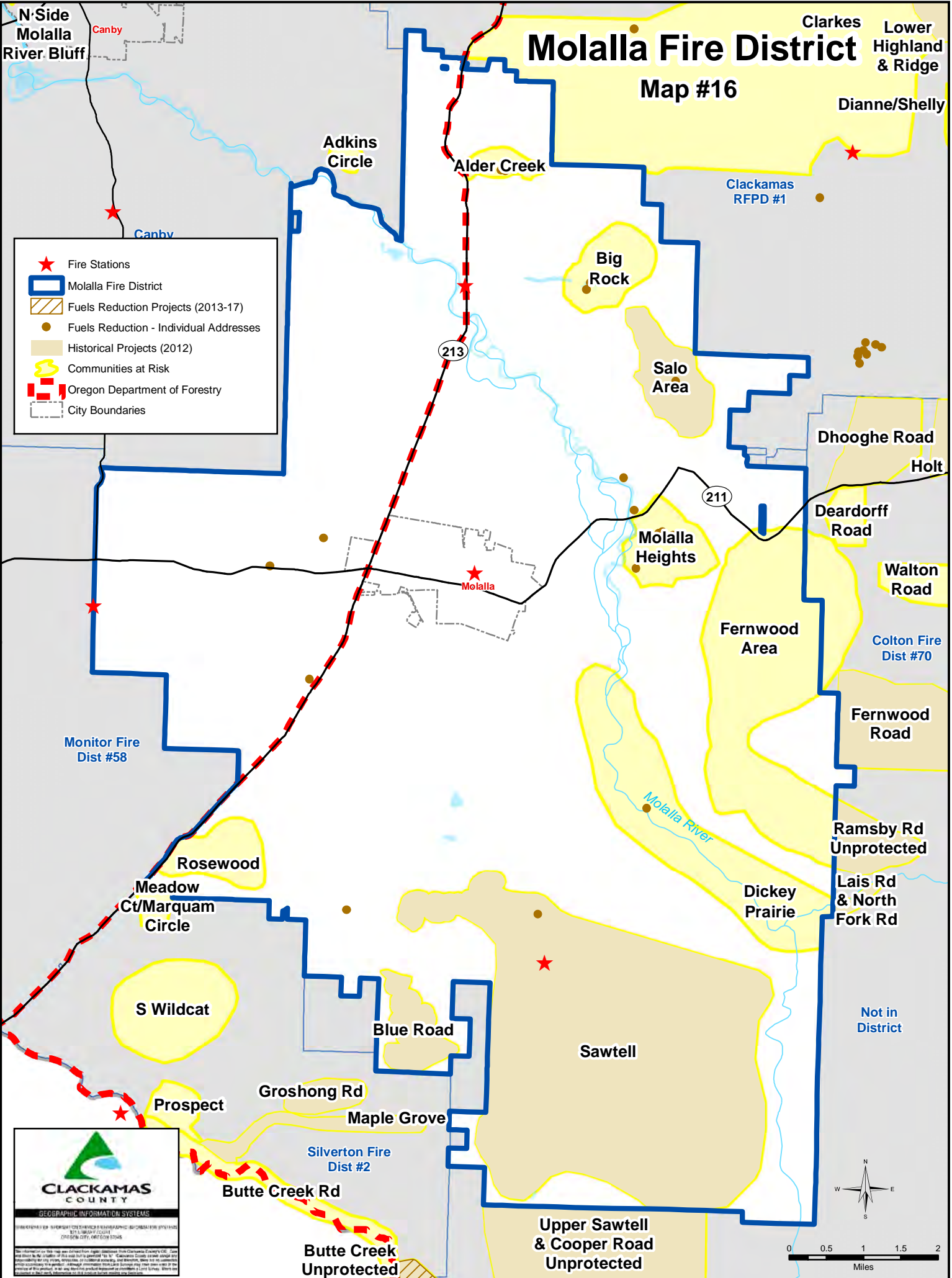
Molalla Fire has developed a list of actions to build capacity at the District scale and has identified actions that can help to make the local CARs more resilient to potential wildfires. The action plan for Molalla Fire and the local CARs therein is provided in Table 10.9-2.

**Table 10.9-1. Molalla Fire District Local Communities at Risk**

Community At Risk	CAR Priority	Defensible Space	Access	Water	Public Forest Lands	Private Forest Lands	Recreators/ Transients	Protection Capabilities	Burning	Preparedness	Communications	Steep Slopes	Description
<b>Molalla Fire Communities at Risk</b>													
Rosewood	High	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	The Rosewood Community is densely populated with homes located at the top of a very steep, vegetated slope. There are major access limitations here, as Colmer Creek does is no longer a through road. There is a lot of poison oak on private lands as well as the adjacent heavily forested BLM land. Many local residents use ATV's here and there have been instances of teenagers starting fires. There are also homemade saunas that tend to burn down. Residents of this community burn yard debris all year long,
Alder Creek	High	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	The Alder Creek Community is on a steep, very narrow dirt road. There are water limitations here and the landscape is heavily forested. Burning is an issue here and the community is not aware of the high wildfire hazards.
Sawtell Trout creek/Lebo/Novak/Hardy. Maplegrove Road	High	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	This is a large community in eastern Molalla that extends beyond the Molalla RFPD boundary, so some homes are actually unprotected. Access is limited throughout this area, as Hardy, Leabo, Hibbard, Appleman and Maple Grove Road are one way in and out. Steiner's Pond is a draft site and Deardorf has a huge lake that could be used as a watering site. Trout Creek and Hardy Roads have interrupted radio coverage. ATV users, transients, and other recreators accessing the Molalla River Corridor are potential ignition sources. Also, it takes 30 minutes to get to the end of it, so protection capabilities are compromised.
Dickey Prairie Road	High	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	The Dickey Prairie area is characterized by dense homes, heavy timber, and limited access and water supply. The forest road between Adams road and Dickey Prairie is in very poor condition, The City's Water Works Plant intake is also located here. Weyerhaeuser industrial first land is adjacent to Dickey Prairie.
Molalla Heights	High	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	The Molalla Heights Community has limited access and the closest water draft site is at the bridge which is difficult to get to. Homes are in need of defensible space. The rock pit here is very active which provides potential ignition sources.
Fernwood Road/Ramsby/Munson/Callahan	Medium	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	The Fernwood Area is a steep canyon that drives fire up the steep slope towards homes. There was a fire here about 10 years ago that did just this and was very difficult to fight. There is heavy vegetation and limited access with tight windy driveways and lots of foliage overhanging. It is about 20 minutes from a fire station. Recreators and transients use this area frequently because it is near a forest road.
Blue Road	Medium	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	Blue Road has very limited access and heavy vegetation. There are only a few homes here, but that are overgrown and are adjacent to private and public forest land. Water is an issue here and it would require a longer response time.
Big Rock Loop	Medium	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Big Rock Loop is vulnerable because there is heavy vegetation and no defensible space around homes. There is a potential water source, but accessing the water source is an issue. Many recreators use this area for ATV's, shooting, campfires and other activities that could provide an ignition source. It is also adjacent to steep BLM forest land.
Salo Royal Oaks	Medium	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	Salo Royal Oaks has steep, narrow access with very little defensible space around homes. There is poison oak here as well, and no water supply.

**Table 10.9-2. Molalla Fire District Action Plan**

Action Item	Timeframe	Partners	CAR
<b>Molalla Fire Action Plan</b>			
Secure funding to develop a marketing campaign that utilizes social media outlets to build support and capacity for the Molalla Fire District (volunteer recruitment, community support, fund raising).	Completed	Fire Co-op	Molalla Fire District
Conduct yearly large scale wildfire exercise.	Ongoing	OSFM,ODF,DPSST	Molalla Fire District
Pursue grant funding to purchase Wildland PPE to replace outdated PPE.	Completed	FDB, ODF	Molalla Fire District
Identify and pursue opportunities to provide Incident Management Training for firefighters that will be Incident Commanders on larger scale emergencies.	Ongoing	FDB, CCEM, NAFT	Molalla Fire District
Identify and pursue opportunities to participate in prescribed burns and live fire training to update and maintain wildfire certifications.	Ongoing	ODF, BLM	Molalla Fire District
Partner with the Clackamas County Fire Defense Board to participate in a WUI conflagration exercise.	Ongoing	Clackamas Fire Defense Board	Molalla Fire District
Develop rural water supplies and in areas that do not have hydrants and are difficult to access.	Ongoing	ODF	Molalla Fire District
Work with local Christmas Tree growers to develop and implement a chipper program to reduce excessive burning of woody material.	Ongoing	ODF, CCFA	Molalla Fire District
<b>Molalla Fire Local Communities at Risk Action Plan</b>			
Partner with the Fire Co-op to create and distribute outreach materials that promote responsible burning, defensible space and reduction of structural ignitability within the Home Ignition Zone.	Ongoing	Fire Co-op	All CAR's
Reduce hazardous fuels in the ROW of potential evacuation routes. Engage residents adjacent to primary evacuations routes to extend treatments onto private land.	Ongoing	ODOT, Clackamas County Roads	All CAR's
Obtain structural ignitability data by conducting structural triage assessment data collection (including GPS points) for homes in Communities at Risk.	Ongoing	ODF	All CAR's
Implement road addressing (including length of driveways) and other signage for emergency response.	Ongoing	ODF	All CAR's
Work with industrial and public forest land holders to reduce fuels on private and federal land adjacent to CAR's.	Ongoing	ODF, BLM, Weyerhaeuser, Port Blakely	All CAR's



**CLACKAMAS COUNTY**  
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

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