

AMADOR COUNTY



COUNTY INFORMATION

Size: 605 sq. miles

Population: 38, 471 (2000 U.S. Census)

Sub-Region: Central Sierra

Official Website: <http://www.co.amador.ca.us/>

CONSERVATION STORY

Amador Fire Safe Council Conserves the Upcountry

By Cathy Koos Breazeal, Executive Director

The prehistoric forest lands of the Sierra looked completely different than the brush-clogged region of the present. The prehistoric native peoples of present-day California managed undergrowth in the forests by annually burning undergrowth. These controlled fires, combined with lightning strike fires, helped create a forest that for 10,000 years was open, diverse, and environmentally sound.

In the mid-1800's California was flooded with miners who, it was said, could ride their horses from one end of the Sierra to the other without ducking or getting knocked off by thick forest brush. But these European settlers quickly erased the 10,000 year history of healthy forest care enacted by the indigenous peoples. In the last 140 years, programs of fire suppression and created a brush-choked environment ripe for catastrophic wildfires.

In 2001, the Amador Fire Safe Council was created in response to the brush growth in the wildland/urban interface (WUI). The WUI is the location where trees meet the people. Because of the population density, annual burning as the indigenous people conducted is now out of the question, and the brush remains an ever-present danger to foothill and mountain residents. Ultimately, the Amador Fire Safe Council's hope is to "protect the people of Amador County and their property from the effects of catastrophic wildfire through education, cooperation, innovation and action."

From 2002 to 2005, the Amador Fire Safe Council created shaded fuel breaks on about 400 acres in various portions of the Upcountry, closely recreating the open park-like forests that were present prior to 1849. Using the County Wildfire Protection Plan as the guiding document and various state and federally funded grants, the AFSC has built numerous shaded fuel breaks encircling the rural subdivisions. In 2006, close to 200 acres on private properties were treated, and in 2007 nearly 340 acres were treated. As of 2008, the Amador Fire Safe Council has completed shaded fuel breaks on approximately 160 acres in Pine Grove and Pioneer. All of these shaded fuel breaks are created using rubber-tracked masticators as opposed to tractor pile and burning. Through mastication, small shredded material is returned to the ground, providing soil protection and preventing erosion. The added benefit of mastication is that, unlike burning, mastication leads to cleaner air quality.

The Amador Fire Safe Council considers watershed protection and wildfire prevention in every shaded fuel break project. CEQA and NEPA documents are researched and written, protecting archaeologically and environmentally sensitive areas. The Amador Fire Safe Council annually applies for state and federal grants through partner agencies such as the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the Bureau of Land Management, the US Forest Service and CalFire.

To learn more about the Amador Fire Safe Council's projects and volunteer opportunities, visit <http://www.amadorfiresafe.org/>.

ORGANIZATIONS

Foothill Conservancy

Contact: Chris Wright

Address: PO Box 1255, Pine Grove, CA 95665

Phone: 209.296.5734

Email: fhc@foothillconservancy.org

Website: www.foothillconservancy.org

Counties of Activity: Amador, Calaveras

Issue Focus: all

Group Type: volunteer, staffed

Description: The Foothill Conservancy formed in 1989 with the goal of protecting and enhancing the rural surroundings and quality of life in Amador and Calaveras Counties. The Conservancy supports land use planning that emphasizes environmental health, community, and a respect for the natural aesthetics of the region. Issues of interest include growth management, watershed restoration, social and economic diversity, public transportation, coordination of local land use planning, conservation of agricultural lands, forest lands, and open space, and habitat protection. The group actively participates in local decision-making processes.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES

Amador County Board of Supervisors:

Address: 810 Court St
Jackson, CA 95642
Phone: (209) 223-6470
FAX: (209) 257-0619
Business Hours: Mon-Fri 8 am-5 pm
Website: <http://www.co.amador.ca.us/depts/bos/>

Senate Representative – 1st District:

Counties Represented: Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Plumas and Sierra, as well as portions of Nevada, Placer and Sacramento Counties.

Website: <http://republican.sen.ca.gov/web/1/>

Assembly Representative – 10th District:

Counties Represented: Amador

Website: <http://republican.assembly.ca.gov/members/a10/index.aspx>