

# **Smoke Management Public Outreach Pilot Project**

## **The Need for Improved Prescribed Burning/Smoke Management Public Outreach**

Prescribed burning in California is a necessary vegetation management tool. It helps to reduce catastrophic wildfire hazards, clear downed trees, control plant diseases, improve wildlife habitat, and restore natural ecosystems. Efforts to educate the public about the need for prescribed burning, and associated smoke management/public health protection programs, have been limited and have met with only marginal success. Typically, such efforts have involved a few community workshops, notifications in the news media, and public service announcements immediately prior to burning. To obtain greater understanding, buy-in, and support from the public for prescribed burning and smoke management, a greater effort is needed to:

- educate the public in advance about why prescribed burning is necessary – including reducing catastrophic wildfires and improving sensitive ecosystems;
- educate the public about efforts conducted to minimize and manage smoke impacts – including who the government agencies are and what the programs are in place to manage smoke and protect public health;
- give the public a greater opportunity to take ownership of where, when, and how prescribed burning may be conducted – including providing more input for public comments at workshops and town meetings; and,
- improve efforts to keep the public informed before, during, and after a prescribed burn is initiated.

## **Tools Available for Smoke Management Outreach**

The Air Resources Board (ARB)/California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) “Smoke Management Public Education and Outreach Working Group” (OWG), together with the California Interagency Air and Smoke Council (IASC) has spent a considerable amount of time and resources identifying and developing public education and outreach materials on prescribed burning and smoke management. A compilation of these materials may be found on the ARB web site at: [www.arb.ca.gov/smp/progdev/pubeduc/pubeduc.htm](http://www.arb.ca.gov/smp/progdev/pubeduc/pubeduc.htm)

## **Developing Public Outreach Protocol**

Additional outreach tools are being developed, including a public outreach protocol “Protocol” that may be used by burners and air districts around the state to improve public outreach efforts. The Protocol will identify and recommend use of prescribed burning and smoke management fact sheets and webpage materials already available, as well as additional outreach materials such as an “Outreach Outline” and generic powerpoint presentation for use at town hall and community outreach meetings.

The Outline will identify outreach messages and methods for different target audiences and burn objectives, and will identify sequential steps in the outreach process from burn and smoke management conceptualization, months in advance of the burn, through the periods immediately prior to, during, and after the burn.

## **Outreach Protocol Pilot Test**

The Outreach Protocol will be completed by the end of April. Concomitantly, the OWG will work with burn agencies and air districts to identify a burn project on which to pilot test the Outreach Protocol. We hope that the Protocol will be pilot tested prior to

June 2003. This outreach effort would include a follow-up survey to identify strengths and weaknesses of the outreach effort. This survey could be incorporated into the Protocol in an effort to continually improve the effort.