

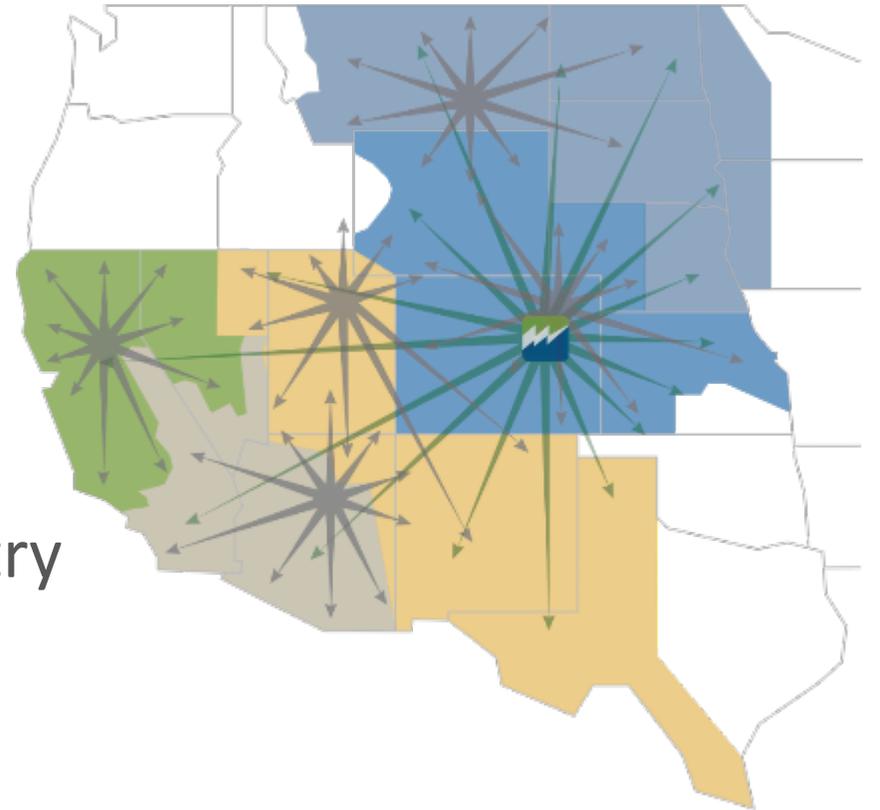


# Blocking and Tackling

Administrator and CEO Mark A. Gabriel  
Western Area Power Administration

# Who WAPA is

- Serve 40 million Americans
- 15-state footprint
- 1.4 million square miles
- 49 offices
- ~700 customers
- Top 10 largest transmission utility in country



# What WAPA manages

- \$4.3 billion in assets
- 114,863 structures
- 17,236 miles of transmission line
- 324 substations
- 291 transformers
- 661 buildings
- 489 communication sites



# California wildfires 5-year overview

| Year                   | Acres Burned | Number of Fires | Loss of Life | Structures Damaged or Destroyed |
|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| 2020<br>(as of Oct. 7) | 4,040,935    | 8,320           | 31           | 8,687                           |
| 2019                   | 259,823      | 7,860           | 3            | 732                             |
| 2018                   | 1,963,101    | 7,639           | 100          | 24,226                          |
| 2017                   | 1,548,429    | 9,270           | 47           | 10,280                          |
| 2016                   | 669,534      | 6,954           | 6            | 1,274                           |
| 2015                   | 880,899      | 8,283           | 7            | 3,159                           |

# 2018 Carr Fire



# Impact on WAPA



# WAPA's wildfire mitigation plan

- Prevent, combat and respond to wildfires
- Minimize probability of being the origin or contributing source
- Communication protocols regarding potential de-energization of lines
- Details operation and maintenance procedures to mitigate wildfires



*Paradise, CA, destruction from 2018 Camp Fire  
Photo courtesy of NBC News*

# Regional implementation

- Integrated vegetation management
  - 2 line inspections annually – 5 in California
  - Lands, Environment and GIS
  - Remote-sensing technologies
  - Discuss and share BMPs
- 
- Unique to California
    - Dedicated patrolman
    - 4 certified utility arborists
    - 14 line-clearance tree trimmers



# Importance of vegetation management



Before



After

# ROW reclamation - California

- Removing incompatible species
- Promoting low-growing, fire-resistant plant communities



# Leveraging partnerships – Rocky Mountain, Summer/Fall 2020

- Worked with Forest Service to mechanically remove vegetation for first time in over a decade in Colorado, Utah and Nevada.

Before

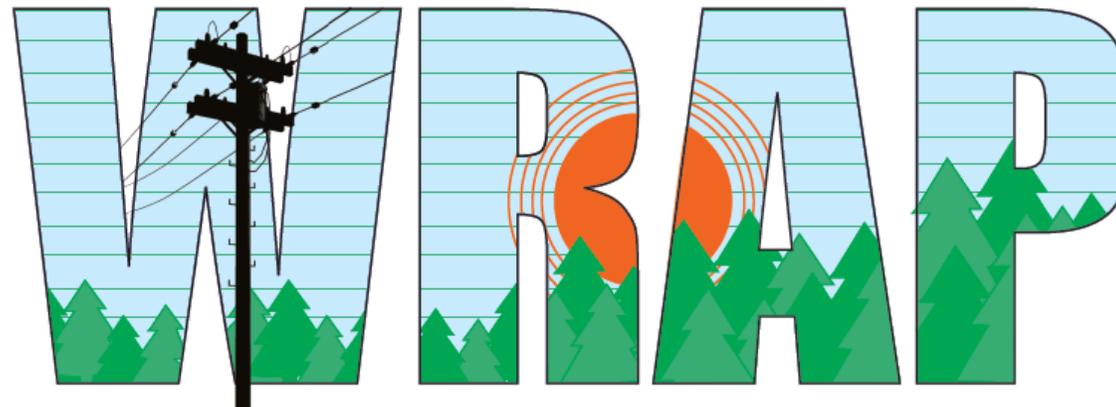


After



# ROW expansion – California

- Partnering with Trinity Public Utilities District to evaluate environmental impact of expanding ROW for 17.5 miles of WAPA transmission line & 216.8 miles of Trinity transmission and distribution line.



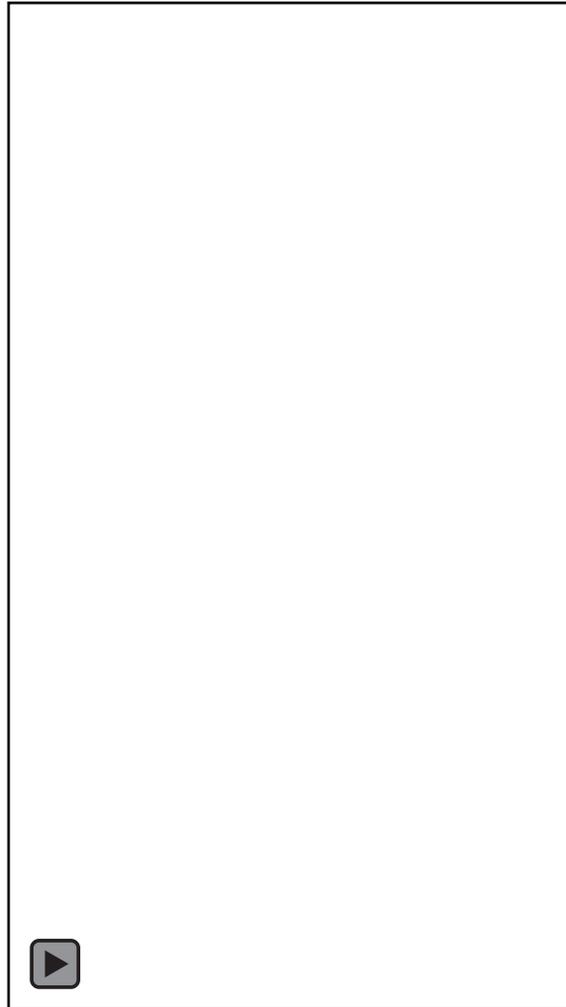
**Wildfire Risk Reduction, Reliability, and Asset Protection Project**

# September 2020 Sears Fire – Arizona

- 4.5 miles under two lines burned.
- Integrated vegetation management performed
- No relay events
- Nominal damage



# October 2020 Coral Fire – Arizona



# Accidental ignition – Sept. 29, 2020

- Contractor for neighboring utility was conducting drone work in a van.
- 40-foot antenna struck two conductors outside our substation
- Ignited small grass fire



# Lessons learned

- Develop relationships with other organizations before you need them.
- Be up-to-speed on NIMS.
- Have excess inventory and MOUs on hand and be flexible with restoration.
- Have agreements ready to go for fire retardant services.
- Develop contacts to allow your crews to access restricted areas to perform critical work.
- Recognize fire department's leadership role in restoration; it requires significant coordination with them.
- Offer ROWs as fire breaks.
- Proactive vegetation management today will save lives and possibly lives in the future.

# Contact/Follow me

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*New permanent structures after Carr Fire*