



2011 Accomplishment Report



**FireWise
Southwest
Colorado**



The FireWise Council of Southwest Colorado strives to keep lives, homes, and property from being damaged by wildfire. We provide education, planning and mitigation support to spark wildfire preparedness in the hearts of our neighbors!

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**Our Vision of
FireWise in 2017**

FireWise of Southwest Colorado is recognized by our communities and partners as the source for wildfire preparedness education, planning and implementation. We lead the way in establishing Fire-Adapted Communities that can survive a wildfire with little or no assistance from firefighters. All of the Fire Protection Districts understand and advocate the FireWise message throughout Southwest Colorado.

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From the Program Director:

It was an exciting year for FireWise and a year of changes. We said goodbye to some friends and welcomed many others into the fold. Karen Dickson, our Montezuma Chapter Coordinator resigned in Dec. 2010, and in February of 2011 we welcomed the new Coordinator, Rebecca Samulski. Rebecca grew up in Montezuma County and her local knowledge was a huge asset in establishing the Montezuma Chapter. Since her first kick-off meeting with her Ambassadors she has led an active and engaging education program in Montezuma County. Her facilitation, organization, and planning skills were a great asset to Montezuma County as it revised its Community Wildfire Protection Plan and to the Steering Committee as we worked through some strategic planning issues to help us move forward as an organization.

In September, we said goodbye to Tammy Tyner who served as our CWPP Coordinator for 18 months, and in November Jack Cannon stepped down from the Steering Committee. The CWPP duties are now being handled by the County Coordinators and we are recruiting for a new Steering Committee member.

Unlike 2010, we had very little turnover over in Neighborhood Ambassadors which was wonderful and we welcomed 25 new Ambassadors into the program. We anticipate that by February of this year we will have more than 100 FireWise Ambassadors!

FireWise undertook two new programs last year. We completed three demonstration sites, two in La Plata County and one in Archuleta County, and have another online for 2012 in Montezuma County. We are thrilled with the opportunity that these sites will afford our communities as pinnacles of outstanding mitigation work and we thank the mitigation contractors for their attention to detail.

FireWise also started a “This Property is FIREWISE” sign program to recognize properties that have been well mitigated. Unfortunately, no signs have yet been posted due to a materials problem, but they are ready to go just as soon as the bracket supplies come in.

We continue to see great support for mitigation work both from those associated with FireWise and also from the community at large. Entities and residents in southwest Colorado received almost \$350,000 in grant money this year and more than 2/3 of that is going directly to on-the-ground mitigation work.

Many thanks to all who continue to help make our communities better prepared for wildfire and safer for our residents and emergency responders!

With much gratitude,

Pam

Pam Wilson
Program Director

OBJECTIVES

The FireWise Council takes a three-pronged approach in its efforts to help residents understand their wildfire risk and what they can do to mitigate that risk – Outreach and Education, Planning, and Mitigation. Objectives within these areas that the Council strives towards annually include:

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION:

- 1) Increasing the number of Neighborhood Ambassadors
- 2) Reaching more southwest Colorado residents with information about their wildfire risk and how they can reduce that risk, and
- 3) Coordinating Fire Prevention and Education Month every May

PLANNING:

- 4) Encouraging the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs)
- 5) Getting subdivisions recognized in the Firewise Communities USA program

MITIGATION/IMPLEMENTATION:

- 6) Increasing the number of homeowners undertaking mitigation efforts
- 7) Other mitigation efforts

Our accomplishments in each of these objectives are described below.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

1) FireWise Ambassador Program

Our FireWise Ambassador Program is the backbone of the Council's programs. Ambassadors are volunteers within neighborhoods that help their neighbors who live in or near forests to become more aware of their fire risk and what they can do to mitigate that risk. They strive to make their community more prepared to survive a wildfire. Ambassadors may spearhead the Community Wildfire Protection Planning effort, write grants, and/or initiate work days.

FireWise recruited a record twenty five new Ambassadors this year! We believe this increase was due to several factors:

- 1) the Four Mile Canyon Fire in Boulder in Sept. 2010 which burned 177 structures, cost \$10 million to suppress, and had \$217 million in insurance loss;
- 2) the extreme 2011 fire season in AZ, NM, and TX related to drought conditions, and
- 3) an increasing number of residents being required to mitigate their property by their insurance companies.

Only five of the neighborhoods listed below already had representatives on the Council. All Ambassadors are from high-risk communities as defined on our Communities of Concern maps prepared by the Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College or in county-level Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs).

La Plata County: 18 new Ambassadors representing the high-risk subdivisions of: Clearview Project (2), The Cliffs of Durango, Tween Lakes (6), Heartwood, Los Pinos, Coolwater, Rancho Mira Sol, Aspen Trails, Rafter J, Forest Lakes (2), and Shenandoah Highlands.

Montezuma County: Three new Ambassadors -- one additional one from Cedar Mesa Ranches and two from the Cash Canyon area.

Archuleta County: Three new Ambassadors -- one from Loma Linda and two from Timber Ridge.

Dolores County: One new Ambassador from Glade Ranch.

All Ambassadors have received their “orientation” and begun their Ambassador duties. Two Orientations are already planned for 2012 for Ambassadors that were unable to make the last Orientation in September and/or have signed up since then – one in Montezuma County in January and one in La Plata County in February.

Currently, the total number of Ambassadors is 90; with 5 from Archuleta County, 12 from Montezuma County, 1 from Dolores County, and 72 from La Plata County.

Ambassadors recorded **2,275** hours of volunteer time attending meetings and working within their neighborhoods – a value of \$48,594.00. We know the actual number of hours is much higher as it is difficult to get all volunteers to report their hours. Also, this number only represents work done by Neighborhood Ambassadors. Residents in several subdivisions donated hundreds of hours in making their communities more wildfire prepared.

2) Education and Outreach

The Council continues to offer educational in-services at their bi-monthly meetings in Durango at which we typically have 22-32 participants. In addition to guest speakers, Ambassadors that received grant funding also made presentations on the work accomplished. Topics this year included:

- a. Observations from the 2010 Four Mile Canyon Fire (near Boulder);
- b. Climate Change
- c. Getting Ready for the Upcoming Fire Season
- d. Field Trip to Forest Lakes to look at demonstration site and ongoing mitigation work being done by Upper Pine River Fire Fuels Crew
- e. DFRA Fire Chief Dan Noonan discussed the upcoming ballot initiative

- f. NFPA Firewise Advisor Keith Worley did a presentation on “Hunting for Dollars” and the Firewise Communities USA program
- g. Grant funding presentations on projects completed in Deer Valley Estates, Falls Creek Ranch, and Durango Ridge Ranch

In addition to our bi-monthly meetings, FireWise also wrote and sent out five “Focus on Firewise” newsletters and/or monthly E-News to our Ambassadors, partners, and other residents interested in FireWise happenings, as well as notices of upcoming presentations and articles of interest.

The Montezuma Chapter held five programs to engage existing Neighborhood Ambassadors and recruit new ones. These included round-table discussions to share ideas and plan for future projects within our Neighborhood Ambassador’s communities and at the county-wide outreach scale. Programs included:

- a. An introductory program with new Chapter Coordinator Rebecca Samulski;
- b. An in-service on evacuation planning with the Montezuma County Emergency Manager, Doug Parker;
- c. An opportunity to contribute to the update of the Montezuma County Community Wildfire Protection Plan;
- d. A presentation on Living with Wildfire in Southwest Colorado by BLM Mitigation and Education Specialist Craig Goodell; and
- e. An introductory chainsaw workshop with National Park Service Zone Safety Officer, and new Neighborhood Ambassador, Everett Whitehead.

Pam and Rebecca attend Fire Chiefs’ meetings within their counties, as needed, to keep the Chiefs apprised of FireWise happenings, CWPP efforts, and emerging issues.

In addition to continuing with education efforts for our FireWise Ambassadors, the Program Director and Chapter Coordinators also participate individually, and often with partners, in HOA meetings, CWPP meetings, and occasionally on home assessments. This year FireWise participated in or organized education/outreach and/or CWPP activities in the following communities:

La Plata County: Florida River Estates, Clearview Project, Forest Lakes, Heartwood Co-Housing, Timberdale, Pine River Ranches, Coolwater/Los Pinos, Tween Lakes, and Los Ranchitos

Montezuma County: Cedar Mesa Ranches, Summit Lake, McElmo Wilson Ditch, Cash Canyon/Stinking Springs, Sunwest Estates, and Cassidy Canyon/Mud Springs communities

Archuleta County: Timber Ridge, Loma Linda, Echo Canyon Ranch, Pagosa Lakes POA

FireWise partnered with the Montezuma County Fire Chief’s Association at three area shows/festivals -- The Home and Garden Show, Dolores River Days, and Verde Fest. This raised awareness of FireWise in thousands of area residents, with at least 300 direct

communications and hundreds of FireWise materials distributed at these three events. As part of Wildfire Prevention and Education Month, the Montezuma Chapter also organized a special wildfire display and booth at the Cortez Wal-Mart.

Through these educational booths, FireWise arranged 21 on-site wildfire hazard risk assessments in Montezuma County between May and November 2011. These were carried out in collaboration with the Cortez Fire Protection District, Montezuma Fire Chief's Wildfire Education Specialist, Colorado State Forest Service, and the BLM/USFS Wildfire Mitigation and Education Specialist. By fall, FireWise provided written assessments for each property visited, and will continue to work with all our partners to create a user friendly site assessment record that is useful for property owners and our partners. The assessments tend to be one part education (if the homeowner is present), one part planning by identifying the greatest risks and next steps for a homeowner to take, and one part mitigation support by providing information on how to get the work done.

FireWise also made presentations to the La Plata County, Montezuma, and Dolores County Commissioners, and to Durango High Noon Rotary and Durango Daybreak Rotary (about CWPPs). FireWise also had representation at the Archuleta County Safety Expo in June. A presentation titled "*Firescaping Your Forested Homesite*" was made to approximately 35 members of the Pagosa Springs Garden Club.

The Montezuma Chapter also offered an introductory chainsaw workshop with NPS Zone Safety Officer, and new Neighborhood Ambassador, Everett Whitehead.



3) May is Fire Prevention and Education Month

Since 2003, the Fire Council has coordinated Fire Prevention and Education Month in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and other firefighting entities throughout southwest Colorado. The theme for the month has always been "What Are You Waiting For?" Efforts for the month are focused around education and typically include a variety of media efforts, workshops or tours, guest speakers, and/or video screenings.

For the second year in a row, FireWise partnered with the Fort Lewis Mesa Fire Protection District to host a Home Ignition Zone Workshop in Durango. FLM personnel taught the class and FireWise provided all the logistical support. This year we had 16 attendees including FireWise Ambassadors, mitigation contractors, fire department personnel, and FireWise contractors. This workshop focuses on actions people can take around their homes to make it safer for firefighters to defend and to increase its chances of surviving an “ember shower” caused by an approaching wildfire.

Special presentations included “*Firescaping Your Forested Homesite*” to Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association (by FireWise Program Director) and “*Creating Fire-Adapted Communities*” at the Bayfield Library (by Craig Goodell, BLM Mitigation and Education Specialist).



Upper Pine River Fire conducted two “WUI Checkpoints” in the Forest Lakes subdivision where they stopped all vehicles heading in or out of the subdivisions and talked to them about their wildfire risk.

FireWise wrote an article on “Fire-Adapted Communities” for SJMA’s spring newsletter and their Stewards of the Land monthly column in the Durango Herald, as well as working with the Durango Herald on an article about defensible space.

The Montezuma County Chapter hosted a booth at Cortez Wal-Mart. The booth featured the County Wildfire Hazard Map, Smokey Bear, live broadcasting by Four Corners Broadcasting, and fire trucks from the Dolores Public Lands Office, BIA Ute Mountain Ute fire crew, the Cortez Fire Protection District, and support from the Montezuma County Fire Chiefs Association, directly reaching 300-400 individuals



The Montezuma Chapter also celebrated the month with a media blitz including: newspaper, TV, and radio PSAs; three radio shows on KSJD, KIQX and others throughout the month; four special wildfire education guest articles in the Cortez Journal, and banner displays.

PLANNING

4) Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs)

In 2003 the Healthy Forest Restoration Act authorized the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans, or CWPPs. HFRA calls for communities to collaborate with state and local agencies to determine priorities for hazardous fuels reduction projects on federal and private lands in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). The CWPP allows communities to develop and list priorities that affect their ability to survive a wildland fire in their area. In addition to mitigation needs, egress, education, and water availability are some of the other issues that communities may address in their plans.

Benefits to a community include:

- ▶ Improving coordination and communication between emergency response agencies and the community
- ▶ Restoring healthier, more resilient conditions in adjoining forests
- ▶ Priority funding for projects on adjoining or nearby federal lands
- ▶ A competitive advantage in applying for grant funding



Though the Council is not directly responsible for writing CWPPs, we offer support to communities wishing to undertake them in the form of presentations to Homeowner Associations, support at meetings, and review of documents. The Council and its

partners (USFS/BLM, CSFS, Fire Departments, County GIS Departments, and County Emergency Managers) are an integral part of the collaborative CWPP process.



As most people know, the planning process is never a fast one. If a subdivision hires a contractor to write the CWPP the process is generally completed within one year; if the HOA decides to develop the CWPP themselves the process may take 2-3 years.

In 2011 several CWPPS were completed including:

- Durango West 2 (La Plata)
- Falls Creek Ranch (La Plata)
- Forest Lakes (La Plata)
- Cedar Mesa Ranches (Montezuma)

There are several CWPPs nearing completion and underway:

- Vista de Oro (La Plata) – anticipated completion Jan. 2012
- Heartwood Co-Housing (La Plata) – anticipated completion Mar. 2012
- Timberdale Ranch (La Plata)
- Pine River Ranches (La Plata)
- Coolwater/Los Pinos (La Plata)
- Tween Lakes (La Plata)
- Los Ranchitos (La Plata)
- Crowley Ranch (Archuleta) – anticipated completion Dec. 2012
- Echo Canyon Ranch (Archuleta) – anticipated completion Dec. 2012
- Timber Ridge Ranch (Archuleta) – anticipated completion Dec. 2012
- Loma Linda (Archuleta) – anticipated completion Dec. 2012



In addition, two counties – Dolores and Montezuma – have been revising and updating their current plans. FireWise took an active role in the development of the Montezuma CWPP by assisting with the plan revision process, coordinating public input meetings, contributing sections to the revised plan, and providing extensive advice and content editing support. The Montezuma County Fire Chiefs approved the plan at their December 7th meeting, and County Commissioner and Colorado State Forest Service approval is anticipated in early January 2012.

Dolores County is upgrading their 2002 Community Fire Plan to make it compatible with the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 and to meet SB09-001. The plan is just about completed and ready for signature.

We have seen many good accomplishments from communities that have completed CWPPs; these accomplishments and others taken by Neighborhood Ambassadors are found in the **Mitigation/Implementation section**.

5) Firewise Communities USA Program

In December 2010 Deer Valley Estates became the first Firewise Community USA in southwest Colorado. Firewise wrote a news release about this event and was interviewed by the Durango Herald and Four Corners Broadcasting. We also arranged for

a success story on Deer Valley Estates and their accomplishments to be posted on CSFS Durango District Web page.

In 2011, we had two additional communities apply for Firewise Community USA status -- **Falls Creek Ranch and Vista de Oro**. Falls Creek Ranch is located northwest of Durango, and Vista de Oro is southwest of Durango.

Falls Creek Ranch has been conducting Firewise activities in their community since 1978. They completed their CWPP in August 2011 and have been actively implementing recommendations in their CWPP. FireWise Ambassador Judy Winzell created a CWPP Team to help with implementation. Each Team member has responsibility for a certain section of the neighborhood and talks to neighbors about why certain work is needed and when it will be happening, answers questions from residents, and takes concerns forward to Judy and the rest of the team.



Under Judy's leadership, FCR applied for and received several grants in 2010 and 2011. FCR's accomplishments can be found in the Mitigation/Implementation section.

Vista de Oro also has an impressive list of Firewise accomplishments including getting land donated for a fire station, community work days, and the addition of water storage tanks for wildfire suppression and to improve their ISO rating. Their CWPP should be signed in Jan. 2012.

Sponsored by the national Firewise Program, this program recognizes communities that have a completed wildfire risk assessment (and/or CWPP), have an organized Firewise committee and undertake Firewise activities on a yearly basis, and spend \$2 per capita on mitigation work annually. This is a self-nominating program, but all applications are approved by the local Colorado State Forest Service District Forester. There are more than 700 communities across the U.S. that have been recognized as Firewise USA Communities.

MITIGATION/IMPLEMENTATION

6) Increasing the amount of mitigation undertaken

It is often difficult to gauge how much mitigation work is occurring because some people are not good at reporting their accomplishments, some think that what got done is too insignificant, and others just want to see the work done.

In FireWise language, the term “mitigation” most often refers to reducing vegetation to make a home or property more defensible against wildfire but it can also refer to a myriad of other actions that can be taken to help a community become more prepared to survive a wildfire such as improving access and egress; adding reflective home and street signage; adding water storage; maintaining emergency contact lists, and more.

There are several factors that do help us determine the level of interest and work being done including:

- 1) The number of Neighborhood Ambassadors rose from 65 to 90 in 2011.
- 2) FireWise again had money for “mini grants” to Ambassadors. In 2011, we had requests for almost \$31,000 and only \$25,000 to allocate.
- 3) Most mitigation contractors saw an increase in business in 2011.
- 4) Upper Pine Fire hired a fuels crew to conduct mitigation work and prescribed burning on private lands within their District and had so many requests they had to increase the size of the crew from 6 to 10, and many residents are on a waiting list for 2012.
- 5) Many residents took advantage of grant opportunities offered through the Colorado State Forest Service.

Mini Grant Projects: For the past three years the FireWise Council has offered a “mini grant fund” for use by Neighborhood Ambassadors. In 2011, we required a 10% match which could be either hard cash or volunteer hours (valued at \$21.36/hr.). Funds are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. The funds can be used for development of a CWPP and/or community mitigation projects, including ROW treatments, mitigation of common space, or development of a fuel break that would benefit at least five homes. Funds could also be used for educational efforts, community work days (i.e. chipper rental), and other community projects identified in a CWPP or by a mitigation specialist or Fire Chief.

Mini grants approved in 2011 include:

Falls Creek Ranch (La Plata) -- \$5,000 to upgrade 6.8 miles of road within the subdivision to improve safety for residents and emergency responders including providing passing zones and enlarging cul-de-sacs

Status: *Completed. Added mini grant monies to their 2011 road maintenance budget and added 11 turnouts on one-lane roads, enlarged seven cul-de-sacs, and widened some narrow roads*

Florida River Estates (La Plata) -- \$6,000 for fuel mitigation and tree removal from ditches and common area along 2 miles of road, 15 ft. either side of road; removal of overgrown brush in common area around ponds, and rental of chipper and trailer for residents use.

Status: *Hired a mitigation contractor to help with chipping and slash disposal.*

Hidden Ridge Ranch (La Plata) -- \$3,500 for acquiring and installing one or two 6,000-12,000 gallon water storage tank(s) to provide additional water for firefighting, and supplies for plumbing the tanks

Status: *An 8,000 gallon used tank was secured and installed in early December 2011.*

Cedar Mesa Ranches (Montezuma) -- \$6,000 for clearing of fire access road located between the east end of J.8 and J.9 to a width of about 40 ft.; includes removing dead trees and brush left from original excavation of fire road as well as beetle-killed trees. Also, rental of chipper/shredder and trucks for annual fuels "Clean-Up Day."

Status: *Work on fire access road has been completed. It is now useable as an emergency egress route. Approximately 6.1 acres treated.*

McElmo Canyon Area (Mont.) -- \$1,500 for clearing of old McElmo Road to provide a fuel break and access to firefighters to currently unavailable areas and use of goats to reduce weeds and vegetation growth.

Status: *Unable to complete project. Funds will become part of the 2012 mini grant process.*

7) Other Mitigation Efforts

In 2010 the Colorado State Forest Service offered up some special funding called Emergency Supplemental Funding, or ESF, that would reimburse property owners up to \$470/acre for completed mitigation work. More than \$330,000 was awarded in southwest Colorado.

Most recipients did not get started on the work until 2011; to date, 404.6 acres out of 708.9 acres have been completed, with the remainder to be done in 2012. Below is a listing of work accomplished to date:

1. Cedar Mesa Ranches – Fuels Mitigation -- 14 lots/tracts; 123 acres
2. City of Durango – Cliff Rock Open Space Fuels Reduction Project -- 124 acres
3. Durango West 2 Metro District – Common Area Fuel Reduction -- 53 acres
4. Falls Creek Ranch – CWPP Project 1.0 -- 9 acres
5. Navajo Peak Ranch Subdivision – Fuels Mitigation – 3 lots; 74.6 acres
6. Pagosa Lakes POA – Pagosa Vista Subdivision WUI Thinning Project -- 21.0 acres

Though not all these entities are affiliated with FireWise we appreciate, and wanted to recognize, their efforts in creating wildfire preparedness, healthier forests and safer communities.

ADDITIONAL 2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In March of 2011, the Steering Committee, Program Director, Chapter Coordinators, and partners from the BLM and CSFS went through a facilitated strategic planning session where we began work on a 5-year vision and came up with a list of actions to work on over the next year. We have completed six of our seven action items including developing a new mission statement and a 5-year vision statement, featured at the start of this Report.

Pam and Rebecca both attended a 2 ½ day national Firewise Conference (Backyards & Beyond) in Denver along with about 350 other people. Pam and BLM Mitigation Specialist Craig Goodell co-presented **“CWPP Planning: A Tale of Four Subdivisions”** that highlighted the CWPP efforts in Elk Stream Ranch, Falls Creek, Forest Lakes, and Deer Valley Estates. Upper Pine River Fire Chief Rich Graeber also attended the conference and made a presentation titled **“One Fire Department’s Approach to Mitigation.”** Both presentations were well received and Pam is sharing information about the Neighborhood Ambassador program with counterparts in Bend, OR, central Texas, and upstate New York. Rebecca and Pam both brought back a great deal of useful information, resources, and tools to bolster our FireWise program.

FireWise worked with six local mitigation contractors to develop a Wildfire Mitigation Professionals Association (WMPA). The goal of the organization is to create a sustainable mitigation industry in SW Colorado as well as enhance communication and outreach efforts between WMPA, FireWise, and local, state, and federal agencies. The group received their 501(c) status in August and has begun membership outreach and educational efforts.

We also started discussions with a property management group (AREM) in Durango that manages several high-risk communities about getting on HOA meeting agendas and/or providing information to high-risk subdivisions that they manage. We also discussed ways to outreach to real estate groups.

We requested and selected an intern through FLC’s Environmental Studies program to head up the FireWise Council’s “Sign Program” over the summer. Our intern also assisted with Website updates, homeowner events, and other educational efforts.

In cooperation with Upper Pine River Fire Department hosted a tour for Congressional representatives Ellen Roberts and J. Paul Brown, Forest Service and BLM employees, La Plata County OEM personnel, and the media to look at mitigation efforts in Deer Valley Estates and Forest Lakes.



We shared our CWPP Framework (developed in 2009) and accomplishments with about 60 participants at a CSFS CWPP Workshop in Breckenridge.

Attended a Single-Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) demonstration hosted by Colorado State Forest Service at La Plata County Airport with four FireWise Ambassadors and many interagency firefighters.



Prepared presentations for and participated in two “Fired Up in Southwest Colorado” events – one for La Plata County personnel and one for insurance agents – that were planned and facilitated by the WMPA.

Contracted with professional photographer to assist with documenting FireWise projects in southwest Colorado.

Partnered with Mountain Studies Institute to host a presentation by CU Professor Joe Ryan titled: *“The Effects of Fire on the Release of Mercury from Forest Soils to Natural Waters.”*

Partnered with Pagosa Lakes POA on the development of a defensible space demonstration project (treating greenbelt area between two subdivisions) in Archuleta County.

SPECIAL PROJECTS IN 2011

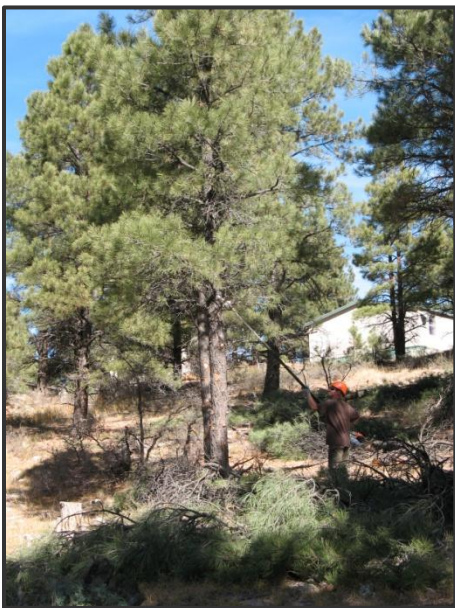
FireWise had several special projects in 2011 which assisted with our educational efforts as well as providing mitigation support. Under two separate grants from CSFS we received funding to develop four Wildfire Mitigation Demonstration Sites. Three of the sites have been completed; two in La Plata County and one in Archuleta County. The fourth site has been selected and will be in Montezuma County, just outside of Mancos, with anticipated mitigation in spring and summer 2012. This site will serve as a demonstration of high quality fuels mitigation in a pinyon/ juniper woodland, the primary ecosystem in Montezuma County.

The long-term goals of the sites are to enhance the safety of people who live in a high-risk subdivision in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and to provide an educational site(s) to visually display the benefits of wildfire mitigation in a variety of vegetation types.

Vista Project – Archuleta County

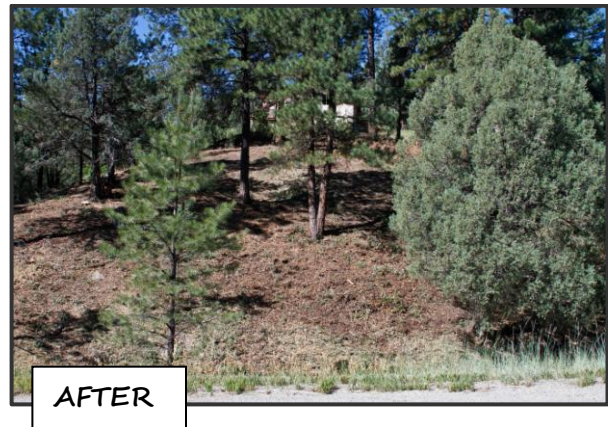
The project in Archuleta County, known as the Vista Project, was completed in partnership with the Pagosa Lakes POA. The POA selected the contractor and provided oversight for the project and FireWise contributed some funding and will provide an interpretive sign to enhance the educational efforts. A total of 21 acres was treated.

The project is located in the Vista greenbelt area just below the Vista Mobile Home Park. The vegetation is primarily ponderosa pine with a Gambel oak and juniper understory. A well-used hiking trail meanders through the site.



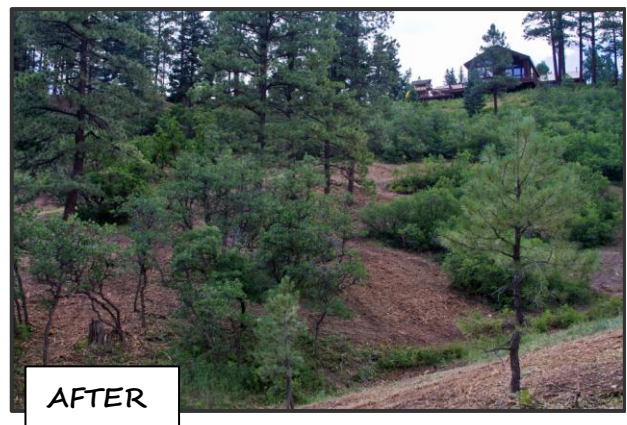
Rafter J Project – La Plata County

The Rafter J project is located just off Wildcat Canyon Road about .3 mile up Meadow Road on the left. Approximately 3.5 acres was mitigated. The primary vegetation is ponderosa pine with a Gambel oak understory with scattered juniper and other shrubs. The residence is located at the top of a relatively steep slope that was dense with vegetation. Jon Westrup of Fire Smart was the primary contractor and was assisted by several members of the Wildfire Mitigation Professionals Association including Brush Hogs, M&M Enterprises, and Fire Ready.



Los Ranchitos Project – La Plata County

The Los Ranchitos project is located off Florida Road at the west entrance to the Los Ranchitos subdivision. Approximately 4.0 acres was mitigated. The primary vegetation is ponderosa pine with a Gambel oak understory with scattered juniper and other shrubs. Two residences are located at the top of a relatively steep slope that was dense with vegetation. Troy Flory of Brush Hogs was the primary contractor and was assisted by Mike Kane of M&M Enterprises.



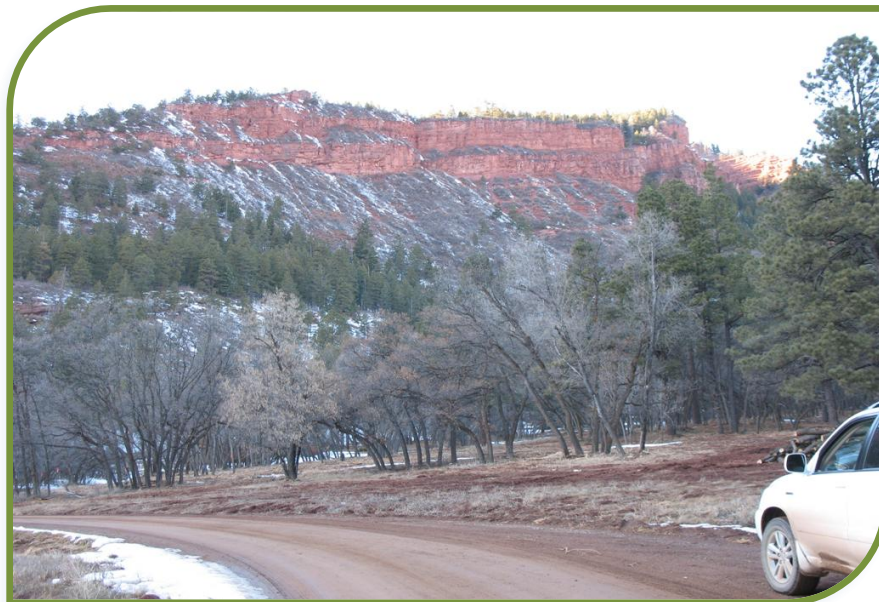
Grant Monies Received

The FireWise Council received several grants in 2011. All were invaluable in allowing us to sustain and grow the FireWise program and we are most grateful to all our funders. Grants received include:

- ▶ **\$22,290 from La Plata County**
- ▶ **\$18,850 from Montezuma County** for Montezuma Chapter Coordinator (includes some time for Program Director)
- ▶ **\$30,565 from Colorado State Forest Service** for the development of two demonstration sites and a “This Property is Firewise” sign program
- ▶ **\$45,000 from the BLM** for the Ambassador Program
- ▶ **\$27,050 from the BLM** for a mini grant fund
- ▶ **\$4612 CCP grant from Homeland Security** to assist with Ambassador Program supplies and printing expenses

Grants for Others

- ▶ **\$23,200 from the BLM** to complete Project 1.0 in Falls Creek Ranch (La Plata)
- ▶ **\$36,050 from the BLM** for mitigation work in Cash Canyon (Montezuma)



Bottom of Starwood Drive in Falls Creek Ranch where a recently completed mitigation project occurred in which the oak and other shrubs was heavily thinned and large clumps of oak were left.

FireWise Ambassador Accomplishments 2011

Cash Canyon (Cortez FPD)

- Held a FireWise Awareness day with presentations by FireWise and BLM Mitigation Specialist
- Received a \$35,000 BLM Community Assistance grant to mitigate approximately 50 acres in the Cash Canyon area

Cassidy Canyon (Mancos FPD)

- Held informational presentation at neighborhood potluck
- Site assessments were conducted on six properties
- 2 new ambassadors will begin in 2012

Cedar Mesa Ranches (Mancos FPD)

- CWPP completed in July 2011
- Using a mini grant from the FireWise Council, the HOA hired a contractor to do mitigation work along a secondary egress route (fire road). The contractor cut trees near the road and also removed piles of dead wood left near the road from when it was originally built. This was a priority action listed in their CWPP.
- 123 acres mitigated on 14 lots /tracts using CSFS ESF funds
- In cooperation with Mesa Verde NP, the Dolores Public Lands Office, and the Mancos Fire Department the subdivision hosted an interagency engine training, followed by a BBQ. Several Cedar Mesa residents attended the training.



Clearview Project (DFRA)

- Had FireWise Program Director speak at Annual Meeting about fire risk and defensible space
- Ambassador mitigated 2 of their 7 acres; other residents have mitigated about 7 of 16 acres

Coolwater (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Participated in initial kick-off meeting for Coolwater CWPP along with six other subdivisions in the Upper Pine River FPD
- Demonstration site completed and signed by Upper Pine Fuels Crew (1 acre)

Crowley Ranch (Pagosa Fire)

- Continued working on a CWPP

Deer Valley Estates (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Using remainder of a 2010 WUI grant, had a hammerhead turnaround constructed at end of Weiland Drive. Volunteers also cleaned up deadfall and some oak from the road ROW and filled 3 cubic yard rollaway dumpsters with material. 10 volunteers donated about 197 hours.
- Had monthly work days during the summer. Volunteers donated 72 hours.
- 10 homeowners had their properties mitigated through Upper Pine for a total of 21.10 acres.



Durango Ridge Ranch (DFRA)

- Residents built rock retaining walls (3 homeowners), installed metal stripping at base of house (1), removed trees (2) and scrub oak removal (16), installed dry-bed (1), installed irrigation system (1), installed cistern (1) and purchased a chainsaw (1).
- 16 out of 19 homeowners/landowners participated and volunteered 787 hours
- 16 homes or properties were mitigated for a total of 20 acres
- Remainder of 2010 mini grant was used to hire a mitigation company to provide chipping for six residents that did their own trimming and reseeding some property that was mitigated in 2010.
- Homeowners invested \$62,600.00 in mitigation



Durango West 2 (DFRA)

- Received CSFS ESF funds and had contractor mitigate 53 acres of common space (priority action listed in CWPP)



Echo Canyon Ranch (Pagosa Fire)

- Began working on a CWPP



Elk Stream Ranch (Mancos FPD)

Using remainder of 2008 WUI grant, completed a shaded fuel break 100-150 ft. from both sides of road (where topography allowed) along subdivision roads.

Falls Creek Ranch (DFRA)

- Held CWPP meeting to introduce the “Draft CWPP” – attended by about 40 residents.
- Ambassador finished CWPP and held a “signing party” in August.
- Received \$5000 mini grant from FireWise which they added to their FY 2011 roads budget and did major work along their seven miles of roads including:
 - Installed/expanded 7 turnarounds
 - Created adequate turnarounds on 11 of 13 roads
 - Added 11 turn-outs on one-lane roads
 - Resident volunteers did much of the prep work like cutting back brush, removing a few large trees, etc., and then a contractor came in and did the cut/fill work and spread the fill and gravel.
Volunteer hours: 106
- Mitigation (mowing oak and thinning smaller trees) up to 50 ft. along select areas on both sides of Falls Creek Main Road for a total of 9 acres using ESF and BLM Community Assistance grant. Also mitigated 3.16 acres along Starwood Drive and Meadow Ridge Trail.
- Applied for Firewise Community USA status



Florida River Estates (DFRA)

- Held FireWise Awareness BBQ for residents in May with presentations by BLM Mitigation Specialist and FireWise
- Had CWPP Coordinator give presentation on CWPPs to HOA Board
- Hired a mitigation contractor to provide chipping for residents that had slash to be removed. About 10-12 residents participated with 20-30 acres of mitigation work completed.

Forest Lakes (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Completed a CWPP in August after numerous small group and public meetings
- Upper Pine River Fuels Crew completed a demonstration site
- Upper Pine Fire conducted several WUI Checkpoints
- Upper Pine River Fuels Crew mitigated 90 lots for approximately 115 acres



- Forest Lakes Metro District opened an emergency egress route off Pine Valley Road that had been closed for many years

Glade Ranch (Dolores FPD)

- Eight homeowners performed various tasks. On one lot, a brush hog was used to create breaks in the oak brush on approximately 15 acres.
- General clean-up around structures, approximately 25 hours volunteer time



Heartwood Co-Housing (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Participated in initial kick-off meeting for Heartwood CWPP along with six other subdivisions in the Upper Pine River FPD
- Held CWPP meeting to share Draft CWPP – attended by about 12 residents

Hidden Ridge Ranch (Fort Lewis Mesa FPD)

- Using a Firewise mini grant, acquired and installed an 8,000-gallon water storage tank for wildfire suppression.

Loma Linda (Pagosa FPD)

- Hosted a “FireWise” meeting with presentations by FireWise, BLM Mitigation Specialist, and Pagosa Fire – attended by about 30 residents)
- Began working on a CWPP

Los Pinos (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Participated in initial kick-off meeting for Los Pinos CWPP along with six other subdivisions in the Upper Pine River FPD



Los Ranchitos (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Participated in initial kick-off meeting for Los Ranchitos CWPP along with six other subdivisions in the Upper Pine River FPD

Pine River Ranches (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Participated in initial kick-off meeting for the Pine River Ranches CWPP along with six other subdivisions in the Upper Pine River FPD



Rafter I (DFRA)

- Had Craig Goodell drive through neighborhood with Ambassador and do a general assessment of mitigation needs

Shenandoah (DFRA)

- Prepared site review of neighborhood with risk assessment for each property in conjunction with Craig Goodell (BLM Mitigation Specialist) who then did a presentation at May HOA meeting which 30 of 54 residents attended
- Ambassador did two Home Ignition Zone site visits and contacted one new resident and sent out periodic e-mails on fires and other fire info
- One resident did some dead tree removal after my/Craig's assessment; one resident did mitigation after HIZ review for approx. 2 acres mitigated.

Sunwest Estates (Mancos FPD)

- Hosted a Living with Wildfire presentation
- Organized site assessments in within subdivision and neighboring community
- Recruited 3 new ambassadors who will begin in 2012



The Cliffs of Durango (DFRA)

- Ambassador burned several large piles of slash, with some assistance from DFRA

Timber Ridge Ranch (Pagosa Fire)

- Had 34 home/property assessments done by CSFS, BLM Mitigation Specialist, and FireWise
- Received approval from HOA Board to develop a CWPP

Timberdale (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Participated in initial kick-off meeting for Timberdale CWPP along with six other subdivisions in the Upper Pine River FPD
- Upper Pine River Fuels Crew completed and signed a 4-acre demonstration site

Timberline Estates (DFRA)

- The HOA board chose an area of open space to mitigate as a demonstration project, got 4 bids, has picked a contractor, and will get the work done early in the spring,

Tripp Creek (DFRA)

- Ambassador updated HOA emergency contact list
- In cooperation with DFRA installed a pass key device (which bypasses the gate code to allow entry during any type of emergency) on their gate to allow access by Fire/EMS Departments

Tween Lakes (Upper Pine River FPD)

- Upper Pine Fire Chief Rich Graeber spoke at annual meeting in July 2011 about the need for mitigation work and CWPPs. Board immediately approved development of a CWPP.
- Recruited five residents as Firewise Ambassadors (some are part-time). Three have attended Ambassador Orientation and two will get it this spring.
- Demo site completed and signed by Upper Pine River Fuels Crew (3 acres)

- Ambassadors have been doing mitigation work on their property, individually and with mitigation contractors.
- Updating subdivision maps with vital home/lot owner information for our records as well as emergency agencies in our area.
- Participated in kick-off meeting for Tween Lakes CWPP and six other subdivisions in Upper Pine River FPD.

Vista de Oro (Fort Lewis Mesa FPD)

- Worked with FireWise CWPP Coordinator on Vista de Oro CWPP. Presented Draft CWPP to homeowners at annual meeting in Sept. CWPP is awaiting final review and signatures. POA Board donated 45 hours to CWPP effort and CWPP Committee volunteered 30 hours.
- Distributed Firewise e-Newsletters to all 35 property owners.
- Installed a second water storage tank (8000 gallons) in the subdivision for wildfire suppression.
- Held a Community Clean-Up day and cleared brush that was encroaching on the road, and other community repair jobs. Nine POA members volunteered a total of 45 hours.
- Applied for Firewise Community USA status

Note: *The subdivisions and accomplishments listed above do not reflect all the subdivisions/areas involved in FireWise nor do they represent all the work done by Ambassadors.*