



# 2012 Accomplishment Report

FireWise  
Southwest Colorado



Photos on the front cover show a lot in Elk Stream Ranch in East Canyon – Before Mitigation, After Mitigation, and After Fire (Weber).

*Photos courtesy of Odin Christensen, FireWise Ambassador*



---

*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!*

---

**Fiscal Agent:**

Susan Bryson  
San Juan Mountains Association  
P.O. Box 2261  
Durango, CO 81302

**2012 Staff:**

**Pam Wilson, Program Director and La Plata County Coordinator**  
*swcoloradofirewise@gmail.com, (970) 385-8909*

**Rebecca Samulski, Montezuma County Coordinator**  
*montezumafirewise@gmail.com, (970) 882-2388*

**Bill Trimarco, Archuleta County Coordinator**  
*archuletafirewise@gmail.com, (970) 264-0430*

**Steering Committee:**

Les Kole, Chairman  
JT Coyne  
Barbara Kennedy  
Ken Kurz  
Rebecca Samulski  
Bill Trimarco  
Pam Wilson

**FireWise Vision -- 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.

# Contents

<i>From the Program Director</i> .....	4
<b>Summary of 2012 Accomplishments</b> .....	6
<b>Structure Protection at Elk Stream Ranch:</b> .....	7
<b>OBJECTIVES</b> .....	9
<b>EDUCATION AND OUTREACH</b> .....	9
1) FireWise Ambassador Program .....	9
Archuleta County .....	11
La Plata County .....	13
Montezuma County .....	15
2) Reaching more southwest Colorado residents:.....	17
3) Fire Prevention and Education Month: .....	18
Archuleta County .....	18
La Plata County .....	19
<b>PLANNING</b> .....	22
4) Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs).....	22
5) Firewise Communities USA Program .....	24
<b>MITIGATION/IMPLEMENTATION</b> .....	25
6) Increasing the amount of mitigation undertaken.....	25
7) Other Mitigation Efforts.....	28
<b>ADDITIONAL 2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS</b> .....	29
<b>Special Projects in 2012</b> .....	30
Mancos Demonstration Site .....	30
Piedra Park Demonstration Site.....	31
<b>Grant Monies Received</b> .....	32
<b>FireWise Ambassador Accomplishments</b> .....	34
Archuleta County .....	34
La Plata County .....	36
Montezuma County .....	42

## *From the Program Director:*

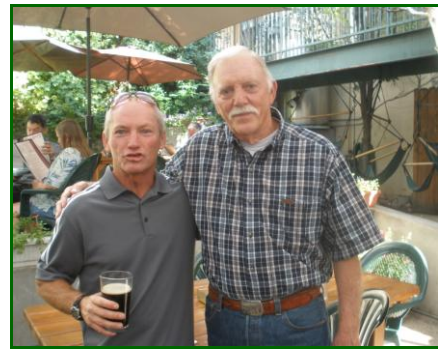
It was another exciting year for FireWise as our organization continued to grow and gain momentum. We said goodbye to some friends and welcomed many others into the fold. Due to declining county budgets and increased workloads, we said goodbye to Christina Marquart from the Archuleta County Sheriff's Office who had been serving as our Chapter Coordinator in Pagosa. In January of 2012, we welcomed Bill Trimarco as our new Archuleta Coordinator. Originally from Chicago, Bill found his way out west many years ago; he has lived in Pagosa Springs since 1999. Bill's energy and enthusiasm for FireWise is really helping the Archuleta Chapter to take off.

This year we said goodbye to three members of our Steering Committee -- Joy Mathis, Mike Kane, and Jigger Staby -- all members since the Committee was established in 2007. Fortunately for FireWise, Joy and Jigger will be staying on in their Ambassador roles. We welcomed Ambassadors Ken Kurz and Barbara Kennedy to the Steering Committee and are beginning recruitment for one more Steering Committee member.

Without a doubt, the biggest loss to FireWise was Craig Goodell, Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist with the BLM, who moved to Portland, Oregon to take a Fire Ecologist position. Craig was a great friend and asset to our organization. Over the years, he has spoken to hundreds of local residents, inspected properties, and given advice on needed mitigation. His congenial and intelligent approach moved many reluctant homeowners into action. Craig was also a real rock star when it came to funding opportunities, helping not only FireWise, but local fire departments and other local entities as well.

We were also sad to see Fire Chiefs Rich Graeber from Upper Pine and Steve Ebner from Fort Lewis Mesa move on. Both were strong supporters of FireWise and actively promoted FireWise within their Districts. Rich led the way in the development of CWPPs for subdivisions within his district and became the first Chief in our area to hire a seasonal fuels crew to assist with mitigation on private land. Steve helped teach the popular Home Ignition Zone Workshop for several years. We miss both of these wonderful men!

It was a long and busy fire season in southwest Colorado, impacting all three of our FireWise Chapters throughout the season. It began early with the lightning-caused Little Sand Fire in Pagosa which started on May 19<sup>th</sup> and burned more than 25,000 acres -- and ended late with the Vallecito Fire in La Plata County which began Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> and burned 1,400 acres. In late June, residents in Montezuma County were impacted by the 10,000-acre Weber Fire. The incident became a shining example of how good mitigation work can help firefighters defend homes. Numerous other fires burned across the region making this southwest Colorado's busiest fire season since 2003.



*Craig and Les Kole, Deer Valley Estates Ambassador at Craig and Rich's going-away party at Carver's.*

The plus side of having a large fire in the area is that it may test the mitigation work being done and the Weber Fire did just that! The education, the mitigation work, the Firewise building materials used, the Community Wildfire Protection Plan – it all came into play and has given us many teachable moments.

The busy fire season contributed, in part, to a huge influx of new FireWise Ambassadors. We welcomed 58 new Ambassadors into the program bringing our total number of Ambassadors to 126!

“Regarding mitigation.... Don't ask yourself whether you have done enough, always be asking yourself what more you can do.”

*Philip Walters  
Elk Stream Ranch Ambassador*

FireWise was able to complete two more demonstration sites this year – one in Montezuma County and one in Archuleta County. Both sites were located in pinyon-juniper woodlands and are exemplary examples of mitigation in this forest type.

We continue to see great support for mitigation work both from those associated with FireWise and also from the community at large. More than \$1.1 million dollars in grant money was awarded to residents and entities in southwest Colorado in 2012, though much of the work to be accomplished is just beginning.

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



*Rancho Mira Sol Ambassadors John Glover and Dustin Crandall had some supervision from their furry friends during their mitigation efforts!*

# Summary of 2012 Accomplishments

**5** AMBASSADOR ORIENTATIONS

**69** Attendees,

**58** New Ambassadors

FireWise Volunteer Hours **4,456**

**51%** increase over 2011

Homeowner Volunteer Hours **2678**

Value of Volunteer Hours **\$ 155,449.86**

Grants to FireWise **\$ 255,444.56**

ESF Acres Mitigated  
**178.8**

Grant Funds to Others  
**\$ 858,950.58**

Community Wildfire Protection Plans

**10** subdivision-level

**2** county-level

**8** In progress

## Structure Protection at Elk Stream Ranch: The first 48 hours of the Weber Fire

Residents of Elk Stream Ranch had their rural East Canyon location threatened by many fires – Cow Camp, Menefee Mountain, Cherry Creek and others -- over the years.

“We knew it was just a matter of time before we had a fire that would drop over the hill and threaten our homes,” said resident Philip Walters, who serves as a FireWise Neighborhood Ambassador along with neighbor Odin Christensen.

Local firefighters as well as public land agencies also had concerns about their ability to protect the homes in East Canyon during a wildfire. “We’ve recognized for some time that with the way the canyon aligns with slope and prevailing wind direction that it could be very difficult to protect those communities,” said BLM Mitigation Specialist Craig Goodell, who also served as the Incident Commander for the Durango Zone interagency fire management team.

East Canyon is a long, narrow, north-south canyon nestled in the La Plata Mountains between Durango and Mancos, just west of the La Plata/Montezuma County line. The canyon became the eastern boundary of the Weber Fire which began on June 22.

Years ago, Walters, who has been involved with FireWise of Southwest Colorado for nine years, recognized that if the property owners needed to take some actions to create a healthier forest.



*Firefighters getting ready to engage the fire as it approaches the road.*

In 2007, Walters started working on a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the subdivision. The CWPP, completed in 2008, was the first subdivision-level CWPP completed in both Montezuma County, and in southwest Colorado. The CWPP contains two main areas of focus: educating residents and reducing fuels along Elk Stream’s one way in, one way out road. Part of their education effort related to evacuation planning and it paid off big-time during the Weber Fire. All residents were able to evacuate safely and effectively without impacting firefighters.

Four years ago, Walters applied for and received a grant from the Colorado State Forest Service for creating a shaded fuel break along the roads in East Canyon. Homeowners either did the work themselves or hired a contractor to reduce the ladder fuels and thin out vegetation 150 feet from the centerline of the road, where terrain permitted, resulting in a 300-foot fuel break.

The fuel break wasn’t tested against a fast-moving crown fire but it did give firefighters a leg up on defending homes in the Elk Stream subdivision, according to Structure Protection Specialist Rich Graeber, who headed up the crew protecting the homes immediately after the Weber fire began.

“We asked for 10 engines and only got 5,” he said, “so we were especially grateful to see that fuel break.”

“The fuel break increased our safety factor by several notches,” said Graeber. “It gave us more time to work in the area before potentially having to leave, and it allowed us to commit crews to work on potential threats to homes because we had a large defensible space in which to maneuver engines.”



Graeber said many residents had done some outstanding mitigation work around their homes; at others, there was more work that could have been done. “We spent maybe 30 minutes at each house

doing a little more mitigation – limbing trees, removing ladder fuels, or cutting grass.”



*A line of retardant was dropped just above this home to slow the fire's spread. Note the good defensible space below the house.*

As the fire burned on the steep hillside above the homes, constant ember showers kept firefighters leapfrogging from home to home battling spot fires as the main fire moved north up the canyon. Of the 28 homes in the canyon, about half of them were directly threatened by the fire. Firefighters took direct action at seven of those homes. Actions included digging fire line around homes, laying hose, and foaming a couple homes.

The mitigation work done by residents also allowed firefighters to safely conduct a burnout operation between the homes and the encroaching fire. The crew intentionally moved past some green vegetation near homes, where possible, before starting their burnouts. The burnouts help even out jagged fire lines making it safer for firefighters to work.

Graeber and his crew were impressed by the building materials used at many of the homes. Most had a stucco finish and metal roofs. At least one even had a steel deck. Many homes had enclosed soffits, another Firewise recommendation, which prevents embers from entering the roof eaves.

“The proactive actions these homeowners had taken allowed us to do defensive work from an offensive position,” said Graeber.



*Fire moving downhill behind a home in East Canyon.*

“As a firefighter and a structure protection specialist, I greatly appreciate their efforts.”

# 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:

## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH:

- 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

# EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

---

## 1) FireWise Ambassador Program

The 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 actions they can take 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, initiate work days or take numerous other actions.

FireWise recruited a record 58 new Ambassadors in 2012 – more than doubling the number of new Ambassadors in 2011! We believe there were several factors contributing to this increase:

- 1) the early start to the Colorado fire season and small fires near many subdivisions;
- 2) the numerous large fires along the Front Range of Colorado which burned more than 500 homes and resulted in six civilian deaths;
- 3) an increasing number of insurance companies requiring residents to mitigate their property to maintain their insurance eligibility.

Only five of the 34 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).

**Archuleta County:** 9 new Ambassadors – Echo Canyon Ranch (2), Lower Blanco (2), Crowley Ranch (1), Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association (1), Chimney Rock area (1), Aspen Springs (1), and Sportsman's Campground (Hinsdale County)(1).

**La Plata County:** 32 new Ambassadors representing: Rancho Mira Sol (3), Coolwater/Los Pinos (2), Shenandoah Highlands (1), Timberdale Ranch (1), Coolwater Ranch (1), Long Hollow #2 (1), Forrest Groves (3), Forest Lakes (1), Pine Spring Ranch (3), Sweetwater Springs (2), Edgemont Highlands (1), Edgemont Ranch (1), Enchanted Forest Estates (2), Briggs (2) and in the Vallecito area -- Ho Hum/Hummingbird Lane (3), dirt part of CR 501 (1), Blue Spruce area (1), Vallecito Valley II (1), and Happy Scenes (2).

**Montezuma County:** 17 new Ambassadors -- Cash Canyon area (1), Sundance/Cassidy Canyon area (4), Elk Stream Ranch (2), Elk Springs Ranch (1), Sunwest Estates (1), Green Gate (1), County Road 41.2 (2), Oakview Estates (3), Road 38.7 (1) and Kernan Creek Ranch (1 reinstatement).

Currently, the total number of Ambassadors is 126; with 13 from Archuleta County, 28 from Montezuma County, 1 from Dolores County, and 85 from La Plata County. Nine potential Ambassadors are awaiting Orientation or have not yet submitted their paperwork.

Ambassadors recorded **4,456** hours of volunteer time, a 51% increase in volunteer hours over 2011, attending meetings and working within their neighborhoods – a value of \$97,096.24. We know the number of hours is actually 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 **2,678** hours (Value = \$58,353.62) in making their communities more wildfire prepared.

Accomplishments for the **Education and Outreach** component are listed below by County.



*Mudflows like this one in East Canyon were common in the weeks following the Weber Fire.*

# Archuleta County

2012 was an interesting year for FireWise in Archuleta County. Bill Trimarco assumed the job of Ambassador Coordinator in January and put a local face on the position. A very dry spring saw the outbreak of many wildfires throughout the area. The largest in the Pagosa Springs area was the Little Sand Creek fire. Fortunately, no homes were lost and thousands of acres of overgrown forest received the benefits of mitigation by fire. The smoke from this fire, coupled with national news coverage of the large and devastating wildfires in the Front Range, really raised the awareness of many locals and prompted action and interest in FireWise practices.



*A view of the Little Sand fire in its early days from Sally's overlook on the Piedra Road.*

## Ambassador Program:

The local volunteer Ambassador program took a huge step forward with the addition of eight ambassadors completing Orientation. This brought the total number of Ambassadors to twelve, representing nine different communities. Meetings with the Ambassadors were held almost every month where ideas and techniques were shared and enthusiasm refueled. Three subdivisions began developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) which should be completed in 2013. Numerous mitigation efforts were initiated.

## Education/Outreach:

The FireWise message was spread across the county in various ways. FireWise articles were published in the Pagosa Sun every two weeks during fire season and occasionally at other times. Bill was a guest speaker on the "Positive About Pagosa" radio show which was aired on both AM and FM stations.

In May, as part of Fire Prevention and Education Month, FireWise hosted CSFS entomologist, Sky Stephens, to talk about various types of beetles and the current epidemic.

Presentations were made at the Lower Blanco Homeowner's Association annual meeting, the Echo Canyon Ranch HOA Board meeting (resulting in a reversal of their decision not to support Firewise practices), Loma Linda HOA Board meetings and at the Fall Forest Forum hosted by the San Juan Conservation District.

FireWise also spoke to concerned citizens at the Sportsman's Campground during the Little Sand Creek fire.

### Participating Subdivisions/Areas

*Aspen Springs (1)  
Chimney Rock area (1)  
Crowley Ranch (1)  
Echo Canyon Ranch (2)  
Loma Linda (1)  
Lower Blanco (2)  
Pagosa Lakes POA (1)  
Sportsmans Campground (Hinsdale County) (1)  
Spring Valley Ranch (1)*

## Collaborative Efforts:

Over the past year, FireWise has become an active collaborator with both the Stollsteimer Creek Watershed Partnership and the Upper San Juan Mixed-Conifer Working Group (now called the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership).

The original **Stollsteimer Watershed** Plan, completed in 2006, was a collaborative effort led by the San Juan Conservation District and included a number of local, state, and federal partners including: NRCS, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association (PLPOA), Town of Pagosa Springs, Pagosa Area Water and Sanitation District, U.S. Forest Service, BLM, and Archuleta County, several of whom contributed financially or with technical expertise to early sampling, implementation, and monitoring efforts. The hazardous fuels effort will include the Pagosa Springs Fire Protection District and FireWise of SW Colorado. Two-thirds of the County's 12,000+ residents live within the Stollsteimer Watershed so a large wildfire in the area would be very detrimental in several regards.

FireWise was recently awarded some funding from Archuleta County that will allow us to create several demonstration sites and do some road right-of-way mitigation work in the Stollsteimer watershed. It will also allow us to start a Chipper Rebate Program in Archuleta County.

The **San Juan Headwaters** group is made up of: ecologists, ranchers, educators, forest-related businesses, fire personnel and EMS, Home Owners' Associations, representatives from federal, state and county government and entities, consultants, conservationists, staff from the Pagosa Ranger District Office (USFS), and interested citizens.

The specific activities the group is undertaking include:

- **sharing and strengthening understanding** of appropriate methods of maintaining and increasing health and resiliency in the mixed-conifer landscape;
- **broadening knowledge** of current conditions, conservation needs, and opportunities;
- **developing** a set of restoration approaches, actions, and projects;
- **initiating and recommending projects** that address high priority needs and opportunities for restoration; and
- **establishing follow-up monitoring** methods to guide adaptive management.

The group has completed Phase 1 of their project and in Phase II they will also be looking at needs within the ponderosa pine ecosystem and work that would protect important watersheds. Though much of their work is focused on public lands, many of the same principles and approaches are applicable to adjoining private lands. FireWise and Mountain Studies Institute partnered to write a CSFS Forest Restoration grant for a demonstration mitigation project in Cloman Park, a recently acquired piece of BLM land that is slated to become a county park. The County was awarded the grant for \$36,080 in August.



*On a field trip to one of the severely burned portions of the Little Sand Fire. Only about 15% of the 25,000 burn area was considered to be severely burned.*

# La Plata County

## Ambassador Program:

We welcomed 31 new Ambassadors in La Plata County this year. Most of the new Ambassadors are from the eastern part of the county, including the Vallecito area. Of the seventeen communities with new Ambassadors, fourteen are new to FireWise.

## Education and Outreach:

FireWise hosts bi-monthly Fire Council meetings beginning in January and these meetings are open to all Ambassadors as well the public. Meetings are generally attended by 30-45 people and all include an educational in-service on topics that might be of interest to Ambassadors and/or help them with their educational efforts with neighbors. This year's included:

- An update on what's happening with the insurance industry (Jim Duresky),
- Lessons Re-Learned from the Four Mile Canyon Fire in Boulder;
- Seasonal Wildfire Outlook, and
- La Plata County Open Burn Permit Program
- There were also presentations by Hidden Ridge Ranch (LPC), Clearview Project (LPC), Timberdale Ranch (LPC) and Sundance/Cassidy Canyons on the work they had accomplished with FireWise mini grant monies they had received. Rancho Mira Sol Ambassadors also gave a presentation on the variety of work they accomplished this year.

In addition to these meetings, FireWise also wrote and sent out twelve "Don't Get Burnt, Get 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. We also shared news releases regarding on-going fires.

FireWise was an active participant in property assessments this year, generally in coordination with the Colorado State Forest Service. After the fires on the Front Range this summer, many residents were concerned about the beetle-killed trees in their areas and whether they were contributing to their fire danger (generally they weren't in significant quantity to pose a threat). FireWise talked to HOA Boards and/or assisted with assessments at: Florida River Estates, Timberdale, Los Ranchitos, Tween Lakes, Coolwater/Los Pinos, Falls Creek Ranch, Timberline View Estates, Trappers Crossing, Two Dogs, and Lake 'O the Pines.

### NEW PARTICIPANTS:

*Blue Spruce area (1)*  
*Briggs (2)*  
*Coolwater/Los Pinos (1)*  
*Coolwater Ranch (1)*  
*CR 501 (dirt part) (1)*  
*Edgemont Highlands (1)*  
*Edgemont Ranch (1)*  
*Enchanted Forest Estates (2)*  
*Forrest Groves (3)*  
*Happy Scenes (2)*  
*Ho Hum/Hummingbird Lane (3)*  
*Long Hollow #2 (1)*  
*Pine Spring Ranch (3)*  
*Rancho Mira Sol (3)*  
*Sweetwater Springs (2)*  
*Shenandoah Highlands (1)*  
*Timberdale Ranch (1)*  
*Vallecito Valley II (2)*

### EXISTING PARTICIPANTS:

*Aspen Trails (1)*  
*Bear Creek (1)*  
*Cherry Creek area (1)*  
*Columbine (1)*  
*Cougar Mesa Estates (1)*  
*Deer Valley Estates (2)*  
*Durango Ridge Ranch (1)*  
*Durango West 1 (4)*  
*Enchanted Forest Estates (1)*  
*Electra Lake (1)*  
*Falls Creek Ranch (2)*  
*Florida River Estates (2)*  
*Forest Lakes (5)*  
*Grandview area (2)*  
*Heartwood Co-housing (1)*  
*Hermosa Acres (2)*  
*Hidden Ridge Ranch (1)*  
*Los Ranchitos (1)*  
*Mesa Vista (1)*  
*Rafter J (5)*  
*Rockridge (1)*  
*Sheanandoah (2)*  
*Shenandoah Highlands (2)*  
*Songbird (1)*  
*The Peaks (1)*  
*The Ranch (1)*  
*Trimble Lane area (1)*  
*Tripp Creek (1)*  
*Tween Lakes (6)*  
*Ute Pass Ranch (1)*  
*Vista de Oro (1)*  
*Wilderness Lakes Estates (1)*

In addition to these assessments, we also inspected all completed mini grant projects as well as other mitigation projects like a demonstration project in Timberline View Estates and some CSFS funded work at Coolwater and Los Pinos subdivisions.

We participated in a Town Hall Meeting for FireWise Ambassadors within the Upper Pine River Fire District.



*About 50 residents attended the annual Falls Creek Ranch "FireWise Day."*

We took part in the Falls Creek Ranch "Fire Awareness Day" attended by our partners and about 50 residents. This was a great opportunity to reflect back on the work done at Falls Creek over the years as Kent Grant from the Colorado State Forest Service presented them with their Firewise Communities USA award.

FireWise also participated in Community Conversations, a panel discussion with other firefighting, emergency services, and mitigation personnel to discuss how La Plata County could become better prepared to deal with wildfire.

2012 heralded the first year of La Plata County's new burn permit system. The Program Director worked with DFRA and the La Plata County Fire Chiefs on the Burn Permit Rollout and educated FireWise Ambassadors about the program.

In late May, we coordinated with the Falls Creek Ranch Ambassador on conducting a tour for Senator Ellen Roberts and LPC Commissioner Kellie Hotter, as well as a reporter and photographer from the Durango Herald. The tour highlighted recently completed road and vegetation mitigation work at the Ranch. CSFS and DFRA also participated in the tour. Members of the CWPP Implementation Team were available at each stop to talk about work that had occurred there.



*CWPP Implementation Team member Bill Bales (front) explains the mitigation work that was completed at the end of Starwood Drive.*

# Montezuma County

## Ambassador Program:

In Montezuma County, fifteen new Neighborhood Ambassadors went through Orientation and started outreach in their communities in 2012. The new Ambassadors represent nine communities, including seven that now have Ambassadors for the first time.

In Montezuma County, the FireWise program expanded primarily in the eastern part of the county, with a heightened awareness near Mancos from the 10,000-acre Weber Fire, a human-caused fire ignited on June 22. The 400-acre Roatcap Fire, which occurred in the heart of the wildland-urban interface south of Dolores in October, may help the program expand in the central part of Montezuma County over the next year.

### Participating Subdivisions/Areas

*Cash Canyon/Stinking Springs area (3)*  
*Cassidy/Sundance Canyons (4)*  
*Cedar Mesa Ranch (2)*  
*Elk Springs Ranch (1)*  
*Elk Stream Ranch (4)*  
*Glade Ranch (Dolores Cty.) (1)*  
*Green Gate (1)*  
*Indian Creek Ranch (3)*  
*Kernen Creek Ranch (1)*  
*Oakview (3)*  
*Rd. 38.7 (1)*  
*Rd. 41.2 (2)*  
*Summit Lake East (1)*  
*Sunwest (1)*

## Education and Outreach:

The Montezuma Chapter held several programs for ongoing education of Neighborhood Ambassadors as well as for the community and new Ambassador recruitment purposes.

- a. "No Excuses" – a review of obstacles homeowners and renters face to accomplishing wildfire preparedness and resources available to motivate and enable homeowners, specific to their level of readiness
- b. Ambassadors use of GIS
- c. 2012 Wildfire Season Year in Review with Scott McDermid and Steve Underwood
- d. Mitigation equipment presentation by Rich Hillyer from Southwest Ag.
- e. Two 2 ½-day chainsaw classes to help Ambassadors and residents learn chainsaw safety, maintenance, and operation
- f. Presentation for insurance and land use planning industry folks as part of the Fired Up Campaign
- g. A recap of the 2012 Fire Season

In Montezuma County, in partnership with the Montezuma County Fire Chief's Association, we provided FireWise materials at several events including: the Teen Maze, Home and Garden Show, Dolores River Day, Mancos Days, and the Lewis Mercantile Grand Opening.

Neighborhood presentations were made to: Sunwest Estates; Cash Canyon/ Stinking Springs; Sundance/ Cassidy Canyons; Elk Stream Ranch; Elk Springs Ranch; Oakview and Road 38.7 (Tierra Alta).

FireWise was in the media all year long in Montezuma County. An interview with Smokey Bear and the Montezuma Chapter Coordinator was done in April. Articles appeared in all of the area papers and the Empire Electric Association "Colorado Country Life." FireWise was also invited to participate in six radio interviews in Montezuma County.



The Montezuma Chapter Coordinator and Smokey Bear joined together for a TV interview with Smokey Bear in Dove Creek in April.

When Keith Worley, the Regional representative for Firewise Communities USA, presented at our FireWise Council meeting, he also visited Southwest Colorado to see what work was being done and how he might support us. In Montezuma County, this included a tour of the work completed in Cedar Mesa Ranches and a look at property in the Cash Canyon/ Stinking Springs Community.

On December 1<sup>st</sup>, FireWise Ambassadors and the Montezuma County Chapter Coordinator got together to build a float on a trailer provided and pulled by the Dolores Fire Protection District in the Parade of Lights in Cortez. It featured a lean, clean and green defensible space separating the home from the overgrown forest and a slideshow with wildfire trivia. We handed out thousands of goodies, including hundreds of emergency contact brochures and FireWise flyers.

Thanks to Ambassadors Bob and Lee Wilson, Linda Walters, Diane Cherbak, Catherine Kraus, and Bob Scott for their help and bringing materials. Thanks also to Fred and Erin Bird for loaning a Christmas tree, Dave at Colorado Grown Nursery for loaning us a live juniper forest, and Ted at Holgates for the use of their house and parking lot to build the float. We also owe deep gratitude to Lance and Drew, the Dolores volunteer firefighters who pulled our float, and Scott and Ashton from Dolores Public Lands for bringing Smokey Bear and his goodies.



Though a little outside of our FireWise mission, the Montezuma Chapter Coordinator engaged residents affected by the Weber Fire to assess their needs and seek solutions after recognizing a gap in assistance available to private landowners. The Montezuma Chapter pursued a grant through the Colorado Fire Relief Fund to help residents, and a \$50,000 grant was awarded. Planning efforts are underway to replace burned fence and clean up runoff debris. The chapter coordinator, supported through this grant, continues to support residents and seek solutions to their challenges with fire area rehabilitation. We're pleased to be able to help residents with the rehabilitation efforts.

## 2) Reaching more southwest Colorado residents:

Thanks to a generous grant from the Colorado State Forest Service, FireWise was able to undertake several other efforts that we hope will increase awareness of our program and make FireWise more of a household name. These efforts include:

- 1) Developing a new logo that better reflects our mission.
- 2) Developing a Rack Card that describes FireWise and what we do.
- 3) Updating and printing a new Neighborhood Ambassador Program brochure.
- 4) Buying a number of 2-slot brochure holders so that we can distribute these two new brochures to insurance companies, real estate offices, county planning offices, fire departments, and others.
- 5) Hiring a company to revamp our existing Web site to better meet the needs and programs of FireWise as it exists today. The site is still in progress but we hope to unveil it prior to the start of the 2013 fire season.
- 6) Purchasing two E-Z Up canopies with the FireWise logo and name for use at events.
- 7) Design and purchase of two over-the-street banners for use during Wildfire Prevention and Education Month in May.
- 8) Purchasing notebooks and dividers for Ambassador Orientation Notebooks, as well as a supply of Be Ember Aware brochures from the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.
- 9) Purchasing a computer projector.



Another project this year was getting a Facebook page set up. The site was used fairly extensively throughout the summer as we were able to post information about ongoing fires. We have found it to be a useful way to share informative articles, Firewise tips, and events.

In early October, FireWise offered a bus tour to East Canyon, an area heavily impacted by the Weber Fire in June. Thanks to the efforts of our FireWise Ambassadors in promoting defensible space and fire-resistant building materials, firefighters were able to make an offensive stand and save all the homes. About 20 people attended the tour which was hosted by FireWise Ambassadors Philip and Linda Walters and Odin Christensen. For more on this story, see the Success Story at the end of this document.



*Montezuma Coordinator Becca Samulski (in red) describes the fire activity to tour participants.*

### 3) Fire Prevention and Education Month:

Since 2003 FireWise has been coordinating with the US. Forest Service, BLM, Colorado State Forest Service, Mesa Verde National Park, and local fire departments to sponsor Wildfire Prevention and Education Month. The month's activities have a recurring theme of "What Are You Waiting For? Activities during the month of May include a multitude of presentations, news articles and public service announcements, and other activities to increase awareness about wildfire in southwest Colorado. This year, which was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 70,000 acre Missionary Ridge Fire, we focused on remembering 2002, the conditions that led up to the fire, and what we learned from the fire.

## Archuleta County

Archuleta County businesses were quite generous in donating auction items for the Fire Month events in Durango and Pagosa Springs. Wolf Creek Ski Area lift tickets and a weekend stay at The Springs Resort were two popular items. Pagosa Brewing Co. brewed a batch of Prevention Ale and donated some of the proceeds from each beer sold. It was a big hit with the firefighters coming down off the Little Sand.

Numerous residents joined us for CSFS Entomologist Sky Stephen's informative talk on beetles and how they are changing our Colorado forests.

To highlight Fire Month, FireWise hosted a tour of the mitigation demonstration site in Pagosa Lakes, just off of Trails Boulevard. Pagosa Lakes Property Owner's Association, Pagosa Fire Protection District, Archuleta County Sheriff's Department Office of Emergency Management, Fire Ready and FireWise were on hand. The tour was followed by a meet at the Brewery to unveil the new Prevention Ale.

## Montezuma County

Montezuma County organized radio interviews on KSJD, articles in the Mancos Times, Cortez Journal, and Four Corners Free Press.

The Montezuma County Commissioners, the Montezuma County Fire Chiefs' Association, and the Ute Mountain Tribal Council all declared May as Wildfire Prevention and Education Month.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of the Missionary Ridge Fire, a Wildfire Field Day and Firemen's Ball was held at the Dolores Fire Station. There was food, music, beer, and games. Several of the Commissioner candidates participated in the fundraiser, agreeing to be soaked by participants in the bucket brigade. As a fundraiser, the event was not profitable, but many residents were reached and exposed to the FireWise name through the event and event advertising.





*Kids have fun relaying water at the Wildfire Field Day in Dolores.*



*Smokey Bear boogies to the DJ's tunes at the Wildfire Field Day in Dolores.*

## La Plata County

FireWise also had CSFS Entomologist Sky Stephens give a beetle presentation in Durango at Fort Lewis College which was attended by about 30 people.

FireWise participated in interviews with the Mancos Times regarding the FireWise Program and Fire Month activities as well as working with the Durango Herald on story ideas and potential interviewees for their 3-day series on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Missionary Ridge Fire, particularly for the section that dealt with what has changed since 2002.



However, we focused most of our efforts this year on an event to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Missionary Ridge Fire. Our “Don’t Get Burnt, Get FireWise” event was held on June 10<sup>th</sup> at the La Plata County Fairgrounds, which served as the Incident Command Post during the Missionary Ridge Fire. The event kicked off with a hamburger and hot dog lunch cooked by Upper Pine Fire Chief Bruce Evans and Los Pinos Fire Chief Larry Behrens.



Following lunch, there were several presentations focused on the fire and what has changed since 2002 including:

- *DFRA's slide show on the Missionary Ridge Fire* presented by Battalion Chief Rod Allen
- *The Lesser-Known Effects of the Missionary Ridge Fire* by LPC Emergency Manager Butch Knowlton
- *Fire Management in SW Colorado since 2002* by Craig Goodell, BLM Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist

Concurrently, we had educational booths by FireWise and many of our partners, activities and face painting for kids, an appearance by Smokey Bear, and a Silent Auction fundraiser for FireWise. Four Corners Broadcasting was on hand doing a live broadcast and interviews on different topics throughout the afternoon. The event was attended by about 150 people and thanks to our generous sponsors and donors, FireWise raised about \$2500, which will be used to help fund Fire Month activities in 2013.



# Don't Get Burnt, Get FireWise

## June 10, 2012



Many thanks to our sponsors:

*Durango Fire & Rescue Authority \* Los Pinos Fire Protection District \* Upper Pine River Fire Protection District \* Fort Lewis Mesa Fire Protection District \* Pagosa Springs Fire Protection District \* San Juan National Forest \* Bureau of Land Management \* Colorado State Forest Service \* Society of American Foresters, San Juan Chapter \* Wildfire Mitigation Professionals Association \* Fire Ready \* Fire Smart \* Tyner Restoration \* AJ Construction \* Woodchuck Tree Services \* Wildcat Liquors \* Ken and Debbie Kurz \*  
Ken Willyard's State Farm Insurance Office \* Montezuma Fire Chief's Association \**

Also thanks to our food/drink donors and Silent Auction donors:

*Bread \* City Market North \* City Market South \* Coca-Cola \* Pepsi (of Farmington) \* Southwest Ice \* Sunnyside Farm Market Three Springs \* Wal-Mart \* Zuberfizz \* Desert Sun Coffee Roasters \* JT Coyne \* Joy and Scott Mathis \* Native Roots \* Marsha-Porter Norton \* Howard Rachlin \* Southwest Ag \* Wolf Creek Ski Area \* The Springs Resort in Pagosa \* Pagosa Brewing \* Dolores River Brewery \* Dolores Food Market \* Indian Camp Ranch (Archie Hanson) \* Main Street Brewery \* Slavens True Value \* J. Fargos \* Guy Drew Vineyards \* D.J. PA \* Le Pew Sanitation \**

And last, but certainly not least, thanks to our fabulous coordinator **Martha Gowin** (for the Durango event) and the volunteers that made both events happen:

*National Wildland Fire \* Jim Tencza \* Patricia Haupt \* Barbara and Wayne Kennedy \* Les Kole \* Bill O'Dowd \* Susan Rosenow \* Renate Widder \* Larry Lynch \* Alysia Ratzlaff \* Joe Samulski \* Ute Mountain BIA Fire Crew \* Dolores Fire Protection District Volunteers \* San Juan Public Lands, Dolores District Fire Crew \* Ev and Sue Whitehead \* Chamise Austin \* Teri Cappazzola \* Diane Cherbak \* Leslie Cox \* Craig Goodell \* Kent Grant \* Barbara and Barry Hicks \* Cassie James \* Greg Kemp \* Jen Stark \* Bob and Sue Scott \* Alycia Wichester \**

# 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

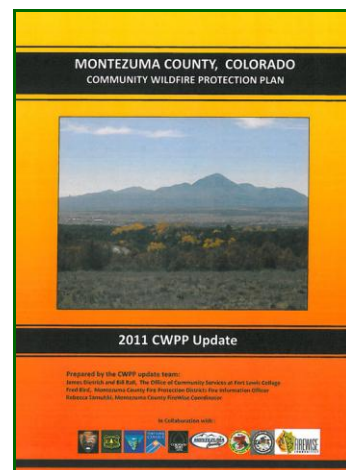


*Kent Grant (CSFS), Bruce Short (CWPP contractor), and Craig Goodell (BLM) talking about the Los Ranchitos Draft CWPP to residents.*

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.

Two counties – Dolores and Montezuma – revised and updated their CWPPs in 2012. The Dolores County CWPP is finished, but still awaiting a signature. FireWise took an active role in the development of both CWPPs 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. San Juan County completed a draft CWPP in 2012 and it should be finalized in 2013. The revisions of the Dolores and San Juan County CWPPs bring them in compliance with the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 and HB09-1199.



The following subdivision-level CWPPS were completed in 2012:

- Heartwood (La Plata)
- Los Ranchitos (La Plata)
- Pine River Ranches (La Plata)
- Timberdale (La Plata)
- Tween Lakes (La Plata)
- Vista de Oro (La Plata)

There are several CWPPs that should be completed by February 2012 including:

- Coolwater/Los Pinos (La Plata)
- Echo Canyon Ranch (Archuleta)
- Edgemont Highlands (La Plata)
- Rancho Mira Sol (La Plata)

Several communities have formed CWPP Committees and are working on plans that should be completed in 2013 including:

- Edgemont Ranch (La Plata)
- Forrest Groves (La Plata)
- Pine Spring Ranch (La Plata)
- Cash Canyon (Montezuma)
- Elk Springs (Montezuma)
- Elk Stream (Montezuma)
- Oakview (Montezuma)
- Loma Linda (Archuleta) – anticipated completion Sept. 2013
- Timber Ridge Ranch (Archuleta) -- anticipated completion Sept. 2013



*Forestry consultant Bruce Short at a picnic in August where he talked about the draft CWPP for Coolwater/Los Pinos.*

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 under Ambassador Accomplishments.**



## 5) Firewise Communities USA Program

In 2011, Falls Creek Ranch applied for Firewise Community USA status, however, recognition did not occur until 2012. Falls Creek Ranch is located northwest of Durango, and has been conducting Firewise activities in their community since 1978. They are the second community in southwest Colorado to receive Firewise Community USA status; the first was Deer Valley Estates in eastern La Plata County.

The Falls Creek Ranch CWPP was completed in August 2011 and residents have been actively implementing the recommendations in their CWPP. FireWise Ambassador Judy Winzell created a seven-person CWPP Implementation Team. Each Team member has responsibility for a certain section of the neighborhood and talks to neighbors about why mitigation 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 has received several grants since 2010. FCR's accomplishments can be found in the Mitigation/Implementation section.



*CSFS District Forester Kent Grant presented the Firewise Community USA sign to Falls Creek Ranch HOA President MaryAnn Bryant and FireWise Ambassador Judy Winzell at the subdivision's annual Firewise day.*



*Falls Creek residents limbing trees and collecting deadfall during their annual Firewise day in June.*

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. More than 700 communities across the U.S. 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 help us determine the level of interest and work being done including:

- 1) The number of Neighborhood Ambassadors rose from 90 to 126 in 2012.
- 2) The demand for FireWise “mini grants” by Ambassadors. In 2012, we had requests for almost \$51,000 and only \$27,050 to allocate.
- 3) The number of residents or entities not affiliated with FireWise that are applying for grants.
- 4) The popularity of our pilot Chipper Rebate Program in Montezuma County.
- 5) Local mitigation contractors were busy throughout the summer.
- 6) Many residents continue to seek out grant opportunities for their communities.

**Mini Grant Projects:** For the past four years, the FireWise Council has offered a “mini grant fund” for use by Neighborhood Ambassadors. In 2012, we required a 10% match which could be either hard cash or volunteer hours (valued at \$21.36/hr.). The simple 2-page application is reviewed by a panel and funds allocated according to projects deemed to have the greatest impact. 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 2012 include:

**Timber Ridge Ranch (Archuleta County):**

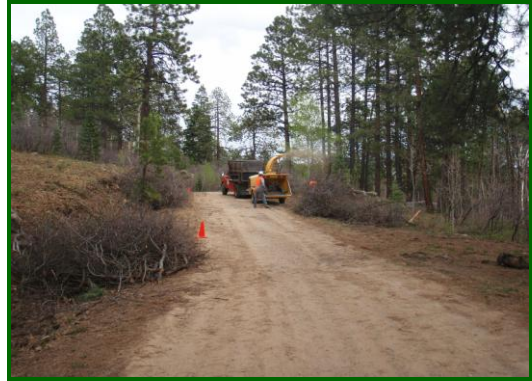
\$7250 for mitigation work in four common areas within the subdivision. Work to include removal of ladder fuels, primarily Gambel oak and juniper, as well as removal of some small trees. Status: Completed



**Clearview Project (La Plata County):**

\$3000 to create a shaded fuel break in the ROW along final 3/4 mile of Clearview Road, approximately 10-20 feet on either side of road.

Status: Completed



**Coolwater/Los Pinos (La Plata County):**

\$770 for a summer subdivision event.

Funds covered a mailing to all residents/property owners, chipper rental and refreshments for 40+ attendees. This effort was tied to public involvement around their draft CWPP and grant funding for mitigation work. Status: Completed



**Rancho Mira Sol (La Plata County):**

\$7500 to hire a contractor to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Subdivision adjoins State and BLM land. Status: CWPP complete, awaiting signature



*The FireWise Ambassadors kicked off the CWPP process with a “work weekend.” Neighbors were enticed with the offer of free firewood.*

**Timberdale Ranch (La Plata County):**

\$3000 to create a shaded fuel break along subdivision roadways for approximately 40 ft. on either side of centerline. Some work completed using ranch caretaker; some completed by private contractor. Brush removed was chipped or masticated. Status: Completed



**Sundance/Cassidy Canyons (Montezuma County):**

\$6000 to develop a shaded fuel break along two privately maintained roads in a self-defined community up to 100 feet from road edge along portions of Road 38.5, the road to Sundance Bear Lodge and Road L.4. Ambassadors coordinated with property owners to get agreement for treatment beyond the community right-of-way. Status: Completed

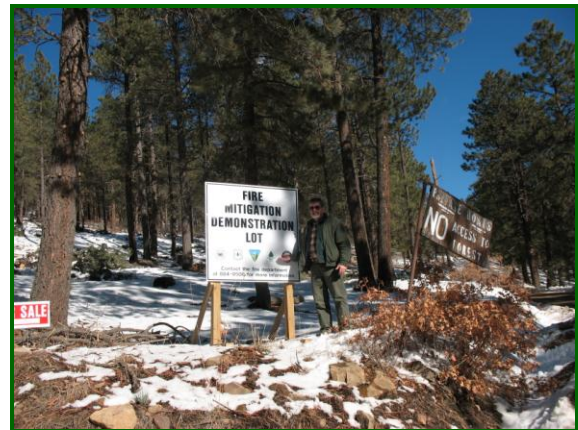


## 7) Other Mitigation Efforts

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, and at the end of 2011, 404.6 acres had been completed. As CSFS learned of original applicants that would not be using their funds, they made the dollars available to other southwest Colorado residents. In 2012, that “unused” funding was awarded to Clearview Project, Echo Canyon Ranch, Rancho Mira Sol, Coolwater/Los Pinos, Timberdale Ranch, Edgemont Ranch, and the City of Durango. 176.8 acres out of 234.8 acres awarded were completed in 2012. The funding expires in early 2013. Below is a listing of work accomplished to date:

- City of Durango, 71 acres, 50 to complete in 2013
- Clearview Project, 18 acres
- Coolwater/Los Pinos, 30.2 acres
- Echo Canyon Ranch, 12.6 acres
- Edgemont Ranch, 6 acres (incomplete)
- Loma Linda, 2 acres
- Rancho Mira Sol, 27 acres
- Timberdale Ranch, 15 acres
- Tween Lakes Demo, 3 acres



*Demo site near the entrance to Tween Lakes subdivision*

A complete listing of ESF awards given in 2012 can be found in the **Grants to Others** section. Though not all the entities awarded funds are affiliated with FireWise, we appreciate, and wanted to recognize, their efforts in creating wildfire preparedness, healthier forests and safer communities.



*Salvaging large oak for firewood at Rancho Mira Sol.*

## ADDITIONAL 2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Chipper Rebate Program:

In 2012, FireWise decided to launch a pilot program to help residents dispose of their slash. Lacking money to launch the program in all three counties, we chose to try it first in Montezuma County. The program was prompted by a dry winter and an accumulation of slash piles throughout southwest Colorado that many residents do not feel comfortable burning. We set aside just \$5,000 for the program and without a lot of promotion, in just over three months FireWise had provided 15 chipper rebates totaling \$4,710 on an estimated 51.5 acres! The total cost of the chipping, before our rebate, was \$15,575.



Under the program, a chipper could be rented or a contractor hired to chip slash left from wildfire mitigation projects on the resident's property.

Applicants could receive the lesser of \$100/day or 50% of a chipper rental cost or \$100/day or 50% of the cost to have a mitigation company provide chipping services, assuming all requirements are met.



*San Juan Bible Camp used the chips to make paths.*

FireWise has received funding from Archuleta County to offer the program there in 2013-2014 and we are currently exploring options to fund the program in La Plata and Montezuma Counties.

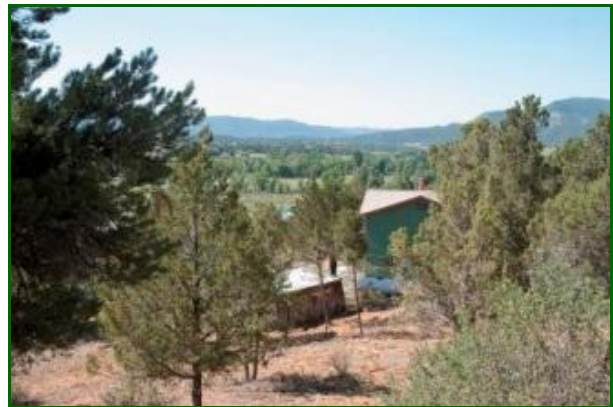
## Special Projects in 2012

In 2010, FireWise received a grant from CSFS to develop several demonstration sites. To date, we have completed five sites – two in La Plata County, two in Archuleta County, and one in Montezuma County. We have strived to locate the sites in highly visible areas in different types of vegetation. In 2012, we completed two sites – one just west of Mancos and the other in the Piedra Park subdivision in Arboles.

### Mancos Demonstration Site

This demonstration site is in a highly visible location just north of Highway 160 where the Hwy. 160 Business Route meets the main Hwy. 160 just west of the town of Mancos. The site is a private property with a residence that can be seen from the highway. About 3.5 acres were mitigated in the pinyon-juniper fuel type on a steep, Mancos shale/clay slope. The work showcases proper spacing and clumping in the pinyon- juniper ecosystem as well as attention to erosion control, which is a common constraint of the pinyon- juniper hills dominating central Montezuma County. AJ Construction completed the work.

Before and after shots of the Mancos Demonstration Site



## Piedra Park Demonstration Site

In Archuleta County, the site chosen is located in southern Archuleta County in the 100-home Piedra Park subdivision in Arboles. The subdivision is about 18 miles east of Ignacio and is bordered to the east by Navajo Lake. The primary vegetation in the subdivision is juniper and pinyon with some grass and small shrubs. The density of vegetation makes the area very prone to a crown fire on that day when all the conditions align properly and there is a fire start.

The bulk of the 6 acres treated belonged to the Piedra Park Metro Improvement District, but there was also private land, belonging to six individual homeowners, that was treated. The site was treated to Zone 2 standards as recommended by the Colorado State Forest Service. Due to the high flammability of juniper, the erosive soils in the area, and the fact that one of our objectives was to reduce the fire danger, FireWise required that all material was to be hauled to the road for chipping, and then hauled off site. The chips went to the Los Pinos Fire Station in Arboles where it was made available to local residents. The Fire Department planned on spreading any unused chips on bare ground near the station. Firewood was stacked near the road for pick-up by homeowners.

The bid went to Fire Ready, a member of the recently formed Wildfire Mitigation Professionals Association (WMPA). One thing that some members had been looking for was a way to better interact with fire crews of local fire departments. After visiting with the WMPA, FireWise decided to make this demo site project a “pilot project.” The selected contractor was required to award 25% of the contract to the Los Pinos Fire



*Pinon Hills Circle is the road running through the center of the photo. One of the objectives of the project was to keep fire from running uphill and destroying homes.*



Department. The contractor was given the latitude to work side by side with the Fire Department or give them a separate portion of the project. Fire Ready and the Fire Department chose to work side by side, so members of both crews were felling trees as well as hauling the slash to the chipper. The joint project was determined to be a success by both parties.



## Grant Monies Received

### Grants to FireWise

The FireWise Council was fortunate to receive several grants in 2012. All were invaluable in allowing us to sustain and grow the FireWise program and we are most grateful to all our funders. In 2012, both La Plata and Montezuma Counties funded coordinator positions; the Archuleta County position was funded by a BLM Community Assistance grant. We have received funding from all three counties for the coordinator positions in 2013.

In addition to funding the Archuleta County Coordinator's position for two years, Archuleta County awarded FireWise about \$98,500 which will be used to fund two years of the Chipper Rebate Program in Archuleta County beginning in 2013, several demo sites and road ROW mitigation work within the Stollsteimer Watershed, and some CWPP development.

We received a \$28,000 BLM Community Assistance grant which will fund 20 hours/month of the Program Director's time, with the remaining funds probably put towards a mini grant fund for FireWise Ambassadors.

We received \$8755.00 from Colorado State Forest Service to assist with Education and Outreach efforts. The bulk of this money was spent on developing new products and purchasing some needed supplies to help with outreach efforts.

The CSFS Durango District awarded us \$12,000 for CWPP work in 2013 to fund the County Coordinators and provide some funds for miscellaneous expenses like printing and mapping.

In addition, we received a \$5,000 WUI grant (slippage funds) from CSFS to help out with our demonstration sites.

Please see the spreadsheet on the next page for **Grants Awarded to Others**.

## 2012 Grants Awarded in Southwest Colorado

GRANT TYPE	AMOUNT	ACRES	PROJECT/NOTES
<b>HB09-1199 Fuels Mitigation Grants</b>			
Falls Creek Ranch	\$ 20,000.00	8	Project 8.0 in CWPP
Michael Bytnar	\$ 4,800.00	30	Private land between DW2 and Durango Ridge Ranch
City of Pagosa Springs	\$ 7,400.00	10	Mitigation on Reservoir Hill
<b>Emergency Supplemental Funds (ESF)</b>			
Clearview Project	\$ 8,460.00	18	Fuels reduction on 5 lots
Coolwater/Los Pinos (Upper Pine Fire)	\$ 14,194.00	30.2	Forest thinning on 19 lots
Rancho Mira Sol	\$ 7,050.00	15	Fuels reduction
Rancho Mira Sol	\$ 5,640.00	12	Fuels reduction on 2 lots
Edgemont Ranch Subdivision	\$ 2,820.00	6	Fuels reduction near townhomes
Echo Canyon Ranch	\$ 5,922.00	12.6	Shaded fuelbreak along main access road
"Tween Lakes Demo (Upper Pine Fire)	\$ 1,410.00	3	Demonstration area on subdivision lot
Loma Linda Subdivision	\$ 940.00	2	Demo site
City of Durango	\$ 23,500.00	50	Brush mastication on Perins Peak Open Space Property to be done in 2013 (2nd Grant)
City of Durango	\$ 33,370.00	71	Brush mastication of Perins Peak completed in 2012 (second part of original ESF Grant)
Timberdale Ranch (Upper Pine Fire)	\$ 7,050.00	15	
<b>CSFS WUI Grant (2011, awarded in 2012)</b>			
City of Durango	\$ 14,714.58	7	Fuels mitigation at Dalla Mountain Park
CSFS Durango District	\$ 12,000	25	To use for 1-5 mitigation projects or other purpose (i.e., FireWise Council)
<b>Stevens Grant</b>			
Upper Pine Fire	\$ 182,000.00	250	Fuels mitigation at Deer Valley Estates
Upper Pine Fire	\$ 313,000.00	351	Fuels mitigation at Forest Lakes Subdivision
<b>CSFS Forest Restoration Grant</b>			
Upper Pine Fire	\$ 84,000.00	175	D-space around homes and shaded fuelbreaks along roads in 6 subdivisions
SW Conservation Corps	\$ 49,600.00	60	Thinning & fuels mitigation on San Juan National Forest land
Archuleta County	\$ 36,080.00	90	Forest restoration treatments at Cloman Park
<b>CSFS WUI Grants (Slippage Funds)</b>			
Falls Creek Ranch	\$ 25,000.00	10	CWPP mitigation project 13.0
<b>Archuleta County Title 3 Funds</b>			
San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership	\$ 18,000		Fire risk assessment
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>\$ 858,950.58</b>	<b>1250.8</b>	

# FireWise Ambassador Accomplishments 2012

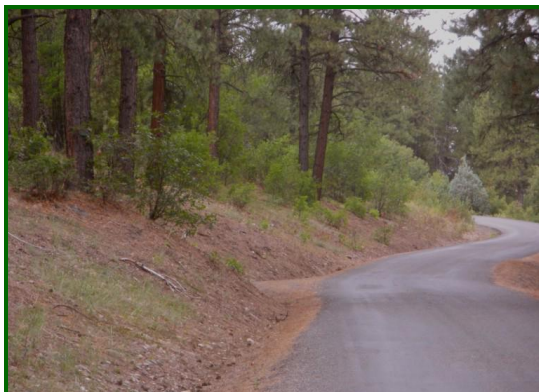
## Archuleta County

Echo Canyon, Pagosa Springs FPD, 18 homes

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 230**

**Resident's Volunteer Hours: 550**

- Formed a Firewise Committee and 2 of the 3 members became FireWise Ambassadors
- Archuleta FireWise Coordinator made presentation to the HOA Board on the importance and benefits of CWPPs and the Board voted to obligate \$1000 for the Ranch Manager to work on writing the CWPP
- Firewise Committee and representatives from neighboring Loma Linda met with Firewise partners to establish a WUI for both subdivisions
- FireWise Partners assessed Echo Canyon Ranch Lane and suggested mitigation that would make for safer ingress and egress for the ranch
- Pagosa FPD personnel David Hartman and Marvin Johnson completed a home ignition assessment on five properties
- A comprehensive, educational email was sent to all homeowners, followed by a mailing of FireWise brochures and other relevant information
- Homeowners participated in attaching the new, blue reflective house number signs to posts along Echo Canyon Ranch Lane
- The Board voted to ban open burning on the ranch, and began work to change the Design Guidelines to encourage fire mitigation (completed in July)
- Several homeowners did mitigation work on their own or hired a contractor
- Completed an ESF grant application and received funding for 12.6 acres
- Submitted a 2013 SFA WUI grant application with 12 homeowners committing to mitigate a total of 150 acres
- Completed a draft CWPP in late November



*Before and after shots of the shaded fuel break at Echo Canyon Ranch.*

## Loma Linda, Pagosa Springs FPD, 100 homes

- Sponsored two “Chipper Days” with 10 residents participating; about a dozen property owners did mitigation on their own
- Formed a CWPP Committee of the FireWise Ambassador and two residents
- Worked with the Echo Canyon Ambassadors on common components of our CWPPs
- Was awarded ESF funds through CSFS for a two acre demonstration site
- Posted FireWise bulletins and brochures at the entrance to the development
- Posted monthly FireWise bulletins on the Loma Linda website
- Attended monthly HOA Board meetings to discuss FireWise projects and get our information in the minutes and out to all property owners
- Met with individual property owners to discuss mitigation of their properties on which there are no houses. Gave them booklets on building in the WUI.

## Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association

- Joined FireWise!
- Provided a brush collection area for homeowners and chipped untold amounts of brush and limbs from defensible space work
- Completed a defensible space mitigation project in the Vista greenbelt

## Timber Ridge Ranch, Pagosa Springs FPD, 80 homes

**Ambassador’s Volunteer Hours: 132**

**Resident’s Volunteer Hours: 300 (on personal mitigation)**

- Mitigated four common areas (approximately 20 acres) within the community, utilizing mini grant funding provided by Firewise of Southwest Colorado. Gambel oak and juniper ladder fuels were masticated and junipers, ponderosa pine, and Douglas-fir were thinned. Remaining trees were pruned up. Nine individuals volunteered 164 hours, in addition to the time spent by the contractor that did the work.
- Eleven (11) homeowners conducted fire mitigation on their own properties during the summer of 2012, (approximately 40 additional acres) and removed significant ladder fuels on flat areas as well as steep slopes, and trees were thinned and pruned
- Established a CWPP Committee and began work on a CWPP for Timber Ridge
- A Fire Mitigation and Forest Health committee (7 people) was established as a formal committee within the HOA and strong board support was shown during its formation; Monthly updates are provided at each board meeting
- Firewise Ambassador presented an update of fire mitigation activities and CWPP development progress at annual meeting of HOA



# La Plata County

## Clearview, DFRA, 6 homes

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 72**  
**Homeowner's Volunteer Hours: 443**

- Five of six homeowners utilized ESF funds from CSFS to have mitigation work done on approximately 18 acres
- Used FireWise mini grant to treat hazard areas along Clearview Road
- Handed out FireWise literature at HOA meeting



## Coolwater/Los Pinos, Upper Pine FPD, 49 homes

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 255**  
**Homeowner's Volunteer Hours: 110**

- Identified subdivision property owners and organized their contact information into a database
- Held four community and small-group meetings with Fire District personnel, FireWise, CSFS, and other industry professionals
- CWPP completed in August 2012
- Posted sign on demonstration site that Upper Pine fuels mitigated in 2011
- Received FireWise mini grant to help with bulk mailings and host a community picnic to get CWPP input (attended by 40 people)
- Received ESF monies from CSFS for mitigation on 30.2 acres on 19 lots
- Coordinated wood removal from properties mitigated through ESF funding



*There's no shortage of firewood in Coolwater!*



*Upper Pine Fire Chief Bruce Evans and Kent Grant (CSFS) visiting with Ambassador Julie Hartman (left) and a resident about the mitigation work at Coolwater.*



*Cougar Mesa residents limbing trees with the Weber Fire looming in the background.*

## Cougar Mesa, Fort Lewis Mesa FPD, 4 homes

**Resident's Volunteer Hours: 20**

- 3 reflective address signs installed
- 1 property mitigated for 20 hours
- Had one mitigation company visit two properties in preparation for upcoming work to be completed by the end of the 2012.

## Deer Valley Estates, Upper Pine FPD, 55 homes

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 200**

**Resident's Volunteer Hours: 449**

- Upper Pine fuels crew mitigated 21 acres
- 36 residents participated in Saturday work parties throughout the summer
- Six residents undertook removal of yearly oak brush growth, one limbed up trees
- Residents removed firewood from mitigated acreage
- Ambassador coordinated efforts between mitigation contractors and homeowners
- Upper Pine Fire was recently awarded a Stevens grant for \$182,000 to treat 250 acres in Deer Valley; this will finish up the needed mitigation work in DVE



*Mitigation work on a slope below a home in Deer Valley Estates.*

## Durango Ridge Ranch, DFRA, 19 homes

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 33**

**Resident's Volunteer Hours: 269**

- Gave brief Firewise presentation given at annual HOA meeting and made handouts available to homeowners
- Homeowners cleaned up (cut grass and removed weeds) entrance area
- 15 of 19 homeowners did some mitigation work
- Eight homeowners spent \$35823.92 on contractor mitigation

## Enchanted Forest Estates

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 81**

- Added two more FireWise Ambassadors
- Ambassador had contractor mitigate his property
- Attended HOA meetings to discuss FireWise and met with fire personnel

## Falls Creek Ranch, DFRA, 100 homes

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 161**

**Resident's Volunteer Hours: 312**

- Received Firewise Community USA recognition in January for 2011; formal presentations made at Fire Council meeting in May and at annual HOA Fire Awareness meeting in June
- Held annual Fire Awareness meeting in June attended by FireWise partners and 38 residents
- Hosted tour for State Senator Ellen Roberts and La Plata County Commissioner Kellie Hotter to showcase Falls Creek Ranch mitigation efforts over the past couple years. CWPP Implementation Team members provided the tours at selected tour stops. Also attending were CSFS, FireWise Program Director, DFRA, and a Durango Herald reporter and photographer.



- Completed several mitigation projects (totaling 29 acres) identified in their CWPP with \$46,730 of various grant money
- Received \$25,000 grant from CSFS for a watershed protection project in 2013
- HOA bought and put up a “Fire Danger Sign” near their fire station
- Worked with DFRA to make dry hydrant located at the lake functional
- Sprayed noxious weeds throughout the Ranch
- Property assessments completed on 14 properties
- Hosted spring clean-up day in which 62 residents participated and donated 236 hours
- Completed mitigation work has resulted in the largest central slash pile ever

## Florida River Estates, DFRA, 88 homes

**Ambassador’s Volunteer Hours: 120**

**Resident’s Volunteer Hours: 234**

- Received a FireWise mini grant and hired a contractor to chip slash resulting from 15 homes that did mitigation work; some mulch was used around homes and some was hauled off site



*Cutting down a large ponderosa pine that was growing up through the deck at a home in Florida River Estates.*

## Forrest Groves, Upper Pine FPD, 75 homes

**Ambassador’s Volunteer Hours: 42 hours**

- Formed a Firewise Committee and had three residents volunteer as FireWise Ambassadors
- Hosted their first clean-up day and mitigated about an acre of common space; slash filled two 30 cubic yard dumpsters; 18 residents participated
- Changed CCRs to allow burning due to quantity of slash and also to encourage residents to mitigate
- Had Kent Grant and Pam Wilson out to walk through subdivision, discuss CWPPs and make recommendations on potential actions
- Started work on a CWPP; had first meeting with CSFS, FireWise, and Upper Pine Fire

## Los Ranchitos, Upper Pine FPD, 44 homes

**Ambassador’s Volunteer Hours: 96**

**Resident’s Volunteer Hours: 12**

- CWPP completed in Sept. 2012
- Had Fire Chief to an HOA meeting
- Approximately 20 residents undertook significant mitigation efforts on their properties
- Created a calling tree for emergencies and encouraged neighbors to register cell phones
- Worked with the Fire Department and County to mitigate 50 feet off County Road 240 up the hillside at the west end of the subdivision

## Pine Spring Ranch, Upper Pine FPD, 20 homes

**Ambassador’s Volunteer Hours: 60**

- Two residents became FireWise Ambassadors
- Most properties installed the reflective house number signs provided by the fire district
- Ambassadors toured neighborhood with Pam Wilson and Kent Grant to get suggestions on potential actions; after tour, sent e-mail to neighbors with suggested actions
- One Ambassador has been mitigating his property and has enough branches to fill an 18 wheeler
- Began work on a CWPP

## Rancho Mira Sol, DFRA and Upper Pine River FPD, 9 homes

Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 619

Resident's Volunteer Hours: 160

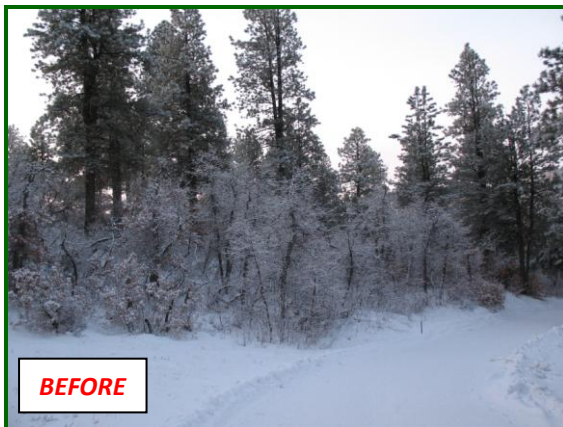
- Residents mitigated about 30 acres over two weekends this summer netting 10 cords of firewood and clearing 20 acres of brush; firewood was offered to neighbors that helped with the mitigation work. Dustin's company donated some equipment like a Sky Track to haul slash, and other equipment was rented as needed. Did 2 days of chipping and used the chips to help slow erosion on steeper slopes.
- Built a high production water well (320,000 gallons) w/correct plumbing and pump that can be used to fill either the pond or a tank at over 100 gallons/minute
- Excavated a ranch pond (to mine topsoil) so that it now has sufficient depth and volume for bucket fills by a helicopter
- Set up a gooseneck trail for fire suppression with pumps and hoses. Because of the weight they found it easiest to tow with a tractor
- Converted a "ranch truck" to fire truck – has a portable water tank that can haul 600 gallons
- Received a FireWise mini grant and hired a contractor to develop a CWPP; hosted two meetings with homeowners to talk about the CWPP and proposed actions



High production water well



The new pond that's deep enough for a helicopter to dip from.





## Rockridge, DFRA, 90 homes

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 152

- Rockridge Firewise newsletter to all residents
- Seven property owners requested Firewise evaluations; Craig Goodell (BLM) evaluated six of those properties and the Firewise Ambassador (me) accompanied him to learn more about “best practices” on communication of Firewise information/recommendations and conducted the last property assessment
- Seven properties mitigated in 2012 – some by owners, most with contractors or a combination of homeowner and contractor

## Shenandoah, DFRA, 42 homes

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 49

### Resident's Volunteer Hours: 90

- Made a presentation at the annual HOA meeting in May
- Met with two new landowners to review their properties and discuss pre-building fire mitigation issues and FireWise building thoughts
- Communicated with all home and landowners throughout the fire season and stimulated good conversation about evacuation planning and further mitigation efforts
- Had a “chipper day” in August with 10 families participating and shared the cost of a chipper, and went house-to-house, chipping duff and trees

## Shenandoah Highlands, DFRA

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 7

- Had Kent Grant and Pam Wilson out to make recommendations on mitigation actions needed for the subdivision

## Timberdale Ranch, Upper Pine River FPD, 58 homes

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 87

### Resident's Volunteer Hours: 20

- Completed CWPP and had it approved (July 2012)
- Completed Right-of-Way fire mitigation funded by Firewise of SW CO mini-grant. (Aug-Nov.2012)
  - Completed about 1 ½ miles of road right-of-ways.  
( Subdivision roads total 9 miles)
  - Made presentation at annual HOA meeting in August with a display board of Firewise materials and Firewise handouts.
- Upper Pine fuels crew mitigated approximately 15 acres on six properties (only partial mitigation on any property) using ESF funds
- Kept residents updated on both projects – many wanted to “get on the list” for future funded mitigation work. Also have a number of residents who are interested in getting their own mitigation work done or have been motivated to do some work themselves.



*Going after that Gambel oak at Timberdale Ranch.*

## Timberline View Estates, DFRA, 85 homes

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 20

- Completion of demonstration mitigation site in subdivision greenspace
- Three chipping days – fall and spring
- At least four properties mitigated to Zone 1 by homeowner
- Serious discussions of Zone 1 mitigation of several properties and adjacent greenspace following distribution of updated State Forest Service Quick Guide Series Fire 2012-1.
- Demonstration of screening of underside of deck



*The FireWise Ambassador had the area beneath her deck screened in to protect the area from flying embers.*

## Tripp Creek, DFRA, 6 homes

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 23

- Two properties mitigated - one new and one always maintained yearly out of the six in the subdivision.

## Tween Lakes, Upper Pine FPD, homes

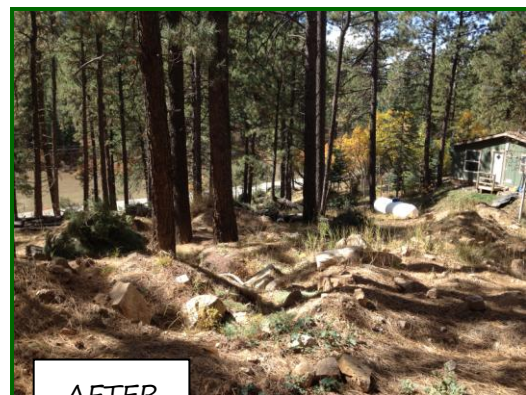
### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 62

### Resident's Volunteer Hours: 21

- CWPP completed in August; CWPP presentation at annual meeting in July by contractor and Upper Pine Fire
- Held a resident work day to do road easement mitigation and chipping -- 8 participants, approximately 21 hours volunteered
- Held a resident work day to mitigate a cul-de-sac
- Upper Pine fuels crew mitigated 10 lots for about 26 acres as part of a Watershed Grant project that they received funding for
- HOA sent letters to owners of vacant lots requesting they do mitigation on their lots



BEFORE



AFTER

## Vista de Oro, Fort Lewis Mesa FPD, 11 homes

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 190.00

- Installation of additional 8,000 gallon cistern to increase firefighting capacity
- Completed CWPP

# Montezuma County

## Cash Canyon/Stinking Springs, Cortez, Mancos, and Dolores FPDs, 65 homes

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 190

- Installed reflective house numbers on four driveways, and one on a poorly marked County Road
- One homeowner ripped out bushes against deck and rebuilt deck with Trex decking
- One homeowner removed trees and shrubs from around propane tank
- Purchased a string mower and mowed previously unmowed areas
- Built a Community Message Board and posted wildfire messages

## Cedar Mesa Ranches, Mancos FPD, 80 homes

- Significant thinning, limbing, and slash burning by residents.

## Elk Springs Ranch, Mancos FPD, 13 homes

### Ambassador's and Resident's Volunteer Hours: 47

- One resident volunteered as a FireWise Ambassador after the Weber Fire in June
- HOA created a Fire Prevention Committee, with the FireWise Ambassador as the chairman
- Updated the subdivision's master site plan (indicating addresses and the locations of homes) which has been placed inside the "FIRE" tube adjacent to the subdivision's entrance gate
- Our Fire Prevention Committee joined Pam, Becca and Kent to survey several occupied and vacant properties in Elk Springs Ranch for educational purposes in how to identify risks and mitigation opportunities.
- Began the clumping of oak groves on the Rose's property which are located on the downslope side of their residence
- Hired a contractor to masticate fuels around two (2) of the homes and driveways of the subdivision's 13 properties.
- Identified several potential fuels "choke points" along RD 46 within our subdivision that will be slated for mitigation in the spring (our HOA recently voted to budget monies for this project for 2013).
- Ambassador placed a four-foot perimeter of decorative crushed stone around his home which will be used a FireWise "model" of Firewise home construction for the subdivision



*This home in Elk Springs Ranch illustrates both Firewise construction principles and good defensible space.*

## Elk Stream Ranch, Mancos FPD, 12 homes

### Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 642

### Resident's Volunteer Hours: 150

- Safe effective evacuation during the Weber Fire with prior planning encouraged by Ambassadors
- Two property owners took advantage of a cost-share opportunity to masticate fuels along the road prior to the fire (resulting in heavy fuels on the ground but the reduction in crown fire along the road)
- One homeowner masticated an additional 3.5 acres and raked up 2 acres of previously masticated property to remove debris

- Ambassadors and residents have also spent numerous hours on post-fire erosion control measures
- Had presentations by the Division Leader (Weber Fire), CSFS District Forester, and FireWise at annual HOA meeting

### **Green Gate, Dolores FPD, 7 properties (3 homes)**

**Ambassador Volunteer Hours: 156**

**Resident's Volunteer Hours: 90**

- One homeowner hired a contractor to clear oak brush around new home
- One homeowner removed ladder fuels along driveway
- One of the two ponds in the subdivision available for fire control was surrounded by cattails, making access to the water difficult. Owners sprayed and mowed to eliminate cattails.

### **Kernan Creek Ranch, Mancos FPD, 10 homes**

**Ambassador's Hours: 3**

**Resident's Volunteer Hours: 50**

- Site assessments at 3 homes
- Two homeowners did extensive sage brush thinning and other defensible space work

### **Road 41.2, Mancos FPD, 5 homes**

**Resident's Volunteer Hours: 40**

- Site assessments were done at two homes
- These two homeowners did fuels mitigation
- One homeowner is stuccoing a part of their home that had wood siding

### **Sundance/Cassidy Canyons, Dolores FPD, 30 homes**

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 310**

- No formal HOA, but residents got together and applied for a FireWise mini grant to do some mitigation along their roadways to improve limited access. About 6 acres were mitigated to 100 feet from the road edges.
- Two property owners have worked extensively on enhancing their defensible space.
- Maintained and updated their Firewise Web site: [www.firewise-81328.org](http://www.firewise-81328.org)
- Created GIS maps of neighborhood to identify project areas and enhance wildfire planning, and integrated into community Web site



### **Sunwest, Mancos FPD, 13 homes**

**Ambassador's Volunteer Hours: 10**

- Invited residents to several FireWise presentations
- Had FireWise do some property assessments
- Made presentations at HOA meetings
- Talked to friends about FireWise and encouraged them to become involved