

Deer Valley Estates

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Update 2023

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Deer Valley Estates Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update

Introduction

The Deer Valley Estates Property Owners Association (DVE) subdivision lies in an incredibly beautiful part of Colorado. The Board of Directors of DVE recognizes that the subdivision is at risk from wildfires moving into, or originating within, the subdivision. Efforts to educate property owners about fire risk and to mitigate around structures have been underway for 13 years. As stewards of the land, residents are aware of the risk of wildfire and many have voluntarily carried out mitigation activities on their property. DVE'S original Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was completed in 2009.

Deer Valley Estates is a residential community situated in La Plata County with 84, 3 to 6.6 acre lots (Figure 1). Of the 84 lots, 69 have structures on them and 15 are vacant (Figure 1). (Note: for the two parcels directly east of the entrance on Beaver Creek Drive along State Highway 160, the landowners officially removed themselves from Deer Valley Estates POA and no longer pay dues to the POA. Figure 1 shows the most accurate boundary of DVE, yet county and state maps have yet to include this revision.) Approximately 132 residents live in Deer Valley Estates. All residents rely on wells for water and some properties have a cistern. Since the 2009 CWPP, 14 new homes have been built in the subdivision. There are about 4 miles of gravel roads within the subdivision with year-round access. The roads are well-maintained, but tend to be narrow and steep in some areas (Figure 2).

Updating Deer Valley Estates 2009 CWPP is an important link in providing comprehensive wildfire mitigation and preparedness across the local landscape. Completion and approval of this document is an important step in protecting forest and property values not only in Deer Valley Estates, but also across the broader landscape, including the forests of the public lands that are contiguous with Deer Valley Estates.

Figure 1: *Deer Valley Estates Parcel Status Map*

Figure 2: *Deer Valley Estates Lot Lines and Road Names*

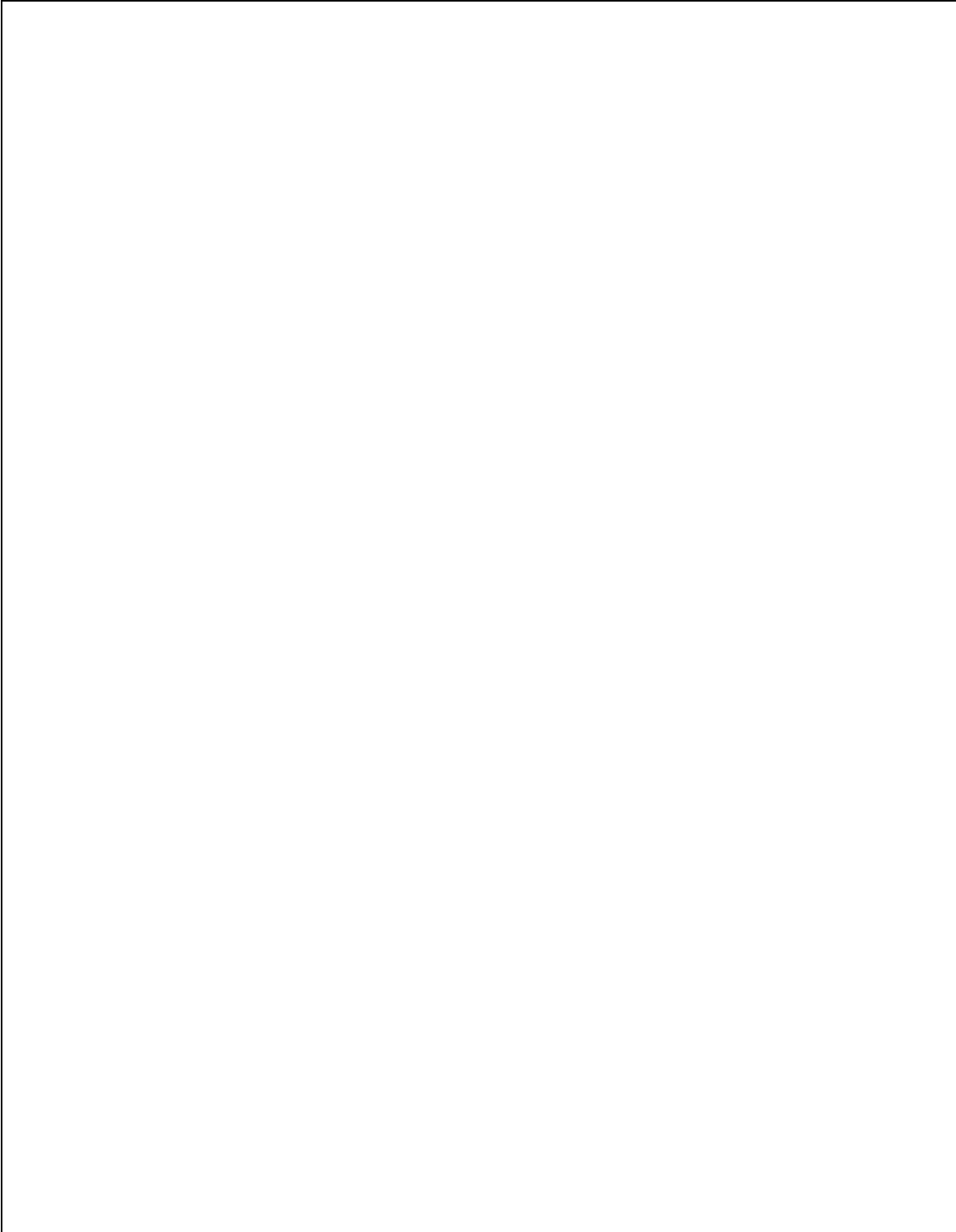


Figure 3: *Deer Valley Estates Vicinity Map*

Location

Deer Valley Estates is located between Bayfield and Pagosa Springs, Colorado. Approximately six miles east from Bayfield and thirty-three miles west of Pagosa Springs on State Highway 160. It is located in sections 21-22-27-28 of Township T35NR6W, La Plata County, Colorado. Elevation of the subdivision ranges from 7,410 feet at the southern border with the San Juan National Forest Saul's Creek Recreation Area to approximately 7,150 feet at the northern border State Highway 160 (Figure 3).

The beauty of La Plata County attracts people from all over the world. Many build their lives and their homes in the heart of the forested landscape, which is at high risk for catastrophic wildfire. The population of La Plata County had a population growth rate of 11.9% from 2010 to 2020 (US Census Bureau). Much of the growth happens in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), which is broadly described as the zone where structures and other features of human development meet and intermingle with flammable wildland or vegetative fuels. In La Plata County, many lots in the WUI have similar characteristics:

- Lack emergency access routes (one way in/one way out);
- Are in poor proximity to water sources;
- Are in areas with steep slopes;
- Have high risk vegetation types; and/or
- Are in close proximity to fuels on public lands.

Deer Valley Estates meets the definition of an at-risk community (Figure 4).

Figure 4: *Wildland Urban Interface Risk of Deer Valley Estates*

Fire History

In 2002, the Missionary Ridge Fire sent shock waves through the county as it burned over 70,000 acres and 56 homes and outbuildings were lost. The map below shows the outline of the Missionary Ridge Fire boundary and its vicinity to DVE (Figure 5). Other wildfires in the vicinity include the 416 Fire in 2018 that burned 54,000 in La Plata County and the Dry Lake Fire in 2023.

In August 2023, lightning started the Dry Lake Fire within the Columbine Ranger District of the San Juan National Forest (SJNF); however, it was burning in a planned prescribed fire burn unit that was 85% prepped for implementation. Although it was a natural start, the Dry Lake Fire was considered beneficial to the landscape and the SJNF managed it as a prescribed burn for ecosystem benefits.

Figure 5: *Missionary Ridge Fire and Dry Lake Fire Perimeter to DVE vicinity*

**Table 1: Significant La Plata County Wildfires
Over Twenty-One Year Period (2002-2023)**

Date	Fire Name	Size (acres)
2002	Missionary Ridge Fire	73,000
2009	Pinon Fire	111
2011	Sambrito 2	522
2012	Vallecito Fire	1,400
2012	Goblin Fire	800
2012	State Line Fire (Fire ID: 641185)	550
2012	Air Park Fire	500
2012	Stateline Fire: (FireID:637721)	350
2015	Sauls Creek RX Fire	1100
2017	Lightner Creek Fire	412
2018	358 Fire	51
2018	416 Fire	54,129
2019	441 Fire	330
2020	84 Fire	25
2020	East Canyon Fire	2,905
2021	Vosburg Pike Fire	75
2022	Perins Peak Fire	106
2022	Ute Pass Fire	30
2023	Dry Lake Fire	1,372

CWPP Authorization and Process

Deer Valley Estates holds regular meetings to address goals, strategies, accomplishments, and updates to the current CWPP. Deer Valley Estates also held discussions with WAP Coordinators, Colorado State Forest Service, San Juan National Forest’s Columbine Ranger District, and Upper Pine River Fire Protection District to update the 2009 CWPP. On October 2, 2023 these partners held a CWPP update meeting. All input and suggestions were included in the final CWPP update and minutes are available upon request. Since forming, the CWPP committee has met on a yearly basis. In 2023, WAP staff met with the Deer Valley

Estates Neighborhood Ambassador and came on board to provide assistance and expertise. Partners continually reviewed and provided input into the CWPP update.

In these meetings, it was decided what information to disseminate to property owners, contents of the CWPP were discussed, assignments regarding the CWPP document were made, the WUI boundary was reviewed with partners, and potential fire mitigation projects were discussed.

Deer Valley Estates has a dedicated core of volunteers willing to improve fire safety, fire preparedness, and forest health within their community. They host regular meeting, apply fire adapted principles, and regularly complete community mitigation projects. It is anticipated that mitigation projects, communication, and information distribution will continue to be a high priority for the homeowners within this subdivision.

Partners in this CWPP Update

- Deer Valley Estates Property Owners Association
- Wildfire Adapted Partnership, formerly FireWise of Southwest Colorado
- Upper Pine River Fire Protection District
- Colorado State Forest Service
- La Plata County Office of Emergency Management
- San Juan National Forest – Columbine Ranger District

Wildland Urban Interface

The WUI acres were developed by the representatives of the USFS/BLM in early 2009. The total acreage considered in the WUI including and surrounding DVE is approximately 23,278 acres (Figure 6). Deer Valley Estates contains eighty-four (84), 3.0 to 6.6 acre lots with sixty-nine having structures on them. About one hundred thirty-two residents live in the subdivision and since the 2009 CWPP, fourteen new homes have been built. Four miles of good gravel roads provide year-round access. Thirty-four of the lots immediately adjoin the San Juan National Forest, Saul's Creek Recreation Area. There are numerous structures located within the WUI risk area (Figure 4, Figure 5).

HFRA defines Wildland Urban Interface within the legislation:

...areas extending 1½ miles from the boundary of a community-at-risk defined by the USFS and BLM inventory and which lack emergency access routes; are in poor proximity to water sources; have areas with steep slopes; have high risk vegetation types; and/or that are in close proximity to fuels on public lands.

Structural and wildland fire protection is provided by the Upper Pine River Fire Protection District. Both structural and wildland fire engines resources are available. The UPRFPD maintains eight fire stations, three are staffed 24 hours (Stations 61,65, and 64), and station 62 is staffed 40 hours per week. The fire district minimum staffing is seven personnel daily. During wildfire season from March through October seasonal firefighters reside in Fire Station 62 below the dam at Vallecito Reservoir. The UPRFPD maintains a seasonal wildfire suppression and fuels crew in the summer to perform defensible space mitigation on private property and to respond to local, regional and national wildfires.

Other wildland fire resources are available through La Plata County Dispatch Center. Wildland fire resources include engines and crews from the USFS and the BLM. An air tanker base is located at Durango - La Plata Regional Airport - and additional aerial wildfire support can be provided by the Mesa Verde National Park initial attack helicopter at Hesperus, the Ute Mountain Ute initial attack helicopter at Towaoc and air resources from the Division of Fire Prevention and Control. The counties, federal land management agencies, DFPC and fire protection districts in southwest Colorado operate under the La Plata County Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for wildfire protection.

Figure 6: Wildland Urban Interface

Accomplishments since last CWPP

Table 2: Deer Valley Estates Accomplishments					
	Group	Priority	Activity/Project	Estimated Cost	Completed
1	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Reflective address signs installed at all residences	\$0	Completed all lots in 2009
2	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Defensible Space around all structures	\$0	All completed between 2010 and 2016
3	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Create turnarounds on dead-end streets	\$2,000	Turnaround completed on Wieland Drive
4	DVE Board Volunteers LPEA	1	Established fuel breaks on four miles of established roads	\$0	All completed between 2010 and 2016
5	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Yearly fuel break maintenance	\$0	Done annually
6	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Negotiate emergency routes out of DVE	\$0	Received permission in 2010
7	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Evacuation simulation	\$0	Conducted in May 2012
8	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Community workshops	\$0	Since 2009 conducted at least one work day annually
9	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Improved Wi-Fi and broadband access to increase response and notification efforts	\$0	Completed in 2022
10	DVE Board Volunteers	2	Installed underground water tanks for emergency response	\$0	In 2006, DVE installed 2x10k gallon underground water tanks
11	DVE Volunteer	2	Install dry hydrants on privately owned underground water tanks for emergency response	\$0	In 2012, 63 Elk Valley property owner installed 2,000 gallon water tank and dry hydrant
12	SJNF	1	Broadcast treatments	\$0	SJNF

Figure 7: *DVE Past Community Projects*

Photos of DVE past mitigation projects.

Revised Goals, Strategies, and Partner Responsibilities

Table 3: Deer Valley Estates Action Plan				
Year	Group	Priority	Activity/Project	Estimated Cost
Monthly	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Provide mitigation info to community via email/website including evacuation preparedness and La Plata County Code Red	\$0
Quarterly	DVE Board	2	Request owners to provide mitigation hours to DVE Neighborhood Ambassador	\$0
Yearly	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Continued shaded fuel break maintenance along 4 miles of roads	\$0
Annually	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Review/Revise CWPP	\$0
Annually	DVE Board	2	Work with USFS toward performing controlled burns in areas around DVE	\$0
Annually	DVE Board	1	Continue proactive efforts with UPRFPD	\$0
2024	DVE Board UPRFPD	1	Conduct another evacuation event utilizing UPRFPD's updated messaging system	\$0
Annually	DVE Board	1	Continue to monitor emergency routes out of DVE with the USFS	\$0
Annually	DVE Board and Residents	1	Promote WAP mitigation incentive programs including the Chipper Rebate	\$0
Stem Annually	DVE Board	2	Recertify Firewise USA [®] recognition	\$0
Annually	DVE Board Volunteers	1	Triage Maps	\$0

Adjacent Land Treatment

San Juan National Forest – Columbine Ranger District

Beginning in 2002, the San Juan National Forest (SJNF) – Columbine Ranger District conducted 200 feet of mechanical thinning and pile burns around entire boundary of Deer Valley Estates in the Saul's Creek area on Forest Service lands. SJNF maintained this work in 2021 and 2022 conducting more thinning and logging. Currently, there is stacked timber and slash piles surrounding DVE and these log decks are in the process of being removed and the slash piles

are slated to be burned during the 2023-2024 winter. All of the broadcast burning that was completed around the subdivision in the past 12 years is scheduled to receive a second entry of prescribed fire in the coming years. This is predominantly a ponderosa pine ecosystem, which is fire dependent and needs frequent low intensity fire. All of the second entry prescribed burns are scheduled to occur from 2024-2030.

Figure 8: DVE Planned Community Projects

Updating CWPP

Deer Valley Estates will review the CWPP each year to update with accomplishments or to address new priorities/areas of concern. Review of the CWPP will be the responsibility of the Deer Valley Estates POA. Annual accomplishments will be summarized during the annual meeting and will be incorporated into the CWPP.

Every five years the key stakeholders will take on the responsibilities lead by the Deer Valley Estates POA of a more detailed review of the CWPP and list of accomplishments. At the five-year period, Deer Valley Estates POA will take a closer look at priority areas of concerns and update the CWPP that reflect any changes.

Summary

This CWPP complements and builds upon the 2009 Deer Valley Estates CWPP. It incorporates key principles and guidelines arising from the HFRA. The plan lays out an ambitious program for:

- Reducing wildland fire risk in the wildland-urban interface (WUI)
- Accomplishing important fuel treatments on private lands
- Reducing structural ignitability
- Improving post fire benefits and protecting wildlife
- Increasing community safety
- Continuing successful education and community mobilization endeavors
- Continuing to enhance partnerships between federal, state and local agencies and among community organizations and local residents.
- Promoting forest and watershed health

Appendix

Appendix 1: Deer Valley Estates 2009 CWPP

*Deer Valley Estates
Property Owners Association*

Community Wildfire Protection Plan



Bayfield, Colorado
December 2009

Prepared by: Les Kole, DVE Resident and Firewise Ambassador

Maps Prepared by: Scott Wagner, Paragon Consulting

Collaborative support from:

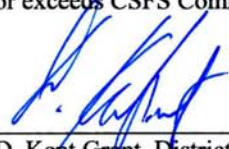
- Kent Grant, District Forester, Colorado State Forest Service
- Craig Goodell, Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist, USFS / BLM
- Rich Graeber, Chief Upper Pine River Fire Protection District

Neighborhood support from:

- John Beebe, DVE Resident and President, DVE Board of Directors
- Terry Beebe, DVE Resident
- Jon Robison, DVE Resident and Member, DVE Board of Directors
- Paul Romere, DVE Resident and Vice President, DVE Board of Directors
- Linda Kole, DVE Resident
- Tristen K. Amador, PhD., Technology Consultant

Approval

The Durango District of the **Colorado State Forest Service** has reviewed this Community Wildfire Protection Plan and approves its content and certifies that it meets or exceeds CSFS Community Wildfire Protection Plan minimum standards.



D. Kent Grant, District Forester

9/4/09

Date

The following entities have reviewed and approved this Community Wildfire Protection Plan and agree with the content and recommendations.



Deer Valley Estates
Property Owners Association

11/10/09

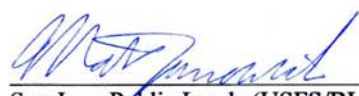
Date



Upper Pine River Fire Protection District

10 Nov 2009

Date



San Juan Public Lands (USFS/BLM)

10/15/09

Date



La Plata County Office
of Emergency Management

Nov 10 09

Date

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I. Community Identification and Description

The Deer Valley Estates (DVE) community area is in La Plata County, approximately 5 miles east of Bayfield, Colorado on the south side of US Highway 160. DVE covers approximately 360 acres and the elevation ranges from 7,150 to 7,410 feet. US Highway 160 provides the only access to DVE.

Deer Valley Estates contains eighty four (84), 3.0 to 6.6 acre lots, with fifty five (55) having structures on them. Approximately one to two new homes are built each year. Four (4) miles of good dirt and gravel roads provide year-round access. Thirty four (34) of the lots immediately adjoin the San Juan National Forest, Saul's Creek recreation area.

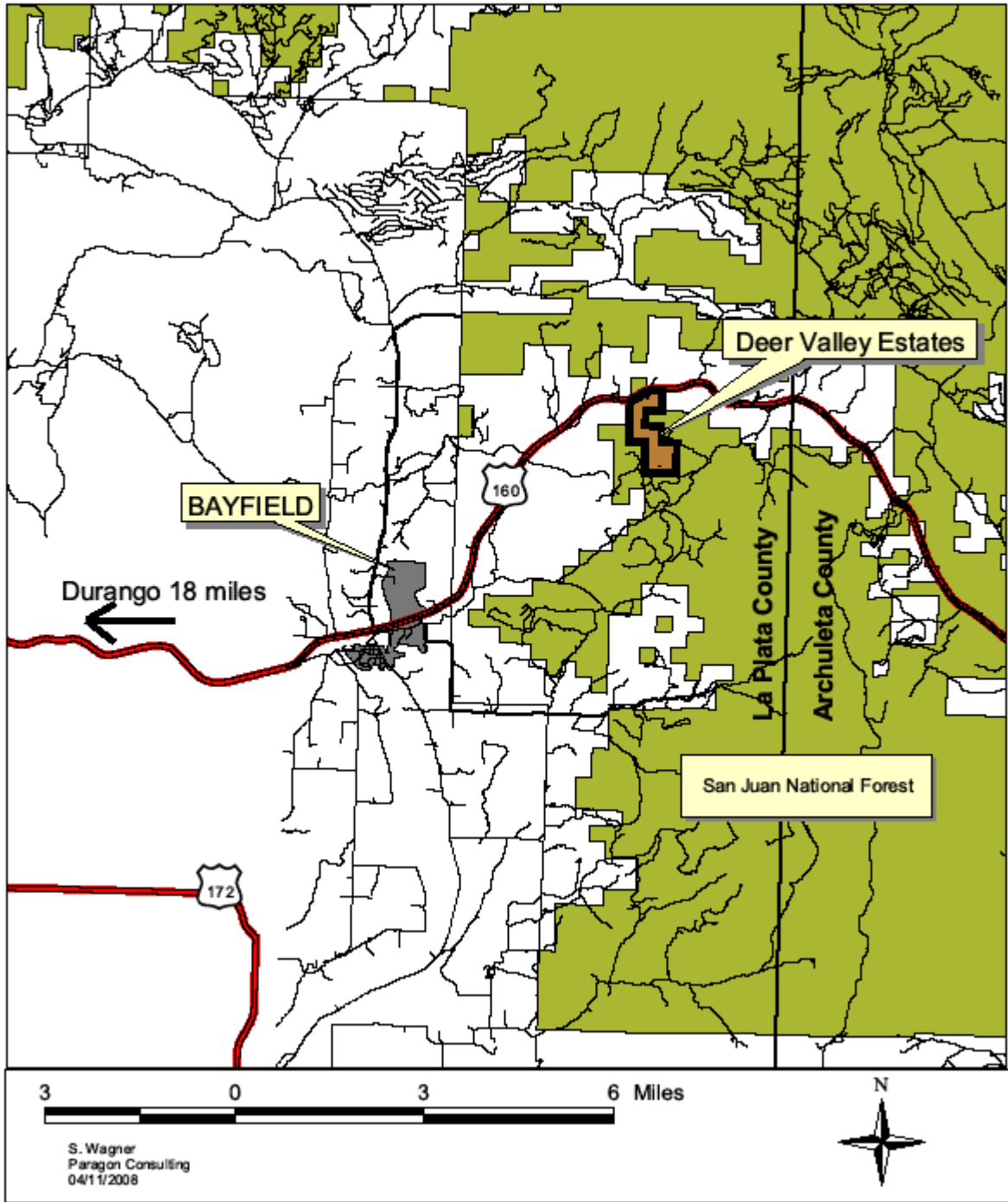
DVE is managed by a very active Board of Directors on behalf of the Association, which meets monthly to carry out required business. Defensible space around structures has been a top priority of the Board of Directors, but evacuation planning has only recently begun.

Numerous fires in the area have created a cross section of vegetation of ponderosa pine in the overstory with a principal shrub understory of Gambel oak, chokecherry, and serviceberry. The vegetation of DVE is broadcast over moderately dissected series of ridges, draws and open meadows. Slopes range from ten to forty percent, the average being approximately twenty percent.

Wildfires are not at all unusual in the area and are of a seasonal nature. The most predominate fire threat is to the south and west of DVE on the San Juan National Forest within the Saul's Creek area. Fires within the development are most unusual, with only one occurring in the last 25 years which was contained to approximately one (1) acre. The Missionary Ridge fire of 2002 (although not close to DVE), forced the local residents living in forested environs to further assess the hazards of living in the Wildland Interface. The initial attack for wildland and structure fires in DVE is provided by the Upper Pine River Fire Protection District.

At the annual meeting of the POA held on August 1, 2009, the draft Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was reviewed and changes suggested by property owners have been incorporated into this document.

Deer Valley Estates Vicinity Map



II. DVE Wildland-Urban Interface

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is most commonly described as that zone where structures and other features of human development meet and intermingle with wildland or vegetative fuels. Communities within or adjacent to the WUI face significant risk to life, property and infrastructure.

Wildland fire within the WUI can be one of the most dangerous and complicated situations firefighters face. Both the National Fire Plan (NFP), a response to catastrophic wildfires, and *A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risk to Communities and Environment, 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy* (2001) place a priority on working collaboratively with communities in or adjacent to the WUI to reduce their risk from large-scale wildfire. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) builds on existing efforts to restore healthy forest conditions in the WUI by empowering local communities or POAs by authorizing expedited environmental assessment, administrative appeal, and legal review for qualifying projects on federal land. The DVE community is recognized as an “at risk” community for catastrophic wildfire, as identified in the *La Plata County CWPP- Communities – at Risk and Communities of Concern* map and the *Federal Fuels Treatment* map. The DVE CWPP tiers to the La Plata County CWPP approved in 2006. This plan is consistent with the goals and strategies described within the La Plata County CWPP and provides further strategic and tactical direction specific to wildfire protection and mitigation for the DVE community.

The 360-acre DVE inhabited area containing critical human infrastructure is identified within the subdivision boundary on the attached Map A: Wildland Urban Interface Zone. The balance of the WUI area covers 22,918 acres and contains many private in-holdings. The total acreage within the WUI is 23,278 acres.

The WUI zone was determined based on USFS/BLM recommendations and fire behavior/incidence history, the risk of crown fires, topography and predominant south/southwest wind direction as deciding factors. The attached Map B: Wildfire Hazard and Mitigation Treatments on Forest Service shows areas that were thinned by the Forest Service in 2003 and areas planned for future thinning.

Current Conditions and Recommended Measures

Representatives from the USFS/BLM have conducted the required assessment of the WUI which contains the Saul’s Creek recreation area, where the DVE boundary is immediately adjacent to the San Juan National Forest (SJNF). Actions are needed to effect an immediate change in fire behavior, to reduce the rate of spread and intensity, and to increase forest and ecosystem diversity and resilience to disturbance. Some of the most critical areas that should receive treatment are those WUI areas located within and adjacent to DVE.

Mechanical thinning projects and prescribed burns have been conducted around Deer Valley in the past few years (2003), especially on the south and west sides, (see Map B). Based on SJNF recommendations, a variety of restorative treatments including mowing, thinning and prescribed burning with low intensity surface fires have been conducted in the WUI. The planned treatments shown on Map B refer to the Saul's Creek Fuels Reduction Project approved by the USFS/BLM. The treatment timetable will depend upon funding/contracting.

III. Community Assessment

The potential risk to DVE from a wildland fire is HIGH. This section discusses the factors considered and contributing to the overall rating.

Fuel Hazards

DVE is covered with rather dense conifer (ponderosa pine) and brush (Gambel oak and serviceberry). The abundant Gambel oak will lift a ground fire into the crowns of the overstory. There are a few scattered meadows and other natural open areas throughout DVE. Fuel Models 1, 6, 9 used for Estimating Fire Behavior (Anderson 1982) are all found in association with one another in DVE. Except for fuel model 9, the rest can have high rates of spread in mild weather situations. Table 1: Fuel Models Found in Deer Valley Estates offers a brief description of these three key fuel models.

Timber groves adjacent to structures that have crown closures greater than forty percent are most problematic. With this continuous ground and crown fuel arrangement, both vertical and horizontal, this area becomes susceptible to all types of wildland fires (crown, wind bor

