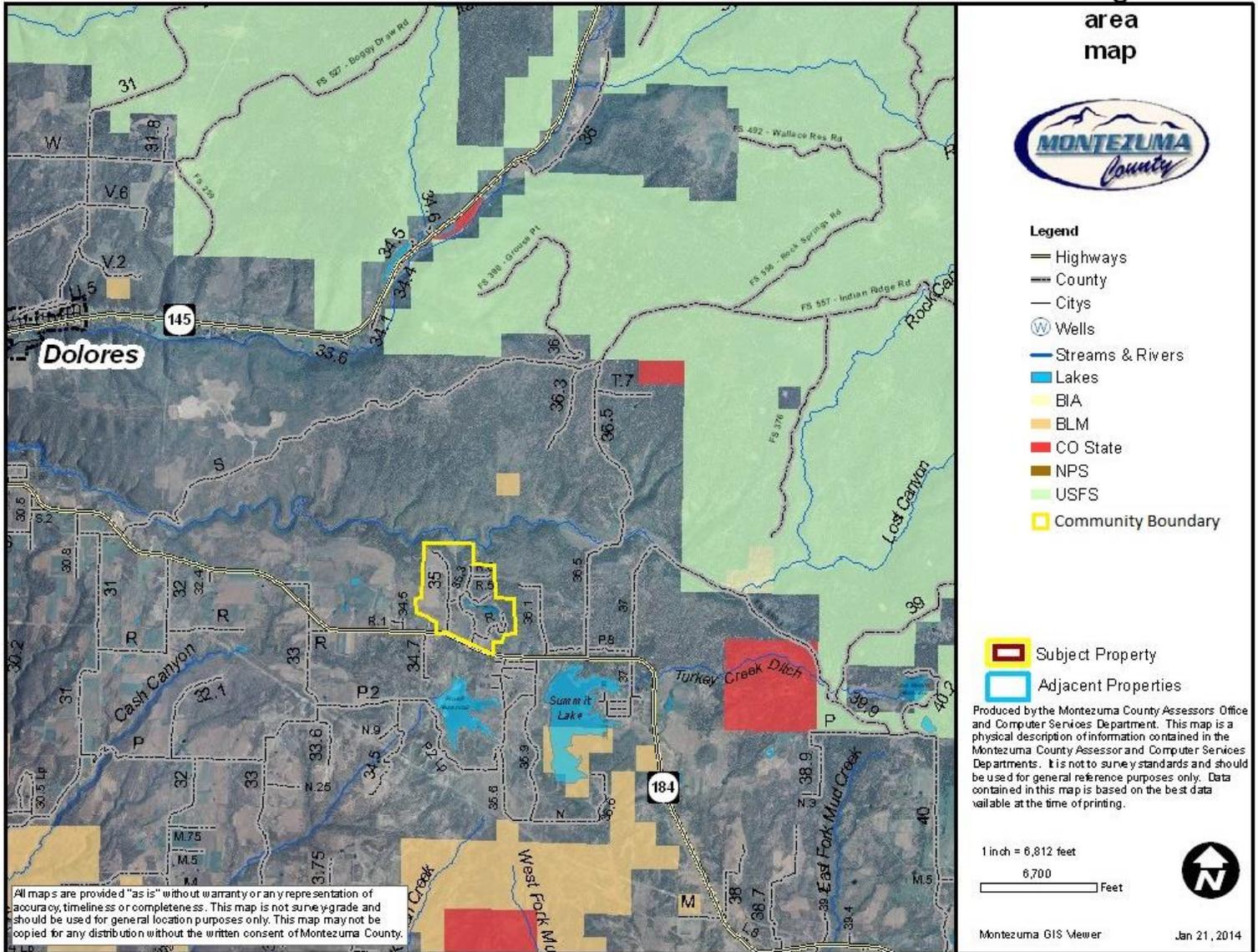


PINE RIDGE/ WAPITI RIM COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The Pine Ridge/ Wapiti Rim neighborhood is comprised of approximately 43 homes accessed north of Highway 184 on Roads 35, 35.3, R, R.5, and R.6 in the Dolores Fire Protection District. Properties range from 3 to 36 acres with the majority being less than 10 acres. A tributary to Lost Canyon cuts through the community, with a reservoir toward the southern edge of the wooded area, and Lost Canyon forms the northern edge of the community. With the exception of one home at the mouth of the tributary, all of the homes are located on the uplands and ridges.



The ecosystem is predominately ponderosa pine with an understory including abundant Gambel oak and rocky mountain juniper and Piñon pine trees. The densely forested canyon where the Lost Canyon Lake reservoir abuts Road 35.3 consists of ponderosa, willow, aspen, oak, Piñon pine, juniper, cattails, and more. There are some meadows

Dense canopy drops down into the side canyon between Roads 35 and 35.3.



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extending north from Highway 184 along the west side of the community, nearly to the rim of Lost Canyon. While this community is moderately dense, the areas to the west and north are very sparsely populated private lands, with only one county road, Road S, between this community and National Forest Service lands. The next neighborhoods to the east are the Summit Lake developments, consisting of hundreds of homes on 1-5 acre lots.

Describe how a wildfire is likely to start and spread within the community.

This area has a high frequency of lightning strikes along the rim of Lost Canyon, a major tributary to the



Lightning struck tree in the defensible space zone of a home in this community.

Dolores River. The majority of fire starts in the area have been from lightning. The area is also right off of Highway 184, where human-caused fires could start. There is some minimal fire use, particularly for slash burning in the neighborhood. There is also an old sawmill ½ mile up Lost Canyon that periodically ignites, but these fires have always been easily contained in the past. Fire starts in Lost Canyon could quickly run east up the canyon to this neighborhood. Wildfire would be expected to move quickly in the dense vegetation and sloping terrain of the canyons leading into this neighborhood. The density of the ponderosa pine stands and abundant ladder fuels could easily sustain a crowning fire. The grassy area along the west boundary and in the canyon bottoms make for dense 1-10 hour fuels, that would likely hasten the spread of the wildfire, rather than slowing it down. However, the lower intensity of the grass fires and limited fuels that can be readily removed with machinery provide opportunities to build fire line in the fine fuels if time permits.

Describe past and current wildfire preparedness activities in the neighborhood.

In 2002, a gravel surface was put in by the Dolores Fire Department to access Lost Canyon Reservoir, but the ownership has changed and the access has been fenced. During 2012 and 2013, three homeowners in the area had independently requested fire risk assessments from the Fire Chiefs' Association. Between scheduling the third of those assessments and conducting it, a lightning strike fire ignited on the southern slope of Lost Canyon, just past the northern end of Road 35.3. The fire was quickly contained, but this got the attention of many residents when notice was given of the fire threat. As a result, one neighbor agreed to volunteer as a FireWise Neighborhood Ambassador. Philip Ayers became an Ambassador in September, 2013. Three more homeowners also requested in-depth home assessments that were done in September and several neighbors decided to organize a community meeting to discuss the risk of wildfire and what could be done to mitigate those risks.

The neighborhood meeting in September was well attended, with 19 homeowners representing 11 homes. FireWise of Southwest Colorado presented information about what homeowners and neighborhoods could do to prepare for wildfires. Evacuation routes and proper defensible space were of

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notable concern at the meeting. Existing secondary egress routes were identified and the availability of water resources was brought up.

As a result of the meeting, Julie Ayers and Pete Dericks, signed up to become FireWise Neighborhood Ambassadors. Pete began by organizing several neighbors to thin along the access roads and jointly rent a chipper to mulch the slash. Phil and Julie Ayers and an adjoining neighbor also helped by assisting with demonstrations and volunteering their property for a Fire Mitigation Workshop in October, 2013. Many of the homeowners who are capable of creating their own defensible space or have the funds to hire a contractor have done so, but much work remains. Many homes need more attention to the built environment and Zone 1 defensible space, and most properties need extensive work in Zones 2 and 3.



Hans Hartman demonstrates the pole chain saw at the Mitigation Workshop in Pine Ridge.

Photos and brief descriptions of common strengths and vulnerabilities of the community.

Access:

The Dolores Fire Chief, Mike Zion, visited the community on January 12, 2014 to evaluate community access and driveways. He recommended removal of one tree that constricted driveway access and noted that with current fuel conditions, the Fire Department probably wouldn't take the time to travel down the long driveway in the bottom of the canyon, unless they had a lot of time and felt confident they could get back out before the arrival of the fire. Nearly all driveways had an adequate turnaround or the homes could be defended from the road. However, the overall verdict was that the fuels adjacent to the county roads are currently too dense to utilize during a fire. A subsequent visit by the BLM Southwest District Fire Prevention and Mitigation Specialist on January 28, 2014 stressed the importance of removing the Gambel oak understory. The structure protection strategy for the community at this time will be to get in and foam as many homes as possible and get back out, before the fire arrives.

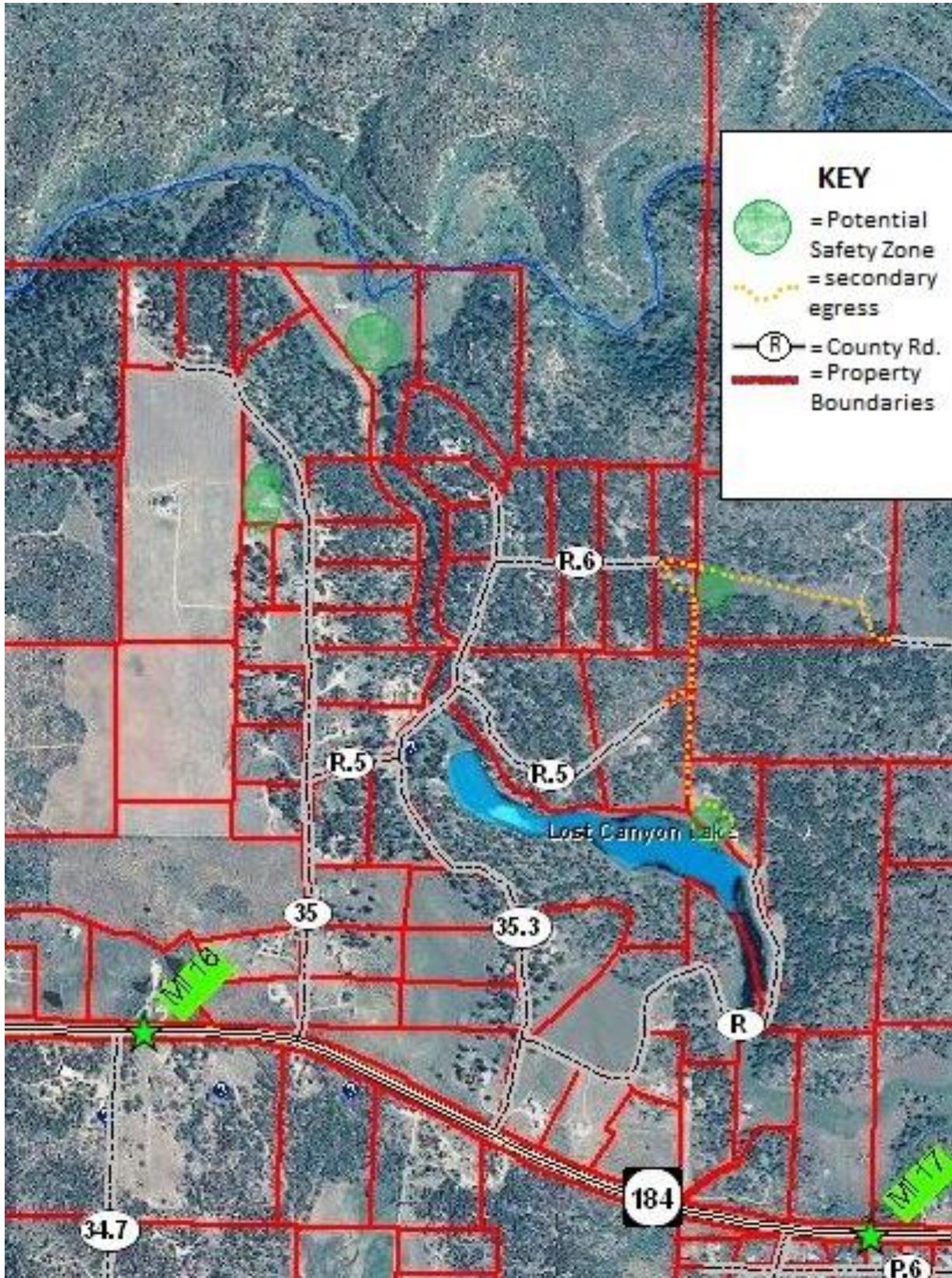


Dense pockets of vegetation are characteristic along roadways.

There are two alternate loops from the east end of Road R.6 that could be used for evacuations in a worst case scenario where the primary route was cut off. There were also four areas that were identified during the Community Assessment that

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could be used or maintained to become safe areas for homeowners or firefighters.



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Secondary egress marked with red reflectors.

Canyon bottom could serve as safe area if mowed or grazed.



A section of log fencing could become heavy fuel along an otherwise safe section of the road if the grass gets tall. There are many wood fences throughout the community.

Home Construction and Landscaping

The majority of the homes were built in the 1990s. Many homes are undergoing remodels and several homes in the neighborhood are also under construction. There is not consistent construction material, though log, and frame construction with wood siding are common. In addition to wood siding, exposed OSB and plywood are another common construction material vulnerable to radiant and direct heat.



Exposed plywood beneath porch eaves.



Exposed composite wood product skirting and accumulated fine fuels beneath wood deck. Wood decks are common.

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Decks are not adequately enclosed or screened.

Needles accumulate around and on homes with many trees within what should be Zone 1 Defensible Space.



Most propane tanks are located a 'safe' distance from the home, but this one may be at risk from surrounding vegetation.

Though this photo was taken in winter, not all homeowners remove excess cordwood stacked against the house once the wood burning season is over. Also note the stone wall in the background. This stone wall makes an excellent fuel break for the main structure.



Garage skirting with stone will help building resist fire approaching on the ground.

Corrugated tin wainscoting and propanel roof help harden this home.

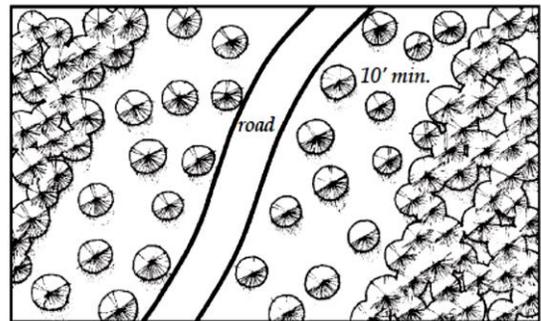
PINE RIDGE/ WAPITI RIM COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Pre-settlement density of the Ponderosa Pines was about 1/10th of what it is in this neighborhood today. Only a few trees should be kept in first 30' from house. See the house on the right? Before forest thinning and extensive oak mitigation in 2013, this new home on the right couldn't be seen from the reservoir. A good defensible space doesn't mean getting rid of the forest.



Community Fuel Breaks and Safe Areas

Currently there are no community scale fuel breaks in this neighborhood. Fuel reduction should be done along the roadways, starting with the County and Private Road Right-of-Ways by removing much of the understory and thinning trees to achieve 10-20' crown spacing, with a goal of extending thinning beyond the right of way boundaries and up to 100' from the edge of either side of the roads. Where 100' is not achievable, any amount of fuel reduction is better than none. The intent is to drop a fire to the ground before it gets to the road, creating a defensible space along the road for the safe evacuation of residents and firefighter access. Other community fuel treatments may include the rim of Lost Canyon extending along either side of the tributary to lost canyon and tying the western meadow into the canyon fine fuels with a 300' shaded fuel break past the end of Road 35.



Plan view of fuelbreak showing minimum distance between tree crowns.



Two of the four potential safe areas, the one at the mouth of the Lost Canyon tributary, and the one west of Road 35, are regularly mowed by the homeowners. These photos show the edges of the other two potential safe areas. Adjacent forest would need to be thinned, and riparian vegetation would have to be burned off or thinned. The grassy areas for the safe zones would have to be maintained. The area at the end of R.6 belongs to a property owner to the east, outside of the community boundary.

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Fire Suppression Resources or Challenges

While the moderate density and proximity to the highway usually results in lightning fires being called in before they grow out of control, smoke can also drop into Lost Canyon and go undetected. There is a fire station on Road 33 North of Highway 184, within 2 miles of this community. However, Dolores is a volunteer district, so the time it takes for firefighters to respond from wherever they are to the nearest station has to be added to the response time. One Dolores firefighter lives in the neighborhood, but he works outside of it. Many residents have put out small fires in the neighborhood on their own. The San Juan Public Lands Office is also only about 5 miles from the community, and can often provide rapid initial attack on wildland fires in the areas of the forest near this community.



Water hydrants only functionally serve as water line clean-outs. The fire district shuttles tankers filled in town or at the Summit Lake Church to provide continuous water for suppression. Lost Canyon Reservoir could serve as a local source to draw water from, but the Fire Department access to the reservoir needs to be re-secured.



This truck and engines from Dolores Fire District and other mutual aid Fire Protection Districts (Cortez, Lewis/Arriola, Mancos, Pleasant View, Rico, and Towaoc) would foam as many homes as possible before a fire arrived.

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Evacuation Readiness

Evacuation readiness by each individual homeowner is paramount in this neighborhood, where a fast moving wildfire could force rapid evacuations, and homeowners need to know to leave, before Sheriff's deputies come knocking. Some residents have signed up for Nixle text alerts, but many residents do not have text capability, or do not have reliable service at their homes.

There are very few livestock in the neighborhood, but there is the potential for livestock needing to be evacuated from grazing lands north of the community through their access routes in this community. Additional challenges include an abundance of four-legged friends, many of whom are home alone during weekdays.

2104 Plan of Action

1. Develop phone tree
2. Start developing a community buddy system
3. Encourage use of Nixle text notifications.
4. Get County address signs put up.
5. Have a community work day to begin thinning trees and underbrush within County Road ROW.
6. Encourage residents to thin beyond the ROWs with a community Chipper Day.
7. Re-secure fire suppression access to Lost Canyon Lake.

Using and Reviewing this Plan

This plan is a tool for sharing general information about the wildfire hazards in the Pine Ridge and Wapiti Rim neighborhoods. The plan of action is for short-term goals to be pursued with the lead of the community's FireWise Neighborhood Ambassadors. This plan should be reviewed each year to reflect the actions taken by the community and outline a further plan of action. As needed, the fire district and forestry professionals should be invited back to review the work that has been done, and its potential efficacy for addressing the risk it is proposed to reduce.

This plan is not a substitute for individual homeowner action. It is critical for residents to become informed of their specific risks and vulnerabilities to life and property. Neighborhood Ambassadors are available to provide technical support and encouragement for individual property actions, but will be focusing on their own properties and activities that can reduce the wildfire risks to the community as a whole. Even if you have addressed all of the vulnerabilities identified in this plan, there is no guarantee that there won't be significant losses from a wildfire in your community. However, every step taken as individuals and as a community reduces the risks posed by wildfire in your community.