Firewise Communities®
"The How-To Newsletter"

This quarterly provides articles and helpful hints on how to incorporate Firewise principles.

Winter 2010

THE FIREWISE COMMUNITY — "10 YEARS OF FIREWISE"

Milestones often offer causes for celebration and, as milestones go, there is much to celebrate for Firewise Communities/USA®. The year 2011 marks the program's10th anniversary!

What started in 2001 with a dozen communities in Arizona, Florida, Utah, Washington, New Mexico and Colorado has grown to more than 600 communities in 40 of our 50 states. Each of these communities, whether new to Firewise this year, a first-time renewal community, a member of our 5-Plus Club or one of our original pilot communities, has embraced making Firewise practices an integral part of its fundamental approach to protecting its members from the threat of wildfire.

In the beginning – between 1999 and 2003 – we offered 30 workshops introducing the Firewise principles, reaching approximately 3,000 individuals. Additionally, during the past 10 years, we've held three major national conferences – in 2004, 2006 and 2008 – where Firewise communities could come together to share their successes while gaining new insights into how to keep interest and expand participation. Leaders in fire science reported on their research findings, providing critical information to support the Firewise principles that residents diligently put into practice. And communities considering the possibility of becoming Firewise learned about the program while making important contacts who could help them in their subsequent efforts upon returning home.

We've also offered Firewise workshops throughout the nation, led by local professionals and renowned fire experts, addressing issues specific to states and regions to help residents make the best decisions for implementing their respective Firewise plans. This has included promoting Extension Service plant lists that highlight the most appropriate plantings for Firewise landscape planning; offering ArcView software to help with mapping a Community Wildfire Protection Plan; and producing various publications and videos, including "Wildfire! Preventing Home Ignitions," a video released in 2001 that is still widely used by Firewise communities.

Celebrating milestones does not mean getting complacent. As we look to the promising future of Firewise, we aim to continue developing helpful materials and useful avenues for your community to connect with other Firewise communities. As an example, during early December, national program staff offered a webinar on how to use Twitter®, MyFirewise and other Internet tools to broaden your communications reach. And we invite your ideas and suggestions on how we might further support your Firewise efforts going forward.

Ultimately, we hope to be able to report that every state in the nation has a Firewise community. For now, though, we thank each and every one of you who has helped to make Firewise Communities/USA the success that it is today.

Featured Articles

The Firewise Community Example – Timber Ridge-Prescott, AZ....2
Celebrating 10 Years of Firewise 4
Q & A with Chief Darell Willis 10
Around the Firewise Home 11
Firewise by the Numbers.... 13
The Firewise Leader – Surveying 10 Years of Firewise 14
Youth Corner – Youths Inquire About Firewise 15
Firewise Resources 16

THE FIREWISE COMMUNITY — EXAMPLE

PRESCOTT, ARIZONA – THE VERY FIRST FIREWISE COMMUNITY

The community of Timber Ridge is located in the southwest corner of the city of Prescott, which borders the Prescott National Forest that is home to the largest stand of ponderosa pine in the country. Depending upon the time of year and amount of precipitation, this forest and its tranquil beauty can hide the danger that an uncontrolled wildland fire can pose to Timber Ridge and much of Prescott.

The community's 376 homes, located on 427 lots, were built mostly of wood construction, since homeowners wanted their homes to blend into the forest setting and few gave thought to what a wildland fire could do to their community. Further fueling the potential for prevailing winds to bring a wildland fire into Timber Ridge were the fact that homes were spaced fairly close together, with dense stands of very combustible natural and planted vegetation growing dangerously close to them, and undeveloped lots and common areas were choked with trees and brush.

When the Firewise program was introduced to Timber Ridge residents, it brought the wildfire problem to the forefront. In determining how to best address this challenge, however, many residents were reluctant to have their trees and shrubs trimmed or removed. They envisioned a moonscape with little to no vegetation left standing.

Educational meetings were held to respond to their concerns. Four homes were chosen to become Firewise models, along with three acres of common land behind the community's clubhouse. Wood cutouts of ponderosa trees were placed on these properties, which were treated using Firewise practices by the fire department. The tree-shaped signs were painted green with the wording "This Lot Is Firewise" across them. When residents saw how beautiful their lots could be, word traveled fast.

A Wildfire Mitigation Plan Is Established for Timber Ridge

Three Timber Ridge residents, in particular, were greatly concerned about wildfire safety issues facing their community and what steps would be essential to better prepare and protect their homes and their neighbors' from wildfire. These three individuals – Darrell Anderson, Al Bates and Sam Corsino – spearheaded the movement to make Timber Ridge a Firewise community

In early 2001 the trio determined that the time had come for the residents of Timber Ridge to get serious about making their community as safe as possible from wildfire. That summer, the Prescott Fire Department met with the community to further discuss what defensible space meant and to explain what the newly formed Fuels Mitigation Crew could do for the community. This crew would assess, cut, thin and perform a general clean up of surrounding live and dead vegetation in order to create defensible space.

In spite of the effort, progress was slow during this first year. Only about 60 owners listed their homes for the defensible space assessments and fuels mitigation work.

Then, on May 15, 2002, the Indian Creek Fire struck, requiring residents of Timber Ridge to be evacuated for three days. Following this near miss so close to the community, the number of homes signed onto the list to have the defensible space treatment done quickly grew to over 250.

Additionally, there was the unforeseen factor of the pine bark beetle infestation, which quickly killed hundreds of thousands of ponderosa pines in and around Prescott while also killing

Community Example – Continued on page 3

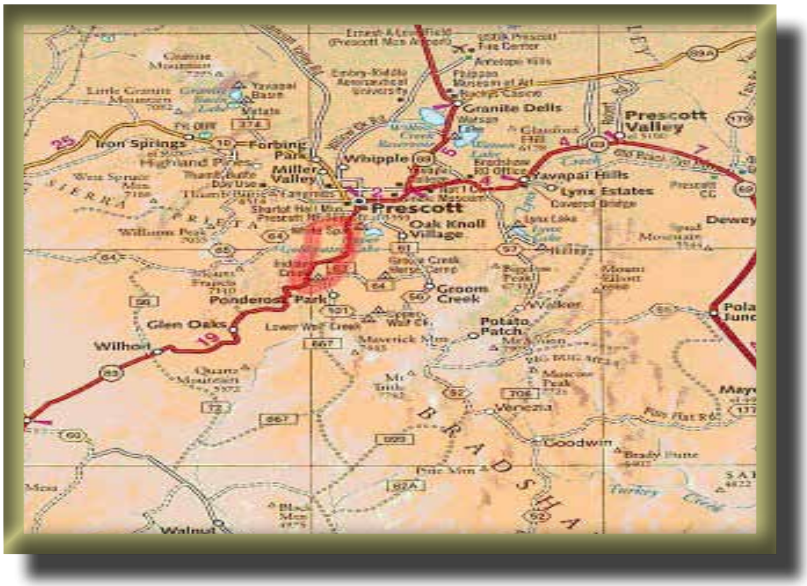
Community Example – Continued from page 2

more than 400 trees in Timber Ridge. This event further demonstrated the great need for removal of the affected vegetation, which could become prime fuel for an approaching wildfire.

A Firewise Success Story

After many meetings, numerous discussions among neighbors, efforts by residents and the Fuels Mitigation Crew, the Indian Creek Fire incident and the pine bark beetle infestation, the goal and reward of all of their efforts was finally reached when, on November 7, 2002, Firewise Communities/USA officially designated Timber Ridge as a Firewise Community. This was no ordinary designation, though. Timber Ridge was the first Firewise Community in the entire nation!

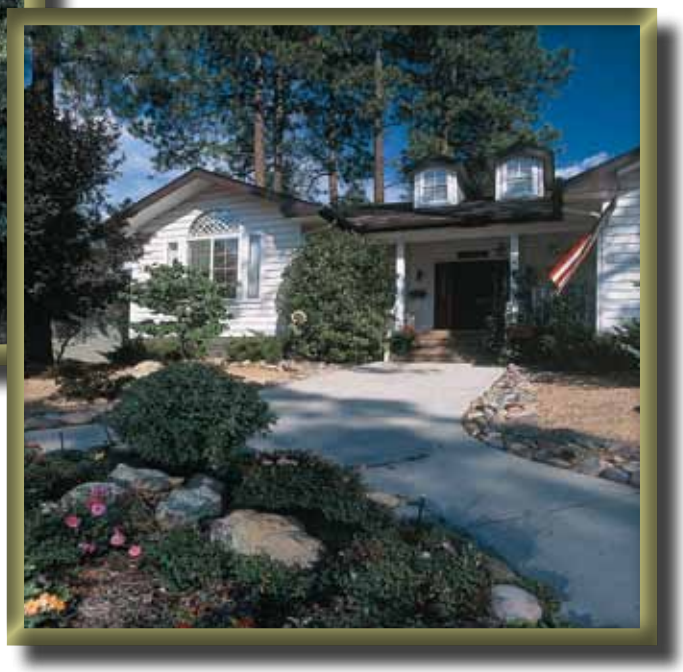
Since its designation in 2002, Timber Ridge residents have worked hard every year to maintain its community mitigation plan. Every year, community members do a ride around with the Prescott Fire Department Wildland Crew leader to access all of the 427 lots in Timber Ridge. This fall, 42 lots were noted as needing ground and ladder fuels removal. Letters are sent to the property owners and follow through has always been very good, due in part to the Firewise articles included in the Timber Ridge community's newsletter and to the annual Firewise Day at which all new residents learn the importance of fuels mitigation.



Area of the Indian Creek Fire

There are currently six Firewise communities within Prescott. Three more communities are in the process of applying for designation status, while three other current Firewise communities are neighbors to Prescott.

The Prescott Area Wildland Urban Interface Commission (PAWUIC) has been instrumental in helping Timber Ridge and its neighboring communities in their efforts to become Firewise. While the community is proud to have been the very first community to achieve Firewise status, its members are equally proud of the influence their success has had on other communtiies. Darrell Anderson, one of the original community sparkplugs sums things up: "I have personally spoken to neighboring communities about the benefit of becoming Firewise and it feels great to know that three of our neighbors are now Firewise."



How-To *thanks Darrell Anderson for providing information and for this Community Example about Firewise's first community, Timber Ridge, in Arizona.*

Celebrating 10 Years of Firewise — Pilot Communities Revisited

Perry Park, Colorado – Good Slash Disposal Makes Firewise Sense

"We, as a community, recognized we had a problem," says Keith Worley, a forester, arborist and land development consultant who serves as co-chair of the Firewise community in Perry Park, CO. "Basically, we're no different than people who live in flood, earthquake or hurricane zones where these natural hazards pose a threat to homes. Becoming Firewise also was about protecting the environment around us."

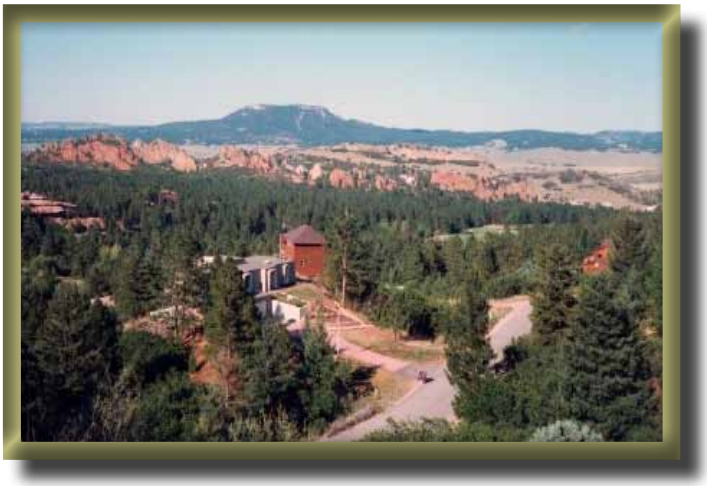
Worley's original co-chair, Don Korinek, also foresaw how fire departments and insurance companies would be concerned about the homeowners' self-imposed risk living in the wildland/urban interface. The duo attended one of the first Firewise planning workshops, held in Denver in 2001, and the push to become a pilot community stemmed from that experience.

Members of the community have been able to realize the benefits of their Firewise involvement in several ways. First and foremost has been the greater awareness of wildfire issues and prevention made possible through an ongoing educational campaign. Additionally, there is what Worley calls "the new aesthetic" offered by the creation of early demonstration areas and early fuel treatments. "This is rapidly becoming the norm rather than the exception," he notes.

"And we've found the perception of being Firewise enhances and protects property values," he adds, referencing a recent conversation he'd had with a local realtor. "From day one, I have always said that if the realtors buy in, we are on our way to becoming truly Firewise."

Community support through community leaders and throughout the general population has been strong enough to take the program to the next level, permitting work on all greenbelts/open spaces within the community that would allow homeowners to tie in their mitigation to more widely mitigated areas. This, in turn, will reduce the amount of fragmentation between public and private ownerships. "As a result, we can protect our natural resources and homes, while also making firefighter safety a priority," explains Worley.

Slash pile ready for pickup.



Additionally, Perry Park recently received a sub-grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that will allow the Perry Park Metropolitan District to employ a fuels mitigation crew. (Please see sidebar story on page 9.)

A key element that the grant provides is the ability to "slash pile burn" as a method of slash disposal in the community's more remote and inaccessible areas. "The mitigation crew can cut and pile slash for burning this winter," says Worley. "They are actually working right now in areas directly abutting home sites and, since fire is a natural part of our ecosystem, slash pile burning is one way to gently re-introduce fire as a normal thing."

In fact, many homeowners within the community will see burning piles from their kitchen windows, and they've been encour-

aged to greet the mitigation crew with hot cocoa and cookies. The homeowners also are being reminded that use of fire may be necessary to protect their homes during a major wildfire through "black lining," " burning out" or even "back firing."

With these approaches in mind, the Perry Park Firewise Committee has even agreed to work toward a goal of prescribed fire in some of the community's greenbelts as a long-range mitigation maintenance tool. "They find the process a little spooky, though, given the media attention to escaped prescribed fires, such as the Los Alamos/Cerro Grande Fire several years ago," says Worley.

Regarding receipt of the grant, Worley notes, "Being a Firewise community helped us win the ARRA grant because we had already demonstrated a capacity to receive, implement and administer funds. Our in-kind tracking system set up in 2001 by Don Korinek and his wife, Barbara Williams, allowed us to offer a 50 percent in-kind match, increasing the value of the grant from $700,000 grant to a $1,050,000."

Another factor that has allowed Perry Park to be more competitive for grants was having a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in place. Among the first communities in Colorado to do so, the plan outlined the community's three-pronged approach of planning, education and implementation that has helped its members to keep on track and remain motivated. "It helped that our pre-planning for wildfire worked easily into a CWPP format," says Worley. "It continues to serve us well."

While Perry Park's educational efforts have spun off to include surrounding communities, its implementation of fuel treatments focuses on the values its residents hold most dear – the forest/trees, wildlife, and protection of property values. "Don and Barbara completed a number of community surveys in 2001 and 2002 that allowed us to tailor our program around these community 'values,' which were incorporated into our planning, education and implementation."

The community also has worked on relationship building with its local fire jurisdiction, Larkspur Fire Protection District. Working closely with these young men and women serves to remind residents that wildfire has a face and that it's the firefighters who will be on the front lines to protect life, property and natural resources. "Their presence is a constant reminder that we, as homeowners, must be part of the solution," notes Worley.

The community's most successful program is its twice-per-year slash pickup program. Nationally, one of the biggest impediments to mitigation is slash disposal. "We would often hear, 'I know I need to cut and clear, but what do I do with all this debris?'" says Worley.

The answer was setting up the program. Introduced during the community's first year of Firewise activity, Worley notes how most residents agree that "without the program we would have been dead in the water by the end of our second year."
Homeowners that have taken action speak with pride about their accomplishments as the Firewise crew ties into their defensible spaces and help to create home ignition zones that will be effective firefighting zones. Without a good slash disposal program, this would be a slow and frustrating task.

Given the high percentage of mitigated homes, Worley is now working with owners on maintenance of their initial treatments, which were done over the past 10 years. "This is a very exciting problem to have!" he says. "And, we will solve it, too."

How-To *thanks Keith Worley, forester, ISA-certified arborist and land development consultant with the Colorado State Forest Service for information about Perry Park's Firewise pilot community.*

Editor's Note: As we celebrate 10 years of Firewise and reflect on the program's milestones, we will be revisiting our pilot Firewise Communities. Look for additional stories in future issues of our ***How-To Newsletter***.

Emigration Canyon, Utah – "Goating" Mitigation with Helpful Herds

While Emigration Canyon has made a lot of progress since 2002, when it first became a Firewise Community, there are still homeowners who haven't caught the vision. In 1988 a large fire left a lot of dead wood lying around. Now, there are large, lovely homes where the fire burned.

To reduce their fire danger, Kathy Christensen, the community's Firewise chair, has been offering cutting crews and goat herds to Emigration Canyon homeowners. She credits the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands with helping the community in finding farmers with goatherds, noting, "We sometimes use the goats to clear out underbrush, weeds and grasses, which make it easier to see the downed branches and choose which trees to cut and which to keep. Then, the cutting crew comes in and their work is easier."

She continues, "Sometimes people don't understand that fire mitigation is like housekeeping. You have to do it again and again to maintain the upkeep around your home. The first time you do it, it's a big job, but after that if you do a little every year, it's not so hard."

Goatherds eat up potential fuels for wildfire, leaving "natural" firebreaks in their wake

While the goats cost less than cutting crews, they often are more trouble. "If you tell a crew not to cut a certain kind of tree or not to go into the neighbor's property, they do what you tell them," explains Christensen. "But with goats, they have to be tended by a herder to keep them where they belong, and even then they can often make an escape."

While the community has had problems with dogs chasing the goats and trucks bothering them where the goats are located close to the road, the positive results outweigh these obstacles. Emigration Canyon uses the goats on both private property and in common areas. Some people use the goats every chance they get. Their properties are often the ones with the most natural and wild landscaping.

Even so, there are those who object to the use of the goats, complaining that they eat too much and make an area look bare.

Fall 2007 — after the goats

"Most of us feel that bare is better than burned, though," says Christensen, "because even if it is bare, the grasses and leaves grow back the next year."

The value of the goats' mitigation efforts was clearly demonstrated in 2007, when a fire struck in Emigration Canyon. It was the same year that the community was finally getting its own fire station, and Christensen had placed the goats uphill from the fire station construction and downhill from the homes at the community's western edge.

On August 29, a fire was started by a workman cutting rebar during the building of the station. The fire quickly got out of control, burning up the hill and toward the goat break. The wind carried the fire westerly and over the hill and down the canyon, which was very unusual. The breeze was light, also unusual.

After a couple of hours the wind reversed and blew toward the development again, bringing the fire uphill. About 20 homes were evacuated and a crowd watched the fire as helicopters dropped water and a bomber dropped fire retardant.

Christensen recalls, "I was busy calling up block captains to get the word out. The tankers used the goat-created fuel break to tie in their retardant drops, knowing that the mitigated area would provide a good anchor point for 'catching' the fire, if necessary. Fire trucks sprayed down the area behind the homes in the development and, after about four hours, the fire was out except for mopping up, and people were able to return to their homes."

The fire had burned to within 100 feet of the goat break. The homeowner closest to the fire related to Christensen that the firemen had said "When we saw the goat firebreak, we knew we would be able to defend the homes."

In the end, that is what makes having goats in Emigration Canyon worthwhile in spite of the occasional difficulties.

How-To *thanks Kathy Christensen for the information and photos provided about Emigration Canyon, UT. For questions, e-mail Kathy Christensen at kchriste@xmission.com.*

A Plane drops retardant on a fire. The goat-created firebreak is pictured at center, between homes and the fire.

Spring 2008 — regrowth of grasses and leaves on trees

Golden Colorado – Genesee Foundation is a Good Neighbor

Genesee is situated in a wildland/urban interface zone within Golden, Colorado, and is considered an "intermix" community because there is no delineation between wildland, or natural, and urban, or individual, properties. With help from the Colorado State Forest Service, Genesee first began "thinning" open space for fire mitigation purposes as early as 1980.

Firewise was brought to the community's attention by Scott Woods of the Colorado State Forest Service, who suggested Genesee would be a good fit into what "works" in the wildland/urban interface. Because Genesee residents value their homes and their open space, the community sought to become a member of the Firewise Communities USA program in 2002.

Before becoming a Firewise community, there was no real collaboration with other neighborhoods regarding wildfire hazard or values at risk, notes Ryan Babcock, open space manager for the Genesse Foundation. Even though community members were unaware of their "pilot" community status, they wanted help in creating a sound management plan to help them continue a coordinated effort within their community.

"We learned about, applied for and were awarded an ArcView scholarship, and we continue to use this software to help us create wildfire management zones," says Babcock. "We also use the software to keep track of information on roof composition, as well as on work that has occurred to thin trees and restore Genesee's ecosystem to a more natural and sustainable condition."

Ryan Babcock speaks with Genesee homeowners.

Since becoming a Firewise community, members of the Genesee community have attended many collaborative workshops and meetings regarding communities in the wildland/urban interface. "We've learned that we're not alone in this effort, and that obstacles we've dealt with are similar to those that others face throughout the United States," says Babcock.

He adds, "Some of the solutions also have benefited us. For example, we've put information from a presentation to good use, where the presenter spoke about "boots on the ground" — a strategy that employs talking individually with residents to help them understand the environment they live in and how it relates to fire."

Additionally, over the years, the national Firewise Communities program has provided helpful information, such as guidelines for developing wildfire action plans and for creating home ignition zones, which aid Genesee residents in directly addressing issues relevant to living in the wildland/urban interface. This educational information and the levelheaded approach to mitigating wildfire is what offer the greatest benefit to the community, according to Babcock. The Foundation often uses information presented by the Firewise Communities organization to publicize its activities and do outreach to all Genesee residents.

Says Babcock, "I've noticed that this information has evolved over the last 10 years, which shows me Firewise is staying in touch with the most recent information about the wildland/urban interface. Genesee is a well-educated community and having a sound scientific basis to our fire mitigation approach helps get a clear and consistent message to our residents."

The community's Firewise status also proves helpful when Genesee annually applies for fire mitigation and ecosystem restoration grants. "Being able to say we are a member of the Firewise Communities organization helps us obtain grant dollars to complete necessary forestry work in Genesee," says Babcock.

Genesee, Colorado – Continued from page 8

These benefits also have made other communities take notice. "Since Genesee became a Firewise Communities/USA site, I've received requests from other Colorado communities to visit Genesee," says Babcock. "These informal meetings have led Genesee residents both to understand and to help address similar challenges within our state. It also has provided us additional resources to draw upon, when needed.

"Even though we aren't tied together in our activities or funding, the sharing of ideas with other communities helps us continue moving forward in making Genesee a safer and more sustainable community within the wildland/urban interface."

To reach communities beyond Genesee, the community typically presents its Firewise days during its Fourth of July parade and festival, held at the Genesee Fire Rescue open house. Information about the wildland/urban interface, property assessments and the groundwork that's been completed during year is on display, offering residents from Genesee and its neighboring communities a forum for meeting and discussing the information on an individual basis.

Adjacent communities further benefit from this synergy, as they don't have to reinvent the wheel when working on certain forested areas. Making a phone call or arranging a meeting to exchange ideas can move a process forward. What's more, combining efforts among communities has created a healthy atmosphere of competition among contractors who are capable of completing the needed forestry work. "This has helped us to thin trees in areas previously not feasible due to cost and efficiency," notes Babcock.

During its 10 years as a Firewise community, Genesee has increased its Firewise activities. The community hosts at least one chipping week per year, where residents can stack branches and even whole trees along roadsides, and these materials are chipped at no additional cost to them. The community also has increased its forest management thinning practices, since open space is a most-valued asset to the community and residents don't want to see it devastated by wildfire.

Say Babcock, in summary: "Thanks to Firewise and the supportive structure it provides, we're able to better protect our community and help our neighbors to do so as well."

***How-To** thanks Ryan Babcock, open spaces manager for the Genesee Foundation, for the information and photos.*

ARRA Grant Fulfills Dream of Veteran Firefighter

Moises Barrera, a 10-year veteran of the Larkspur (Colorado) Fire Department, had dreamed of having a fuels mitigation crew for nearly as long as he's been with the department. A fuels mitigation crew would work to reduce live and dead vegetation available to a forest fire and would be the first to respond to wildland fires that occur in the Larkspur Fire Protection District. However, although the department recognized the benefits of a mitigation crew, funding had always been a challenge.

Earlier this year, Barrera's dream became reality when the Perry Park Metropolitan District, located in the Larkspur Fire Protection District, successfully competed for an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) sub-grant through the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), awarded by the U.S. Forest Service. The ARRA grant will fund Community Wildfire Protection Program (CWPP) projects in Perry Park through September 2011 and is expected to create or retain up to 43 jobs.

This includes funding for a newly formed fuels mitigation crew to reduce vegetation in Perry Park. As a result, Barrera is now "crew boss" to the 10-person fuels mitigation crew. His workforce includes two squad bosses and eight crew members. Additionally, Keith Worley, a local forestry consultant, will set up project areas for the Metro District based on high-priority fuels mitigation needs identified in the Perry Park CWPP. Private fuels mitigation companies also will be hired to reduce the negative impacts an uncontrolled fire would cause if the fuels were not removed.

The group shares a common thread—passion for reducing wildfire risk and the satisfaction gained from a hard day's work outdoors. "It is exciting to be on a brand-new crew, to be at the root of something that has the potential to continue past the grant period," says fuels mitigation crew member Chris Gentile. "We have the chance to make a difference."

Regarding the grant, Ernie Bergamo, Firewise Committee chairman and Metro District board member, notes, "Larkspur Fire has been our partner in this project for almost 10 years now. It made sense for us to utilize this kind of program to take our community's Firewise efforts to the next level of wildfire awareness and fuels treatment."

How-To Chats with Chief Darrell Willis

In this issue of the How-To Newsletter, Darrell Willis, chief of Wildland/Emergency Preparedness at the Prescott Fire Department, discusses what prompted Prescott to become the first Firewise pilot community, what the Firewise program can offer communities, and how communities can keep the Firewise movement growing, benefiting more and more communities throughout the U.S. Darrell has spent 25 of his 33 years of fire service with the Prescott Fire Department, including 15 years as its chief. He was called back to service shortly after his retirement, asked to lead the Wildland/Emergency Preparedness Division, which he calls "his passion." He also has been a member of a National Incident Management Team for the past 10 years, as a structure protection specialist, and is currently an operations section chief with a Type 2 team in Arizona. Darrell was a founding member of the Prescott Area Wildland/Urban Interface Commission (PAWUIC), established in 1990, and is currently on the commission's Board of Directors

H-T: ***Was there a catalyst that led Prescott to take on the challenge of being the NFPA's first Firewise pilot community?***

DW: Since the inception of the PAWUIC in 1990, several agency and community leaders had identified that Prescott was at critical risk of a wildfire that could cost lives and homes. We began working and developing information for the community then. When Firewise Communities/USA® recognition came into being in 2001, it provided support and a structured program that the community could and did embrace. In 2002, the community experienced its first wildland/urban interface (WUI) fire, called the "Indian Fire." This fire consumed five homes and forced the evacuation of 2,500 people, and reinforced the need for more community involvement.

H-T: ***Given the immediate threat of wildfire in the vicinity of your community, it would seem people would embrace a program like Firewise. Were there challenges to getting started? If so, what were they and how did you address them?***

DW: Our program started slowly as our vision from the very start, in 1990, was to have the homeowners lead the effort. We felt that an agency-driven effort would lose momentum, and that proved to be true as we found that agencies providing support for neighbor-to-neighbor educational effort is better accepted than having the government forcing another program down the throats of homeowners. As an example, our five existing Firewise communities and three awaiting certification each have more stringent requirements for their homeowners than our agency version of the WUI fire code. Homeowners enforce their standards and we support their defensible space efforts by removing the cut vegetation at no cost.

H-T: ***Have neighboring communities also embraced the Firewise approach?***

DW: Firewise has grown to eight communities (subdivisions) in 10 years. When we work with homeowners, we always bring in other successful Firewise communities and let them tell their stories. It has now turned into a friendly competition, with those whose communities are not yet Firewise wanting the status their neighbors have.

H-T: ***What do you think is the greatest challenge to getting more communities and other stakeholders involved in Firewise?***

DW: The greatest challenge has been to keep selling and educating the public about Firewise practices. We now have been doing this for 20 years, 10 formally with Firewise. I personally would have liked to see more action, quicker. We have found that it takes time and not everyone is ready at the same time. It is important not to lose faith, but to continue the efforts. They will pay off in the long run.

H-T: ***What have been the most rewarding aspects of your community's adoption of Firewise practices?***

DW: The most rewarding aspect of the program is seeing what happens when the public finally catches the vision. They can take the wildfire protection program much farther, faster than we ever could have done. Where there is buy-in from the local homeowners, we have truly become a support to them while they enforce standards and get the work done.

H-T: ***What advice would you offer other communities considering Firewise for its residents?***

DW: Knowing that, today, our community is much better protected than ever from wildfire and knowing that the Firewise effort has strong community support. Also, recently, we've adopted the Ready, Set, Go! Initiative and, in meeting with all our Firewise communities, I've found that they like the idea of one comprehensive brochure that really prepares homeowners and gets to the point. The action plan that is included is a hit, with many commenting on the importance of having a plan prior to a possible evacuation. In the past, I think we have bombarded and overwhelmed our residents with too much literature. The Ready, Set, Go! Program materials allow us to keep it simple while giving the homeowners all they need to survive a wildfire.

Around the Firewise Home

Part of Good Planning Is Good Planting

Throughout the past 10 years, one of the most critical Firewise principles that we've emphasized is adopting Firewise landscaping practices. While this can and does include paying attention to your home ignition zone – your home and everything around it within 100-200 feet – it also relates to the vegetation that you have throughout your property. While it's important to keep grasses cut, to limb up trees to prevent a ladder effect for a raging fire, and to incorporate fuelbreaks, most important is knowing which types of plants are safest to have close to your home. To learn about fire-prone plants versus those that can delay or prevent fire from reaching your home, visit your state's Cooperative Extension website for a listing of appropriate plants. You also may find useful information on the Firewise Plant Lists site, at www.firewise.org/usa/fw_plantlists.htm.

Preparation in Winter Paves Way for Spring Activities

While the prospect of snow and ice in locales throughout the U.S. can put some gloom into our winter outlook, the season actually offers an excellent opportunity to get a head start on activities you'll need to tackle come spring.

Consider the following:

- By keeping trees healthy and trimmed, you can stave off excessive damage that can occur as a result of winter storms. For example, removing dead limbs that are too close to your roof can eliminate the risk of a power outage or roof damage caused by the dead wood.
- By clearing unwanted tree debris from your yard or property, you'll be able to collect kindling to fuel the fire in your home's hearth (if you have a fireplace). What's more, by trimming evergreen boughs and collecting fallen pinecones, you can be resourceful in the creation of festive holiday décor.

While doing these simple things can help make your Firewise landscape efforts more manageable when spring arrives, your outdoor labors also have more immediate benefits. For one, they can help burn the extra calories resulting from enjoying delicious holiday treats!

USAA Reaches Customers and Community through Firewise

San Antonio-based insurance and financial services provider USAA has a passion for facilitating the financial security of the men and women of the United States military and their families. Firewise principles are playing a larger role in the organization's efforts to help its customers take action to keep their properties and livelihoods safe.

USAA recently took a more community-oriented approach to wildfire loss prevention by reaching out to customers and their neighbors in and around the Firewise community, Big Bear Lake, California. The organization joined local fire authorities in sponsoring the Firewise property featured in the Sierra Club Big Bear Group's eighth annual Xeriscape Garden Tour in July.

While on the self-guided tour, visitors to the USAA-sponsored home learned how to combine drought-tolerant and native plants with defensible space to create a unique fire-wise landscape. Drawings were also held for $1,000 in gift certificates redeemable at local nurseries.

USAA's sponsorship increased awareness of the event and the organization's support of wildfire loss prevention and helped double attendance over the event's previous record.

"In our experience, wildfire loss prevention works best in a community setting, with neighbors helping neighbors," says Manny Rios, chief underwriter for USAA Property and Casualty Group. "Our goal is to demonstrate that wildfire loss mitigation is achievable, scalable, and sustainable for our customers and the communities where they live.

USAA thanks Michele Steinberg of Firewise and professionals like David Yegge, who oversees the Big Bear Lake Community Wildfire Protection Plan, for leading the way.

***How-To** thanks Jeff Cavanaugh and Michael Sherman for providing information for this story. For more information about USAA and its recommendations concerning wildfire loss prevention, visit www.usaa.com.*

Ready, Set, Go! Initiative and Firewise: How They Work Together

IAFC's Ready, Set, Go! Initiative is a program to equip residents living in areas prone to wildland fire with the knowledge and skills to adapt to living with wildfire, to evacuate safely when ordered and, if trapped, to practice learned skills to survive wildfire.

NFPA's Firewise is a program that helps save lives and property from wildfire by helping people to understand wildfire, to take action to reduce risk long before a fire starts, and to recognize that we all have a role to play in protecting ourselves and each other.

Firewise principles can help individuals and communities accomplish the "Ready" component in IAFC's Ready, Set, Go! Initiative, since Firewise provides the proven steps to empower individual homeowners to lower their property's wildfire risk and to work with their neighbors to make their community safer.

Used together, IAFC's Ready, Set, Go! and NFPA's Firewise can save lives and property by:

- Helping community members to understand the natural occurrence of wildfire and that there are things individuals can do to protect themselves and their property. Firewise communities are therefore better prepared for wildfire wherever and whenever it may occur.

- Empowering residents in the wildland/urban interface to play their part in their year-round wildfire security. These programs offer solutions to lower each homeowner's risk of wildfire and create more defensible space on their property and throughout their community.

- Encouraging homeowners, community leaders, planners, state forestry officials and firefighters to implement wildfire safety actions before a fire ever starts. Less vulnerable landscaping design, pruning trees and vegetation around buildings, and structural modifications such as installing fire-resistant roofing, can significantly reduce wildfire risk.

- Teaching residents how they can help clear a safe path for firefighters to battle wildfire and better protect life and property. A fire-resistant property makes it easier for firefighters to focus on the wildfire, not individuals and structures.

Each year, wildfires burn millions of acres, destroy hundreds of homes, and often grow faster than they can be suppressed. Ready, Set, Go! and Firewise can help homeowners play a more active role in increasing wildfire security and preventing the loss of life and property. Learn more about how to be Firewise and how to develop a personal "Ready, Set, Go!" action plan at www.firewise.org and www.iafc.org/ReadySetGo.

FIREWISE BY THE NUMBERS

Over 10 years, the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program has grown from a handful of pilot communities to more than 600! Since our Fall issue of "***How To***", 75 new communities achieved Firewise recognition status, with 132 communities joining the Firewise family to date since January 1, 2010.

Communities have been reporting on their 2010 activities all season long to maintain their active Firewise status. We expect to see the 9 active pilot communities reach their 10th year of participation, and another 160 will have been active for five years or more.
Whether your community is new or an "old-timer," being Firewise means greater awareness and safety for your home and community. The more Firewise Communities/USA sites there are, the more of you there are who will be preparing to prevent fire from reaching your homes and property.

Congratulations to all of our Firewise communities for making awareness of wildfire and the safety of your communities a top priority!

How-To Newsletter is pleased to welcome the following communities:

Arizona – Anthem, Cathedral Pines, Southview Trails Community Association, Yavapai Hills Home Owners Association
Arkansas – Bentonville, Cave Springs, Centerton, Decatur, Eudora, Gallatin, Gentry, Gravette, Greenwood, Highfill, Hilltop, Hiwasse, Leola, Little Flock, Lowell, Maysville, Nathan, Pea Ridge, Ratcliffe, Rocky Branch, Siloam Springs, Sulphur Springs, Swaha, Tulip-Princeton, Western Grove, XNA
California – Cascadel Woods, Clear Creek, Lake Almanor West, Lake Forest, Northstar, Portola Valley Ranch, Tahoe Donner Association, Willow Creek
Colorado – Elk Falls Ranch
Georgia – Mt. Pisgah/Mangum's Pride/Rain Tree POA, Spring Cove
Idaho – Central Foothills Neighborhood Association
Maryland – Loch Glade Sanctuary
Missouri – Cliff Village, Dennis Acres, Grand Falls, Leawood, Loma Linda, Redings Mill Fire Protection District, Saginaw, Shoal Creek Estates, Silver Creek (Missouri's first Firewise communities!)
Montana – Grouse Mountain HOA, Lion Mountain Homeowners Association, Wolftail Pines
Oklahoma – Big Four, Foss, Loyal, Okarche, Omega, Temple
Oregon – Crosswater, Fishhawk Lake
South Carolina – Hunters Pointe, Waterford
Tennessee – The Highlands
Washington – Bullfrog/Hanna, Cascade River Park, Edgewood Village, Storybrook, Sunny Woods, Wagon Wheel, Wilkeson
Wisconsin – Arrowhead Augusta, Arrowhead South

For additional information on the Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program, please visit www.Firewise.org. And remember, you can contact your state forest service liaison for assistance; he or she is an excellent resource for guidance in formulating your plan and offering activities that can energize your community to take part. The Firewise Web site includes this contact information as well.

To help jump start the process, you may want to download a copy of, "*A User Reference Guide to the Firewise Communities/USA® Recognition Program*" at http://www.firewise.org/files/FirewiseUserGuide.pdf or order a copy at no charge from the Firewise online catalog at http://www.firewise.org/catalog/index.htm.

Do you know of a state, region or community whose efforts deserve special recognition? Write Michele Steinberg at msteinberg@nfpa.org and share your story.

Surveying 10 Years of Firewise

A big part of the success we've seen with Firewise Communities/USA has been the ability, year in and year out, of the communities that have achieved Firewise status to keep the positive Firewise vibe going – influencing new residents to embrace Firewise principles, inspiring neighboring communities to take action and working with a variety of stakeholders while expanding upon initial efforts. In conjunction with our milestone anniversary, the NFPA public affairs office conducted an online survey about the Firewise program to gain insights about a broad range of factors, from involvement in Firewise at the local level to preferred methods of obtaining wildfire safety information.

Nearly 600 individuals responded to the survey, from among the 4,865 individuals who received the survey by e-mail. Their responses offer a window on what has allowed us (i.e., all of you who comprise our Firewise family) to succeed, as well as where we still have work to do.

For example, 67% of respondents said they lived in an area with wildfire risks, while 47% said they owned property in such an area. Eighty-four percent said they are involved in wildfire safety activities, 38% as volunteers and 46% as part of their jobs. What's more, 82% said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the Firewise program and 94% had visited the Firewise website at www.firewise.org.

These respondents represented many regions of the U.S., including the Pacific region (20%); Pacific Alaska region (16%); Rocky Mountain region and the Southeast (15%); the Great Lakes region (7%); Mid-Atlantic region (6%); the Northeast (3%); and the Central Plains region (2%). Another two percent represented regions located outside the U.S.

Respondents preferred to get their information in a variety of ways, with the vast majority (85%) using print and/or audiovisual Firewise materials. While half of respondents have not embraced the use of social media, those who use it go most to Facebook (41%), YouTube (20%) and LinkedIn (12%).

With regard to participation in Firewise activities, 47% said they are involved or very involved, while 21% are somewhat involved, 7% were thinking about becoming involved and 24% were not involved.

The aspects of Firewise that respondents claimed they enjoy most include improving firefighter safety and fire response access (74%), working with fire and forestry professionals (67%), feeling better and safer when the Firewise work gets done (54%), and getting a sense of accomplishment (49%). Additionally, 36% said they enjoyed convincing their neighbors to get involved and getting or maintaining Firewise status (36%).

Not surprisingly, the prospect of convincing neighbors to take part in Firewise activities also proved to be an aspect of the program that respondents found most challenging (64%). Also among the top challenges respondents noted was involving seasonal residents and absentee landowners in wildfire safety (51%), the cost of work and who pays for it (43%), and disagreements about the kind of work that needs to be done for wildfire safety (16%).

As we move forward with the Firewise Communities/USA program, we will seek solutions for addressing these challenges – including insights from you, the people on the ground whose experience can help inform us how we might better support your efforts. Working together, we can make the next 10 years of Firewise even more successful.

The first step you can take toward helping us do so is to either submit your community's application for Firewise recognition status or complete your renewal application. Remember, whether applying for the first time or renewing, you can complete the process by downloading an application or renewal form at www.firewise.org/usa/app_renewal.htm. For those renewing Firewise status, you also may complete the process directly online at the same URL.

Editor's Note: *If you would like to share your community's efforts or think you have an activity that could benefit other Firewise communities, please send the description of your activity and how it has helped with wildfire mitigation in your community to* ***Michele Steinberg*** *at msteinberg@nfpa.org.*

YOUTH CORNER

Youths' Inquire about Wildfire

Editor's Note: *This fall, Firewise received some interesting questions from a couple of 6th grade students working on a wildfire project. We thought we would share with you. If you know of a story or activity that the youth in your area are involved in and would like to share please send to Michele Steinberg at msteinberg@nfpa.org.*

Youth: *What are the reasons wildfires are started?*
Firewise: Wildfires can start a number of ways. Most people think of lightning as the main cause, but unfortunately a lot of wildfires start because people accidentally let fires get out of control. For example, if someone is burning a pile of trash in their backyard, embers might travel and spread to nearby grasses and trees, which could set them on fire. Or campers might enjoy a campfire but forget to put the fire out when they leave. Even worse, some people decide to set wildfires, not realizing how much they can impact an entire community. Other ways a wildfire can start can be from thunderstorms that knock power lines down and bring sparks to the ground.

Youth: *How do wildfires affect the ecosystem?*
Firewise: Sometimes, wildfires can actually be helpful for the environment. Many tree species, especially pine trees, rely on the process of fire to help them reproduce. Wildfire is also responsible for other ecological benefits: the ashes can nourish soils; and wildfire can clear a forest area of dense, dead trees and bushes –which creates areas for animals to live in. Of course, wildfires can also be very dangerous, especially to humans. They can burn homes and threaten our safety. It is important to remember the difference between wildfires that are small and helpful for the environment and wildfires that start in areas where people live and burn out of control.

Youth: *How long does it take to put the fire out with firefighters and why?*
Firewise: In order to protect houses, communities have to spend a lot of money to fight the fires, and it can be dangerous for the firefighters who are protecting homes. It is always difficult to predict how long it will take to put out a fire because a lot of factors affect the fire's behavior, such as weather, terrain, and the amount of vegetation or other fuel that is in a fire's path. For example, it is much harder to fight a fire on a dry, windy day in steep mountains with lots of trees than it would be to put out a fire on a cool, moist day with little breeze and open prairies. The more 'stuff' there is for a fire to meet in its path (branches, bushes, grasses, leaves, and trees), the stronger the wildfire will grow. This also means that if a wildfire encounters a house, it can burn the deck, fence, and the house itself. Fortunately, we have developed a program to help people learn about what they can do in their yards and with their houses to reduce the risk of a wildfire burning it down. The program is called Firewise Communities, and we encourage you to learn more from our website: www.firewise.org.

Youth: *What are the effects of wildfires on people and the environment?*
Firewise: Other impacts that wildfires can have include smoke pollution. When a wildfire burns, a lot of particulates enter into the atmosphere. This can make it difficult for people to breathe, especially those of us with asthma or hay fever.

Youth: *What impact do wildfires have on the local area?*
Firewise: In some cases, wildfires can result in polluted rivers, streams, and lakes. This usually happens when the wildfire was severe and caused a lot of trees to burn. Without the trees to hold the ground in place, soil will erode into water bodies and clog up the water channels.

Youth: *What kind of animals can't escape during a wildfire and why?*
Firewise: In many cases, animals have time to escape during a wildfire because they will run away from an area when they first smell smoke. Unfortunately, not all animals can leave the area in time if the fire moves very quickly and they have nowhere to run. For example, if a fire starts in the forest and approaches a city, a bear will have a difficult time escaping into the city!

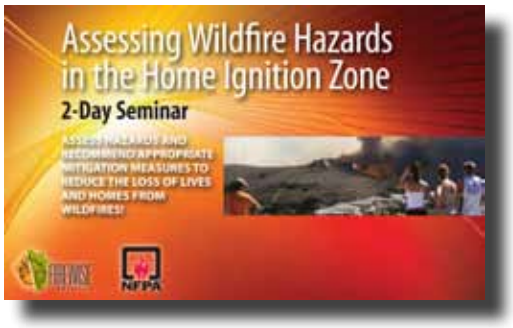
FIREWISE RESOURCES

Web Sources

To access information addressed in this issue of ***How-To Newsletter***, visit the following websites:

- MyFirewise – http://network.firewise.org
- Firewise on Twitter – http://twitter.com/firewise
- Firewise Plant Lists – www.firewise.org/usa/fw_plantlists.htm
- Access to FREE Firewise Resources – www.firewise.org/catalog/index.htm
- Firewise Course Offerings – www.firewise.org/fw_youcanuse/learningcenter/index.htm

NFPA Announces 2011 Home Ignition Zone Workshop Schedule



Wildfires are a problem in virtually every part of the US and there are many steps that can be taken to reduce losses. This 2-day seminar will help you to identify hazards and reduce risks in the home ignition zone before a wildfire starts. Research has lead to a greater understanding of how wildland fires ignite homes. By applying new knowledge of how wildland/urban interface fires occur and by using new approaches, future wildland/urban interface fire disasters can be significantly reduced.

This revised seminar incorporates NFPA 1141: *Standard for Fire Protection Infrastructure for Land Development in Suburban and Rural Areas* and NFPA 1144: *Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire*, as the basis for assessing hazards and recommending appropriate mitigation measures to reduce wildfire risks to homes, developments, communities, and subdivisions and to increase awareness among residents and communities. To register or for more information go to http://www.nfpa.org/Catalog/product.asp?pid=HIZ2 or call 1-800-344-3555 to speak to an NFPA Customer Service Representative.

Location	Date
Houston, TX	February 7 - 8
Rancho Cordova, CA	February 28 - March 1
Phoenix, AZ	April 4 - 5
Ann Arbor, MI	September 19 - 20
Hasbrouck, NJ	October 10 -11
Las Vegas, NV	November 14 - 15

On-Site Workshops

Unable to attend one of our Open Registration work-shops? This course can be taught at your facility.

For more information call Linda Coyle at 617-984-7486; email lcoyle@nfpa.org.

Engaging Fellow Firewise Friends

As you make your own efforts and engage with other like-minded communities, you will find there are many ways to go about pursuing and renewing Firewise status. A useful way to share your successes and learn from those of others is to join MyFirewise – the networking site for communities living in the wildland/urban interface. Also check www.facebook.com/firewise for more news & interaction, or follow Michele Steinberg's Firewise tweets at http://twitter.com/firewise, where you can keep abreast of all kinds of Firewise-related news and information.

Facebook Twitter

Editor: Karen Gardner
Design: Cheryl Blake

Firewise Advisor:
Michele Steinberg

Firewise® and Firewise Communities/USA® are programs and registered trademarks of the National Fire Protection Association.
Copyright © 2010 NFPA. All Rights Reserved.

This publication was produced in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior.