

FOOTHILLS OBSERVER

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A forest stewardship and wildfire mitigation newsletter for the rural landowner, provided by Fremont County Firewise

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Union Pass Receives National Recognition as a Firewise Community/USA



The wildland/urban interface community of Union Pass, near Dubois, WY has earned Firewise Communities/USA recognition by the National Firewise Communities Program due to its efforts to reduce the vulnerability of homes and landscapes to wildfire.

The community worked with Shad Cooper, the Fremont County Firewise Coordinator and Mark "Oly" Ellison, the assistant district forester for Wyoming State Forestry Division to conduct a wildfire hazard assessment and develop a plan to address safety concerns. The community then worked together to implement the plan.

"Firewise Community/USA recognition status for Union Pass is a great honor for everyone involved. Everyone's hard work has paid off" explained Shad Cooper. Other recognized Firewise Communities have been asked to speak at national conferences, have

had wildfire documentaries filmed in their communities, and have stood as an example for the rest of the nation to learn from. "The recognition status will also open many more funding resources for Union Pass to further enhance their preparedness" Cooper further explained. "It can be thought of as being similar to becoming a "Tree City/USA" but with the emphasis being on wildfire prevention and mitigation."

"It is critical that communities become equal partners with the agencies in implementing a community action plan. Without significant action by communities to mitigate hazards (i.e. homes and yards that are highly ignitable), we will continue to have significant fire disasters in the wildland urban interface regardless of the actions on federal and state lands," said Cooper.

Union Pass is the second community in Wyoming to be recognized as Firewise Communities/USA, joining many other communities nationwide that have been recognized since the program's inception in 2002.

To receive Firewise Communities/USA

recognition, Union Pass met a rigorous set of requirements. The community completed the following activities:

- Conducted vegetation and fuel mitigation at many locations in the community.
- Worked with local fire and forestry agencies to remove flammable vegetation from around their homes and neighborhood structures.
- Created and distributed questionnaires to determine public attitudes and awareness about wildfire risks and to assess the current emergency needs of community.
- Conducted numerous community meetings and open houses to explain and educate the community about the necessary steps to mitigate hazards on their properties.
- Worked with private landowners and state and federal agencies to provide a community slash pile for fuel reduction activities.

"Achieving Firewise recognition is not a quick or easy process. Union

Pass has done an outstanding job of creating a local Firewise Task Force (UPEPC) and implementing Firewise principles," said Jim Smalley, manager of the Firewise Communities program. "By preparing homes, structures, and landscapes before a wildfire occurs, Union Pass has dramatically increased the chance that homes and structures will be protected when a wildfire occurs."

Working through the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), the Wyoming State Forestry Division supports the Firewise Communities/USA recognition effort. The program is a nationwide initiative that recognizes communities for taking action to protect people and properties from the hazards of fire in the wildland/urban interface. This program is of special interest to small communities and neighborhood associations that are willing to mitigate against wildfire

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Lander Selected as Site for Statewide Firewise Workshop



A Statewide Fire Workshop Will Be held in Lander This June, 2004

“It will provide a unique opportunity for landowners to meet with public officials, landscapers, insurance agents, fire officials, and a wide variety of industry professionals who can help to mitigate the hazards in their community and on their property”

A partnership of government agencies, private companies and professional associations has selected Lander, Wyoming as the site of a statewide workshop about a growing problem in Wyoming: wildfire in residential areas. Organizers of the Firewise Communities Project say that since the 1970's more than 40,000 structures in the United States have been lost to severe wildland fire, called a “wildland/urban interface fire” when it occurs within residential areas. These fires have cost taxpayers an estimated \$25 billion to suppress and the insurance industry another \$10 billion in restitution. More than 1000 wildland firefighters have died in wildfire incidents since 1910, 24 firefighter deaths occurred in 2003 alone.

According to Shad Cooper, coordinator of the Local Community Firewise Workshop, the goal is to create community dialogues about what it takes to live wisely with fire. “We’re inviting key community leaders from around Wyoming to gather in Lander this June to discuss the situation and come to an agreement about what it takes to build a community able to withstand the almost inevitable wildfire.”

“We want to involve more than our fire specialists,” he says. “We want to put our community leaders

together—the planners, developers, architects, landscapers, public officials, insurance agents, homeowners, and the people who really decide how a community is built. That’s who we want as part of this dialogue.”

“All urban interface residents in Fremont County and the entire state should attend this workshop. It will not only provide landowners with excellent tools to protect their homes, but it will also provide a unique opportunity for landowners to meet with public officials, landscapers, insurance agents, fire officials, and a wide variety of industry professionals who can help to mitigate the hazards in their community and on their property,” said Cooper.

The Firewise Communities Workshop Series began in the fall of 1999. More than two dozen national workshops have been offered since the year 2000 and hundreds of smaller spin-off local workshops have occurred across the nation. The Workshop is scheduled for June 4th - 5th, 2004 at the Lander Best

Western Inn. People from across Wyoming have been invited to attend this event, which centers around a small-group exercise focusing on the realities of preparedness planning and successful implementation.

The Firewise Communities Project is sponsored by more than 30 organizations, including the NFPA® International, the USDA Forest Service, the National Park Service, the US Fire Administration, the American Association of Home Builders, the Institute for Business and Home Safety, and the American Red Cross.

More information, the registration form, and the workshop agenda can be found on the Fremont County Firewise website at www.fremontcountyfirewise.com or by calling Fremont County Fire at (307) 857-3030. Additional information about Firewise Workshop Series is also available on the national Firewise website at www.firewise.org/communities.



Firewise Community/USA

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by adopting and implementing programs tailored to their needs. The communities create the programs themselves with cooperative assistance from state forestry agencies and local fire staff.

Firewise Communities is a national program designed to reach beyond the fire service and involve homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, and others in the effort to protect people and

property from the risk of wildfire. The Firewise Communities program includes the Firewise Communities workshop series, Firewise Communities/USA recognition program, and support for fire organizations and community groups. The Firewise Communities program is sponsored by the Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, the National Association of State Foresters, the US Fire Administration, and the National Fire Protection Association. For more information, please visit www.fremontcountyfirewise.com or www.firewise.org.



Union Pass has been recognized nationally as a "Firewise Community/USA"

Beetles Are Killing Trees in the Union Pass Area

Beetle populations in the Union Pass foothills are beginning to increase. Scattered patches of dead trees, the result of beetle infestations are becoming visible on many hillsides. Currently the Douglas-fir beetle and mountain pine beetle infestations are of greatest concern.

Once beetle populations build-up, the beetles will often spread to green trees. Damage is greatest in dense stands of mature Douglas-fir where drought has weakened the tree's defense against the beetle.

In the Union Pass area patches of beetle infested limber pine have been increasing recently. This is cause for great concern, due to the fact that mountain pine beetle populations will commonly build-up in limber pine before spreading to lodgepole pine. Since the majority of forest land in the Union Pass area is comprised of lodgepole pine, this beetle could make

a severe impact on the area.

The life cycle of both beetles is similar. Adult beetles generally attack new trees in mid-to late-spring and overwinter in attacked trees.

Identifying the common signs and symptoms of a beetle attack is essential to controlling the insect. The signs of a beetle infestation include the following:

- Boring dust in bark crevices and on the ground immediately adjacent to the tree base.
- Evidence of woodpeckers feeding on the trunk. Patches of bark are removed and bark flakes lie on ground or snow below tree.
- Clear resin exuding from entrance holes on the stem of the tree.
- Foliage turning yellowish to reddish throughout the entire tree crown. This usually occurs 8-10 months after a successful beetle attack.
- Presence of live beetles (eggs, larvae, pupae, and/or

adults) as well as galleries under the bark. This is the most certain indicator of infestation. A hatchet for removing bark is needed to check trees properly.

- Bluestained sapwood. Check at more than one point around the tree's circumference.
- Popcorn-shaped masses of resin, called "pitch tubes" on the trunk where beetle tunneling begins. Pitch tubes may be brown or white in color.

If beetles are found on your property, you have a number of alternatives to kill the beetles before they emerge the following spring or summer and infest more trees. First, all infested trees should be identified and cut down. If these infested trees have not been killed by beetles yet, they should be within 2 years. Beetles will alert other beetles of a good host tree, subsequently more beetles will continue to infest the tree until it dies.

The infested logs can be treated by various means to kill developing beetles before they emerge in the summer as adults and infest new trees. The most effective methods are either to burn the logs which kills the larvae under the bark or to use intense solar radiation that raises temperatures to lethal levels. This can be accomplished by cutting up the infested trunk and placing it in an opening where it will receive full sun. Plastic can also be placed over the logs to raise the temperature and improve the beetle kill ratio. Chemical treatments are also an alternative. To get more information on specific chemicals and methods of treatment, contact the Wyoming State Forestry Division.

FREMONT COUNTY FIREWISE

Wildfire Safety Through Prevention & Education

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WERE ON THE WEB!

WWW.FREMONTCOUNTYFIREWISE.COM

2004 Wildland/Urban Interface Grant Received



Many different activities are planned for the 2004 grant period.

The 2004 Western States wildland Interface Grant Application for Fremont County has been reviewed by the Western States Grant Review Committee and was recommended for funding. It was then submitted to the Council of Western States Foresters for their approval. After receiving their approval the grant request was submitted to the Washington Office of the USDA Forest Service where it is currently awaiting distribution of funds.

The 2004 Grant is designed to accomplish specific program objectives which include:

- To provide community wildland fire education & prevention information
- To reduce hazardous fuels

in affected wildland/urban interface areas

- To restore fire-adapted ecosystems in affected wildland/urban interface areas
- To promote homeowner & community action in affected wildland/urban interface areas

Specific grant tasks include:

- Continuation of previous grant projects including prevention, education and mitigation projects
- Coordination of a "wildfire prevention week"
- Distribution of wildfire prevention pamphlets, various brochures, educational handouts, newsletters, informational mailings, and new property owner informational packets
- Creation of shaded fuel

breaks in affected wildland/urban interface subdivisions

- Creation of Firewise homeowners groups
- Creation of emergency evacuation plans
- Improvement of existing water sources — installation of dry hydrants and cisterns
- Improvement of road systems to accommodate fire department access
- Coordination of multi-jurisdictional hazard reduction projects

For more information about the 2004 Wildland/Urban Interface Grant, please contact the Fremont County Fire District at 857-3030.