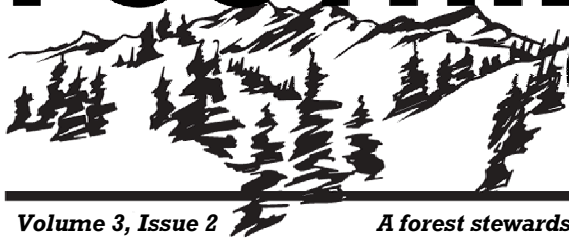


# FOOTHILLS



# OBSERVER

Volume 3, Issue 2

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

Summer 2004

## 2004 Fire Season Will Present Many Challenges



*Air Tanker Dropping Aerial Retardant*

Although the Wind River Basin is currently experiencing an unseasonably wet and cool spring, (the Basin is at 122% of average precipitation) do not let these temporary conditions give you a false sense of security. As we all know, a couple weeks of hot and dry weather can dramatically decrease this percentage and put us well below average, which has been the norm over the past few years. In fact, Wyoming is experiencing at least its fifth consecutive year of drought and the U.S. Drought Monitor lists the Wind River Basin as being in *Severe Drought*, as of May 18, 2004. Fire Forecasters are also predicting another active fire season for Wyoming

and with the grounding of the entire fleet of heavy air tankers, the job of keeping wildfires small will become much more challenging for Fire Managers.

In response to the grounding of the air tanker fleet, Governor Dave Freudenthal is supporting a plan which would pre-position Army National Guard helicopters near tinder-dry forests, with the purpose of suppressing small fires before they become disastrous. The helicopters would be used to drop water on fires and to transport firefighters and gear to the firelines. What is still unclear, is whether adequate crews will be available to man the

helicopters and whether the high cost of positioning the helicopters will be cost effective throughout the fire season.

The State Forestry Division is also looking into other alternatives to secure aerial firefighting resources in the future. Contracts with smaller single-engine air tankers that are typically used to spray agricultural crops are being considered for this season. Typically, the State contracts single-engine air tankers on an as-needed basis but this year the State is considering paying more to retain the air tanker's services in advance. These smaller air tankers have proven to be very effective in suppressing small fires, due to their pinpoint accuracy and rapid turnaround times, however their effectiveness is greatly reduced in large fire situations.

Another factor that has Fire Managers worried is a recent dramatic increase in standing dead timber due to insect and disease epidemics across the state. As a result of the drought and overcrowding within our forests, trees are highly

stressed and extremely susceptible to insects and disease. The increased fuel load resulting from large stands of insect or disease killed timber has Fire Managers concerned about the likelihood of catastrophic, large fires in these areas. In response to this increase in standing dead timber in our forests, many Land Managers are frantically working to set up salvage timber sales to remove this volatile fuel from the landscape and improve conditions for reforestation.

As the 2004 fire season approaches in Fremont County and Wyoming, many challenges are very evident, however numerous steps are being taken to prepare for an active fire season and protect the forests and open spaces which we all value.

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## **What You Can Do To Protect Your Property**



**“Simple Firewise steps can help you and your neighbors minimize your risk from wildland fire, and maximize your safety”**

During the past few years, we’ve seen hotter and more destructive wildfires. These blazes result from a mix of conditions. A build-up of fuels such as dead trees, and brush combines with drought to create a tinderbox. The wildland fires that result from these conditions is often a natural process and many wildland fires fulfill their role in nature: reducing old fuel, stimulating new plant growth, and creating healthy habitats for wildlife. Fire is often a dangerous and powerful force. But in the forests and rangelands it is a natural force and one that shapes our ecosystems and deserves our respect, understanding and attention.

Perhaps we can’t stop the hot weather and lightning storms that cause these fires, but we can do our part to reduce the amount of wildfires and protect our homes and communities when we are camping, traveling, and at home in the wildlands.

When it comes to wildland fires, human error can lead to destruction. Thousands of fires in the United States each year are caused by people. The major causes of human caused fires are from burning debris that gets out of control, improperly extinguished or unattended camp fires, sparks from the use of

equipment like chain saws or recreational vehicles, and people using fireworks in our wildlands.

Another major cause of wildland fires is the presence of human development. As we continue to build homes and live near the forests and rangelands where wildland fire is a natural event, our homes can become just another log on the fire. Worse still, sparks from chimneys, barbecues and debris burning can start the fires that consume these lands and homes we love so much. As we live and play near the wildlands, we need to work within our communities to learn how to protect what we value from the flames.

When it comes to protecting homes and communities from wildland fire, firefighters can’t do it alone; especially as more and more of us live in the urban interface. Fire prevention and protection has become everyone’s responsibility. Simple Firewise steps can help you and your neighbors minimize your risk from wildland fire, and maximize your safety.

Firewise steps may include: building homes with fire-resistant materials, especially on the roof, and removing flammable materials from

around your home. Create fire-breaks with lawns, driveways and walkways and stack firewood away from your home. Make sure your address is visible from the road and that you have a evacuation plan for your family and pets. Make your home a safe place with fire resistant plants and materials. Keep your streets and roads clear so that fire engines can easily maneuver. Make sure fire hydrants and/or water sources are visible and accessible. Most importantly, clear flammable vegetation using defensible space zones around structures, and fuel treatment on large lots and along roadsides. These simple prevention measures can go a long way toward reducing damages from a fire to your home and community. Improve your odds by doing these Firewise steps before fire season begins in your community.

For more information, our website is full of useful tips that can help you and your loved ones steer clear of fire danger. Please visit us at [www.fremontcountyfirewise.com](http://www.fremontcountyfirewise.com) today and see what you can do.



## Recognition Ceremony & Annual Firewise Day

Because of residents efforts to reduce the vulnerability of their homes and landscapes to wildfire, Union Pass has recently earned Firewise Communities / USA recognition by the National Firewise Communities Program. As part of this honor, a formal recognition ceremony will take place on July 10, 2004 at 1:00 PM at the Line Shack, 448 Union Pass Rd. Prizes, signs and other items related to the recognition will be accepted by members of the Union Pass Emergency Preparedness Council (UPEPC).

Residents from all around Union Pass are highly encouraged to attend the recognition ceremony. Various representatives

from the media will be present and the UPEPC would especially like to recognize everyone who has supported and been involved with the Firewise program.

Preceding the recognition ceremony, we will also be hosting the annual "Firewise Day" beginning at 10:00 AM. Several fire prevention related activities are planned, including the private screening of 'Keeper of the Flame' a new movie which tells the story of fire and how fire policy changed dramatically during the 20th Century and how fire is now being re-introduced across the American landscape. The film culminates by detailing the impact of development in the

wildland/urban interface and the changing terrain of fire ecology. Wildland fire officials from the USFS, BLM, Wyoming State Forestry, Fremont County Fire, Fremont County Firewise, and the Dubois Fire Department have all agreed to attend the "Firewise Day" and provide various demonstrations and activities related to wildland fire as well.

The Line Shack has agreed to provide a BBQ and refreshments for a minimal price so bring the whole family and make a day of it. For more information, please contact Shad Cooper with Fremont County Firewise at 307-857-3030.



### UPEPC ANNUAL FIREWISE DAY

**DATE:**

July 10, 2004

**TIME:**

10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**LOCATION:**

The Line Shack  
448 Union Pass Rd.

## Student Conservation Association Comes to Fremont County

For 47 years, resource managers across the U.S. have relied upon the Student Conservation Association, Inc. (SCA) to provide them with dedicated conservation interns and volunteers. These motivated stewards have skillfully augmented the efforts of both public



agencies and private organizations in preserving some of our most popular natural and cultural treasures.

This summer the Bureau of Indian Affairs — Wind River Agency has obtained the services of a seasonal crew from the SCA. Fremont County Firewise will be cooperating with the BIA, BLM, and USFS to provide educational opportunities for the SCA interns who will be working in and around Fremont County.

The SCA crew will be working on numerous projects including:

- Fire Hazard Assessments
- Mapping Information Collection
- Demonstration Site Construction

Nationally, the SCA recruits and fields college students and other young adults for positions ranging from three months to one year. Projects can range from traditional resource management projects to restoration, GIS and computer-related work, wildlife research, environmental education and interpretation and visitor center staffing.



*"Changing lives through service to nature"*

# FREMONT COUNTY FIREWISE

Wildfire Safety Through Prevention & Education

Fremont County Firewise  
305 South Smith Road  
Riverton, WY 82501

WERE ON THE WEB!

WWW.FREMONTCOUNTYFIREWISE.COM

## 2004 Wyoming Firewise Communities Workshop



**DATE:**

June 4th 12:00 - 5:00 PM

June 5th 8:00 - 5:00 PM

**LOCATION:**

Best Western

The Inn at Lander

260 Grand View Drive

Lander, WY 82520

The 2004 Wyoming Firewise Communities Workshop is scheduled for June 4th - 5th in Lander, WY at the Best Western Inn.

Participants from all across Wyoming representing several diverse backgrounds including county officials, planners, developers, architects, builders, landowners, emergency managers, and fire officials have already registered to attend.

Landowners from around Fremont County are especially encouraged to attend this workshop. It will provide a unique

opportunity for landowners to talk with everyone involved in building a community and come to a solution about how to fix the problems associated with the wildland urban interface.

The goals of the Firewise Workshop are:

- To improve wildfire safety in Wyoming's urban communities
- To create and nurture local partnerships for improved decisions in communities
- To encourage the integration of Firewise concepts into community planning

Several prominent national

and state wildfire experts are scheduled to speak at the workshop, including keynote speaker Ronald Montague, a Firewise Communities National Management Team member, and Wyoming State Forester, Bill Crapser, who will brief participants on current forest conditions and wildfire threats in Wyoming.

For more information or if you wish to register to attend, please visit [fremontcountyfirewise.com](http://fremontcountyfirewise.com) or call us at 307-857-3030.

We look forward to seeing you there!