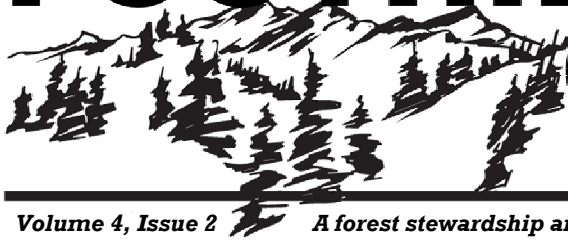


FOOTHILLS



OBSERVER

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

Summer 2005

What is the WUI and Why Should You Care?



Wildland/Urban Interface is a term that is widely used in the fire world, but what does it really mean? Is it a geographical area that can be easily defined on a map? Is my property in it? These are questions that many people may not know the answers to.

The actual term Wildland/Urban Interface or "WUI" was coined in the 1960's by a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. The term did not really gain popularity until after the fire season of 1985. In 1985, over 1400 homes were burned during wildfires in California, Florida, and other states. These homes were shown on the nightly news across the country and suddenly the term "WUI" was thrust to the forefront of people's minds. Since then it has been widely used and has generally been put into the public's vocabulary.

But still, what is the WUI? The WUI is not a geographical area and cannot be easily defined on a map. It is more of a set of conditions that sometimes occurs when homes are built outside of urban areas. The WUI can be defined as a house that has the potential to be damaged or destroyed by a nearby wildfire. There are more technical terms such as occluded, intermixed, and others that further define the WUI, but for the most part this definition works. This does not mean that your home has to be surrounded by a forest. Many homes are at risk from wildfire and do not even border wildlands. Large fires can spew burning embers long distances, these embers can ignite and burn homes, given the right conditions.

So the question now is, who in Fremont County is at risk and why should we care? The best way to decide if

you are at risk is to take a tour of your property with a critical eye. Do you feel comfortable that your home would survive a wildfire event even if nobody was there to try and protect it? If you don't then you should take steps to make your property more fire safe. Many of these steps are small and inexpensive, but in the event of a wildfire they can be the difference between your property being a black moonscape and being what it was when you left.

But I don't need to change anything, I can just call 911 and the fire department will save my house right? Wrong. In rural areas such as Fremont County, the fire response will most likely be volunteer and will have to travel a significant distance to reach your property. Don't get me wrong, these volunteers are committed, extremely professional, and more than capable when it comes to fire protection, but the fact remains that they are not being paid to sit at the fire hall and wait for your call. These factors add precious minutes to the response time. This is time that you may not have. This is why you should care.

More than likely, your

home is not the only value that you get from your land. Your actions prior to a fire event can not only protect your home, but your trees, your shrubs, your soil, your water, your view, your investment, and your community. Call and get an estimate for your property and then ask them what your house would be worth if all of the trees, shrubs, and other plants were dead and black. This is why you should care.

Ecologically, fires can be of great benefit, but Mother Nature runs on a different time scale than we do. Are you willing to wait fifty years, or more, before your trees regenerate to anything near what they are today? If not, I would recommend looking into fuel reduction projects and other measures to help protect your home, your property, and your community from the real risk of wildfire.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WRFC Goes Non-Profit	2
SCA Comes to Town	2
U.P. Water Tank Update	3
Bugs and Crud	3
Wildfire Meeting	4

WRFPC Gains Non-Profit Status

The Wind River Fire Prevention Council is a multi-agency council that aims at minimizing losses due to wildfire in Fremont County. Recently the council met and one of the topics discussed was achieving non-profit status. Until now, the council was operating as a loose knit group and funding projects came from the different partners. It was decided that the council should move forward towards non-profit.

The council has since become formally incorporated as non-profit and has already received funding that was previously unavailable to them. This extra funding will allow the council to

become much more effective in getting the fire prevention word out and doing different projects.

You may have seen some of the council's work. The hunting billboards in Dubois and Cody, as well as a new sign located north of Riverton, were all produced by the WRFPC. They have also had an award winning booth at the Winter Fair for the past couple of years. Pile and debris burning brochures have also been distributed throughout the county and the council is bringing the "Smokey the Bear" balloon to the Riverton Rendezvous in July. Future projects that are being looked at include different fuel mitigation and education efforts.

The council is made up of representatives from the BIA, BLM, USFS, Fremont County Fire Protection District, Wyoming State Forestry Division, and Fremont County Firewise. For more information call 307-857-3030.



SCA Comes to Town

The yellow shirts are back in Fremont County! This summer another team of interns from the Student Conservation Association is headed back to Wind River Country for the second year. The team of five people



from Arkansas, Iowa, New York, and Texas are a part of the SCA Fire Education Corps and will begin working June 8 with the WRFPC.

The primary goal this summer is to complete assessments of homes on the reservation. At each location, they will evaluate factors of importance to a fire crew responding to fire in the area, such as shingle type, slope of land, number of structures and whether each is inhabited, vegetation thickness, and what access is available to fire vehicles. This information, along with the fire number, will be entered into a GIS to provide fire crews more detailed information about the structures

in a fire area.

The SCAs will also be working on a variety of projects coordinated by the BLM and by Fremont County Firewise. These will include fuels reduction projects, litter-clean up, public awareness days and clearing up fuel management areas.

The SCA is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing a meaningful conservation service experience to students while providing cost-effective assistance to the nation's major national, state and local land agencies.

Alison Cox

Wind River Project Leader

U.P. Water Tank Project Moves Forward

The Union Pass water tank project has taken another step closer to being completed. Recently, a meeting was held with the property owner, the County Fire Warden, and Fremont County Firewise to discuss the project.

With the changing of the Firewise coordinator and the Dubois Fire hall project, the water tanks seem to have been placed on the back burner. Now that the coordinator position has been filled, the project is being looked at and worked on again.

Currently, funding is the main key to achieving success with this ongoing

project. The plans have already been produced and the schematics are complete for the project. The tanks need to be officially decommissioned and prepared for burial. The site needs to be prepared and the tanks then need to be hauled to the site and installed.

Ed Calvert, who owns the property that will contain the tanks was extremely helpful and has agreed to donate the land in order to get the tanks in the ground. Without Ed's generosity, the project would have to find an alternate site.

A local contractor who initially bid on the project is

willing to take a closer look at the project in order to try and get the cost to a level where the tanks can be installed. Alternate means of funding is also being pursued in order to get the project moving forward.

Fremont County Firewise has met with the USDA Rural Development manager to discuss different types of funding. The outlook is good for funding and the hope is to get the tanks in the ground as soon as possible.

For more information on the subject feel free to contact Jeff Swanson at 307-857-3030



Donated 12,000 gallon tanks

“Without Ed’s generosity, the project would have to find an alternate site.”

“Bugs and Crud”

A closer look at insects and diseases that may affect your trees

White trunk rot *Phellinus tremulae*

Hosts: Found only on living aspen

Identification: In standing trees look for hoof-shaped conks on the lower portion of the tree. This is the most reliable sign of a diseased tree. The conks are dark brown to black on the upper surface with many small cracks, and light brown on the lower pore surface. The interior of the conks is dark brown with numerous white flecks. Conks are perennial: new layers of pores form on the lower surface each year; thus the interior of old conks appears layered.

The decay causes a yellowish white spongy, sweet smelling decay that is generally confined to the central core of the stem and is surrounded by black zone lines. Although the absence of conks does not necessarily mean the absence of decay, several small conks or a few large conks usually indicate advanced decay.

Management: No direct control is known, but loss can be minimized by harvesting aspen stands before decay becomes advanced. In many parts of the Lake States, aspen stands begin to deteriorate rapidly when they reach 50 to 60 years of age. Consider potential hidden decay along with visible decay when planning harvesting schedules. The volume of wood affected by hidden decay can be equal to the volume of decay in trees with disease signs. Harvest damaged stands (fire, wind, ice, etc.) early. Trees in such stands are especially susceptible to white trunk rot. Manage aspen to achieve uniform well stocked stands in which natural pruning will reduce the number and size of potential infection sites.

(Taken from a USFS “How to” publication and “Insects and Diseases of Woody Plants” a CSU cooperative publication)



White Trunk Rot *Phellinus tremulae* conk.

FREMONT COUNTY FIREWISE

Wildfire Safety Through Prevention & Education

Fremont County Firewise
305 South Smith Road
Riverton, WY 82501



July 9th 2005. Riverton, Wyoming. Visit www.fremontcountyfirewise.com to register.

Wildfire Community Meeting

It seems like last month the entire county was burning up, just ask Fort Washakie residents. But with the recent spring snow and rain it appears that the fire danger has declined. A little rain causes everyone to think that the drought is over and the fire danger is gone, but is it? Come out and hear what Wyoming's top experts think is going to happen this summer.

Firewise has assembled some of the top professionals in the state and the nation to try and get a good look at what lies ahead. Presenters include the BLM, USFS, Wyoming State Forestry Division, National Weather Service, Fremont County Fire Protection District,

and the National Park Service. These presenters will look at current and predicted fuel conditions, predicted weather patterns, and fire suppression capacity and techniques.

After the presentations we will be showing the NOVA Documentary "Fire Wars". This is an excellent movie that follows an elite group of hotshots through an active fire season. "Fire Wars" gives a perspective on firefighting that most of the public is not familiar with.

This is an excellent resource for educators as well. Many different tools are used in conjunction with the movie to try and educate our youth about wildfires.

Refreshments will be provided and there is no cost to attend the event. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. on June 25th at the Headwaters Convention Center in Dubois. It is recommended that you register by calling 307-857-3030 or via e-mail at fremontfirewise@wyoming.com to ensure that there are enough refreshments to go around. Everyone is invited, and firemen, educators, area residents, hunters, fishermen, and all other outdoor enthusiasts are encouraged to attend. More information can be found at :

www.fremontcountyfirewise.com