

FOOTHILLS OBSERVER

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

Fall 2008

Fremont County Residents Beat Fire Season



The Homestead Park Community Slash pile has been growing larger every year. Here it is burned last winter.

Kudos to the residents of Fremont County! The fire season has all but passed and even though the danger is still there, it appears that we dodged the bullet this year. Thanks in part to your responsible use of campfires, outdoor activities, and burning practices.

Fremont County was also blessed by Mother Nature this year. We had a nice wet spring and that was followed by the usual summer thunderstorms, but this year most of the thunderstorms were accom-

panied by enough rainfall to extinguish most ignitions.

This fortune of having avoided the fires is overshadowed however by the ever-increasing beetle epidemic that is sweeping across the county. There have been new beetle hits from Towgotee Pass to South Pass, and everywhere in between, this year and the populations appear to still be increasing. Certain areas have been decimated while others are just starting to see

signs of infestation. Areas that had been hit a couple years ago are suddenly being hit again and the beetles are attacking smaller and smaller trees.

It was once widely accepted that trees needed to be 8 inches in diameter or larger for beetles to attack, but this year trees with a diameter of only 5 inches have been seen with active infestations.

Fremont County Residents are not going down without a fight as evidenced by the amount of preventative spray that has been applied and the amount of beetle infested trees that have been removed. Many residents are also staying on top of the overwhelming tree removal that is needed following a large beetle infestation. This will help prevent that huge wildfire that is bound to rear its ugly head in the next few years as the beetle killed trees continue to increase in number

across the forest.

Now is a very important time to try and protect our private lands from being decimated by a large fire. It is extremely important to remove the red needled trees in a timely manner and to encourage your neighbors to do the same. Cooperation is how we are going to get past this beetle mess.

In the mean time, take a big sigh of relief and give yourself a pat on the back for making it through a summer without a major wildfire. But after you're done, sharpen your chainsaw and continue to clean up our private forest lands. If yours is already cleaned-up, see if your neighbor needs a hand.

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Beetles Are Still Here!



The bark beetles are no bigger than a grain of rice.

Articles like this probably seem overly redundant, but they remain extremely relevant. Bark Beetles are still wreaking havoc on the trees of Fremont County.

A few years ago, the main threat was to the Douglas-fir due to the Douglas-fir beetle. Then the mountain pine beetle began to increase in population. Now the mountain pine beetle (mpb) is the major threat to mature trees in most of the county's subdivisions.

If you have a property in Fremont County that contains pine trees and they have not been effected by mpb, you are either extremely lucky or you have been effected and just don't know it. The beetles have devastated the mature lodgepole in the Union Pass area, killed the majority of the mature limber pines in the Upper Little Warm Springs area, and are rapidly moving into Homestead Park and South pass.

The most important thing that a landowner can do to try and

combat the tiny beetles is to be educated about their lifecycle and know what to look for. By knowing how they live and what the signs of a successful attack look like, you can begin to take steps to save the non-infested trees.

The mpb has a one year life cycle. The mature beetles emerge from the trees in the spring and early summer and begin to search for new trees. Once they find new host trees, they burrow just under the bark and lay their eggs which over-winter there and then complete the cycle when they emerge the following year.

The tell-tale sign to look for are the "pitch-tubes". These are the popcorn-like masses of sap, or pitch, that accumulates around the entry hole of the mature beetles. They can occur anywhere on the main stem and large branches, but they are often found on the bottom few feet of the trunk. If you find multiple pitch-tubes on your tree, it WILL DIE. There is no remedy to remove the beetles and larvae from the tree and keep it living.

It is very important to note that the tree will remain green, often for several years, following a successful beetle attack. Once the tree turns red, the live beetles have already exited the tree and there is no further action required to combat the beetles. These trees remain a

fire and health hazard and should be removed, but the beetles are long gone.

Please monitor your trees or contact someone to go and look for you if you are an absentee landowner. The beetles are now everywhere in Fremont County, from the Upper Wind Area to South Pass . If you want to learn more about what to look for, contact Fremont County Firewise or the USFS or State Forestry offices.



Infested trees need to be removed while live beetles are inside!

Join Us at the National Firewise Conference



On the heels of an already challenging 2008 wildfire season, several of the world's leading wildfire experts will meet in Florida to discuss key wildfire issues and best practices to help homeowners and communities prepare for wildfires. The National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Program will host its third biennial Fire Education Conference, Backyards and Beyond, November 6-8, 2008, in Tampa, Florida.

The Backyards and Beyond conference offers a great opportunity to learn from those who work and live in the wildland/urban interface, including residents and experts who work with Firewise principles

on a daily basis. The Firewise Communities approach emphasizes community responsibility in planning and designing safe communities; individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping, and maintenance; and effective emergency response. The conference also provides an opportunity to network with people from communities all over the United States, as well as representatives from Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, and more.

"The Backyards and Beyond conference continues to grow as an invaluable opportunity for anyone who is impacted by the threat of wildfire," said Jim Smalley, National Firewise Communities Program Manager. "For everyone in attendance, the 'Backyards & Beyond' conference offers a unique perspective— not only from well-known experts on the issue, but also the residents and community leaders who have real-life experience with Firewise on the ground."

Residents, community leaders, planners, builders, landscape architects and designers, insurance professionals, and others will be joined at the conference by fire and emergency managers, sharing information and techniques for protecting people, property, and resources from fire in the wildland/urban interface.

The conference will also include the announcement of the national 2008 Firewise Leadership Award winners. For the third year, the Leadership Awards will be presented to individuals and organizations working to promote a cooperative Firewise approach. The second national conference held in November 2006 in Denver, Colorado, saw nearly 500 participants from a wide variety of professions and backgrounds.

Visit http://www.firewise.org/fw_youcanuse/conference/08/index.htm for registration materials and conference updates as they become available.

County Firewise Still has Money

With the looming crisis on Wall Street and the hundreds of billions of dollars being spent to bailout huge banks, funding for other programs has to be cut to help pay the tab.

Government land agencies are seeing their budgets slashed each and every year while the workload continues to grow.

The National Fire Plan was enacted by Congress in 2000 to help reduce the amount of damage to private property from large wildfires. This is

currently where Fremont County Firewise receives 100% of its funding.

The Plan was slated to provide funding through 2010, after which it may or may not be renewed.

Fremont County Firewise has applied for grant funds in each of the past few years and we have been lucky enough to receive this funding. We currently have the funds to continue our reimbursement program and to help the residents of Fremont County prepare for

wildfires.

Of course nobody can tell what the future may hold so lets get some large community projects implemented while the funding is still here.

If you have any ideas for your community or you just want to clean up your property, contact Fremont Firewise at 307-857-3030 and we can discuss your ideas.



FREMONT COUNTY FIREWISE

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WERE ON THE WEB!

WWW.FREMONTCOUNTYFIREWISE.COM

**Your house is not the only thing at risk
during a wildfire.**

**Firefighter Fatalities Related to Wildland Firefighting
(1998-2008)** Source: U.S. Fire Administration

