

FOOTHILLS OBSERVER

Volume 9, Issue 3

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

Late Fall
2011



Union Pass— Warm Springs Subdivision

Fuel Treatments Are Protection

The summer of 2011 has come and gone now, and will be remembered as a fairly non-eventful year in the wildland urban interface (WUI) here in Fremont County. The one exception, as residents will tell you, was the Warm Springs Fire in Dubois.

But, ask folks in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico and you will be told just how devastating the year has been. Hundreds of families in this region of the United States have lost everything they owned, some even being injured.

One of the largest fires was the Wallow Fire that started May 29th near Alpine, Arizona. This fire would not be extin-

guished until it had consumed 538,049 acres, 73 structures, and burned through several communities. A fire foot print this size is nearly 30 square miles.

What began to happen on June 3rd was what fire managers and homeowners fear most, a running crown fire coming right at the community of Alpine. The fire was moving fast and showering embers out in front nearly one mile away.

As the main fire entered a 1/2 mile wide fuel treatment unit on the outskirts of town, the blaze dropped from the tree tops, back down to the surface of the ground. The

fire's rate of spread dramatically slowed, and flame lengths were low enough to allow firefighters to safely attack the fire and protect homes and property.

With firefighting forces now allowed to engage the blaze, numerous spot fires were extinguished, and the spread of the fire was halted at the edge of the community.

Due to very solid Firewise practices, and the forest fuel treatments, only ONE structure was lost here in Alpine.

Fire managers emphasize that the community of Alpine survived because of prior fuel treatments, and Firewise construction and landscaping recommendations which were followed closely by homeowners. There is no question that these two things allowed the firefighters to safely and aggressively fight the fire.

What I would like Fremont County Residents to understand is what was accomplished by Alpine and other communities that allowed this fire protection to happen. Posted on the Fremont County Firewise website is the full article about the Wallow Fire, and it illustrates the fuel treatments that created the decreased fire behavior.

For the past decade, Fremont County residents in certain areas have worked hard to develop this protection for their properties, and should be commended for doing so. But, it is just the start of the work which needs done.

I would like to challenge each of you to become involved, and ask Firewise for guidance and assistance to make it happen.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Planning for the Future	2
Shorter Funding	3
Observer Delivery	4

Planning for the Future

Wood Care for the Home



Sealed Protection

Protection of your investments can come at all different expenses. But don't let things be added expenses, there sometimes are other ways.

As I traveled the county the past few months, one of the things that I repeatedly discovered was property owners who were or needing to refinish decks and outdoor living areas. This is a big issue when evaluating the fire risk for a property—what is the type and condition of deck.

It is a known fact that, along with proper enclosing, regular maintenance of all wooden constructed materials will increase the fire "hardening" or resistance of your structures. Every few years it is necessary to re-seal the wood surfaces of decks to preserve aesthetic appeal and prevent deterioration of the materials.

Many new products seem to have really exploded on the market in recent years which you could use to do a better job of deck preservation. Any type of oiling or staining is better than none at all, this is definitely true when it pertains to fire protection. But now, the manufactures are providing the consumer with sealing products which can specifically add to fire protection for your property, and do so by means of regular product care.

As with any product, if it promises to do something more than normal, it probably is going to cost a little more. This is true with these types of sealers and paints, but not much.

I do recommend that a property owner do some leg work as to the specific brand and type to use. I am sure there

are really good products, and some that maybe just average. The professionals at your local lumber yard or home center would be better advisors of this, and can help you pick the right product for your application.

Realizing it is now winter, why not start early to prepare for next year's care on your place, and make a Firewise difference while doing so. If you have painting and sealing plans before you, why not grasp the chance to do more for the protection of your possessions.

**WE ALL HAVE
A ROLE!**

**Wildfire
Survival**

**It Takes a
Community**

What Starts Fires?

The NFPA Journal, October 2011, printed an article of the totals of fire types and causes during a five year period, 2004 thru 2008. The portion of the report on vegetation fires, and what caused the fire to start is not what most would guess.

The number one cause of wildland fire is not lightening. When speaking of things that start fires, most folks feel this is the most common cause, and it is absolutely that last.

In almost two-thirds of wildland fires, the first item ignited was some type of light vegetation, including grass, leaves, needles, chaff, mulch, and compost.

The summarized data in the report shows the leading causes to be:

1. Intentional (Arson or debris burning) 20% of the time
2. Hot embers or ashes 17 %
3. Garbage burning 15%
4. High Wind issues 13%
5. Smoking materials 12%
6. Playing with a heat source 6%
7. Fireworks 5 %
8. Electrical Power lines 4%
9. Lightening 4 %

Important to notice, 6 of 9 are human caused directly.



Lightening is not #1

Tid Bit— Something to Ponder

I have noticed some things this summer and fall that I think is worth a mention.

I observed an early summer beetle flight that that was not as large as in the past, don't get me wrong, there were still lots of beetles.

The second thing, is that the trees are doing something they are supposed to, but have not been doing for several years. In the Dubois area, some trees are sapping out a small portion of the bee-

tle attack from this years flight. In the Lander area, I have not seen this happening. In other words, the tree sap has pushed the beetle out, and that beetle did not infest the tree. See the picture to the right, the black spots are beetles.

The last two wet springs have provided some much need moisture to the trees which have increased the tree health.

This by no means is the end of the epidemic, but is a positive sign that things could improve.



Examples of Pitch Tubes with Beetles - Sap Outs

Caution Advised Using Mulches

As an area that sometimes does not have much for mulch or debris build up naturally (Usually due to our climate), it is important to remember that mulch is a fine fire starting fuel that comes in various forms.

In Fremont County, there is an abundance of dead beetle killed trees which landowners are looking for ways to dispose of. One popular way of

removing the branches, after cutting the tree for other wood uses, is to use a chipper. This chipping produces a very usable chip product that is great for landscaping and the environment both.

Chips as mulch must be used with care however. Placing these chips back against and next to our homes and structures is NOT a good Firewise practice. These are fine fuels,

which are very easily ignited by a heat source.

Place these material several feet away from the structure to prevent igniting the structure if the chips catch fire. Using the chips around the property for mulching other landscape is a very sensible use.



Funding Short in 2012

Over the past few years, Fremont County has been fortunate to receive grant monies to accomplish several different projects. Not to mention just having the funds to provide cost share assistance to area property owners.

As everyone already knows, things are tight at all with law makers and leaders struggling to balance budgets dur-

ing tough economic times.

This situation is trickling down to affect our program here locally by reducing already short grant funding.

A larger fuel treatment project will still be planned for the Homestead Park Subdivision, similar to the Union Pass Project in 2010, however, funding for this work was denied because of the lack of

funds.

Managers at the state and federal level are optimistic that funding will be in place, and maybe slightly more in the future, but not until sometime in 2013 or 2014.

During the 2012 summer, cost share funding will also be substantially less than recent years. I would encourage owners to plan projects early



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

Foothills Observer Delivery



Electronic Mail

Last edition I asked for folks to send in email addresses if interested in receiving this news letter electronically. Response to my asking that question has suggested to me that this will be the best method.

Therefore, this will be the last issue that is to be mass mailed. From now on, to get a copy by U.S. Postal Service mail, you need to specifically ASK for it.

I understand that some folks don't have the means to get email, or just do not want to receive mailings of this nature. This is fine, a postal service mailed copy can still be sent to you.

But, send me a note by email

with the address you wish to receive it at.

So, in summary, the ways to receive this publication are in this order:

- 1) By personal email
- 2) By referring to the website FREMONTCOUNTY-FIREWISE.COM
- 3) Or, by USPS mail

The website will have the current issue posted to it, and it also contains all the past issues for reference.