

Overcoming Common Barriers to Action

Adapted from - Montezuma County Chapter of FireWise of Southwest Colorado
<http://www.southwestcoloradofires.org>

Assessing A Neighbor Or Friends Level Of Readiness

Homeowners will not activate unless they are first aware that there is a threat of wildfire with associated risks to their person and property, and those risks exist to them and within their neighborhood/area.

Once Homeowners recognize wildfire as a problem, raise awareness that there is something that they as individuals and members of their neighborhood/community, can do to minimize those risks and be more prepared for wildfire. Give concrete ideas, but not necessarily details, about the kinds of actions they can take as homeowners, such as creating defensible space, having an evacuation plan, improving their access, reducing the ignitability of their home and other structures, etc. Help them set achievable goals.

Homeowners who understand that there may be a risk to them, will probably want to know more about what their specific risks are. This is an opportunity to help the homeowner find out what they can do on their individual property, and to begin dropping hints about how mitigation on their property would affect their neighbors and to start seeking out landscape scale projects that would benefit the whole community. Find out what you can do for them. Also, general inferences about an area based on a few home visits can garner community-specific information that will be useful in conveying to other members of the community the specific risks associated with the community, such as access, unhealthy ecosystem conditions, lack of water resources, specific topography, etc.

Once homeowners begin taking action on their property, they will certainly recognize that the problem extends beyond their property lines, and this will be a good time to get their ideas and get them engaged in community scale projects. Neighborhood level meetings can be held at this stage to do community scale planning and projects.

Motivation

Denial: I don't think it is a problem where I live. It couldn't happen to me. It could never happen here.

- Refer individuals to the County CWPPs
- Review specific risks, fire history and fire ecology –
 - Gambel Oak management <http://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/06311.pdf>
 - Ponderosa Pine- http://www.firescience.gov/projects/05-s-03/project/05-s-03_final_report.pdf
 - Piñon/Juniper management- http://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/120866_PinonJuniperGuide_www.pdf
 -
- Leverage the concept of - “it's not if, but when”

Irresponsibility: It's not my job or responsibility, Firefighters are supposed to protect my home from wildfire.

- “When residential development is exposed to extreme wildfire conditions, numerous houses can ignite and burn simultaneously, overwhelming firefighters and reducing fire protection effectiveness.” This means “the most important person in protecting a house from wildfire is NOT a firefighter, but the property owner.”
- Firefighters focus their efforts on properties that are mitigated for their personal safety and because the

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probability of saving properly mitigated properties is greatly increased relative to unmitigated areas. Ask any fire fighter if they would rather defend a home with an adequate safety zone and escape route or with trees leaning over the drive and house.

- University of Nevada Fire Adapted Communities: It takes a community - <http://www.livingwithfire.info/it-takes-a-community>
- Landowning Colorado Style - https://csfs.colostate.edu/media/sites/22/2015/03/landowning_guide.pdf

Insurance: That's why I have insurance.

- [UHhelp home inventory app](#)
- Insurance cannot replace everything and insurance is often inadequate to cover replacement needs.
- Check your policy because some require rebuilding on the same site.
- "Colorado Fires a Reminder..." Insurance <http://www.iii.org/press-release/colorado-fires-a-reminder-that-wildfires-pose-threats-to-life-and-property-well-beyond-california-091510>
- Be proactive. Within 10 years, lenders will likely be requiring mitigation and performing inspections prior to sale. Lenders like you do not want to see their investment go up in smoke.

Futility: What difference can I make? The problem is tremendous.

- Proper mitigation cannot guarantee that your property will not suffer damage; however, it will reduce the risk of property damage. http://www.cameronpark.org/fire_pdfs/public_pdf/Defensible%20Space%20Works.pdf
Small actions can have large results. Complete a Site Hazard Assessment and you will be surprised. A great assessment form can be found at <https://disastersafety.org/wildfire/wildfire-checklist/>
- Work from the house out, beginning inside with evacuation preparedness. Eat the elephant one bite at a time or share it by working with your neighbors

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Click on the image to watch a video of the Black Forest Fire.

Environment: It will be bad for the environment to cut down trees.

- Pondo and P/J Forest before and after photos, w/ wildlife and forest floor returned to healthy state with mitigation.



- Forests in Colorado are unhealthy – Fire once played a very important role helping to keep diseases, insects and overcrowding in check. Fire has been excluded and the forests are out of balance. Well-planned and executed projects can restore the forest to a more healthy condition which is good for the ecology of the area.
- FireWise brochure Part 1, “Fires Natural Role” and Part 5, “Increasing your Property Value” - <http://www.southwestcoloradofires.org/library/firewise-sw-colorado/>
- Mitigation helps remaining trees because competition for water is reduced. Conifers use pitch to fight against beetle infestation and water is necessary for the tree to produce pitch.

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Aesthetics: It won't look good, if all the trees were gone, I wouldn't want to live here anyway.

- A burnt forest is not very aesthetically pleasing.
- Some insurance policies will only cover to rebuild on same property. Check your policy.
- You can mitigate to protect the forest as well. Well-spaced trees and tree clumps that are limbed should minimize crown fire activity, and eliminate total fire loss and look park like.
- Property owners often comment after work is completed that they can see more wildlife, and the flowers are amazing. Forest management activities can be aligned with the aesthetic needs of an owner.
- Highlight demonstration areas that you can show property owners.



Discomfort: There are snakes and poison ivy out there, I can't do the work. Besides, it's too hot.

- Mitigate before or after fire season when temperatures are cooler, such as April or May or later, such as October or November.
Review "Getting the Work Done, Part 3" - <http://www.southwestcoloradofires.org/library/firewise-sw-colorado/>
- Lead by example and partner as a neighborhood when possible. The larger the project, the better price you should be able to secure.
- Review "Getting the Work Done, Part 3" - <http://www.southwestcoloradofires.org/library/firewise-sw-colorado/>
- Mitigation contractors can do the work -
<https://csfs.colostate.edu/media/sites/22/2015/03/Choosingaforestrycontractor.pdf>
- Review "Getting the Work Done, Part 3" - <http://www.southwestcoloradofires.org/library/firewise-sw-colorado/>

Absentee: I don't want to work on my vacation. I'm not even around for you to tell me that there is a problem. I'm not from here and don't know enough about wildfires to be concerned. In June of 2016 approximately 40,000 acres were burned in the area.

- Always include seasonal and second landowners in any mailings and invite them to participate. It must first be understood that there is an issue.
- When absentee landowners are in the area, have local "Champions" engage them.
- For Market homes, use FireWise brochure Part 5, "Increasing your property value" -
<http://www.southwestcoloradofires.org/library/firewise-sw-colorado/increasing-your-property-value/>

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- Set an example and focus on the rest of the neighborhood first. This may provide a sense of insecurity about their lack of action.
- Seek opportunities to help whatever financial or time barriers they present once they understand the issue. Leverage the year-round homeowner's match to grants, to include work to be done on absentee owners' property, or host work parties to help them get work done. Anything to show that you want to support them, rather than just have them deal with what the rest of the neighborhood sees as a problem, will help them take ownership of their property and fire mitigation work.
- Don't expect absentee owners to be among the first to take action in your neighborhood. They may come around to recognizing the need more slowly, as they are not regularly presented by the concern.

Means

Cost: I don't have the money.

- How can you afford to do nothing when doing nothing could mean you will lose everything?
- There are simple, inexpensive steps you can take to make your home more fire resistant. Start with the low hanging fruit such as screening porches; maintaining roof free of debris; lean, clean, and green around the home; having a to-go-bag and evacuation plan for your family; have a site assessment to determine the highest priorities for your energy
- Numerous funding opportunities are available to reduce the financial burden. To learn more visit - <http://csfs.colostate.edu/funding-assistance/>
- State of Colorado tax deduction – <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/Income65.pdf>

Time: I don't have the time.

- There are mitigation contractors who can do the work (Information on hiring a contractor located above)
- Eat the elephant one bite at a time or get more done as a group and participate in a neighborhood work party.

Knowledge: I don't know what needs to happen or where to start.

- Complete a Site Hazard Assessment
- Have a Forester from the Colorado State Forest Service visit your property - <http://csfs.colostate.edu/districts/canon-city-district/>
- Landowner's Guide to Thinning - http://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/landowner_g4thin_scr.pdf

Slash Disposal: I don't have a way to get rid of the slash and debris from any work that I do.

- Hire a contractor to complete the work
- Numerous methods to manage slash are available – Review CMAT Toolbox for more information.
- Lop and scatter in zone 3 - Landowner's Guide to Thinning, http://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/landowner_g4thin_scr.pdf

Physically Unable: I can't physically do the defensible space work that needs to be done.

- Hire a contractor
- Seek service groups looking for projects – Often Church organizations, Scout groups and non-profits provide

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volunteer resources.

- Neighborhood work parties may be able help. Host a work party – when the work is completed have a potluck event to celebrate the accomplishments.
- Wildfire crosses boundaries – work should as well.
- Working together can create a greater sense of community. Much like the barn raisings of old, numerous people must come together to work towards the common goal of more resilient and safer communities.



Maintenance: A lower risk home will be harder or more expensive to maintain.

- Using drought tolerant and native vegetation can be fire resistant and non-combustible materials adjacent to the house are often maintenance free.
<http://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/natres/06303.pdf>
- You may have to mow, rake, and clean up a little
- Think of the work as mowing the lawn – it does not take too much time, but will make the property look great.



Opportunity

Illegal (covenants): I can't cut trees down in my subdivision without permission. I don't know when I can cut because there is a protected bird that breeds here.

- Often covenants were created when fire was not seen as an issue. The times have changed - Work with your Home Owners Association or community to see what can be done to update these rules.
- Work with partners to address endangered species concerns.

Rent: I rent this property and my landlord won't do anything about it. I don't know if I am allowed to do anything about it. Besides, why should I, it's not my house.

- Owners and renters alike must understand the risk.
- If a renter is able to do the work it will benefit everyone. Consider incentives, such as cost share programs that could help reduce the cost.

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- The cost of mitigation can be prohibitive. If a renter wants to complete fire mitigation work consider giving a rent discount, or paying them.

Small Lot: Even if I cleaned up everything on my land, it won't make a difference unless neighbor Joe does something. Our property is too small to make a difference.

- Small actions, such as working to reduce fire vulnerabilities to the structure, can make a difference.
- Others will follow if you set a good example.
- Forest health can be improved by fuels mitigation.
- If the house is particularly close to hazardous fuels (including structures), share your concerns with that neighbor. Alternatively, consider adding fire resistant treatments to the affected area of the house.
- Firefighters focus their efforts upon properties that are mitigated for their personal safety and because the probability of saving properly mitigated properties is greatly increased relative to unmitigated areas.
- Small lots completed can lead to large areas of reduced risk. Often when one owner completes work others see the outcome and want their property to look as good.

Foreclosure: The banks aren't going to do anything unless it affects their liability or the marketability of the home.

- Most banks aren't aware that there is a problem. Make them aware if a foreclosure home they own is in your neighborhood. Contact the owner bank and share your concerns.
- Don't assume that because it is a bank, they won't want to participate in neighborhood grants or cost-share opportunities.
- Be sure to include the potential increase in the home value and marketability of the home in your discussion with them.