

Firewise Council of Southwest Colorado
Meeting Notes
July 28, 2009

Present: **Pam Wilson** (Firewise Neighborhood Ambassador Program Director), **JT Coyne** (Vista de Oro), **Les Kole** (Deer Valley Estates), **Bob Koenig** (Mesa Vista Estates), **Patricia Haupt** (Durango Ridge Ranch), **Bill Vaughn** (Shenandoah HOA), **Jack Cannon** (Enchanted Forest), **Cherry Miloe and Anne Schrier** (Forest Lakes), **Gary Rottman** (Shenandoah Highlands), **Archie Hanson, Curt Mangan, and Russ Sweezey** (Indian Camp Ranch), **Jon Callendar** (Kernan Creek Ranch), **Greg Kemp and Paul Ruati** (Cedar Mesa Estates), **Ken Kurz** (Rock Ridge), **Laurel Lee** (CR232), **Rebecca Whitehead** (Mont, Cty. Resident), **Tom Engle** (La Posta), **Robert Manning** (Rafter J) **Craig Goodell** (San Juan Public Lands), **Ben Cordova** (LPEA), **Kevin Heiner** (Southwest Conservation Corps), **Dave Abercrombie** (DFRA), **Dave Cluff** (Montezuma County), **Mike Kane** (M&M Enterprises), **Christina Schmidt** (Archuleta County Chapter Coordinator), **Alexander Hinkle and Jesse Thompson** (Mastiff Enterprises) and **Brandon Montag** (State Farm Insurance)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Pam Wilson and everyone introduced themselves.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Steering Committee Change: Pam gave Ben Cordova of LPEA a framed Certificate of Appreciation for his contributions to the Steering Committee and the Education Committee. Ben will be stepping down from both committees due to time constraints; however, he will remain part of the Council for which we are very grateful. His seat on the Steering Committee will not be filled since we are bringing on the two new Chapter Coordinators.

We are looking for a volunteer to take over chairing the Education Committee. Time commitment is 2-3 meetings a year and helping to organize some educational activities/events. If interested, please let Pam know.

Montezuma County Chapter: It's official!!! The 45-day comment period ended with no comments and the Montezuma County Commissioners gave their formal blessing, and funds, to establish a Firewise Chapter in Montezuma County. The job announcement closes on July 31st and if all goes well Pam hopes to hire a coordinator in early August.

La Plata County Fire Code: Pam asked if anyone had questions on the summary she had sent out from the Commissioner's meeting. Dave A. mentioned that the Adoption and Revision Code group (which includes fire chiefs) will be meeting on Aug. 14. Since a lot of work had already been done they hope to have a final product within a couple months. We'll try to get Chief Noonan or Fire Marshall Tom Kaufmann to a future meeting to give us an update.

Grant Deadlines:

CSFS grant is due to Kent Grant by Aug. 7, 2009.

BLM Community Assistance Grant: Just opened. Application deadline is **Aug. 17, 2009**. Pam will send the letter out to ambassadors. It is not available to individual homeowners but is available to a group of homeowners proposing a treatment that will protect several homes or treat common area. These grants require a 10% match by the applicant.

IMPORTANT FOLLOW-UP NOTE FROM CRAIG GOODELL ON THESE GRANTS:

At the Firewise Council meeting last week, I explained how the grants could be used and that they were not for private individuals to use for their own land, however, the money could be used by communities or HOAs on private lands for the good of the community.

Unfortunately, I did not let everyone know about the process of applying for and receiving one of these grants. In order to receive a BLM Community Assistance Grant, the entity or group applying for the grant must have a tax ID number, be registered with Dunn and Bradstreet and have a DUNNS number, be registered with the Central Contractors Registration and have a CCR number and be signed up in ASAP, Automated Standard Application for Payments. If your HOA or community organization already has a tax ID number then the rest of this process, while daunting, can be accomplished. Another option is to work with organizations that are already prepared and familiar with this process to act as an agent or clearinghouse for your grant, such as the Southwest Conservation Corps.

Fire Council mini grant fund: Still money available. We've requested a 6-month extension on this money (originally needed to be obligated or spent by Sept.). There are **NO** matching funds required – just a simple 2-page application, however it can only be used for mailings, copying, CWPP development, and other tasks that lead up to mitigation occurring. It can't be used for mitigation. Contact Pam for an application.

Heart Safe La Plata: JT mentioned that Heart Safe is giving away 2 AED machines with training, and he thought it might be good for a couple of our subdivisions, especially those that are more than 20 minutes from a fire station. If interested, you must submit a letter explaining why your subdivision should be the recipient NLT 4 Aug. Contact JT at coynejt@gobrainstorm.net or 247-7971 for more info.

Ambassador Joy Mathis asked Pam to share a DVD – The Golden Hour of Rescue – that she helped produce and JT Coyne starred in – that shows the values of the AED. The 20-minute film depicts a “thought to be” healthy woman having a cardiac event and follows her story from CPR/AED resuscitation through hospital cardiac intervention and rehab. You may view the movie on the Durango Community Access TV web site, <http://www.dcat.tv/promovideos.php> or purchase it through DCAT 970-259-2802 WWW.DCAT.TV. Many thanks to Joy for sharing information on this important topic with us even though she couldn't be here tonight.

FIREWISE COMMUNITIES USA:

Pam encouraged ambassadors to think about nominating their subdivision for Firewise Community status under the national Firewise organization as many of the subdivisions are close to or already meeting the requirements. The five requirements are:

- Form a Firewise Board
- Invest at least \$2/capita in Firewise projects (and state and federal grants can count)
- Complete a community assessment and create a plan (doesn't appear to have to be a CWPP as long as it's a plan that identifies agreed-upon achievable solutions to be implemented by the community)
- Hold a Firewise Day

- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities that documents continuing compliance with the program

Status is good for one year, then you must reapply. The Firewise site (www.firewise.org) has the application, volunteer sign-in and timesheets, promotional materials, signs, etc. for your use. Applications would go to Kent Grant, CSFS, who would certify that you are meeting the above requirements. There is no requirement that a percentage of homes be mitigated.

LET'S PUT SOUTHWEST COLORADO ON THE MAP!!!

ROUND ROBIN:

JT Coyne – Vista de Oro

- Working with Fort Lewis Mesa FPD to get a new fire station
- HOA put in 20,000-gallon water storage tank (repainted, buried, and plumbed for fire hose)

Craig Goodell – BLM/FS

- Craig stressed that fire season is here. Colorado is starting to see some larger fires in the Montrose, Grand Junction, and Rangely areas. Precipitation has been scattered.
- Public lands have had a couple dozen fires (lightning starts) in the last two weeks.
- It's a good time to urge your neighbors to cut tall grasses around the house and especially around decks, propane tanks, firewood piles and other flammables.

Les Kole – Deer Valley Estates

- POA has put in two 10,000-gallon underground storage tanks, plumbed for fire hose
- Working w/county on street signage. Trying to mark empty lots also.
- CWPP in final stages. Will present to HOA on 8/1.
- Received \$12,000 WUI Grant from CSFS. Will use for mitigation in neighborhood.

Jon Callendar – Kernan Creek Ranch (Mont. Cty.)

- HOA meeting coming up soon where he will stress defensible space/mitigation needs.
- Mentioned that Montezuma County is considering a revision to their land use code (Jon is on the Planning Commission)

Archie Hanson, Curt Mangan, Russ Sweezey – Indian Camp Ranch (Mont. Cty.)

- Subdivision has 1200 acres, 35-ac. minimum home sites, 19 homes
- Maintaining Web site
- Working on getting all homeowners to carry fire extinguishers in cars
- Have removed over 5,000 trees in last couple years

Ben Cordova – LPEA

- LPEA maintains over 3,000 miles of overhead lines. This includes removing brush and trees from that might interfere in line operations.

- If you have trees leaning towards your power lines, call LPEA. They can help trim or remove the trees.

Jack Cannon – Enchanted Forest

- 78 lots, 54 homes, 2 new being built
- Have received help from LPEA trimming trees
- HOA meeting coming up in August
- Doing some work on covenants –said he’s discovered that the county only records the covenants, but that it’s the State Attorney General’s Office that has responsibility regarding enforcement

** Jon Callendar suggested www.hindmansanchez.com for answers regarding covenants. Jon said it’s the best site he has found for HOA and covenant information.

Christina Schmidt – Archuleta County Chapter Coordinator

- Will have a booth at the Arch. County Fair this weekend. She’ll be there Friday promoting the Ambassador Program. If anyone could spare a couple hours to go over and help call Kristina at 731-4799.
- Meeting with the transfer station on Wed. to discuss the slash issue and see what they can do to help.
- County sent 300 letter to Arboles residents regarding mitigation and the Ambassador Program. No volunteers yet.
- Engines have been doing Red Zone inventory

Patricia Haupt – Durango Ridge Ranch

- 20 homes in subdivision
- Encouraging addressing for all homes. Would also like to do vacant lots if possible.
- Redoing covenants and by-laws
- Has started CWPP process. Had Craig and Kent out today looking at properties
- Six mitigation projects have happened in last 2 weeks, 3 earlier this spring
- Finished 2010 CSFS grant – involves 11 homes and 1 property owner

Note on **reflective address signs** – with many insurance companies these signs are becoming an eligibility requirement – meaning if you don’t have a sign, you may not get insurance. Some emergency responders now have GPS units and/or computers in vehicles, but it was pointed out that it is often volunteer responders that are first on scene and their vehicles don’t have this equipment. Campaign in Bayfield after young boy died because emergency responders could not locate his residence – *“We can’t help you, if we can’t find you.”*

In La Plata County – the reflective white on blue address signs are free (for now) and may be obtained at the Courthouse – in a room next to the Planning Dept. If your address is 3 numbers or less the signs can be either vertical or horizontal. The signs should be put on a post at the end of your driveway and kept cleared during the winter.

In Montezuma County – code actually specifies how high the signposts must be. The County has been conducting a readdressing program for a couple years. All roads now have reflective road address signs.

Getting address signs put up is a great, inexpensive task that homeowners can accomplish that not only prepares them for wildfire season, but also for any kind of emergency response. It's a win-win situation for everyone.

Ken Kurz – Rock Ridge

- Subdivision is within city limits
- Has hosted one homeowner meeting, but only got four attendees
- Ken finished mitigation work on his property. The city removed 40 yards of slash from his property free of charge this spring.

Bob Koenig – Mesa Vista Estates

- Mitigation is happening slowly but surely on some of his neighbor's property. Not much interest in group projects.

Anne Schrier and Cherry Miloe – Forest Lakes

- Subdivision has 900 homes and 1900 residents
- 1 way in, 2 ways out
- Received a \$40,000 WUI grant last year from CSFS – it went to 41 participants; 31 residents and 10 property owners.
- Did bulk mailing to over 1000 people in April to discuss mitigation and the available mitigation money
- CWPP in process. May do another one this fall.
- Working on reflective addressing, especially for the empty lots.

Mike Kane – M&M Enterprises

- Mitigation business is definitely slowing down.
- Has heard of many crews being laid off with companies around the state.
- Mike has put on just one crew of four this year instead of two.

Paul Ruatti and Greg Kemp – Cedar Mesa Ranches (Mont. Cty.)

- Paul just inherited the Fire and Weeds program from the previous ambassador.
- Subdivision has 139 properties
- Only 2 properties with no address signs. Way to go Cedar Mesa!!
- HOA has a tank and sprayer on ATV and homeowners assist with lightning fires.

Bob Manning – Rafter J

- Mitigation happening, but it's one house at a time

Bill Vaughn – Shenandoah

- Homes in pretty good shape in terms of mitigation
- Their program focuses mostly on education and awareness
- Have bulletin board and blog
- HOA meeting coming up
- Recently collected emergency contact information and that raised awareness more than some of the education efforts as people thought about pets and special-needs folks

Tom Engle – Rancho Durango (CR 213 near La Posta)

- Just getting started

Linda Schwinhammer – Rafter J

- Just getting started

Kevin Heiner – Southwest Conservation Corps

- Crews just completed 600 man hours of thinning at Forest Lakes
- Getting ready to start some hand thinning on FS land near Tripp Creek – will be a 10-week project

Gary Rottman – Shenandoah Highlands

Has about 40 homes, no common ground

Have good street signs but no reflective markers

Kent Grant – Colorado State Forest Service

- Two WUI grants awarded for 2009 – one to Durango West 2 for development of a CWPP and one to Deer Valley Estates for mitigation work.
- Also, was notified by State Office of some leftover monies from a couple years ago. Kent was able to get that to Edgemont Ranch (they had applied for WUI grants for the last 2 years and not received anything).
- Should have at least 4 CWPPs completed in 2009 (Durango West 1, Vista de Oro, Deer Valley Estates, and Falls Creek Ranch). Others working on CWPPs include: Durango West 2, Forest Lakes, Durango Ridge Ranch, and Timberline Oaks.
- Also looking at doing the possibility of some shaded fuel breaks on State land near Cedar Mesa Ranches and a couple other locations – similar to what they did adjacent to Forest Lakes
- Several bills regarding mitigation currently in the state legislature. Kent has heard from Ellen Roberts that she would like to discuss these with folks at some point.
- Governor's Healthy Forest meeting last month in Grand Junction. Folks are very concerned about the viability of the state's remaining timber mills. If you have a large amount of property to be cleared you might consider getting it commercially removed.

Joy Mathis (in absentia) – Tripp Creek

- Recently completed update of Emergency Contact info. She's willing to share format if anyone is interested.
- At upcoming HOA meeting, Joy will share letter highlighting Fire Council and Ambassador program and will include survey of accomplishments. Will also discuss mitigation of private property and common areas. Focusing on getting part-time residents to maintain their property.
- Working on uniform house numbers.
- Looking forward to mitigation project on FS lands that adjoin the subdivision. May have guest speaker give update on progress at HOA meeting.

WHEW!! Lots of great work going on across Southwest Colorado. Thanks everyone for the hard work and the reports! But we're not done yet – there was one more speaker.

Brandon Montag from Denise Elliot's State Farm Office in Durango.

On the Front Range, 22% of premium goes to catastrophic claims (mostly hail damage)

On the western slope, just 2.5% of premium goes to cat. claims

Insurance companies no longer use ISO ratings. State Farm's eligibility requirements include:

- Reflective address sign
- Working telephone
- Spark arrestor on your chimney
- Working fire extinguisher

If you are more than 10 road miles from a fire station your policy automatically goes to an underwriter.

The #1 claim in La Plata County is frozen pipes. Brandon said the next discount that State Farm is likely to offer will be for an automatic shut-off valve on your water.

Brandon stressed checking your Coverage A amounts – this is your replacement cost, but you must make sure it keeps up with the cost of rebuilding in your community.

Re-insurance – every couple years companies will do a random selection by zip code and will then inspect those homes for needed mitigation work. They will look primarily at whether you have trimmed your ladder fuels and if your deck is enclosed (if less than 3 feet high). Will also be looking to make sure you don't have combustibles stored under your deck or near your home. Would probably issue letter of warning first, but they might not re-insure you if the situation was not rectified.

He felt that across the insurance industry they are tightening up standards.

Mentioned you might be liable if you actually start the fire. Must prove negligence to prove liability – document concerns you might have with neighbors. Carry good limits on your liability.

Brandon also suggested that you carry higher deductibles on your homeowners insurance. Most homeowners only submit a claim once every 33 years – you could save thousands of dollars over time with a higher deductible.

Fire mitigation is important but you need to understand how it plays into the big picture.

Brandon offered a free insurance check-up to anyone, regardless of whom you are insured with. He can be reached at 247-4060..

Alex Hinkle and Jesse Thompson from Mastiff Enterprises handed out their brochure. In addition to mitigation work, they also offer fence and deck construction, snow removal, and more. They can be reached at mastiffenterprises@gmail.com or 749-0464. This information is FYI only. It is not an endorsement by Firewise of their services. If you choose to engage their services you should ask the same questions that you would of any other contractor and decide if they are right for you.

Next meeting will be held on September 22nd. This will be our annual picnic. We're looking at holding it at Junction Creek Group Picnic Ground and touring some mitigation work on adjacent Forest Service lands. More details to come!!