

**Park County Wildfire Coalition
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COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN 2015 UPDATE



INTRODUCTION

In April of 2005, the Park County Board of Commissioners passed resolution #2005-12 to establish the Park County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Coalition. Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are authorized by the Federal Healthy Forests Restoration Act, signed into law effective December 3, 2003. The purpose of the Coalition is to prepare and implement the Park County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

Mission Statement

The mission of the Park County Community Wildfire Protection Plan is to identify potential wildfire hazards, to prioritize those hazards as they relate to public safety and community values, and to develop activities and objectives to reduce wildfire risk in the highest priority areas.

This document is an update on the original plan that was finished in 2007. The 2007 plan is available on Park County's website.

The 2015 update contains:

- Updated goals and objectives, with a focus on collaboration and treatments.
- Information about treatments homeowners can do to lower structural ignitability. A full wildfire mitigation guide for homeowners is available on the Park County website.
- Information on broad changes in wildfire risk in the county based on the use of The Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) Self-Assessment tool.
- Reporting on progress towards the 2007 goals and objectives, with particular focus on priority areas identified in the 2007 plan.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Wildfire risk will always be an issue in Park County. As more devastating fires burn in Colorado, the question is not if a forest or grassland will burn, it is when and where. Everyone who lives or works in a wildland-urban interface (where development meets natural areas) must assume they are at risk of being affected by wildfire and plan accordingly. Protection of your home and property is not up to the fire department or the government; wildfire mitigation is your responsibility. Understanding how to live with fire and be resilient as a community is critical for

safely living in a fire-adapted area. Resilience, defined as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, is only achieved through collaborative preparation. The best defense against wildfire is proactively working together to collectively protect as many properties as possible before a wildfire.

2015 PLAN UPDATE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Information about progress towards goals and objectives will be added to this document as the following goals and objectives are met, with completion dates noted.

Goal 1

Improve understanding of wildfire resilience countywide through the use of Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) tools.

Objectives

1. Key organizations participate in the FAC Self-Assessment.
2. Fire chiefs understand the strengths and weaknesses of each Park County fire district.
3. Collaborate with State Parks and Wildlife areas in creating a mitigation plan.

Goal 2

Prioritize wildfire mitigation work that will benefit communities in Park County fire districts.

Objectives

1. Each fire district specifies three wildfire mitigation projects that would benefit their community (excluding home mitigation projects).
2. Projects are well thought-out, described, and organized using a tiered system:
 - Tier one projects are small projects that would take less than \$10,000 to implement.
 - Tier two projects are larger projects that would be easily implemented once funding became available.
 - Tier three projects are also larger projects that would be easily implemented once funding became available.
 - Develop long range strategies to obtain funding for priority projects.

Goal 3

Collaborate to understand and prepare to mitigate wildfire and post-wildfire impacts in Park County.

Objectives

1. Bring representatives from key organization together to do a multi-agency tabletop mapping exercise exploring floods after fire.
2. Create an ambitious drainage-wide mitigation plan.

Goal 4

Empower homeowners to take responsibility for wildfire mitigation on their property.

Objective

1. Create a 'how-to' guide for homeowners about treatments homeowners can do to lower structural ignitability.

REPORT ON 2007 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES PROGRESS

The following pages provide an update on progress toward the goals and objectives outlined in the 2007 CWPP. Goals, objectives, and priority information from the 2007 CWPP document are shown in *bold italics*. Progress towards these goals, objectives, and priorities is outlined below each goal and priority area.

Planning and Collaboration

Goal:

Create a "living" flexible document that incorporates a multi-agency approach to planning.

Specific objectives

1. ***Review the CWPP every two years and make changes as needed through consensus building process within the coalition.***
2. ***Evaluate the identified priority list at a minimum of every five years, to ensure currency.***
3. ***Conduct quarterly meetings to monitor changing circumstances and review progress.***

The specific objectives under the above goal were not practical given the time constraints and scheduling conflicts of participants. The following have been accomplished under this goal:

- The living document was created.
- While quarterly meetings were found impractical due to busy schedules, a line item was added to the Emergency Services Council's monthly meetings to discuss issues related to the plan.

Goal:

Promote and develop materials and programs in prevention and education that improve community wildfire awareness and safety.

Specific objectives

1. ***Develop an initial assessment of subdivision risk to catastrophic wildfire and preparedness for wildfire. Present the assessment to the residents of Park County through this CWPP.***
2. ***Within three months of plan approval, create a link to the Park County website providing public access to coalition progress, and information for developing local community wildfire protection plans in their own neighborhood.***
3. ***Within three months of plan approval, distribute copies of the CWPP and reference materials to all libraries, post offices, and Fire Protection Districts.***

- 4. Promote development of local subdivision or neighborhood CWP's by attending association meetings and public workshops as requested.*
- 5. Provide information to individuals and homeowners associations for creating defensible space and reducing the susceptibility of structures to wildfire by identifying websites and other sources in this document.*

All of the objectives under the above goal were completed. The document for the plan has become too large and cumbersome, so a separate 'how to' document for homeowners will also be created as part of the 2015 update to address objective 5.

Fuels Reduction

Goal:

Facilitate appropriate hazardous fuel reduction by illustrating the areas of greatest wildfire hazard and developing the highest priorities for fuels abatement treatments

Specific objectives

- 1. Develop an initial countywide assessment of wildfire hazard on both public and private lands, and display that assessment in this document.*
- 2. Provide a list, of the three highest priority areas within Park County, to public land managers to focus their fuel treatment projects. Display those priorities in this document.*
- 3. Reevaluate those priorities, at least every 5 years, or as project planning and implementation are completed on public lands.*
- 4. Provide support, through the coalition, to create cooperative efforts across jurisdictional or ownership boundaries on an ongoing basis as requested.*
- 5. Work with county and other entities to improve slash disposal opportunities for private landowners.*

Changes to the objectives and progress towards completing the objectives under this goal include:

- State lands and wildlife areas were not included in the countywide assessment but will be covered through the FAC Self-Assessment tools used in 2015.
- Priority areas within Park County have been changed to include areas from every fire district.
- Slash sites are continually being created. There is concern now that the northwest slash site has closed.

Priority One: Bailey Area

The Bailey area is the largest area of high risk, in that it contains the largest population and amount of development in Park County. This area is located within, and adjacent to, heavily forested lands with a high fire occurrence history, including several large fires. The region has high values at risk, generally high fuels risk, and a high ignition risk. Large acreages of

National Forest lands are also located here.

Currently, the Platte Canyon Fire Protection District and the Elk Creek Fire Protection District are both working on mitigation efforts through wildfire protection plans already developed in that area. Platte Canyon Fire Protection District completed their Wildfire-Risk Assessment in July 2003. The district was divided into 20 communities with risk assessments assigned. Three were designated as extreme, four as high, twelve as moderate, and one as low. In addition, evacuation routes for many of the areas were identified. The Behave Fire Behavior Prediction and Fuel Modeling System were utilized to help determine the wildfire hazard for the study.

The 20 communities in the Bailey area were rated as follows:

- Three rated extreme areas: Deer Creek Valley Rancho's, Hidden Valley, and Harris Park
- Four rated high: Bailey Mt, Royal Ridge, Horseshoe Park, Roland Valley, and Woodside (also in Jefferson County)
- Twelve rated moderate: KZ ranch, Burland, DCV Ranches, Singleton Estates, Shawnee, Ravenswood, Elk Creek Highlands, Belford Mountain Heights, Friendship Ranch, Bailey and /Bailey estates
- One rated low: Mill Iron D

Four evacuation routes were identified as follows:

- Hidden Valley/CO 43: Vigilante Road to Spirit Lake Road in Woodside. This can be an evacuation route from CO 43 all the way to Harris Park, as well as from Mt Evans Blvd. in Woodside out to CO 43. This evacuation route serves the most home and is of the highest priority.
Minimal work has been done since 2007 to make this route more usable.
- Mill Iron D Estates/CO 43: the old 2-track at the end of Derringer Court (gated) to Hwy 285 by Smokey. This evacuation route is a high priority.
Minimal work has been done since 2007 to make this route more usable.
- Singleton Estates: Sculy Place west through Long Meadow Ranch via the 2 track out to Hwy 285. Fewer homes are in this area.
Minimal work has been done since 2007 to make this route more usable
- The fourth evacuation route suggested was defeated by the new 285 bridge.

In 2004, in response to the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, members of the South Platte Ranger District and the Colorado State Forest Service partnered with the Platte Canyon FPD to develop the CWPP for that fire district. From this, the 285 Conifer-Bailey Fuels Management Initiative was started, which is an extension of the Platte Canyon CWPP.

Work in the Platte Canyon FPD has included a partnership with Colorado State Forest Service to obtain grant monies to support mitigation efforts in the district adjacent to the Pike National Forest. This includes the hiring of additional personnel to contract with local homeowners to cut and thin the forest area on private lands, as well as coordinating a chipping program to remove the slash that all homeowners in the district have accumulated for removal.

The Platte Canyon FPD received a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on November 7, 2012 for mitigation work adjacent to the Pike National Forest in Deer Creek Valley Ranch. Work under the grant started in April 2013 and will extend through December 2015. In 2013 and 2014, between six and ten crewmembers worked on a mitigation crew addressing well over 100 Deer Creek Valley Ranch properties. Slash resulting from mitigation projects was fly chipped on individual properties. In addition, 9 days were available for residents to contribute their slash to a community slash pile. This pile was barrel chipped and hauled away for a cost of \$16,000. All work was performed under contract using Park Count grant money, with no cost to homeowners.

The U.S. Forest Service has done the following work in the Bailey area since the 2007 CWPP was written:

- Thinned about 1,150 acres using mechanized and hand thinning with product removal, mastication, and fuelwood sales. Different silvicultural prescriptions were used and all of the trees with diameters smaller than 8 inches were generally removed.
- Piling of thinned material on about 210 acres
- 60 acres of slash piles burned to date, with approximately 150 acres more scheduled for spring 2015

Future efforts planned are working with the Firewise Communities program to promote the continuation of mitigation efforts within the various Home Owners Associations (HOAs). This will transfer the ownership of much of the mitigation efforts to the HOAs. For more information on the Bailey area, please refer to Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Platte Canyon Fire Protection District.

The Dozier Ranch, Woodside and Deer Creek Valley Ranch communities have become Firewise Communities since the 2007 CWPP was written.

75% of planned mitigation has been completed in Deer Creek Valley, although a fuel break has not been created between Woodside and Deer Creek Valley Ranch.

Priority Two: Lake George Area

The general Lake George – Lower Tarryall Road area is the second highest priority identified. This area includes large tracts of National Forest lands, and significant population and development. The adjacent area in Teller County has been rated as the second highest priority area in the Teller County CWPP. Most of the development is in forested locations. Development is growing at an increasing rate. Fuel hazards are generally moderate to high. Ignition risk is high, historical fire occurrence is very high, primarily due to the extensive lightning, but human caused occurrence is increasing. The South Platte River, above the Hayman fire, is one of the few segments left of the River that has not been burned over. The South Platte River and associated recreation is critical to the local community, and a major water supply for the Front Range.

Currently, the US Forest Service is implementing two large fuels mitigation projects, Sledgehammer (which covers the area south of the river and north of County Road 98), and Rocky Messenger – Howard (which covers the area north of the river and south of County Roads 90 and 92, and east of Cty. Rd. 62) as well as smaller projects around Wagon Tongue, Beaver and Echo subdivisions.

The U.S. Forest Service has done the following work in the Bailey area since the 2007 CWPP was written:

- Thinned about 4,125 acres, removing all boles greater than 12 inches and 75% of those in the 5-12 inch size range using long and short-term stewardship contracts, public fuelwood, and mastication.
- Piling of thinned material on about 4,123 acres, with those piles burned
- Crushing/roller chopping 115 acres worth of slash
- Broadcast burning on about 6,200 acres

Priority Three: Guffey - South Eastern Park County

This area is characterized by moderate to high fuel hazards with high fire risk and occurrence. Forested cover is not as continuous as in the other two priority zones, but can be extensive. This area has been one of the driest areas of the County over the past several years. There have been several moderate sized fires in this general area, including the largest all private land wildfire. Population is increasing rapidly, as it is in the adjacent portions of Fremont and Teller Counties.

There has been no work done on the National Forest within the priority 3 zone.

The Bureau of Land Management reports a CWPP for the Guffey and Northern Fremont area are complete.

This plan has been reviewed and approved by all fire protection districts, Colorado State Forest Service, Office of Emergency Management, and CUSP, as indicated by the following signatures:

Gene Stanley, OEM Park County

Jay Hutcheson, Chief Hartsel FPD

Dutch Kliennesselink, Chief Lake George FPD

Kristy Olme, Chief North West FPD

Aaron Mandel, Chief Southern Park County FPD

Mark Wesseldine, Chief Platte Canyon FPD

Skip Wilson, Chief Jefferson/Como FPD

Larry Long, Colorado State Forest Service

Theresa Springer and Paige Fulghum, Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP)

Approved by the County Commissioners
