

Transcript
Firewise Communities Chat Session
January 17, 2008

judithleraascook Welcome to 2008's first Firewise chat! And thank you for joining us. We have lots to tell about what's coming up this year, as well as some statistics to share from 2007. Michele Steinberg and I will be today's 'speakers'. Please hold questions until the end of our presentation. At that point, the chat will become completely interactive. Would you like to greet everyone, Michele?

Michele_Steinberg Thanks, Judith! I'm glad you all could participate in today's talk. We have some great info to share with you today.

judithleraascook First, you all deserve kudos for our dedication to our Firewise approach to community participation. Because of your hard work, we added 103 new communities to our roster---a 47% increase over 2006. Our current number of active sites is 302! And the level of community commitment continues to be remarkable. Our numbers show that wildfire mitigation investment is \$26/capita among participating homeowners. Total investment for 2007 is more than \$9.6 million. The program's five-year community investment tops \$24 million!! You will be receiving this information soon in the 2007 FWC/USA executive summary. Watch for it. Any numbers you want to add, Michele? I was hoping you might want to talk about the upcoming liaison training session also.

Michele_Steinberg We are really proud of all of our states in the work they – you – are doing in advocating for Firewise and assisting communities as they work through the process. We boasted a 90% retention rate for community participation. That means 90 percent of the communities that were on our roster last year remained as active participants. Welcome Ann! I'm just telling everyone what's new in the program.

Eleven of our pilot communities that first earned recognition in 2002 celebrated 5 years of participation and received new banners we created to celebrate the long-term commitment of these communities. As each “class” renews on its 5 year anniversary, we'll be sending them a banner also.

You'll be able to take a gander at the new banner and a lot of other Firewise products and information if you join us at one of three great opportunities we are providing you this year for training and networking. Judith and I will conduct a program review (or introduction, if you are new to your Firewise liaison role) and provide you with updates on program status and challenges at three sessions, starting March 25-26 in San Diego, California. The next session is April 22-23 in Denver, Colorado; and the third will be on June 24-25 in Richmond, Virginia. You should be receiving a letter very soon (possibly some of you have already seen it) inviting you to attend and asking you to respond with a location choice. We think this will be a great opportunity to share information, provide technical advice and support, and simply to network with your peers who may have some tips and

ideas to share about promoting Firewise activity. In fact, we think it is so important for you to participate that the Firewise program will cover the cost of your travel, meals and lodging in order for you to attend.

judithleraascook As we move through the year, we have other things for you to remember. The first is to enroll yourself or other staff members in Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone. It will be presented five times during the year---in Arkansas, Florida, West Virginia and twice in California. It lasts two days and is designed for those who are responsible for conducting home inspections and assessing individual properties for wildfire hazards. You can get more information at www.firewise.org/hizworkshop. The information in this course is extremely helpful as a basis for understanding the FWC program. Second, plan to attend Backyards & Beyond in Tampa on November 6-8. This national conference is created for you and for all of our participating communities as an informational and a networking opportunity. We are thrilled by the quality of presentations we can anticipate. Michele, would you like to elaborate on what we can expect in Tampa?

Michele_Steinberg Sure! As many of you have experienced, the conference attracts nearly 500 participants from all over the nation as well as other countries including Canada, Australia, India and South Africa. We'll be having several pre-conference sessions running on November 4-5, including the training Judith just mentioned, sessions on writing and media, and GIS training. We are in the process now of providing final approval for speaker submissions of presentations, but there is a wonderful diversity in the kinds of topics that people have submitted. We'll also plan a special reception for Firewise state liaisons on Wednesday evening, November 5. You'll be hearing lots more about the conference in the coming weeks and months.

judithleraascook Another small task you can embark on is that of nominating someone from your state or region for a Firewise Leadership Award for 2008. While nominations can be made through June 30, it is a good thing to be thinking about it now. We know you have extremely energized people who are doing amazing things because we read all the FWC/USA renewal forms! Nominate one of your most deserving groups.

Michele_Steinberg We had a great response last year to the call for nominations and we awarded six individuals and organizations with this prestigious honor. At the state level, the winners were Randy and Jeanne Crane, volunteers with Utah Living With Fire, Hi-Country Estates Wildfire Council; Matt Eberlein with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources – Southeast Region and Tony and Patricia Siciliano, contractors to the Arkansas Firewise Program and Arkansas Forestry Commission. At the local level, the winners were Captain Greg Barton of the Beverly Hills Fire Department, Ron Garner of the San Juan Island Fire Department and the Flagstaff Fire Department – Fuel Management Division. You can read more about them - and get the 2008 nomination form and information – at http://www.firewise.org/fw_youcanuse/awards/.

judithleraascook Michele is working hard pulling together some Firewise 'guidelines' for developers and I know she wants to bring you up to date on that project.

Michele_Steinberg So many of you have asked us about how new communities, just breaking ground, can become Firewise. Whether it's a question from a developer on best

practices or if the new subdivision wants to become a recognized Firewise Communities/USA site, we want to be able to provide you with sound advice and guidance for new communities that are “Firewise-friendly”. We’re working with a small task group that includes researchers from the Southern Region of the USDA Forest Service who have been compiling information on local codes, ordinances, regulations and practices relating to Firewise and wildland fire management (the National Wildfire Programs Database at HYPERLINK "http://www.wildfireprograms.com" www.wildfireprograms.com) as well as the Community Associations Institute to examine current practices and protocols for subdivision rules known as covenants, conditions and restrictions (or CC&Rs) and architectural review standards. We’ll use these findings to create easy-to-use guidelines for developers of new communities to help make subdivisions Firewise from the planning stages forward. We’ll also make it accessible for existing community associations so that they can review their current rules for Firewise-friendliness. We know there are still many communities that have restrictions preventing roof replacement to non-flammable materials and prohibiting the removal of flammable vegetation from around their properties. We hope this guide will help illuminate the fire safety issues that communities should be aware of, and help make more communities Firewise from the get-go.

judithlaraascook Another project that is within a hair's breadth of completion is a community assessment course that we are prepared to add to the Firewise Learning Center. Based on the work of Jack Cohen and other members of the Firewise Communities staff, it will be of great benefit for those of you who are trying to train more folks to be able to conduct assessments within your jurisdictions. The chat is now open to everyone, and we really want to talk about all of this.

Rodger_Ozburn If an individual completes the online assessment course, can they receive some sort of certificate or proof?

judithlaraascook The Firewise Learning Center generates a certificate when an individual completes a course. So the short answer is, yes.

Rodger_Ozburn thanks

judithlaraascook No problem. We really feel that the more people who have community assessment training, the more easily the FWC/USA process can be implemented.

We will be talking about that during the state liaison training session. The banner we are sending five-year veterans of the FWC/USA program will be going out soon. We will be notifying each of the liaisons who has a community receiving one.

Ann_Walker I'm really looking forward to the state liaison training session-thank you for planning those!

judithlaraascook Glad you are excited about it, Ann! We have a lot of good information to share.

Harry_Steele When will we receive more information about the training for state liaisons? I am very excited about attending - but already I can see scheduling conflicts for myself.

judithlaraascook We will be covering everything from materials available to you to the assessment itself. Michele - Do you know when the invitations are being issued? I understood it would be very soon.

Gena_Williams What is the best program- to take landscapers through for firewise

landscaping training and is there a certificate they can use to let communities know they passed the program?

judithlaraascook For your planning purposes, Harry, the first session is in San Diego (March 25-6. The second, in Denver (April 22-3) and the third in Richmond (June 24-5)

Rodger_Ozburn I want to say thanks to national for covering the costs for the liaison training - otherwise, I probably wouldn't be able to go.

Michele_Steinberg The letters went out on Monday - some have already received theirs.

Ann_Walker I sincerely appreciate the travel costs being covered too!

judithlaraascook We know that travel money is tight.....It is for us, too! That being said, we felt that this training is extremely important. Glad you are able to plan on attending.

arlene_weber-sword Yes ,having the costs covered is huge - thank you

judithlaraascook You're welcome, Arlene.

Harry_Steele I'll add that without the travel cost help, I doubt whether I would have been able to attend. Many thanks!

judithlaraascook Gena - There is a Firewise Landscaping course in the Firewise Learning Center (www.firewise.org). And a certificate of completion is issued. Is that what you were thinking of?

Rodger_Ozburn WV is finally looking at expanding the program out of our original 10-county area - will hinge on next round of grants - but getting refreshed and obtaining new tools will certainly help my staff.

judithlaraascook What good news for West Virginia! Keep us posted and let us know if we can lend a hand.

Gena_Williams yes, I will check it out -- thanks

judithlaraascook Great! If you need something different, let me know.

Rodger_Ozburn The HIZ workshops - would these be beneficial to fire department chiefs that are undertaking assessments throughout their coverage area? They are currently using our state form for documentation and analysis, kind of a different approach from Jack's outlook. I know that Dr. Jack doesn't like forms that keyhole the process, but it seems to be the easiest way for me right now to get consistent results

judithlaraascook Actually, they would be beneficial to the fire department chiefs. They will learn some excellent things about wildfire's relationship with homes that they can integrate into what they are doing. There is no reason they cannot stick to the WV form. But the knowledge packed into that workshop has been consistently useful. I know that a couple of folks on this chat have attended at least one of the sessions.

Rodger_Ozburn And this will be a lot different than what we learned in Toms River, NJ a few years ago?

Ann_Walker I think it would be beneficial to review and compare the two. Jack does has some more current stuff that may not be reflected in your current state form/process. - just a thought

judithlaraascook The knowledge focuses on single homes rather than communities....and, of course, the students do not hear much about the FWC/USA process as the focus is on conducting an assessment.

Michele_Steinberg Rodger, my take on the difference between the 2003 training in Toms

River and elsewhere and the current HIZ course is that this will be more refined and organized, and provide you with improved learning and teaching tools.

Gena_Williams I attended the workshop - I find that the forms give the communities something to help give direction on what to work on first - when there are several major areas for improvement. They use it to create the protection plans.

judithleraascook Thanks, Gena.

Rodger_Ozburn I see and look forward to attending myself - we don't have any problems looking at individual homes, but it takes a lot of time, and I feel I need to focus more on the community as a whole. Small improvements by individuals are necessary, and will benefit the entire community hazard in the long run

judithleraascook We hope, then, that you will find the Community Assessment course that we are finishing right now is useful for you. As soon as it comes into the Learning Center, you will get the word! I am trusting that each of you will be on the lookout for a Firewise star in your jurisdiction. I attended a presentation ceremony for one of the 2007 winners and can't overstate how thrilled the recipients are. (And the nomination form is easy to complete.) I believe that this year we will be presenting the awards in Tampa. Isn't that correct, Michele?

Michele_Steinberg Yes, that's right.

judithleraascook Our Firewise guidelines for developers project is also one you will want to watch. You will be hearing more about it at liaison training. We have had numerous requests for this and are finding it a very interesting area to address. One other reminder - When you receive your invitation to the 2008 training, be sure to let us know of your choice quickly. We have maximum numbers for each site.

Rodger_Ozburn FYI - my invitation just arrived today in the mail.

judithleraascook Oh, good! That means the system works. Am wondering if we have anything else we need to discuss/clarify as we move out into 2008. I just noticed that the clock is moving toward the top of the hour.

Rodger_Ozburn I have a question about logos but will ask it via email later.

judithleraascook OK. Happy to help out with that. One thought I would like to share is that we who process the FWC/USA applications are struck each time by the excitement of the generating community. Folks who complete the process are so thrilled, committed and, yes, smart about fire by the time they have completed a plan and a project. It really confirms that communities CAN do this and CAN protect themselves. Each of you knows that, of course.

Ann_Walker You're right on Judith-it is still something worth mentioning!

judithleraascook Glad you agree, Ann.

Rodger_Ozburn I for one am very happy that your support has continued all these years, with the same folks - so many programs seem to fade off after a few years, but not Firewise - unfortunately, it's because we keep burning houses down..

judithleraascook I suspect, Rodger, that people are changing. And that is what we hope will happen.

Michele_Steinberg Rodger, in some ways there is nothing more I would like than to work myself out of a job because no more homes burn down!

Ann_Walker ditto Michelle!

Michele_Steinberg Having worked in other programs that "come and go", I am proud to work on one that's got legs and staying power.

Ann_Walker Arlene - do you know which session you may be attending?

Rodger_Ozburn Well, I just wanted you to know that I appreciate having people to turn to for advice and help.

judithleraascook Rodger - That's what we are here for.

arlene_weber-sword Ann- Probably Denver as it appears at this time I have a conflict at the end of March

Michele_Steinberg Judith and I and the rest of the program staff really hope you will let us know how we can support you in other ways. We think the trainings this year will be a good way to assist.

Gena_Williams I agree - communities will keep the work going I have seen this in just the 2 years I have been working with the program

Harry_Steele I have to run. Looking forward to meeting the Firewise Family at one of the trainings.

judithleraascook Harry - Will be seeing you in just a few weeks!

Harry_Steele I just e-mailed you more info . see you soon.

judithleraascook OK!

Gena_Williams I have to go - good talking with you all.

judithleraascook Glad you could join us, Gena!

Michele_Steinberg Thanks, Gena!

Ann_Walker Have a great day everyone - thank you!

judithleraascook You're welcome, Ann!

arlene_weber-sword Thank you all and see you soon

judithleraascook Sure enough, Arlene.

Michele_Steinberg Thanks all!

Rodger_Ozburn Glad I could join in this one - sorry I haven't kept up - will email you soon with my logo question

Michele_Steinberg OK - just let us know.

judithleraascook Great, Rodger. Glad you could join us.

Michele_Steinberg Hasta luego (until later)...

judithleraascook Hasta luego.