



Transcript  
Firewise Communities Chat Session  
September 13, 2006

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Welcome to today's chat session. We get to talk about the Firewise Communities conference---Backyards & Beyond---today. My name is Judith Leraas Cook and I am the project manager for Firewise Communities/USA and will serve as your moderator. We will begin the chat by hearing from Michele Steinberg, the Firewise Communities Support Manager. Michele has been with the Firewise Communities program for the past five years and is well known nationally for her work with wildland/urban interface issues. She has worked in the area of natural hazards and land use planning since 1989 and frequently presents and writes about related subjects. Please hold your questions until we open the session for comments. At that time, the chat will become completely interactive. Michele - Welcome! As you know, folks all over the country are looking forward to the second Backyards & Beyond conference. We know that the organizers have scheduled three general assembly presentations. Would you please tell us a little about them?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Thanks, Judith. I'm really excited to tell you all more about the conference. Our opening session on Thursday morning, November 2, will feature keynote speaker James Mapes. He's the founder and president of The Quantum Leap Thinking Organization and the creator of The Transformation Coach. His goal is to help people become more creative, productive and confident. I'm sure this will be a motivating talk that will set the tone for the kind of enthusiasm and thoughtfulness we are sure to see during the conference.

The next time the participants gather together will be on Friday morning, November 3, for a special presentation by Jack Cohen, the USDA Forest Service research scientist whose work on fire behavior and how homes ignite is so important to learning to become Firewise. His theme will be Preventing WUI Fire Disasters – the link between the two problems of preventing home ignitions and restoring fire as an ecological process in the nation's wildlands.

On Saturday afternoon, November 4, our final assembly will include a panel on the question: Does Evacuation Always Put Life Safety First? This provocative topic will be explored by research scientists and fire service professionals and will be moderated by a Boston-based TV news reporter, Jorge Quiroga.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** I know all of these will be very interesting! In addition to these thought-provoking speakers, would you describe what is happening the rest of the time?

I am thinking specifically of the fact that the conference is featuring SIX tracks, plus a GIS computer class, for attendees to choose from. And I understand the conference presenters are exceptionally well qualified and diverse.

**Michele\_Steinberg** Yes, we have an amazing group of presenters – more than 80 people will be sharing their expertise and information about programs and projects. Our six tracks include Using Technology – which includes three hands-on GIS mapping training sessions, Firewise Communities/USA; Communicating the Firewise Message; Planning and Mitigation Research; and Fire and Emergency Operations. These sessions run concurrently from Thursday afternoon through mid-day on Saturday.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** In addition to this, the conference is offering two pre-session seminars. Would you please describe these?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Jack Cohen will be teaching a revised course on Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone. The course covers what people need to know to be able to look at homes in fire prone communities and document wildfire risk.

Pat Durland, Jim Smalley and Jim Gilpin will be teaching Firewise Communities Planning Workshops in two different formats. These are more of the primer for people less familiar with Firewise concepts.

The two seminars run concurrently on Tuesday and Wednesday, October 31 and November 1. Participants must register separately to participate in one of the seminars.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Besides all of this, I understand that folks will have the chance to meet others who work in the wildland/urban interface in networking settings. Would you please tell us about the welcome reception, the banquet and other social opportunities?

**Michele\_Steinberg** With our experience from the 2004 conference, the organizers recognized the great energy and excitement that came along with participants being able to talk with one another informally. We've included as many opportunities as possible for them to do that, starting with a get-together reception on Thursday evening. There will also be a reception and banquet on Friday evening featuring The Blues Rangers, an interpretive musical group of USDA Forest Service employees from the De Soto National Forest in Mississippi.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Will there be an exhibit area?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Yes, we're pleased to have more space for exhibits this year at the conference. We have about 20 sponsors/exhibitors for the conference who will have displays. There will be an exhibit-only hour on Friday to showcase these sponsors and provide yet another opportunity to network.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** How about an opportunity for continuing education credits?

**Michele\_Steinberg** We have two great opportunities for participants to earn continuing education credits. The Society of American Foresters has approved the conference for professional continuing forestry education credits, up to 30.5 Category 1 credits total. In addition, the National Fire Protection Association is accredited as an AIA/Continuing Education Systems Provider of educational programs and has approved the conference for 0.1 CEUs per one-hour session.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Finally, I know that a special session has been created for Firewise Communities/USA representatives who attend, and that they will have a chance to network as well. Would you please tell us about that?

**Michele\_Steinberg** We are really pleased to welcome so many of the representatives from state forestry, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other organizations that support

Firewise on the state and regional level. We are having an invitation-only reception on Wednesday evening, November 1, so that these individuals can meet each other, the Firewise staff, and the members of the national WUI Working Team. New representatives and veterans can also benefit from a half-day session that I'll be presenting with Judith about "everything you always wanted to know" about the national Firewise Communities/USA recognition program on Thursday afternoon.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** What a great event! The chat is now open to everyone. Please feel free to join in. If you have questions that are not answered during the chat, you can contact me at [firewiseusa@aol.com](mailto:firewiseusa@aol.com). I will either respond directly or put you into contact with someone who can provide the information you need.

**krpearce** with so many choices, is it ok to jump between the "tracks" and do individual sessions in multiple tracks

**Michele\_Steinberg** Absolutely. We are using the tracks mainly to organize topics and help participants understand the focus of the session they want to attend.

**krpearce** great thanks,

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Michele - I neglected to ask you about registration deadlines. Isn't there a \$\$ advantage in registering early?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Yes! Now I have to go look it up! October 18 is the early registration deadline. You can save \$50 by registering by then.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Thanks!

**chatfirewise** I am Toni Haukom, University Park, Manhattan, Ks. Since I am the "new kid on the block" will this weekend be too late to find out more information about this conference from you Michele since I will get to meet you personally. Thanks in advance for attending our Recognition Event - It will be great

**Michele\_Steinberg** Hi Toni! I'm so delighted to be able to join you for the recognition ceremony you are holding in Kansas. I'll bring conference info with me. It's very timely and not too late to plan to attend.

**chatfirewise** Thank you so much.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** The last news I heard about the conference was that many communities will be represented. Am I correct that some of them will be providing information on their projects in the exhibit area?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Yes. We've invited recognized communities to display if they wish. I believe we have several communities that have chosen to do this.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Great!

**Michele\_Steinberg** I'd also like to mention that we will be specially celebrating our first communities that have now been in the program for 5 years.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Will that be in a one of the general sessions?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Yes, we'll be including that in the opening session on Thursday morning. Also - the national program has sponsored "Firewise Leadership Awards" for the first time this year. The awards will be presented at the conference.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** For those of you who aren't familiar with the numbers, eleven communities will be celebrating the completion of five years of recognition status. The program has increased to 173 recognized sites in the past five years. I know there was a lot of interest in the Firewise Leadership Awards. I'll bet it was difficult to identify the best candidates.

**Michele\_Steinberg** We had a great response to the nomination request. I am assisting the Review Committee and can tell you that there were many excellent submittals. It was hard for them to decide.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** We haven't really talked about conference logistics. For those of the folks who are coming in for the workshops, they will have to be in their places at 8:00 a.m. on October 31 and they will be busy until the end of the day November 1. Correct?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Yes - folks have to pre-register for the workshops but need to check in with registration when they arrive. Both workshops will run the full two days.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** People who come for the conference proper should plan to have taken their places in the general session by 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, November 2. And they will be busy until mid-afternoon on Saturday. Right?

**Michele\_Steinberg** That's right. People can check in at registration on Wednesday afternoon from 2 til 6 p.m. And registration opens up again on Thursday morning at 7:00 a.m. So there is plenty of time to get your conference packet, name badge, etc.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Those attending the assessment workshop should plan to be outside, so they need to plan to bundle up if it is cold and to have comfortable shoes...Any advice about the other pre-conference workshop?

**Michele\_Steinberg** The other workshop will involve some hands-on use of ArcView mapping software using a model community, and demonstrate some other neat technology. Come ready to learn!

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** For those who want to participate in the GIS Hands-On Computer Classes, they need to register early so they will get a space. I am remembering, from the last conference, that dress was casual, although people brushed off a little for the banquet. Is that the plan again?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Thanks, Judith -- the GIS training sessions during the conference are space-limited. You must sign up for those ahead of time. All the other sessions are open. Regarding dress - yes, it's pretty casual. We have such a diverse group, I'm sure we'll see business suits, dress uniforms, and jeans! Does anyone else have any questions about the conference?

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Will we be seeing some of you there?

**krpearce** i'll be there, registered a few weeks ago

**Jeff\_Madden** That's my plan...

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Great! We can talk about Randle!

**krpearce** sounds good

**jerry\_borgelt** Yes, I'm also already registered.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Jeff - I will look forward to chatting about Carnation. And Jerry, I am so pleased to hear you will be coming.

**kchriste** I will be there and hopefully on time.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** I have been getting calls from folks who are deep into their conference presentations, and suspect you will be very pleased with the sessions.

**cliff\_pearlberg** Hopefully my reg. has been paid for by now....If we are planning to attend a GIS session and already have arcview on a laptop is there any benefit to bringing it?

**Michele\_Steinberg** Hi Cliff, You may want to bring your laptop along for notes and consultation with the instructors. But we will have computers loaded with the software available for the participants.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Michele - This was really good information. Thank you so much! As most of you know, transcripts from all chat sessions are posted in the 'Chat Transcript' area of the forum approximately one week after the chat. So you can refer to these if you wish to.

**Michele\_Steinberg** You're welcome. I'm psyched for November!

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** I think we all are!

**Michele\_Steinberg** It's going to be a really great event, thanks to our presenters and participants. Thanks for the opportunity to talk about it today.

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** We are planning a kind of follow-up session for our next chat. We will be talking about the conference and hope to have a couple of our speakers give us a little preview of what they will be telling us in November. Both Michele and I would like to thank all of you for joining us today. There is a lot to talk about with respect to Backyards & Beyond, and we hope we have answered most of the questions you may have been thinking about. And, of course, we will be delighted if you have the time to join us next month---on October 18---for the Backyards & Beyond follow-up chat session. Do let us know in the meantime if there are specific things you would like us to include during that hour.

**cliff\_pearlberg** Thank you for your time.. I look forward to seeing you in November

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** Until then, Michele, do you have any words of wisdom regarding the conference? Cliff - We look forward to seeing you, too!

**krpearce** (kathie) thanks for the information

**Michele\_Steinberg** Eat your Wheaties and be ready for an energetic, synergistic learning experience!

**Judith\_Leraas\_Cook** No problem, Kathie. Stay dry during the rain that SHOULD fall.

**Michele\_Steinberg** Thanks everyone. Bye now!

**krpearce** hopefully!

**christina.fowler** Thank you. It sounds like a great event and I look forward to the next chat.