



Transcript
Firewise Communities Chat Session
October 18, 2006

Judith_Leraas_Cook Welcome to today's Firewise chat. We get to talk about all the exciting things that are going on with Firewise Communities. 2006 has been a really busy year. The web site, as you all know, has been transformed, the recognition program has expanded by leaps and bounds, and we are all eagerly awaiting the upcoming Backyards & Beyond conference. My name is Judith Leraas Cook, Project Manager for Firewise Communities/USA. Today, Michele Steinberg and I are the chat 'speakers'. Michele is the Firewise Communities Support Manager. This is going to be a free-flowing hour, so we invite you to ask questions as we go. We will, of course, have our usual 'open mike' during the last half of the session when the chat will become completely interactive. Michele - Let's start by updating everyone about the web site. One of our most exciting new enhancements is the library. Do you want to tell the folks about that?

Michele_Steinberg Thanks, Judith. The Firewise collection includes over 800 documents, publications, research papers, and periodicals about wildland fire, wildland urban interface, and Firewise specific material. In the past, it was searchable on our website, but we did not have a mechanism to allow people to borrow materials. With the new enhancements, however, the Firewise collection is now part of the Charles S. Morgan Library of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), one of the largest fire science libraries in the world. The Morgan Library's collection includes resource materials collected from national and international sources including more than 18,000 books and reports, 200 periodical titles, and educational media such as curricula, videos, games and brochures. The archives include NFPA documents dating from the Association's founding in 1896. The Morgan Library's online card catalog will allow you to find all kinds of information in addition to the Firewise collection. It provides access to bibliographic records of books, reports, conference proceedings, journal titles, audiovisual materials, and curricula. Located at NFPA headquarters in Quincy, Massachusetts, the library is open to the public during regular business hours (8:30 am to 5:00 pm Eastern). However, the online card catalog and library staff brings the resources of the library home to visitors all over the world. Materials are available for loan through Interlibrary Loan (ILL) network and library staff is available to help with questions. The

Firewise website Library page provides introductory information and search tips, as well as the links to get into the online Morgan library.

Judith_Leraas_Cook Thanks! Another area that will be interesting to some of you is the new Spanish-language part of the site. You can enter it by clicking on the tiny flag in the upper right-hand corner of firewise.org. We will be developing that area even more during 2007. One of the more exciting areas of the web site to come on line this year is the Firewise Learning Center. You will find the Center in the Firewise You Can Use section. We currently have two courses available: Firefighter Safety in the Wildland/Urban Interface and Firewise Landscaping. A third course dealing with the subject of conducting community assessments should be available by the end of 2006. Michele - Do you want to talk a little about the Learning Center and the program vision for this part of the web site?

Michele_Steinberg The Firewise Learning Center is designed to be an educational, empowering resource accessible to everyone who is interested in the issue of wildland fires in the wildland/urban interface. The topics addressed are relevant to both those who own homes in the wildland/urban interface and the fire fighters who work to defend those homes. The Firewise Learning Center is a good place for individual instruction that people can use at their own pace. We aim to provide "just-in-time" learning for a wide variety of users. The kinds of courses we offer will continue to be ones that address complex problems and issues that do not have clear "right or wrong" type of solutions. Because we're seeking to expand knowledge and lead users to seek more information, the courses are not designed to provide a grade or formal certification.

Judith_Leraas_Cook While we are in the Firewise You Can Use arera, we should point out that we have also posted a 'Workshop Series' area. Michele - Would you share some thoughts about it?

Michele_Steinberg Sure, Judith, The Workshop Series area provides a bit of history about the Firewise program's very successful Firewise Community Workshop series that took place from 1999-2003. Thirty workshops around the country attracted about 3,000 people and provided a great classroom learning experience. But that's not what's important about it. The great success was that the people who attended the workshops started giving their own workshops. We estimate that this "seeding" effect has reached perhaps 10,000 more people around the country to date. The Workshop Series area provides an easy-to-use Coordinator's guide so you can set up and deliver your own workshop. The participant workbooks and CDs can be ordered from the Firewise catalog, and workshop attendees are eligible for Continuing Education Units. These workshops are a great start to helping people in your area understand the problem of wildfire in residential areas and what they can do to solve it.

Judith_Leraas_Cook And we are really excited about the Firewise blog. It was created last summer. We are finding that folks are enjoying it. As a matter of fact, we posted a new blog just yesterday about some activities going on in Colfax County, New Mexico. You need to take a look at it after the chat. For those of you who want some interesting reading, go to the Communities/USA area and enter the section titled 'Community Stories'. You will be amazed at what people have done around the country, and delighted by the photographs that tell the story of their efforts. Michele - Do you want to give us the current statistics relating to Firewise Communities/USA?

Michele_Steinberg I am so wowed by our communities! The numbers are changing daily – all in a positive, upward direction! Right now, we have 189 participating communities in 34 states. Oops - make that 182. We have “firsts” from Alaska, Kansas and New York. The program is reaching approximately 250,000 residents of fire-prone areas and communities have invested nearly \$10 million in their own Firewise projects since 2003.

Judith_Leraas_Cook The program has really taken off this year. 2006 renewals are coming in every day, and applications for new communities continue coming in. This year is the fifth anniversary for our first eleven communities. We will hear more about them at Backyards & Beyond, I am sure. Let's talk about the conference now. Michele - Do you have a feel for how many people are coming? I hear the hotel is full. And I understand that at least one of the pre-conference sessions is full as well.

Michele_Steinberg Yes, we had to add seats for the course on Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone, to be taught by Jack Cohen. The Firewise Planning Workshop course is also filling up. Two of the GIS courses – Beginner and Intermediate – are already full. Mike Price from Entrada/San Juan is teaching these as well as an Expert level course. I think we'll have great attendance to rival our 2004 conference that attracted about 490 people.

Judith_Leraas_Cook November 2-4 will be absolutely packed with activities. I don't think we have said much yet about the speakers at the general sessions, or what is planned in the evenings. Would you like to hold forth on that?

Michele_Steinberg 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. 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. As far as evening activities, we'll start 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. The banquet will also feature an awards presentation for the winners of the 2006 Firewise Leadership Awards.

Judith_Leraas_Cook Sessions will range from computers to event planning to how to communicate the Firewise message. Representatives from the research community will be presenting information as well. Any details to share about that?

Michele_Steinberg I was pleased to find we had a good response from researchers on our call for presentations. The info they will present ranges from social issues in the WUI to detecting fire ignitions from space, to fire physics research .

Judith_Leraas_Cook The chat is now open to everyone. Please feel free to join in. If you have questions that are not answered during the session, you can contact me at firewiseusa@aol.com. I will either respond directly or put you into contact with someone who can provide the information you need.

Bill_Altman Do you have any contractors that do assessments or CWWP's that will be attending next week?

Michele_Steinberg Hi Bill -- not sure about who all is registered to participate, but we have numerous sessions on CWPPs and the like.

Bill_Altman OK

Judith_Leraas_Cook Bill and Jeff - I know you are planning to go to Denver. Anyone else?

Michele_Steinberg In addition, Judith and I will be teaching a 4-hour session on Thursday afternoon dealing with community assessments for state folks.

Richard_Deppen Yes I am

christina.fowler I am not attending, but our Firewise Coordinator in Arkansas David Samuel will attend, along with both of our Firewise consultants.

Judith_Leraas_Cook Great! We will look forward to seeing you there, Richard. And I know that David is attending as well. He will bring some good information back. As we mentioned earlier in the chat, we are creating an on-line course that will allow a larger number of folks to learn how to do community assessments. We are very excited about that.

christina.fowler Earlier in the session you mentioned a Workshop series. Is this something that has to be taken over a course of days, or something that can be completed in an hour?

Bill_Altman Yeah, that sounds great. I see fire departments being able to use that.

Judith_Leraas_Cook So do we!

Michele_Steinberg Hi Christina - the Workshop series area of the site provides guidance to do a one-day workshop.

christina.fowler The reason I ask is because we've been invited to provide an education session during Extension Homemakers Club State meeting.

Michele_Steinberg Christina, how much time do you have on their agenda?

christina.fowler We will host two 1-hour sessions. This way we can have two separate groups and reach more people.

Michele_Steinberg Depending on what you want to teach, we have some presentation templates you could use on Firewise.

christina.fowler Are they available online, and if so under which section?

Bill_Altman Are these templates available on the web?

Michele_Steinberg Click on the Newsroom link in the top bar and then go to Communications Guide.

Judith_Leraas_Cook Actually, one is in the state liaison section.

Michele_Steinberg You'll see lots of materials including 3 presentations. Link is http://www.firewise.org/newsroom/communications_guide.htm

christina.fowler Thanks.

Judith_Leraas_Cook We have both used these, and they are well received.

christina.fowler Wonderful. Thanks again.

Bill_Altman Where is the state Liaison link located?

Judith_Leraas_Cook Go to www.firewise.org/usa and click on the 'State Representatives' section. I can send you your name and password. Meaning, of course, we use your name and, if you don't have your password, I will send it along to you.

Bill_Altman OK, would have to hunt up that password so if you could send that would be great

Michele_Steinberg The presentation at the state liaison area is Firewise Communities: Where We Live. How We Live. An Introduction to Firewise Concepts for Communities. This is also available in the Communications Guide area I mentioned...

Judith_Leraas_Cook Shall do! I really like the presentation posted there.

Michele_Steinberg It's the presentation I'd most strongly recommend for your use in talking with homeowners.

Judith_Leraas_Cook Indeed. Have any of you taken one of the two on-line courses in the Learning Center? We have been pleased, because we have several course completions each week. The folks who finish the courses are issued certificates by the program.

christina.fowler No, but it's probably something I will try to do in the near future.

Bill_Altman I have not...CEU's available?

Michele_Steinberg Not as of yet. We are working on it -- it's a little challenging to figure out contact hours (how long it takes to go through the course). Would you be interested in CEUs from the Society of American Foresters?

Bill_Altman Yes, I think it would be an incentive to get our agency foresters dialed into the Firewise program

Michele_Steinberg Are there other entities that provide CEUs you think we should be aware of?

Bill_Altman Depending on how user friendly the system is to work within. Hmmmm. Probably but not sure right now of additional ones. I think if there was some minimum # of hours to do the course, SAF may accept that.

Michele_Steinberg I will be sure to check into it. SAF has provided us with CEUs for

Bill_Altman If there is a landscaping course, there may be opprtunities with the International Society of Arboriculture or some landscaoe archtiects assoc.

Richard_Deppen There may be a system of CEU's within the Fire Service.

Bill_Altman True. I can check on the possibilities with ISA. The pres of the midwest chapter is a co-worker

Michele_Steinberg Great! That would be most helpful.

Judith_Leraas_Cook The ISA would be an interesting source for CEUs. And, of course, we are researching the fire service.

Bill_Altman Nothing like adding some carrots to get people to get involved. I think if nothing else it would just aid to get Firewise concepts more widely known

Judith_Leraas_Cook This is really good input for us.

Bill_Altman I will see if I can bring some insight into ISA's process to the conference next

Judith_Leraas_Cook Thanks!

Michele_Steinberg Bill, we'd be so pleased to talk with you more at Denver or later at your convenience. Thanks!

Judith_Leraas_Cook We would like to thank all of you for joining us today. It has been a most interesting hour for us.

Bill_Altman Sure, next week will work. I will be with the ISA pres the Thurs. and Fri so will discuss w/ her.

Judith_Leraas_Cook Bill - We will look for Todd Chandla at the state liaison reception and hope to see you in our class on Thursday afternoon. Will Todd be attending?

Bill_Altman Yes, Todd will be at the State Liaison reception.

Judith_Leraas_Cook Will he be attending the Thursday afternoon course?

Bill_Altman I am not sure what he is going to be signing up to attend. I will be remaining the state liaison and plan to attend the appropriate events during the conference. Well, I am going to log off. I will be looking for my login password

Judith_Leraas_Cook It will come today.

Richard_Deppen Bye everyone see you all in Denver.

Bill_Altman OK, thanks. See ya!

Judith_Leraas_Cook See you there!

Michele_Steinberg Thanks all! Safe travels.

Judith_Leraas_Cook See you soon!