



FIREWISE Newsletter

MAKING SENSIBLE CHOICES IN THE INTERFACE

2009



FIREWISE LEADERSHIP AWARDS - CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Awards promote local, regional, state efforts to reduce wildfire risk

The National Firewise Communities Program is calling for nominations for its fourth annual awards program to recognize outstanding efforts to promote a cooperative approach to reducing the loss of lives, property, and resources in the wildland/urban interface. The Firewise Leadership Awards are open to individuals and organizations conducting wildland fire mitigation activities in residential developments in the wildland/urban interface. Eligible Firewise efforts may include, but are not limited to:

- Innovations in engineering
- Program communications, advertising, exhibits, and/or other informational programs
- Success in involving communities
- Collaboration across agency jurisdictions
- Special partnerships

The Firewise Leadership Awards provide recognition to the drivers of the Firewise movement – whether they are individuals, groups, or departments –and encourage other innovative initiatives that promote the Firewise mission. Winners of the 2008 Firewise Leadership Awards were announced in November at the bi-annual National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Education Conference, “Backyards and Beyond,” in Tampa, Fla. Winners were selected based on their impact at the regional, statewide, and local level.

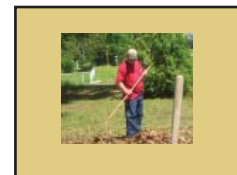
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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT FIREWISE

In June 2008 the Mid-Snake Resource, Conversation and Development (RC&D) entered into a partnership with the Agricultural and Plant Science Department at Shoshone High School in Shoshone, Idaho. The Firewise Landscape Nursery program has provided an opportunity to educate students about Firewise landscaping principles, and the different plant species that enhance the

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[We welcome your comments!](#)



COLFAX COUNTY (NM) COALITION OF FIREWISE COMMUNITIES VISITS PONIL COMPLEX FIRE SITE



Members of the Colfax County Coalition of Firewise Communities recently visited the area known as the Ponil Complex fire which occurred in June 2002. A lightning storm sparked four separate fires on or near the Philmont Scout Ranch and spread until all four blazes united to form the very large wildland fire. In total, 90,000 acres were consumed including approximately 30,000 acres on the Philmont Ranch alone. The forest fire was the largest on record in New Mexico's history and suppression costs were estimated at \$14,000,000.

The purpose of the visit was to view the regeneration of the area following since the fire. Post fire rehabilitation efforts included extensive aerial seeding of grasses and contour falling of trees to prevent soil movement. A salvage logging operation removed a limited number of commercial trees in order break up soils hardened by the fire to encourage new growth.

Visitors during the tour saw a very diverse community of plants with tree seedlings beginning to appear and minimal erosion problems. This is important, as the area of the Ponil River serves as a watershed area for the neighboring community of Springer.

A local forester led the tour and discussed the fire, its effect on the environment, and the steps taken to protect and reforest the burned area.



KANAKA RAPIDS RANCH (ID) HOLDS FIRST FIREWISE DAY



The Kanaka Rapids Ranch Homeowners Association took the final step in becoming a Firewise Communities/USA. This May they held their first Firewise Day at the Kanaka Rapids Children's Park. Activities included chipping, home ignition zone assessments and lunch. The Buhl Fire Department, Twin Falls District BLM and the Mid-Snake RC&D were major partners in assisting the homeowners in becoming a Firewise Community.

In August of 2005, the community was threatened by a wildland fire which encouraged homeowners to become a Firewise Community. The Kanaka Rapids Firewise Community Assessment was completed in September 2008 and identified four areas of concern:

- The potential for continuous wildfire spread to the home ignition zone from overgrown neglected shoulder of River Road adjacent to Kanaka Rapids subdivision.



- River Road is a well traveled scenic byway and also the main access to the subdivision.
- Neglect of home ignition zones and vacant lots.
- Proximity of homes to steep slope areas.
- Evacuation with one main egress.

Kanaka Rapids Firewise Community has completed all the steps to become a nationally recognized Firewise Communities/USA and will continue progress in homeowner responsibility to protect their homes and property from the threat of catastrophic wildland fire.





STUDENTS HELP IN RESEARCH PROJECT STUDYING PERFORMANCE OF SOFFIT VENTS

Theatrical images on television lead the average homeowner to believe that structure losses can't occur in areas outside of forest. However, structure losses occur in large number from wildfires each year in grass and brush ecosystems throughout Texas, not timber. Embers can 'rain' on and around homes for hours before the wildfire flame-front reaches structures even in grass ecosystems.

Inlet vents, such as in soffits (eaves) are usually located on the lower portion of the roof. Entry of burning embers has been problematic for attic vents in general, and soffit vents in particular. Most vents incorporate a screen at the inlet and building codes stipulate a minimum mesh size of 1/4-inch to minimize plugging of vent holes and reduction in air movement.

Students from the Bastrop High School Building Trades Department (Texas) were asked to help out with building structure face fronts as part of the testing of new vent designs under fire conditions. The project served two purposes, one to help with a research project and secondly help the students compete in the SkillsUSA competition.

Instructor Danny Hamilton states, "This type of project is a valuable opportunity for students to utilized learned skills in a 'real life' application. SkillsUSA is a national nonprofit organization serving teachers and high school and college students involved in career and technology education who are preparing for careers in trade, technical and skilled service occupations, including health occupations."

The assemblies will be placed on the boundary of the burn footprint and observed to determine the performance of the vents during the 20 acre research burn. This data will be invaluable to home builders and owners throughout Texas, if the vents are determined to function as designed for both new and retro-fit homes.



BONITA CREEK NEWEST FIREWISE COMMUNITY IN ARIZONA



Bonita Creek Firewise Board Members are presented with Nationally Firewise Communities/USA Recognition: (l-r) Lorna Glaunsinger, Chris Pestka, Mike Lynch, Billy Ichida and Bill Glaunsinger.

Approaching the 19th anniversary of the 1990 Dude Fire, the Community of Bonita Creek worked toward and achieved, national Firewise Communities/USA Recognition. Lee Ann Beery from the Arizona State Forestry Division, along with Dan Eckstine and Jeremy Plain from the Payson Ranger District of the Forest Service, were on hand to present the award to the Bonita Creek Firewise Board on Saturday this past April.

"Six firefighters lost their lives fighting that fire" states Beery, "and the community lost all but five structures." Bonita Creek joins a small, but growing, number of Rim Country Communities to receive national Firewise Recognition by becoming the 9th community in Gila County and the 28th community in Arizona.

"It was about a year ago when one of the community members approached me and said they were concerned the community had potential to burn from a wildland fire *again*" said Beery. "It is not unusual for a community to approach me with concerns about wildland fire. The word that really got my attention was '*again*'. Their community has a lot of tall brush combined with a unique grass component, and under the right conditions, it could create a very hot and fast moving fire."

Achieving Firewise Recognition status is

not a quick or easy process and communities must apply for renewal each year.

In their first year with the program Bonita Creek was able to create their Firewise Plan; establish additional emergency water sources for firefighting; hold work days to thin vegetation in and around the community; and in March sent two members of their Firewise Board to Hazard Assessment training in Prescott.

The folks at Bonita Creek realize there is still a lot of hard work ahead. This year they have applied for grant funds to help with fuel reduction projects and have set a goal to get private property owners to create Survivable Space around their homes.

"This community truly understands the loss that can happen from wildland fire. They have made a commitment to protect themselves and I am extremely proud to work with them" said Beery.

For more information about Bonita Creek or other Arizona Firewise Communities contact Lee Ann Beery (928) 474-2689 or via email at leebeery@azstatefire.org.



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT FIREWISE,

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protection of homes situated in the wildland/urban interface. The 200-fire resistant plants were germinated in the Shoshone High School greenhouse. They include numerous species to provide ground-covers, vines, perennials and shrubs and approved from the Fire Resistant Plant List published by the Twin Falls District BLM.

The Mid-Snake RC&D assists eight counties in updating and implementing their County Wildfire Protection Plan. This assistance is provided through a partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, Twin Falls District, Idaho

"We have a great partnership with the RC&D. This program provides a good opportunity for the students to learn about the fire resistant nature of these plants, and the importance of this type of landscaping in the south central Idaho desert," said BLM Fire Management Officer Chris Simonson.

Shoshone is a small rural town of 1,400 people with limited resources in an economically disadvantaged county.

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Providing Firewise education opportunities has greatly enhanced the students' school experience and promoted a greater public awareness of Firewise landscaping principals and plant species. Each student has created their own landscape design within the 2008/2009 curriculum.

The Firewise Greenhouse project represents a unique and innovative idea, method or approach to providing fire education which is deemed advantageous by the Mid-Snake RC&D Fire Education program objective. If you have any questions about this project contact Lorraine Simonson, Firewise Coordinator, Mid-Snake RC&D at garmendia04@msn.com.



FIREWISE LEADERSHIP AWARDS, CALL FOR NOMINATIONS,

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For example, Colorado Springs Wildland Risk Section was recognized for its development of a program that utilizes several mitigation approaches to address wildfire risk. Features of the Wildland Risk Program include: fuels management, Firewise education and outreach, grant administration, development review, monitoring, operational support, hazardous activity permitting, and volunteer project coordination. Ongoing collaboration includes stewardship with 42 neighborhoods; volunteer organizations; local, state, and federal agencies "It's nice to be recognized nationally," said Christina Randall, wildland risk manager, Colorado Springs Fire Department. "Our tagline is sharing the responsibility- and this award

represents how the rubber meets the road. Our ongoing collaboration has really paid off." Beyond recognition, the Firewise Leadership Awards program will help program administrators capture success stories and share best practices across the country, between all types of interests – public, private, and tribal. The Firewise Leadership Awards are open to a maximum of the following every year:

Two Regional Level Awards – Impact in more than one state

Three State Level Awards – State level impact, with relevance in a majority of the state, measured by land or population

Three Local Level Awards – City/municipal, county, or regional impact within a single state

All entries must be submitted by July 31, 2009. Visit www.firewise.org/awards for entry guidelines and forms. E-mail questions to firewiseawards@nfpa.org.



FLOVILLA (GA) HOLDS FIREWISE RECOGNITION DAY



A house owned by the City of Flovilla was selected by representatives of the Georgia Forestry Commission as a demonstration site. Community members worked together with the State to make it Firewise. Joining them were Georgia State Forestry Director Bob Farris and Georgia State Chief of Protection Alan Dozier (pictured above) who not only visited the site but proceeded to put on their work gloves and get to work. Alan Dozier is a former chair of the NWCG Working Team and a supporter of the National Firewise Communities Program.



DESPITE SPRING SNOW STORM MONTANA CITY HAS SUCCESSFUL FIREWISE EVENT



Despite heavy snow residents of Montana City, a recognized Firewise Community, held a Firewise event at the Montana City School to discuss wildfire evacuations and the actions needed to prepare to deal with a major wildfire.

Those who did venture onto the icy snow covered roads learned they are living in the midst of 400,000 acres of dying forest - and what that means for them as residents of the Montana City Fire District.



"We're nervous - we've never been up against this much fuel before," said Fire Chief Rick Abraham during his initial remarks. "We called this meeting to get this information out to you - so you know how serious this situation is."

Following remarks by the MCVFD Chief, Sonny Stiger, Montana -renowned fire behavior analyst, presented the Stiger Award to Montana City residents, Rick and Lori Maronick for recognition of personal commitment to socially responsible forest land stewardship and fire hazard reduction.

Pat McKelvey, Tri-County FireSafe Working Group Project Manager addressed the crowd on the need to create survivable space around their homes in addition to

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giving some practical tips to prepare for the approach of wildfire as they get ready to evacuate ahead of it - ideas that will increase the survivability of their homes and other structures on their property.

Throughout it all, personal responsibility was the recurring theme: individual property owners are responsible to prepare their own property/homes to survive a wildland fire. While it's easy to be distracted by the mountain pine beetle problem, homeowners need to focus on treating fuels within the home ignition zone - creating survivable space.

With the district having only four fire trucks capable of fighting fire (in addition to two water tenders to carry water) there is no way Montana City VFD can stay and defend homes during a major wildfire. There are just too many homes (over 1,100) and only four trucks.

One homeowner asked, "If a fire starts near the Interstate, what's being done now to stop it from going up Saddle Mountain Drive?" The sobering reply: "Nothing is being done, homeowners living above the Interstate need to create survivable space."

"It's not just about trees and other fuels growing in your yard. You need to clear out combustible items from under your deck, away from your house and remove combustible lawn furniture - put it away in the garage before you evacuate. If you leave it out during a wildfire, there's a good chance it will ignite your home," said Chief Abraham.

"You also need to think about screening soffit vents to keep embers from going into your attic and starting a fire there. Vented soffits are designed to carry air up into the attic to ventilate the house and the system works very well. But, you don't want hot embers in your attic. While firefighters can save a lot of homes putting out small spot fires, if a roof is 25% in flames when the fire trucks drive through after the flame front has passed, there is nothing firefighters can do to save your home," he added.

Homeowners also signed up to get a free home evaluation - helping them direct their efforts creating survivable space. Karen Semple, Volunteer Firefighter with the Montana City Fire Department and PIO contributed to this report. She states additional information is available at www.montanacityfire.org or visit her MyFirewise page from www.firewise.org.



ONE VIEW OF THE TEXAS WILDFIRES

This State of Texas suffered another serious wildfire fire this spring that consumed 45,000 acres over an eight day period. Luckily, no deaths or injuries resulted from the fire but several homes were destroyed or damaged. One person, Sharon Van Baale, watched intently the goings on of firefighters and emergency personnel over those days and produced a sort of a journal of her thoughts. If you ever wondered or experienced a wildland fire in your area, this story is a reflection of the hard work of many who fight these fires. It is also a reflection of why so many folks at the local, county, state and federal level work to prevent them.

From My Heart Firefighters & the People of Jack County

By Sharon Van Baale

It is April 10, 2009 and the second day of the fire. As fire ate its way through the brush and trees racing along the dead, drought-plagued grass, gaining momentum with every breath of wind, I was riveted in place watching it. Our property was next in line and there was nothing slowing it down except the firefighters. They were stationed at different locations doing their assigned job. Some fighting the fire directly, others were busting brush with their trucks or hosing down ahead of advancing flames. Still others were setting wet lines to start a backfire to stop the spread of the encroaching inferno.

Dozers and their operators provided by the private sector were cutting fire lines to try to stop the monsters advancement. Tank trucks called in from the oil field, were standing by to refill the tanks of the brush trucks and engines. Still others were in four wheelers and pick-ups racing back and forth trying to keep track of the direction the fire was taking.

All the while, the fire chiefs maintaining an awareness of who had been dispatched, what the present location was of the fire, where the wind direction was from, the humidity level, and maintaining contact with the State Forest Service and County Dispatch.

Listening to my scanner, I could hear

them coordinate plans to set up command centers for the Roberts Ranch Road Fire near Squaw Mountain and the Cement Mountain Fire at Bryson and finding out that the Two Bush fire was still burning near Gibtown kept me riveted in place. Staff was short. Every truck, dozer, and tank truck were being used from every corner of the county. Winds were gusting up to 50 MPH as drought conditions prevalent in the entire county and surrounding counties allowed the fire to consume the fuel that seemed everywhere. Time after time, back fires were set only to hear a little later that the fire had jumped the road, pulling back to the next road or to leave that building burning because it can't be stopped.

Dispatch was busy as police officers and Texas DOT personnel closed highways 148, 59, and 1191 turning traffic around because of dense smoke and fire. The dispatcher was on the phone calling other fire departments begging for help, toning out our fire departments again and again trying to pull in fresh firefighters. Getting weather reports and keeping up with who checked in and out along with completing all their other duties. She was running interference with those trying to fight the fire, but who could not communicate with each other as well as relaying messages other departments or the State Forestry Service to one of the command centers.

Three ambulances were stationed in strategic locations available just in case a firefighter or sheriffs deputy needed assistance as they attempted to evacuate homes in the path of the oncoming blaze. Some didn't want to leave. Buildings burned and property destroyed.

The Governor provided an order to allow fire departments to cross local boundaries and provide much needed assistance and relief to the beleaguered firefighters. Seeing a task force of fire engines coming in to town was an awesome sight. It was just a moving, knowing how tired our firefighters were and how hard they tried to get these fires under control with so little help.

Many who came were volunteer fire departments sending equipment and personnel. I spoke with one firefighter from Wylie. He had parked at the Dairy Queen and I pulled up beside him to let him know that they were feeding the firefighters at the Fair Barn. He said the Dairy Queen was pitching in and feeding firefighters too. I

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told him, "Jack County thanks him and his crew." They had been on the line for 32 hours and were beat. Wow. We must never take our guys for granted!

The whole county comes together in times, as businesses donated bottled water and food. People turned out to make sandwiches at midnight and provide things like granola bars, lip balm, and fruit cups. Churches were waiting on standby to help evacuated residents. Firefighter's wives and families staffed the donation center at the Fire Hall and delivered items to the line. We have not even gotten through the disaster and already the wonderful people of Jack County are stepping up as always.

Now, smoke is getting thick over our property again and makes the fire seem closer. My heart is a little racy because I don't want to go through it again. Just to know that the brave men and women who volunteered for this danger-prone job of fighting fire, as well as the ones who have left their home counties to help us, paid or not, have an eternal place of honor in my heart.

What exemplary examples for our children to be watching! May God Bless You Some More!



CREATE A FIREWISE DAY CAMP THIS SUMMER

Created and sponsored by Firewise Communities®, YMCA Camp Orkila and Washington State University Master Gardeners worked together to create a curriculum designed for day campers of middle-school age. It's goal is to increase the understanding of wildfire among young adults and empower them to implement Firewise® practices around their homes and in their communities. Now the tools to create you own local Firewise Camp are being made available to you.

From the newly-constructed Firewise Fire Camp web site www.firewise.org/fire-camp it allows you to download the curriculum to learn what you'll need to prepare and conduct a one- or two-week day camp that will lead your campers on a path to discovery of the many facets of wildfire. A downloadable certificate is also available to provide your campers at the successful conclusion of the session. Visit the Firewise Catalog www.firewise.org/catalog to order supporting materials for the cost of shipping and handling, or to purchase low-cost items as prizes for campers.



'MY FIREWISE' DESERVES A VISIT

A Firewise Communities social network makes it easy for fire professionals, agencies, educators, and homeowners to connect on the issue of wildfire protection online.

MyFirewise has already grown to more than 300 users. "It is really exciting," said Judith Leraas Cook, project manager for Firewise Communities/USA. "The site enables interested parties across the nation to discuss best practices in real time."

Each of the more than 463 recognized Firewise Communities/USA sites in 37 states is represented through its own network on MyFirewise. Members can use the site to upload videos, pictures, and post discussion questions pertaining to wildfire mitigation. The Firewise Communities/USA recognition program (see www.firewise.org/usa) encourages voluntary action by residents to reduce their wildfire risks.

The MyFirewise site also features links to Firewise landscaping tips as well as instructional videos for community members to reference when working to modify wildfire hazards around their homes and within their neighborhoods.

Leraas Cook says an interactive educational tool is what the new network is designed to be. "Firewise was built around the idea that communities can work together to help prevent wildfire loss. MyFirewise takes this concept and applies it to the online space. People from all parts of the United States can now share stories of their wildfire mitigation challenges and successes with ease."

To join in, go to <http://network.firewise.org/>. Anyone interested in wildfire protection is welcome to participate.

