



BIGHORN BASIN FIRESMART



BIGHORN BASIN FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

ISSUE #37 — EARLY 2021

YEAR 2020 FIRESMART ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2020 the Washakie County Firesmart Program administered two U.S. F.S. NFP WUI Grants (2017 & 2018), and one Community Assistance on Adjacent lands Funding Grant (2017 CAFA).

Accomplishments under the NFP grants include: 32.5 acres of hazardous fuels treatments along the Bighorn River; three defensible space projects completed around homes and cabins in the WUI; 40 acres of slash piles burned; ten Wildfire Mitigation Plans (WMPs); three quarterly Firesmart Newsletters (reaching approximately 1,800 recipients); 50 structure ignitability assessments; 289 persons reached regarding the Ready, Set, Go! Program; a Firesmart website and Facebook Page with regular posts and blogs regarding Wildfire mitigation and the Wildland Urban Interface.

Accomplishments under the 2017 CAFA grant include burning slash piles from previous fuel treatment, and the award of a 73 acre fuelbreak contract to Summit Forestry from Oregon. The fuelbreak will treat hazardous fuels in the Onion Gulch community-at-risk adjacent to Canyon Creek Country in the Bighorn National Forest. Work will occur in the summer of 2021.



YEAR 2021 FIRESMART GOALS

Goals for the NFP grants for 2021 include: the development of comprehensive forest plans (LFSP) for the Tensleep Preserve and Tolman Ranch properties (approximately 10,000 acres); 100 acres of hazardous fuels treatments in high priority communities-at-risk; and continued public outreach through the Firesmart Newsletter, website, and Facebook page.

Firesmart information and all newsletter issues are available at:

www.bighornbasinfiresmart.com

<u>In this issue</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Special points of interest</u>
2020 Firesmart accomplishments	1	* 2021 Firesmart plans
Firewise/Firesmart Coordinators	2	* Reducing fire risk on your property
Oregon 2020 fire observations	3	* Working with your neighbors
Reducing outside home fire hazards	4	* From State Farm Insurance
A few Little Things That Matter	7	* Around a historic mountain cabin
Firewise Communities	6-7	* Project ideas and funding
City of Worland Fuels Reduction	8	* BEFORE and AFTER photos

NOTES FROM AFTER OREGON'S 2020 DAMAGING WILDFIRES

After the fall 2020 Oregon wildfires burned more than 1,300 square miles, destroyed large parts of a half dozen small forested communities, and killed a dozen people, wildfire experts from Oregon State University shared their evaluations. Their key observations were the need for homeowners and communities to:

1. Create defensible space around homes, and clear fuels within communities.
2. Build and maintain fire-adapted housing.
3. Plan and share evacuation routes.
4. *Work together, as neighbors often survive or burn as a unit.*

They considered #4 a major item. Below is the “Working With Your Neighbors” segment from the PNW publication “Reducing Fire Risk on Your Forest Property” (PNW 618) mentioned on Page 2 of this newsletter.

Note that all of the observations are consistent with being *Firewise Communities/USA®*

10. Working with Your Neighbors

Working with your neighbors to address wildfire management issues can be as simple as agreeing to maintain a common driveway and as complex as developing a landscape management plan that encompasses your property and that of your neighbors. While much can be accomplished on individual properties, working at a neighborhood scale can yield even greater benefits. Neighbors may include other private landowners, as well as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). These agencies have mandates to work with local communities to address wildfire risk and fuels concerns. Take advantage of this!

Specific activities you can undertake on a neighborhood basis include the following:

- Develop an emergency phone tree. List all residents (those wishing to participate) and their phone numbers. Have an agreed-upon procedure for contacting those on the list. This can be a great way of disseminating information during a wildfire and other emergencies.
- Develop a neighborhood evacuation plan. Identify a safe zone (for example, an open field) where residents can congregate in case evacuation is needed. Address special needs (evacuation of animals, elderly residents, etc.).
- Share equipment.
- Identify and map firefighting resources (ponds, *pump chances*, equipment, and so on).
- Work with local agencies to identify key neighborhood resources at risk and develop plans to protect them. Create a map showing location of roads, water sources, bridges, and tactically important locations.
- Create a neighborhood-scale fuels reduction plan. Identify tactically important locations for fuels



Marty Main, Small Woodland Services.

Figure 32. Neighbors work with a professional forester to discuss fuels reduction options.

treatments such as ridgetops, major access roads, and the like. Identify areas that are particularly vulnerable, for example a group of dwellings on a steep, overgrown access road.

- Work with neighbors and other stakeholders to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), if one has not already been developed for your area. A CWPP identifies and prioritizes hazardous fuels treatments in a community and recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability. It is prepared through a collaborative effort involving local and state government representatives, federal agencies, and other interested parties. CWPPs help communities obtain federal grants for fuels reduction projects. They also influence how federal agencies address fuels reduction treatments in the wildland-urban interface.
- Update your plans on an annual basis.

From **State Farm** insurance: **How you can reduce outside home fire hazards**

Simple maintenance and good practices can make the outside of your home more fire resistant.

When most people hear the words “fire safety,” they probably think of in-home smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems. But fire resistant exterior protection can be just as important to help minimize the risks of starting or spreading fires in homes. Fortunately, there are some doable, concrete steps every homeowner can take to decrease the risk of fire hazards outside. Here’s what to do.

Practice safe grilling—The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends keeping grills and fire pits at least three feet away from houses and from anything else that can burn. In addition, never leave an in-use grill or fire pit unattended. Fully douse any flames with water, or cover with sand, until completely cool.

Leave fireworks to the pros—Each year, hospitals treat over 9,000 injuries resulting from fireworks. Even in states where fireworks are legal, FEMA suggests attending public fireworks shows instead of producing your own pyrotechnics display. Sparks from fireworks can burn as hot as 2000°, leading to risk of burns or embers landing on your home or other structures.

Keep your home clear of debris and vegetation—Fire can spread to a home from dead branches, dried leaves or even mulch. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) advises homeowners to keep their roofs and gutters clear of leaves, pine needles or other debris that could catch embers. Also, anything that can burn (including flammable plants, mulch and firewood piles) should be moved away from exterior walls. And keep lawns trimmed to four inches to prevent the potential spread of fire.

Trim your trees—The NFPA advises pruning trees up to six to ten feet from the ground (or up to one-quarter of the overall height of shorter trees) to prevent surface fires from reaching the crowns. Trees should be planted so that mature canopies are at least 10 feet away from the home structure, too.

Protect against embers--Hot embers can make their way into a home through tiny nooks and crannies. Once they’ve lodged themselves in an attic or floated through a window, they can set the entire structure ablaze. To keep embers out of the house, replace any loose or missing shingles or roof tiles, install noncombustible leaf and debris guards over gutters constructed of noncombustible materials and repair or replace any broken windows or screens.



A FEW LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER

The historic Southern Bighorns cabin pictured has more than one feature that is not Firesmart. Corrections of three problems would be easy. The fourth is more complex.



The large ponderosa pine overhangs the roof, and crowds the side of the cabin. **(#1) Limbs should be removed to give 10-12 feet of clearance horizontally and vertically from the cabin sides and roof. (#2) Pruning all trees up to ten feet above the ground is prescribed for within 100 feet of this structure.**



Highly flammable Juniper is within Zone Two of the cabin wall. **(#3) All juniper should be removed from within 30 feet of this structure, and probably from within 100 feet as a precaution. Keeping the grass mowed within this zone is also recommended.**

The weathered logs and crude pole structure are ember traps in the event of a wildfire. Since replacing or covering the logs with something more Firesmart is not practical to maintain the historical appearance, **(#4) logs should have all loose bark and slivers removed, cracks and gaps wider than 1/4 inch should be filled, and all of the bare wood sealed, preferably with a fire-resistant coating. Replacing the pole structure with sealed poles is also recommended.**

A secondary requirement would be removing forest litter (twigs and needles) from within 3 feet of the log walls, and keeping that area cleared down to bare soil, or adding a 3-foot wide gravel strip completely around the structure.

A WMP Progress Report



BEFORE TREATMENT

Treatment was accomplished with a "track-hoe" without the need for hand work. This "cost-share project met the Firesmart intent and the landowner's vegetation management objectives.

The prescribed treatment on this completed small Wildfire Mitigation Plan along the Bighorn River was removal of all Russian olive and tamarisk (salt cedar).

AFTER TREATMENT



Firewise Communities/USA®

Recognition Program—Part Two

Continued from Firesmart #36



Grants and Funding - Although your county's Firewise/Firesmart program can directly provide limited financial assistance, other funding can be helpful in accomplishing many Firewise mitigation activities. This page highlights grants and funding opportunities for individuals, homeowners, community groups, and fire services seeking financial assistance to implement Firewise Community mitigation projects.

Firewise mitigation activities—The source and amount of financial assistance for Firewise mitigation activities will vary depending on the type of application and request. Examples of Firewise mitigation activities include:

- Thinning/pruning/tree removal/brush clearing on private property
- Retrofitting a house to replace roofing or siding with noncombustible materials
- Managing private forest lands
- Organizing a community slash pickup or chipping day
- Creating or improving roads for better access/egress
- Improving the water supply for firefighting
- Educating the public through sponsored activities or events throughout the community

Types of available grants—There are many types of grants and financial resources available on the federal, regional, state, and local level. In addition to public agency grant opportunities, private organizations may also sponsor or offer financial assistance for Firewise mitigation activities.

Government - Your county Firewise Coordinator has information about federal, state, regional, and local government grants and cost-share funds to reduce wildfire threats.

Additional resources—Get tips on the grant-writing process and other grant search engines.

Don't forget—Many Firewise activities help homes and neighborhoods become safer from wildfire without requiring a significant financial investment. Community clean-up days, awareness events, and other cooperative activities can be successfully accomplished through partnerships among neighbors, local businesses, and local fire departments, at little or no cost. The Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program provides examples of these projects and programs.



Project Ideas - Projects to reduce wildfire risk and increase preparedness can be accomplished by a broad range of ages; and come in a variety of time commitments, with some as short as a few hours. You might be asking - what can I do in one day to be safer from wildfire? And the answer is a lot!

To help get you started, page 5 has a list of project ideas for individuals and groups. With the youngest participants in mind, most can be accomplished without power tools or monetary costs.

A few ideas for community or neighborhood projects based on standard Firewise principles:

- ⇒ Distribute wildfire safety information to neighbors, or staff a table at a grocery or hardware store (other high-traffic locations work too) and distribute free Firewise and emergency preparedness materials that can be ordered from the Firewise catalog or from [READY.gov](https://www.ready.gov).
- ⇒ Visit the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association site, and download free home inventory software. Work together as a family to videotape and take photos of your possessions – that way you'll have the insurance documentation needed to replace belongings.
- ⇒ Collect downed tree limbs and broken branches and take them to a disposal site, or join forces with neighbors and pool your resources to pay for a chipper service to remove slash.
- ⇒ Develop and practice neighborhood home evacuation plans.
- ⇒ Evaluate your address numbers, and build and implement a plan so they are visible from the street at night and under extreme weather conditions.
- ⇒ Contact your local Office of Emergency Management and ask if your jurisdiction requires individuals to register cell phones to receive emergency notifications on mobile devices.
- ⇒ Work with neighbors to develop a phone tree that can be used to alert everyone about a fire or evacuation. **A reverse 911** may need to be established!
- ⇒ Using social media or text messaging, pick a day and send hourly Firewise and Emergency Preparedness tips to your contacts and friends.
- ⇒ Do group working visits to help elderly neighbors make and keep their homes Firewise.
- ⇒ You can invest time, or organize a group to help a neighbor that needs assistance getting work completed. Wildfire safety also means making others aware, and there's plenty of options for that too.
- ⇒ Organize a Wildfire Community Preparedness Day in coordination with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).
- ⇒ Hold a garage sale or other fund-raiser, and donate the proceeds to the local fire department's wildland fire team.
- ⇒ Take a walk through your neighborhood gardens, and see which types of Firewise plants work best in your landscaping. Get a list of Firewise plants.
- ⇒ Before getting started, make sure everyone has reviewed the safety gear and safety tips information in the Firewise Community website



The primary website for the Firewise Community program can be accessed at

<http://www.firewise.org/communities.aspx>

If you are interested in becoming part of a designated Firewise Community after you have read these two pages, and those in Firesmart #36, contact your county's Firesmart/Firewise Coordinator (Page Two) to help you get started.

City of Worland East Bank Fuels Reduction Project—BEFORE & AFTER



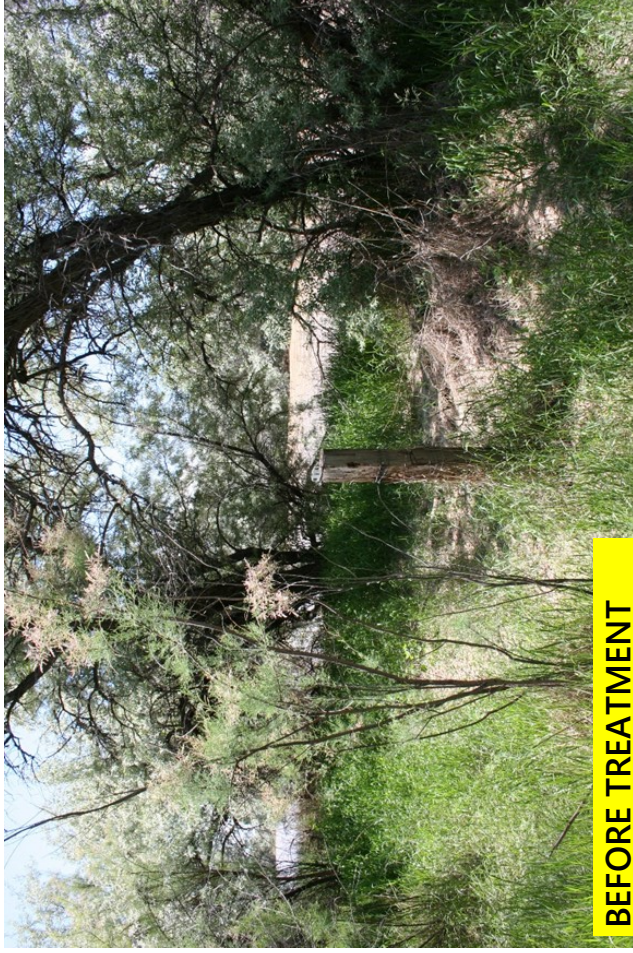
BEFORE TREATMENT



AFTER TREATMENT

The prescribed treatment for this 22-acre project along the Bighorn River was:

- ◇ Thinning all native vegetation to give a crown width of space between trees.
- ◇ Where possible, cottonwood, boxelder, green ash, and willow were left for wildlife
- ◇ Remove all Russian olive and tamarisk (salt cedar), and herbicide the stumps.
- ◇ Pile all cut tree parts smaller than 8 inches in diameter for later burning



BEFORE TREATMENT



AFTER TREATMENT

Ground cover vegetation started recovering soon after these AFTER photos were taken.