



BIGHORN BASIN FIRESMART

BIGHORN BASIN FIRESWISE COMMUNITIES



ISSUE #10—WINTER 2012-2013

A FEW INFLUENCES ON FUTURE FIREWISE and YOU

According to newspaper reports, 2012 was “Wyoming’s Worst Fire Season.” The 1,300 wildfires burned 600,000 acres; twice that of a “normal” year. These fires burned more than 100 homes and cabins, plus additional outbuildings. See page 3.

As a direct result of the thousands of home and cabins burned during the wildfires of the last few years, some insurance companies are requiring that wildland cabins and homes in the wildland urban interface (WUI) have an approved and implemented Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) before they can be insured. This requirement has recently been applied to some properties in Wyoming. See page five of this newsletter for more on insurance for wildfires.

In other parts of the country, the cost of fire protection for rural properties has gotten so high that specific new taxes/fees are being collected on rural properties in unincorporated areas where resident’s property taxes are already paying for fire protection. This hasn’t arrived in Wyoming.



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THE BIG HORN BASIN FIREWISE COORDINATORS ARE:

Big Horn County: The County Fire Warden is Brent Godfrey (307) 568-2324. The Firewise Coordinator is Chris Weydeveld, cweydeveld@wytfs.com, Technical Forestry Services, LLC, 6628 W. Riverside Dr. Casper, Wyoming 82604, or (307) 333-1098 (office), (307) 272-9533 (mobile).

Washakie County: Chris Kocher, Fire Warden, ckocher@worlandfire.org, P.O. Box 504, Worland, Wyoming 82401, or (307) 347-6379.

Hot Springs County: No Firewise Coordinator has yet been selected. Contact Jay Duvall, County Fire Warden, at (307) 921-1485, or hscdwarden@gmail.com

Park County : Bernie Spanogle, Firewise Coordinator, can be reached at pcfirerwise@gmail.com. or at 307-250-9387. The County Fire Warden is Russ Wenke, rwenke@parkcounty.us, 1131 11th Street, Cody, Wyoming 82414, or (307) 527-8551.- <http://codyconservationdistrict.com/firewise.php>

If you have general or specific questions about Firewise, two good online sources of answers are: www.firewisewyoming.com and www.livingwithfire.com.

Do you have topics you would like included in future newsletters? Please submit your suggestions and comments to gwynn@wytfs.com, cweydeveld@wytfs.com, to Chris at any of the above phone numbers, or by mail to G. Wynn, 824 Country Club Road, Casper, Wyoming 82609.

Thanks for providing funding for this newsletter go to the Wyoming State Forestry Division, the Big Horn County Fire Warden, and the U.S. Forest Service.

This newsletter is provided as a service of your county's Firewise Coordinator. If you choose not to receive future issues, please respond to the E-mail address that delivered it, or to G. Wynn by mail.



GREYBULL FIREWISE VOLUNTEER DAY 9/27/2012

Fifteen Big Horn County Firewise volunteers and Big Horn County Weed & Pest crew members spent most of a day in the Greybull riverside fuel treatment area cutting Russian olive and tamarisk sprouts, and spraying them with herbicide to kill these invasive plants.



This was the next phase of the 36 acre fuels mitigation project within the town of Greybull. Slash burning will occur when conditions permit this winter. Funding for the 120 gallons of herbicide mix was provided by Big Horn County, and the City of Greybull.

The text below comes directly from the Fall 2012 issue of the Casper Mountain Forest Stewardship Association's Natrona County Mountain "NEW" newsletter. It was written soon after the September Shepherder Hill Fire that burned more than 15,000 acres on and adjacent to Casper Mountain. The fire destroyed a tallied 37 seasonal homes, cabins, and trailers, plus another 23 outbuildings. Many more structures were damaged or threatened. Conditions on that portion of the mountain were very similar to rural communities and mountain cabin groups in the Bighorn Basin. Note Mr. Weaver's emphasis on the basic Firewise principles of maintaining "Defensible Space" around all structures.



This landowner implemented defensible space zone improvements. The Shepherder Hill fire burned around the structure on all sides.

As many of you probably know, I work part-time as the Natrona County Wildfire Mitigation coordinator. In that role, I work with landowners in setting up defensible space zones around their homes and cabins. Because of this, and my lifelong knowledge of Casper Mountain, I was tasked with triaging structures during the Shepherder Hill Fire. Working in that capacity I had to quickly visit every structure that potentially could burn during the fire spread. In a short period of time I had to look at whether the structures could be defended by firefighting personnel and possibly saved. Some of the criteria, was to see if the structure had defensible space for 100 feet around the home or cabin, a wide enough road to allow fire trucks to safely access the structure and quickly get out if the fire got too close. I also looked to see if there was firewood, scrap lumber or other combustibles piled next to or near the structure. If the structure had excessive needles on the road, firewood or other combustibles stacked against or near the structure, limited defensible space and or a narrow road that would inhibit a fire truck entering or leaving I had the flag the structure's road to signal firefighting personnel not to enter, but to bypass the structure and go to the next one. The bottom line in this decision was to be able to save the structure but not put firefighting personnel at risk of injury or death. This triage process is referred to as red ribbon, green ribbon. The red ribbon indicates to stay out of that area because it is too dangerous and the green ribbon signals firefighters to attempt to save the structure. As you can imagine these decisions are not made easily especially when it is your friends and neighbors homes and cabins that will be affected.

Following the fire, we traveled into the burned areas and found that many of the structures that had survived the firestorm of Sunday afternoon and Monday had defensible space around the home or cabin. The process of reducing ground fuels and increasing the distance between tree crowns had caused the fire to burn around those buildings, leaving them unharmed. So it became obvious in this fire and in many other catastrophic fires we have seen in the region this summer, that defensible space around structure can save that building from loss.

Following the fire, I used GIS to overlay the Jackson Canyon Fire and the Shepherder Hill Fire perimeters onto a map of Casper Mountain (included in this newsletter). In that analysis I found that Casper Mountain covers approximately 34,000 acres. The two fires we've had in the last six years burned 18,600 acres. That leaves the center of Casper Mountain, 15,300 acres, unburned by fire.

From my work with landowners creating defensible space through our Firewise program and the two days of working to save structures during the Shepherder Hill Fire, I have seen that defensible space around building can save the structure even if firefighting personnel are not there to aid in the structure's defense. As a result of this, I would urge all Casper Mountain landowners to contact the Natrona County Wildfire Mitigation Project (Natrona Firewise), 234-6116, to visit with us about establishing defensible space around your structure. This process is a doable fix, with cost share grants available to guarantee your home or cabin will be available for you and your families use for many generations to come.

Written By Sam Weaver,
CMFSA President

Under-deck flammables

A burning wooden deck or stairway may catch the rest of the house on fire. The best way to keep that from happening is to clean flammable material out from beneath exterior wooden decks and stairways.

Firewood and lumber need to be removed. Dry needles, leaves and other litter needs to be raked out and removed.

Keeping the space under wooden decks and stairways clean — and enclosed — is one of the best ways to keep a house safe during fire season. ❁



A wildfire often starts in dry leaves, needles or grass, which may quickly spread to heavier fuels, such as firewood and lumber stored beneath a deck.



A forest fire like this one (right) can send tons of glowing debris skyward. If your property is downwind of an inferno like this, expect lots of hot stuff to land in your yard and on your roof, and to drift under your deck.



The above illustration is based on one provided by the Oregon Department of Forestry. Their Firewise program has created several illustrations that are appropriate for the Firewise program in our area, and has given permission to use them for Bighorn Basin Firesmart.

The section below came directly from Foothills Observer, the Fremont County Firewise Program newsletter. While some of the wording mentions Fremont County specifically, the content has direct application to **all** residents and cabin holders in every Bighorn Basin community and mountain cabin group. Special thanks to the author, Ron Wempen, Fremont County Firewise Coordinator, for allowing use of this article in Bighorn Basin Firesmart.



Wildfire Insurance ???

People don't always realize the dangers of living with wildfire and they don't always see the potential for losing their homes to wildfire.

Everyone has at least some level of insurance coverage on your property and possessions, but when was the last time you sat down with your agent to see exactly what your coverage is? I bet like most, you have not done this for quite some time, even after receiving a post card asking you too.

According to the data supplied by the National Interagency Fire Center, nationally on average there are 2600 homes destroyed by wildfire each year in the

United States.

I know this is not the first time this has been brought up, but the local Firewise office is fielding more and more calls from owners who have had evaluations completed by their insurance carrier, and conditions did not meet insurance standards. It seems that national *corporate* insurance companies are conducting some inspections of rural properties. They are not just looking at risk of wildfire issues, but general construction issues also. When the insurance company finds the property to be "at risk" during the "brush" evaluation, the Firewise office gets a panic phone call.

Insurance companies have denied insurance to residents here in Fremont County because of not having defensible space. It would also be wrong to assume these were extreme cases, because they were not. In our opinion, just average situations we find here locally.

Firewise recommends that you contact your agent for advice about your situation to avoid surprises later. A few tips on things to ask are:

- Does your insurance policy provide coverage against wildfire losses?
- Does your insurance policy provide coverage for additional living costs in the event that you are forced out of your home due to wildfire damage?
- Does your insurance policy provide coverage for farm/ranch or other

business resources being at risk from wildfire? Lost crops, live-stock feed, live-stock buildings or handling equipment, ect...

- Does your policy provide for soot and smoke damage and clean up?
- Does my policy provide enough coverage for the value of my property at today's value?

Don't let wildfire take you by surprise. Review your insurance policy, implement a plan of action if necessary, and be prepared well ahead of time.

Folks in the Casper and Douglas areas of Wyoming will tell you that it makes a difference, they had fires this year.



This process is not a 100% solution, but can protect **some** individual pine trees from bark beetles, if the tree has adequate spacing in relation to other surrounding trees. To be effective, a rule of thumb would be that the sprayed trees be at least a crown width away from other trees, or in well-spaced two or three tree clumps.

SPRING SPRAYING OF PINE TREES

Get ready to apply preventive chemicals to your pine trees this spring. Wyoming State Forestry recommends that residents spray their pine trees starting in early June this year; even earlier if your area has a warm and dry spring.

While mountain pine beetle populations have dissipated in some forests statewide, firewood and raw log transport and natural beetle flight continue to place pine trees in communities and elsewhere at risk for attack. Preventive insecticides applied from the ground to the top terminal all the way around the circumference of the main stem using insecticides specifically labeled for mountain pine beetle have shown good results in keeping trees alive through this beetle epidemic.

All species of pine are susceptible including lodgepole pine, ponderosa pine, Austrian pine, Scotch pine, mugho pine, pinyon pine, and limber pine. Any pine tree with a trunk diameter of four inches or greater is a candidate for spraying, although it is usually best to only spray trees such as those on your landscape with the largest diameters or the nicest crowns. The most popular insecticides are chemicals with the active ingredient carbaryl. The trade names include SEVIN XLR Plus, Sevin SL, and Carbaryl 4L. Although these are not restricted-use pesticides, they are not over-the-counter products either, but can be purchased from a chemical distributor and are usually available at County Weed and Pest offices.

Other options include products with the active ingredient permethrin. Trade names for this product include Astro and Hi-Yield 38 Plus. These two products are available over-the-counter; check your local nursery and home improvement and garden stores for availability. Regardless of which product you use, read the label for instruction that specifically states preventive trunk-treatment application for mountain pine beetle.

Remember to apply the chemical to the main stem to the point of runoff. Avoid spraying on excessively windy or hot days. You might consider hiring a tree-spraying company licensed by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture. Feel free to call Wyoming State Forestry at 777-5495 if you need additional information.



From the Summer 2012 issue of **WYOMING TREE NEWS**

PROPER FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Wyoming State Forestry Division conducts forest management on forested state trust lands and promotes the same techniques to private forest landowners. There are many benefits to actively managing a forest including financial gain through the sale of wood products, promoting long-term enjoyment of a forest, enhancing forest health and long-term wildlife habitat, improving aesthetics, providing safe recreational opportunities, and modifying wildland fire behavior.



Before and after pictures of precommercial thinning in lodgepole pine. In the thinned stand resources are allocated to a limited number of the best trees, resulting in increased health and vigor of the forest stand.

One of the underlying objectives of forest management is to keep forests from becoming too dense from too many trees. Thinning a forest - reducing the number of trees on a forested acre - can ultimately lead to all of the benefits as previously mentioned. Forest thinning increases the spacing between leave trees thus enhancing tree growth by decreasing the competition that is prevalent when there are too many trees per acre. Cutting green trees is often not favored by private forest landowners but can result in more diverse and beautiful forests that are better able to withstand disturbances such as bark beetle outbreaks and wildfires. Contact Wyoming State Forestry Division if you would like to learn more about proper forest management practices for your property.

ONE MORE LITTLE THING THAT COUNTS

And it's not just what is outside your buildings. The photo shows windblown leaves in the corner of a garage or shed. If the door is open, doesn't fit tight with the walls or floor, or has wide cracks, this is a good spot for embers to catch the building on fire. A workshop vacuum cleaner does a good job removing this hazard.



AND ANOTHER LITTLE THING THAT COUNTS



GOOD

Cinders are a good Firewise border around your home or cabin.



BAD

But they must be kept clear of flammable materials to be effective.

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