

FireSafe Montana

Fall Newsletter 2011

This year, as with past La Niña years brought the Northwest Rockies region increased precipitation. Montana's fire season arrived later than usual and the fire preparedness message during Wildfire Preparedness Month fell onto many communities still dealing with the devastating effects of spring floods.

La Niña cycles, followed by a growing trend of hot a dry summers increases the chance that Montana will have more fire on the landscape. It is crucial that preparing for fire is not a one-time effort, but an adaptation to the cycles of the natural habitats of Montana. In Montana we are seeing the result of increased drought, wildfire, insect and disease outbreaks, and water shortages from reduced snowpack and spring runoff (WFLC Brief 2010).

The future health and sustainability of our forests, grasslands, and human communities is integrally tied to adapting to the changing environmental and social trends. Mitigation around human communities and restoration of the natural environment have become an increasing priority in national policy.

Fire adapted communities is a program formed from the National Cohesive Wildland Fire management Strategy. It is a recently coined phrase that bridges forest stewardship practices, fire preparedness such as the creation of survivable space, Firewise landscaping, housing retrofits, and community hazard planning. As it implies in the name, fire adapted communities capitalizes on the strength of collaboration among individuals, their community, and professional partners.

In a broader sense, Fire Adapted Communities encompasses not only aspects of restoring ecosystem health, building community capacity, increasing the chances that the community will survive a wildfire, but it also absorbing the efforts to utilize surrounding biomass for green energy and local building projects.



Picture of the FireSafe Montana Board 2011.
Front Row: Pat McKelvey, Rocky Infanger, Jake Kreilick, Don Lorenzen, Jennifer Mayberry. Back Row: Byron Bonney, Jon Trapp, Bruce Suenram, Bill Swope, Sonny Stiger, Dick Rath, and Bob Fry.
Not pictured Jim Nethercott.

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FireSafe Montana New Financial Reporting

FireSafe Montana recently hired Wolf Creek Office Support to help manage our accounts to ensure proper reporting on our Federal Tax Form 990. Michele Infanger has been a great asset to our team. All monies spent, gained, and allocated to FireSafe Montana are meticulously tracked and placed in appropriate project and expense account. For a detailed account of finances, please contact Don Lorenzen, FireSafe Montana Treasurer at: don.lorenzen.be5s@statefarm.com.

Thank you to all of our funders:



And Sponsors for helping to make Montana fire safe!:



FireSafe Montana's Year in Review

This year, FireSafe Montana said good bye to their first Executive Director Matt Wolcott. During his year stint with FireSafe Montana, he was able to break new ground in many counties across the state. Matt was tasked with identifying programs and projects to bring in new funding to FireSafe Montana as well as expand our area of influence. Matt is now the Southern Area Land Manager for the DNRC. In his place, FireSafe Montana welcomed new Director Jennifer Mayberry. Jennifer Mayberry just received her Masters in Social Science and Natural Resource Management from Humboldt State University.

FireSafe Montana significant Accomplishments May 2010-October 2011

- Fifty Thousand “Living With Fire” Brochures were printed and many have been delivered around the state for distribution.
- Numerous news paper articles as well as “opeds” were done this quarter with exposure to tens of thousands of people.
- FSM worked with the Lessons Learned Center and the Painted Rocks FSC to produce a video titled “One Third Mile to Safety. The video chronicles the story of a family in California who lost a family member due to their late evacuation from a wildfire. The video exemplifies the need to prepare and evacuate early.
- *1/3 Mile to Safety* videos were shipped to an Engine Captain in Michigan, a Natural Resource Agent in Taos, New Mexico and a FireSafe Council in Southern California.
- FSM was able to secure a grant via the DNRC and through the USFS to help design and implement the Title III County Outreach and Education program. To date FireSafe has worked in 3 Counties.
- Firefighters in Granite County have done 92 wildfire home hazard assessments on properties around their county bringing \$13,800 to use for their Volunteer Fire Department
- FSM commented on pending legislation that give guidance to Montana counties about Firewise construction and building codes.

Year in Review Continued



FSM commented on various proposed legislation and changes to the state recommendations for counties in mitigating wildfire hazards during planning and construction in the Wildland Urban Interface.

- FSM participated in the IAFC WUI Conference in Reno, The NRCG Prevention Conference in West Yellowstone, The MACD Conference in Billings, The IAWF Conference in Missoula, The NRWCA Conference in Bozeman.
- FSM presented “Beetle Kill and Wildfire Firefighter Safety Observations” at the IAWF Safety Conference in Missoula
- FSM coordinated efforts directly with over 1,000 organizations in 2010 and 2011
- Information about Wildfire Preparedness Month and safety went out in over 52 newspapers statewide with an estimated 343,000 people reached.
- FSM participated as a member of the National Fire Strategy, Cohesive Strategy Western Working Group.
- FSM added 10 functioning FireSafe Councils
- FSM reached over 4,000 people in 49 of the 50 U.S. States (except Arkansas), 5 continents and 35 countries through our website.
- The Executive Director briefed the Governor at his annual fire season brief on the progress year to date and the plans and programs for the remainder of the year.
- FSM had a booth at the Western, Eastern, and State Fairs. We were able to get News and Media press for FSM and recognition for BLM and the Community Assistance Grant Program.
- At the fairs FSM representative was able to talk with over 50 individuals and hand out over 200 Living With Fire Brochures and Firewise materials.
- Having a presence at Fairs helped spark connections with local chapters of organizations such as NOAA, Audubon, Forest Service, DES, as well as building our partnership with State Farm and Farmers insurance Companies.
- 3 Kick off meetings for Native FireSafe Council project with BIA. Blackfeet, Flathead, and Fort Peck are interested in pursuing council formation.
- FSM partnered with the Montana Wilderness Association and the Rattlesnake Watershed Group in an educational outreach program in the Rattlesnake neighborhood. The Rattlesnake is a priority area for the Missoula Area FSC. There were over 150 attendees.
- FSM sent letters and informational DVDs to the top 30 insurance companies that work in Montana. We are slowly making progress towards incorporating more insurance companies into FSM sponsorship.

Upcoming Events:

- Nov. 16 NRCG Fire Prevention and Education Fall Meeting
- Nov. 12 MSU Extension Forestry : Annual Forestry Mini College [.http://www.msuextension.org/forestry/fmc.htm](http://www.msuextension.org/forestry/fmc.htm)
- Nov. 14-18 Native FireSafe Council Meetings
- Feb. 28 FireSafe Montana’s 2012 Annual Meeting
- Feb. 29 Kick off : Communities and Wildfire Conference Series additional dates for Western and Eastern events TBA

A Word From the FireSafe Councils

Tri-County FireSafe Working Group

Tri-County FireSafe Working Group has completed 196 projects, 462.64 acres, and have made 261 contacts with individuals who have asked for and received an application. Paul Spengler discussed evacuations, 1/3 Mile to Safety, Living with Fire at the Helena Citizens Council. Tri-County's WSF grant has been passed on to the federal level for scoring. The Tri-County FS Working group has recorded "what you can do this fall and winter" message that is being aired on KMTX.

Whitefish

The following report was given by Mike Frost. WAFSC sponsored a Wildfire Awareness luncheon event at the Lodge at Whitefish Lake in June of this year, which was attended by 38 people. WAFSC's other activities this year include one of our members writing an article for the Whitefish Pilot about the Western Spruce Bud Worm and Tussock Moth infestation, and how this relates to forest health (please see copy of article attached). WAFSC also took out ads in the Whitefish Pilot, Hungry Horse News, Big Fork Eagle, and the Daily Inter Lake referring the public to the WAFSC website (WAFSC.com) for a list of Q&A's about this subject. All in all, WAFSC has had an active 2011 so far. We still have a few more things to do this year, and are beginning plans for 2012.

Lincoln County

Headed by Ed Levert, Lincoln County FireSafe Council has been a strong pillar for outreach and education throughout Lincoln County. Ed Levert recently held a meeting with collaborating partners to prioritize a plan for remaining Title 111 funds. To date, the Lincoln County FireWise Council in partnership with the Northwest RC&D have been able to effectively treat 1625 acres. Ed commented that his involvement has generally been to "grease the skids" so that when we apply for grants, we are confident that the community will be receptive and supportive. Ed commented that one of the initiatives of the council that he is particularly proud of their work in requiring FireWise assessments on all proposed sub-divisions. Further, sub division must implement the recommendations before final approval.

North Fork of the Flathead

Following is a report given by Molly Shepherd at the NFLA Business Meeting on Sept. 4. The DNRC recently notified the Fire Mitigation Committee that its grant proposal had been approved and that funding authority had been secured. The amount of the grant is approximately \$99,600. As with previous grants, monies will be disbursed on a cost-share basis, with the grant providing 75% of the cost of treatment and the landowner providing 25%. Landowner contributions may be "in-kind." The total value of the grant, including landowners' share, is approximately \$133,000.

Park County FireSafe Coalition

At this time the coalition is working on creating information packets for the public, interested individuals, subdivision developers, professionals (landscapers, builders, arborists, realtors, insurance), and local groups (HOA's and neighborhoods). We are also going to gathering information to create resource lists for those seeking contact information – fire departments, business, landowners, not mention a distribution list of locals who are interested in keeping up to date on what we are doing. Our Wildfire Preparedness Event in June was a great success at the Farmers Market in Livingston considering it was our first year as a council. Our future plans include: planning workshops for next spring and planning our campaign to spread the word and recruit councils in Park County.

Big Sky Natural Resource Council

The Big Sky FireSafe Council had a great Wildfire Preparedness Event/BBQ in June. The Big Sky Forest Stewardship Plan is complete and has a chapter on wildland fire and homes in the WUI. The Big Sky Natural Resource Council, which is a part of the Fire-Safe Council, plans on having a newsletter come out soon and a fire safe message included. Crystal Hagerman, coordinator for the council, also spoke at the Montana Association of Planners conference in Big Sky about what efforts are being done in Big Sky with regards to community protection from wildland fire. Future plans include planning spring workshops, landowner education, and treating acres through the Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program put on by the NRM-RC&D and Gallatin County Extension.

Glacier County FireSafe Council

The Glacier County FSC which will encompass Blackfeet FSC has been working closely with Glacier Park, North Central RC&D and the BLM to thin lodge pole stands around the entrance of East Glacier. They have had success on their initial projects and have plans in place for the next 40 acres. Glacier County FSC has also come many steps closer to accomplishing their # 1 priority of building an emergency access route over BNSF railroad. At their last meeting, we were able to gather all necessary partners to come to a consensus on where route should be.

***Please contact Jennifer Mayberry with updates from your council!**

Painted Rocks FireSafe Council

Saddle Fire Threatens Painted Rocks Fire District

The 17,000 acre area burned on August 22, 2011, looks like a moonscape after the extremely high intensity fire burned from Idaho to Montana. On the afternoon of August 22 the fire burned an average of almost 3000 acres per hour for six straight hours. The standing trees in places have neither branches or bark, looking like black and brown wood columns; and saplings were consumed to just remaining nubbins above the ground in places. There also were several large patches of blow down trees scattered through the burn, likely the result of the surfacing jet stream and/or strong fire-induced winds. Of course, the merging Saddle and Stud Fires were burning within extensive beetle-killed stands from the epidemic of the past few years.

From late August into September the Painted Rocks Fire District was under an Evacuation Notice due to the threat of the Saddle Fire that was about 5 miles away to the southwest. Residents were asked to be prepared to leave early should the Evacuation Notice become a Warning to leave immediately. The fire was managed under a Unified Command Team that consisted of a Northern Rockies Type 2 Team coupled with Painted Rocks Fire Chief Charles Scripps. The joint command of the fire worked well with good relations established between the Type 2 Team and the Painted Rocks Volunteer Fire Department.



Saddle Fire run in Woods Creek on September 5, 2011



Well attended Potluck held at Fire Station

During the course of the fire, the Painted Rocks area held two potlucks where FireWise materials were handed out to residents by the Painted Rocks and West Fork FireSafe Council. There also was a public meeting for residents one night where the Type 2 Team updated residents on the status of the Saddle Fire. Erica Tresemer handed out forms for the development of Wildfire Actions Plans for residents.

With wildfires directly threatening the Painted Rocks Fire District in 2000, 2007, and 2011, residents are repeatedly being motivated to continue the preparation of sound FireWise practices. During the 2011 threat to homes, firefighters from the Painted Rocks VFD surveyed at-risk properties and contracted with a tree care contractor to use weed eaters to reduce the hazard from the tall grass near homes that resulted from the wet spring.

Submitted by Bob Mutch, Chair, Painted Rocks and West Fork FireSafe Council.

Upcoming Elections for FireSafe Montana's Board of Directors

If you or someone you know has a passion for helping the citizens of Montana become prepared for wildfire please consider joining FireSafe Montana's Board of Directors.

FireSafe Montana, will have several positions opening up Spring 2012. Elections will be held February 28, 2012. For more information please contact FireSafe Montana execdir@firesafemt.org or (406) 431-8718.

FireSafe Montana

Communities and Wildfires Conference Series

You can't control the path of a hurricane or tornado, but you can reduce your potential of loss from wildfire.

Find out what FireSafe Montana and our partners can do to help you transform your community into a resilient fire safe community.

Not a member... find out how you can join our efforts on our website:
www.firesafemt.org



Three Locations:

Fairmont Hot Springs: February 28th and 29th, 2012

Columbus Fire Department:
March, 2012

Polson Fire Department:
April, 2012

More Details to come www.firesafemt.org
or call
(406) 431-8718



Save the Date

Our one day conferences in Polson and Columbus are an effort to offer valuable information from knowledgeable speakers accessible to all stakeholders. We also aim to provide the opportunity for folks to collaborate and identify key issues in their region as well as build steps and tools to address them.

The conference held at Fairmont will be geared toward leaders in wildfire preparedness offering new research and methodologies for addressing wildfire preparedness efforts throughout Montana.

Woody Biomass Research Grant to Launch Biofuel Industry in the Pacific Northwest

**USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Research Station**

Portland, OR: September 28, 2011

Contact: Eini Lowell, elowell@fs.fed.us, (503) 808-2072

Media assistance: Yasmeen Sands, (360) 753-7716, ysands@fs.fed.us

PORTLAND, Ore. September 28, 2011. A recently awarded U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant will help launch a viable, sustainable biofuels industry in the Pacific Northwest. The \$40 million grant to Washington State University, announced by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, will help the Nation develop renewable energy resources from forest byproducts such as wood chips and sawdust.

Washington State University has formed a partnership, the Northwest Advanced Renewables Alliance (NARA), that includes scientists from the Forest Service and other government laboratories, public universities, and private industry throughout the Northwest. Four teams will conduct research on feedstocks, conversion, systems metrics, and education and outreach.

Eini Lowell, a research forest products technologist at the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station, is a member of the outreach and extension team. The team plans to identify communities in each of the four states that comprise the NARA project (Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington) for possible development of biorefineries. The team will serve as a conduit between researchers and community stakeholders, helping to transfer the science and technology of biofuels and important co-products to economic development in Northwest communities.

"Our team believes in participatory planning and technology development to help build the biofuel industry in the Northwest," said Lowell. *"I'll be working on increasing public awareness and engagement activities to work for consensus among local communities whose livelihood is dependent on woody biomass."*

Lowell and the team will also, among other tasks, survey community stakeholders to strategically select three to four test-bed sites for studying the viability of a biofuel-based infrastructure.

"This project is important because it provides a perfect opportunity to address several critical issues, from decreasing the Nation's dependency on petroleum products to promoting resiliency and economic stability in forest-based communities," said Lowell.

The group will be conducting traditional extension activities, including providing workshops, Webinars, and newsletters, with the aim of helping communities and companies throughout the Northwest determine their role in building sustainable biofuels infrastructure and to move toward the establishment of a biofuels-based economy.

At the same time, NARA researchers will be forming regional alliances, identifying communities that might fit into the supply chain for a sustainable biofuels economy.

For more information about NARA, its work, and its partners is available at <http://www.nararenewables.org>.

BioMass Utilization. Stories from Montana...

□ BioMass utilization is a new term coined for age old practices. Fact, wood has been used for heat and structures for centuries. New, is the creation of machines to use wood by products effectively and efficiently for heat. In Montana, however the amount of wood by products from bark beetle infestations and fuel treatments still leaves many with excess wood. Here are a few Montana stories of how individuals and communities have used their resources effectively.

Converting Lodgepole Pine Mortality into Boards, Beams, and Carport

The Bitterroot in western Montana has been losing lodgepole pine to the mountain pine beetle for the past several years. Instead of making still more firewood out of recently killed trees, a resident in the Painted Rocks FireSafe Council area contracted with a portable saw mill owner to mill 3500 board feet of boards and beams for a carport during the summer of 2010. Slabs from the dying trees were burned later in the fall to control the pine beetles under the bark.

In October 2011, the milled beams were used to construct a carport. The carport dimensions are 14 feet wide by 20 feet long. Nine beetle-killed lodgepole logs were cut to 10-foot lengths, peeled, sanded, and stained to serve as the vertical support members. Each vertical log was secured to a concrete base and fastened to each other at the top with



lodgepole beams. Boards and beams cut from the dead lodgepole pine trees provided all of the wood needed to construct the carport. The only other wood product purchased for the project was plywood sheeting to go under the steel roof. The central ridge beam milled from lodgepole pine is 23 feet long and remained perfectly straight during the year of seasoning. Steel roof and gable end will be added.

From start to finish the carport took approximately three weeks to complete. By the end of October there will be a new carport on the resident's property, dubbed the Mountain Pine Beetle Memorial Carport.

Fuels for Schools: Case Study in Darby, Montana

Bergman, R and T. Maker (GTR-173, 2007)

To reduce the risk of catastrophic fires, the USDA Forest Service and its partners are developing practical, economic uses for forest thinning from National Forests and state and private lands in western states. Because mechanical thinning is costly, developing markets for removed wood as fuel for community energy applications is one way to support the economics of forest management while saving money for communities. By installing a wood heating system in the public schools in Darby, MT, the Fuels for Schools Program is demonstrating the potential of putting low quality wood residues to practical use in a rural forest-based community. The wood-fired heating system in stalled replaced three separate oil-fired system... the system has saved them approximately 20,000 dollars annually. However, the start up cost to build a boiler is quite substantial for the Darby school district it was 516,000. To read the rest of this study please go to <http://www.treesearch.fs.fed.us/pubs/28239>.

For more information of BioMass utilization please check out <http://dnrc.mt.gov/Forestry/Assistance/Biomass/>

Grant Opportunity to Check out!

FM Global Fire Prevention Grant

Grants for Fire Departments as well as national, state, regional, local, and community organizations. Grant applicants can apply for funding to support a wide array of fire prevention, preparedness and control efforts. For more information check out www.fmglobal.com under fire prevention grants or email firepreventiongrants@fmglobal.com.

**FSM thanks all
community and agency partners for their
continued
support!**



**Please Visit our website at
www.firesafemt.org or check us out
on Facebook!**