

# Franktown Fire Protection District Community Meeting



Franktown Fire Station 181  
1958 N. Highway 83  
Franktown, CO 80116

November 17, 2010  
7:00 p.m.

## **CWPP Core Team Members Present:**

Josh Keown, Douglas County Wildfire Mitigation  
Jill Alexander, Douglas County Wildfire Mitigation  
Kristin Garrison, Colorado State Forest Service  
Thomas Welle, Douglas County Open Space and Natural Resources  
Dave Woodrick, Larkspur Fire Protection District

## **Community Attendance:**

7 attendees signed in at the meeting. More attendees were observed in the audience that did not sign in. Attendees represented the communities of Russellville and Franktown. *There had been an HOA meeting of the Russellville HOA the previous week where 25-30 folks were in attendance and had a presentation on wildfire mitigation by Josh Keown.*

## **Meeting Proceedings:**

A presentation covering the following topics was given to the participants at the meeting: CWPP Background, Douglas County Process, Draft Hazard Map/Community Delineation, County Lands Assessment, Draft Fuel Treatments, and Next Steps.

After the presentation a general question and answer session was held and attendees reviewed maps. The meeting ended at approximately 9:00 p.m.

**Questions and Comments:** The following summarizes the questions and comments captured during the meeting.

- Question:** What can be done regarding absentee landowners and fuel accumulations? Is there public funding to deal with this type of a situation?

**Answer:** There is no public regulatory authority addressing absentee landowners in particular. It depends on what is in the HOA covenants if an HOA exists. Where there is no HOA or covenant enforcement some success has been generated through community projects. We can provide educational information that the HOA could provide to the landowner to increase awareness of the situation.
- Question:** Can someone come out and assess the hazard on our lot?

**Answer:** Yes, the Douglas County Mitigation staff and the Fire Protection District are available to complete hazard assessments upon request. The CSFS will come out and complete a hazard assessment but will charge for the service.
- Question:** How successful have efforts been to get people on board with mitigation?

**Answer:** There are many levels of success. Those communities with grass roots efforts who know and talk to their neighbors regularly have had successful community involvement and mitigation efforts. Those with top down efforts have larger challenges to raise awareness and motivate people to mitigation action. A great example of a successful community project is currently underway in the Deerfield and Pinewood Knolls area. The HOAs got together and approached the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). The community did not have a CWPP, but had the desire to do work and the ability to pay for a portion of the work. The CSFS had some cost share monies available that came with certain requirements including treating a minimum of 2 acres and following a set scope of work. Meadow Trail was a great place to see completed work. In addition to work being done within the community the Douglas County Open Space parcel in Pinewood Knolls will be treated using county funds. There has been an attitude shift for residents in Pinewood Knolls and Deerfield. They are more aware and have more favorable attitudes as they see more work completed. There has been very positive feedback from the Pinewood Knolls and Deerfield community. The CSFS is going to offer an after project workshop for the Pinewood Knolls and Deerfield community to help continue mitigation efforts.
- Comment:** Some people who are new to the area believe that the current vegetation is natural or in a natural state. They do not understand that the current vegetation state is unnatural *due to fire suppression and other human-caused factors*, natural fire regimes, and that things should look more park like. I believe there is more buy in from community members when forest health components are added to the mitigation mix.

**Response:** We plan on including the background information on forest health, current conditions, what is considered natural for local ecosystems in the CWPP. We will also look at including this information at future meetings and on the website.
- Comment/Question:** I strongly believe in this effort, but insurance companies did indeed cancel some homeowner policies based on the code. How will you address

this? *The commenter has served on the State Fire Marshall task force in California where he assisted with the adoption of the Wildland Urban Interface Code (WUIC).*

**Response/Answer:** This concern has been expressed in the past when different wildfire hazard assessments have been completed. It is important to realize that most insurance companies have their own assessments to determine policies and that there are a variety of wildfire hazard assessments available to the public. To our knowledge CWPPs locally have not been used by the insurance industry to assess homes and policies. Additionally, the hazard assessment and community rankings look only at general landscape scale hazard potential and not the specific hazard to each individual home in identified communities. The Douglas County CWPP will clearly state that it is not appropriate to make inferences about the hazard level of individual homes from this assessment. More, fine scale variables such as defensible space, access, and construction materials must also be factored in. Insurance companies often perform their own analysis by using tools such as aerial photos, ISO ratings, etc. Also, depending on the number of homes insured in certain vicinity, some insurance companies may be at a level of risk saturation in a particular area, which may affect their decision to insure.

- **Comment:** It is good to see the county taking the initiative to treat their own property.
- **Question:** Is there grant funding available for paying the landowner to do the work versus paying a contractor in order to keep costs down?  
**Answer:** It depends on the rules that come with the grant funding. Some grants will allow for that, but most of what we have seen lately has been strictly for paying a contractor. There are some other avenues to look at for reducing the cost of treatment including the use of the prison crews through the State of Colorado and the use of volunteer groups to assist or complete projects.
- **Comment:** In some subdivisions permits approved by the HOA are required for cutting trees.
- **Response (by HOA president):** That is most likely going to be amended to allow tree cutting for wildfire mitigation and forest health.
- **Comment:** The presentation did not clarify the position of wildlife agencies-are they a part of the CWPP?  
**Response:** The Division of Wildlife (DOW) has been contacted in regards to our CWPP process. DOW has been supportive of mitigation work in and around communities and are familiar with the prescriptions as they relate to impacts on wildlife. They are also supportive of the forest restoration work completed along the South Platte on the Denver Water property and on US Forest Service property. There are two habitat improvement projects funded through ARRA funding on State Wildlife area and another 35 acre development with a conservation easement held by DOW in an elk calving area where the habitat improvement prescriptions are similar to those of hazardous fuels reduction.

There have been population increases in some species treatment areas. Edge effect is important and Douglas County Open Space works closely with DOW to balance treatments. Not treating areas for forest health and or fire runs the risk of the area burning or being attack by insect and disease and losing the habitat. There may be temporary displacement of some species during treatments but they return once work has been completed. The types of treatments completed enhance plant communities and species that reside in the area.

- **Comment:** Too much carbon is being removed during treatments if all of the material is hauled away.  
**Response:** Most of the projects that have been completed involve mulching the trees on the stump and leaving the material on the ground. When timber harvests are involved there is a certain amount of material that is left on the ground so the carbon is not being removed from the site. Most projects do not involve a harvest due to a poor wood products industry.
- **Question:** If we were going to let people know about grant funding options what could we put as a general rule of thumb for cost-share? 50/50?  
**Answer:** There are different funding options available at different times with different requirements. Most of this money comes through the CSFS. It is good for CSFS to know what types of projects communities are interested in so they can offer the money when they know it is available. Costs per acre differ based on the complexity and the type of work. Most projects need to be identified in a CWPP to be eligible for funding. A good rule of thumb would be 50/50 cost share as we generally don't have many fully funded (no matching required) projects.
- **Question:** How many people have to agree on a localized plan? Just the HOA or everyone in the community?  
**Answer:** Community support is a large part of the planning process. Some HOA's will formally adopt/sign off on the plan after they feel the community has been heard. Not everyone in the community has to sign off, but all have to be given the opportunity to be involved and provide input.
- **Question:** What options are available for brush disposal?  
**Answer:** There is a County slash/mulch site located in Castle Rock open seasonally. Chipping onsite is always an option. Communities have also piled slash and hired a masticator to grind up the slash. The key is to not let the slash sit longer than a month or insect issues can increase the threat to standing trees (i.e. ips beetle).
- **Question:** How do we get started with some type of community program?  
**Answer:** Community chipping day/clean up day is a good way of getting started. Demonstration sites are also effective. They key is to start raising awareness of the issues with the members of the community.
- **Question:** What time of year should mitigation activities take place? *This question was asked in concern for pine beetle infestation.*

**Answer:** Most mitigation activities take place in the spring and summer when insects are active as this is the best weather for doing work. There have been some instances in the past where we have seen increase in insects in areas where mitigation activities have taken place due to the resins produced from chipping and cutting trees. These have been situations where there are active infestations of ips or mountain pine beetle in the area and they attacked trees in close proximity. Although there is always the potential to have increase insect activity the CSFS entomologists agree that mitigation work trumps beetle concerns. The important thing is to treat slash quickly and be aware of any active insect issues in the area. Slash accumulation can be a potential problem if left too long- ips beetle infestation is a possibility.

- **Question:** There are dense trees along the county right of way. How do we treat these trees not just for fire but forest health?

**Answer:** The County has a right of way tree removal policy through the Douglas County Operations Department. This is usually conducted on an as requested basis regarding roadside safety and maintenance issues, which often will complement forest health and fire mitigation efforts. *Due to the narrowness of right of ways, most of the time treating only trees in the right of way is not sufficient enough to reduce problematic fire behavior or significantly improve forest health. To have significant benefit, trees need to be thinned on private property as well to have an impact on fire behavior. CSFS minimum standard call for a 300' width of shaded fuel breaks.*