

Summit County Wildfire Council
Meeting Minutes
June 18, 2020
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.
Via Zoom Meeting

Attendees: John Drake, Steve Lipsher, Elisabeth Lawrence, Ashley Garrison, Jim Keating, Justin Conrad, Jim Curnutte, Sarah Thorsteinson, Tyler Campbell, Beth Huron, June Walters, Kathleen Gray, Jim Cox, Chapin LaChance, John Pershing, Ken Wiegand, Tony Jensen, Madelene McDonald, Brian Way, Catherine Schloegel, Dulci Jensen, Lisa Kendall, Kate Zander, Jen Barchers, Hoehn (RWB), Christian Nelson, Cody Horn, Ned West, Char Bloom, Maggie Hillman, Andy Held, Lisa Lewis, Gilly Plog, several other attendees who did not sign in.

- I. **Approval of Agenda:** The Chair opened the meeting at 1:30 p.m. The Council approved the meeting agenda without changes.
- II. **Approval of November 21, 2019 Minutes:** Ken Wiegand motioned to approve the November 21, 2019 minutes. The Council approved the minutes without changes.
- III. **Chipping Program Updates:** Kate Zander, chipping program seasonal employee, gave updates on the chipping program, which is now in its seventh year. Last week was the first full week of the 2020 schedule, with chipping starting north of Silverthorne. Ceres Landscaping is the contractor for the second consecutive year. Logistics have changed slightly this year, but the chipper will still make the rounds once through each neighborhood. Messaging emphasizes the importance of “knowing your week” so that people do not put wood out too early or miss the program altogether.
- IV. **2020 Grant Program Application Review and Discussion:** Ashley Garrison, Colorado State Forest Service Forester in Summit County, reviewed all 2020 grant applications and the recommendation each received during subcommittee review, which was conducted last week by representatives from the county, Red, White and Blue Fire, Summit Fire & EMS, and Colorado State Forest Service. The applications included eleven Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFR) projects and one Community Wildfire Protection Plan implementation (CWPP) project. The Council briefly discussed each application, with grant applicants commenting on their specific projects for clarification as needed.
 - Bekkedal – 12 homes, \$23,592, 23 acres, \$2,360/acre. Score: 17. The project will create defensible space on private property in a heavily wooded neighborhood. Some property owners have previously done work on an individual basis, and the neighborhood installed a cistern several years ago. Recommendation: Fully fund the project.
 - Summit Guest Ranch - \$2,500, 1.3 acres, \$3,846/acre. Score: 15. The project will remove deadfall and downed woody material for defensible space on this small property adjacent to Pebble Creek Ranch. Recommendation: Fully fund the project.
 - Silver Summit Ranch - \$61,180, 32.8 acres, \$3,700/acre. Score: 15. The project will remove dead and down on private property adjacent to county, Town of Silverthorne,

USFS and private property. Summit Fire & EMS supports the project. Recommendation: Fully fund the project.

- Pebble Creek Ranch Foundation (PCRF) – 32 homes, \$10,000, 7.5 acres, \$2,667/acre. Score: 14. The project continues PCRF's efforts to remove dead and down, and will essentially complete mitigation work for the neighborhood. The contractor will dispose of wood by utilizing the chipping program and burning piles. Approximately one acre of the proposed project previously received moderate treatment. Recommendation: Fund all new acres, and have Summit Fire & EMS inspect the area requested for re-treatment to determine its eligibility for funding.
- Goldsmith (Gibson Hill) – 2 homes, \$4,000, 1 acre, \$8,000/acre. Score: 14. The project consists of removing dead and down on property above Gold Run Road. Recommendation: Fully fund the project.
- Ruby Ranch/Willow Brook Metro District - \$9,000, 2 acres, \$9,000/acre. Score: 15. The applicant submitted two proposals for funding. The preferred project consists of creating a firebreak along the western boundary of Ruby Ranch, which abuts Eagles Nest Wilderness Area. The Dillon Ranger District has submitted a request to the regional office for a permit to work in the wilderness area, but there is no guarantee of when or whether a permit will be issued. The subcommittee does not recommend funding the project this year and suggested that the applicant resubmit a proposal once the USFS has issued a permit. The applicant's second proposal involves the use of hand tools to clear Sawmill Ditch, which provides irrigation water for the southern half of Ruby Ranch, thereby charging the Ranch's wells and providing storage water to fill their new hydrant system. Discussion followed regarding whether the project falls within the purview of the grant program. The Council gave conditional support contingent upon further research by wildfire and fire department staff.
- Town of Blue River (26 properties) – \$65,160, 24.6 acres, \$5,297/acre. Score: 11. Beetlekill Tree Guys will act as applicant and contractor for this project, which will create defensible space in zone I of participating properties. Discussion followed on the process used to determine which trees to cut for each property. Several council members expressed concern that trees are not marked prior to cutting, and asked that either RWB Fire or CSFS walk each property with the contractor, Christian Nelson, to ensure that trees are marked and that the project is justifiable for the cost. Recommendation: Fund following a site visit to each property from RWB Fire or CSFS.
- Summit County Wide, (14 properties) - \$36,020, 13 acres, \$5,541.54/acre. Score: 11. Beetlekill Tree Guys will act as applicant and contractor for this project, which will create defensible space in Zone I for properties throughout Breckenridge, Ptarmigan, Keystone and Quandary. Several of the properties have been treated in the past, but the applicant is not asking for the same acreage to be treated. Christian hopes to gain traction with neighborhoods such as Ptarmigan and Keystone to create defensible space community-wide in future years. Recommendation: Fund following site visit to each

property to ensure accountability. Ashley will work with Christian on both projects to look at properties.

- Skiwatch Condos - \$6,450, 1.11 acres, \$11,622/acre. Score: 9. The project involves fuels mitigation in Zones 1 & 2. The applicant has worked with USFS and RWB to mark trees, and has submitted a Fuels Reduction application with USFS to remove trees on USFS property. The cost is high because some trees are very close to the building and will require technical work to remove. Recommendation: Fully fund the project.
- Agate Road, Ruby Ranch - \$5,500, 3 acres, \$3,666.67/acre. Score: 7. This 5 acre private property within Ruby Ranch was previously treated in 2010 under the grant program. The current request is to fund the removal of dead and diseased trees on approximately 3 acres. Traditionally, the grant program does not pay to retreat acres, and the Council discussed whether to consider retreatment areas in which regeneration has occurred. Recommendation: Have Summit Fire & EMS and/or CSFS review before making funding recommendation.
- Giberson Preserve - \$6,000, .3 acres, \$18,500/acre. Score: 2. The applicant requests funding to clear hazardous ground material and create a fuel break. The scoring subcommittee felt that this project could be improved and does not recommend funding at this time. Summit Fire & EMS did an inspection prior to occupancy and determined that defensible space was adequate. Recommendation: Do not fund at this time. The Council would like to see a larger scale project including several neighbors that addresses more continuous properties and acres and encourages the applicant to work with Summit Fire & EMS and CSFS to develop a larger project in 2021.
- CWPP – Buffalo Mountain Metro District (Wilderness) - \$55,845 (85:15 match). Score: 22 (CWPP criteria). The applicant requests funding to replace manual butterfly valves in the existing water distribution system with a PRV (Pressure Reducing Valves). In 2017, the grant program funded valve installation at a different location in the same system. Recommendation: Fully fund the project.
- If the total of all recommended grant projects exceeds available funding for this year, staff will request to have the overage funded from Strong Future Funds. During work sessions last fall, staff requested to have \$175,000 from Strong Future Fund set aside to cover any grant request overage in 2020.

- V. Strong Future Fund Project Updates:** Jim Curnutte, Community Development Director, summarized Strong Future Fund (SFF) availability for 2020. The County currently allots \$1,000,000 in SFF at the start of every year for wildfire mitigation (this may change due to COVID-19 impacts). Funded efforts include several large-scale projects with USFS, a recreation/fire watch crew, and a Sheriff's deputy to help the recreation/fire watch crew. SFF also funds Ashley's CSFS position and another CSFS position to assist with county forestry projects. These multi-year obligations come to nearly \$.5 million. Last year SFF funded the Mesa Cortina fuels reduction project, and this year CSFS will put out a request for proposals to burn the piles from that project. SFF also funds education and marketing, as well as \$175,000 to

cover coverage for the grant program. Ashley is working with Open Space & Trails to finish treatments on Peak 7 in conjunction with USFS, as well as the Wellington neighborhood project.

VI. Legislative Updates: None

VII. Other Matters: Jim thanked the Summit Realtors Association for putting out informational flyers, which go out to around 12,000 property owners and help to spread messaging about wildfire mitigation and the chipping program.

VIII. Wildfire Council Members and Partners Updates: Several Council Members provided updates prior to the meeting (Attachment A). The following updates were provided during the meeting:

- Kathleen (Kat) Gray is the new Fuels Planner for the Dillon Ranger District.
- Madelene McDonald (Denver Water) – The [Colorado Post-Fire Recovery Playbook](#) was created by volunteer representatives from local, state, and federal agencies, consulting firms, and watershed agencies. The playbook provides steps for these entities to take post-fire, as well as critical contact and key funding source information. DW will send drone to get footage of Peak 7 project.

IX. Adjournment: Char Bloom motioned to adjourn. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:19 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Beth Huron, Summit County Community Development

Attachment A - Wildfire Council Member Updates

Wildfire Council Member Updates

6/18/20

Buffalo Mountain Metro District:

2019 CWPP Implementation Grant BMMD Wildfire Defensible Space Grant Update

The Buffalo Mountain Metropolitan District (BMMD) is actively moving forward with activities related to the 2019 CWPP Implementation Grant that was awarded to BMMD in the amount of \$25,000.00 last year.

The District began community outreach in Wildernest the summer of 2019 to gain interest in defensible space activities by offering up to a \$1,000 of matching grant money. Approximately 40 properties were interested in the Grant and on-site evaluations were conducted. The District reached out to 3 tree contractors to bid the overall project. By mid-October 2 tree contractors bid the project. In early November, the contract was awarded to TSH Tree Service.

Due to early winter season in November, the tree removal work was postponed to Spring 2020. As we all know, the on-set of COVID 19 changed the outlook for many projects. BMMD re-contacted all the property owners about participation and nearly ½ of the interested parties dropped out.

To date, 22 properties are moving forward with wildfire defensible space mitigation work at their home. With any remaining available grant funds, BMMD will be removing trees in a heavily wooded area in a 20' utility easement near the open space between Wildernest & Mesa Cortina. This area was close to being burned during the Buffalo fire 2 years ago and was luckily stopped by the air support tankers. Implementing a 20' defensible space barrier will provide protection to nearly 2 dozen homes in the area.

TSH Tree Service is starting work June 22 – July 3, 2020. Due to the delay by COVID 19, BMMD hopes the deadline can be extended slightly beyond the July 10, 2020 deadline.

Once the project is complete, the District will be able to show before/after pictures, including all the required financial matching data. Thanks again!

Town of Dillon:

None at this time.

Dillon Ranger District, US Forest Service:

FUELS

Ranger Bill Jackson signed the Peak 7 Hazardous Fuels Reduction Categorical Exclusion in March 2020 which authorizing changes to silvicultural prescriptions on 522 acres of NFS lands near Peak 7 neighborhood, Blue River and Golden Horseshoe areas.

Continuation with Summit County agreement using Strong Future Funding. Scoping out future treatment units in the White Cloud neighborhood of Breckenridge as well as the Eagles Nest neighborhood of Silverthorne.

Under the Good Neighbor Agreement, the USFS is working with the Colorado State Forest Service to layout, implement and administer forest health and fuels projects in Summit County, which currently include the following projects:

- continuing treatment of Unit 348 in Peak 7 neighborhood of Breckenridge, which includes 43 acres of FS and Summit County Government lands
- upcoming contractor site inspection for 94 acre treatment of National Forest, Summit County, and Town of Breckenridge lands in the Golden Horseshoe project area
- upcoming contractor site inspection for 25 acres treatment of National Forest lands in Unit 307 of the Swan Mountain project area
- 36 acres of the Miners Creek project is set to be treated this summer, after a Goshawk nest protection buffer ends on August 15th.
- Plan to implement and contract roughly 150 acres around the Peak 7 neighborhood this year. (Units 124, 130, 349, 350 and 425)

The FS has a new 3-person fuels crew based out of Dillon Ranger district. They are currently implementing hand-thin work in the Peak 7 neighborhood.

Treatment on remaining Keystone Gulch hand treatments is expected to be completed this summer. Fire and fuels crews will burn remaining piles in late fall or winter.

Fire and fuels crews accomplished 3 acres of fuels reduction work on Peninsula Road in Frisco this spring.

The Ruby Ranch neighborhood in Silverthorne has requested allowance to reduce fuels in designated Wildness that is in direct proximity to private property. The FS is planning on scoping the project under NEPA regulations and gathering public comments on the proposal.

TIMBER

Logging operations (felling and skidding) occurred in Keystone Gulch and along Montezuma Road in May.

Logging operation cleanup work to be completed in Ophir Mtn area behind Red Tail Ranch

Logging operations to begin on a 470 acre project in the Golden Horseshoe area. Expect a lot of chip vans along the Gold Run Gulch Road this summer.

Road reconstruction of the Indiana Gulch road is planned this fall by our contractor, with harvest operations as well.

Logging operations in the Harrigan Creek area to be ongoing throughout the summer. Expect a lot of chip vans on the Boulder Creek road north of Silverthorne.

Plan to put under contract late this fall approximately 600 acres of precommercial thinning in the Ophir Mtn, Barton, Peninsula, Tenderfoot areas.

Formalizing a proposed action for the Swan Mountain Vegetation project internally.

Red White and Blue Fire Protection District:

Seeing a lot of defensible space evacuation requests which is good. We have also recertified all of our firefighters for Wildland operations and are looking forward to more WUI operations training later this month in the Farmers Corner area.

Ruby Ranch:

Tract W fuels removal treatment is complete.

11 of 13 hydrants have been installed for CSPP project. Anticipate July completion.

Town of Silverthorne:

The Town of Silverthorne is proud to announce the adoption of Code Amendment 105.7.26 to include language for Wildfire Mitigation in our Development Code. This new language stipulates requirements for the holders of construction permits to perform defensible space requirements.

We have defined Defensible Space as the following:

"The selection, location, grouping, and maintenance of vegetation on the property in such a manner that the opportunity for fire to burn directly to a structure is minimized."

The following section of the International Fire Code, 2018, Article XI, Division 5, Section 4-11-82, are amended to include sections on Application of Building Code, Referenced codes and standards, Types of Permits, Submittals, Mobile food preparation vehicles, Opening Burning, Required Construction, Permits, Temporary membrane structures and tents, Wildfire Mitigation, Procedures, Qualifications, Violation penalties, Failure to comply.

This process provides a course of action for property owners to defend their homes against wildfire risks by removing the down and dead standing timber located on or near home in order to reduce potential fuel sources available to wildfires.