

Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association

Annual Wildfire Operating Plan

&

Community Wildfire Protection Plan



2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
DESCRIPTION OF ENCHANTED CIRCLE PROTECTION ZONE	4
GEOGRAPHIC SETTING & PLAN BOUNDARIES	4
LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERN	4
COMMUNITIES IN THE PROTECTION ZONE.....	6
PUBLIC OPINION	7
COLLABORATORS	9
WILDFIRE RISK ASSESSMENT	10
WILDLAND FUELS	10
DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPMENT	13
HISTORICAL FIRE OCCURRENCE.....	15
FIRE RESOURCE LOCATIONS.....	16
COMMUNITY SUMMARIES	17
<i>Angel Fire</i>	18
<i>Eagle Nest</i>	19
<i>Latir</i>	19
<i>Rio Fernando</i>	20
<i>Red River</i>	20
FIRE RESPONSE CAPACITY	22
<i>Federal Resources</i>	22
<i>State Resources</i>	22
<i>Local Fire Department Resources</i>	22
<i>Private Contractor Resources</i>	26
<i>Response Capacity Summary</i>	26
PLANNED ACTIVITIES	28
FUELS PROJECTS	28
<i>Angel Fire</i>	28
<i>Eagle Nest</i>	29
<i>Latir</i>	29
<i>Pot Creek</i>	29
<i>Questa</i>	29
<i>Red River</i>	30
<i>Rio Fernando</i>	30
<i>Taos Ski Valley</i>	30
<i>Carson National Forest</i>	31
<i>BLM, Taos Field Office</i>	32
PUBLIC EDUCATION.....	33
<i>Angel Fire</i>	33
<i>Colfax County District 6 / Eagle Nest</i>	34
<i>The Carson National Forest</i>	34
<i>Latir</i>	34
<i>Red River</i>	35
LEGAL REGULATION	35
<i>Angel Fire</i>	36
<i>Red River</i>	36
<i>Taos County</i>	36

FIRE RESPONSE CAPACITY BUILDING.....	37
SIGNATURE PAGES.....	39
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL OF THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE	39
ENCHANTED CIRCLE REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION	40
TAOS COUNTY.....	44
TOWN OF RED RIVER.....	46
VILLAGE OF ANGLE FIRE.....	48
VILLAGE OF EAGLE NEST.....	49
VILLAGE OF QUESTA.....	51
VILLAGE OF TAOS SKI VALLEY.....	52
NEW MEXICO FORESTRY DIVISION, CIMARRON DISTRICT	54
CARSON NATIONAL FOREST.....	55
COMMUNITY ANNEXES.....	56
POT CREEK.....	56

Introduction

Efforts to develop this plan were begun in August of 2004 by the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association (ECRFPA). The initiative was driven by several factors. First, the Association's charter calls for the development of an Annual Operating Plan. Association members have voiced a strong desire to make wildfire protection a part of the Annual Operating Plan. Second, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 creates incentives for developing a "*Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)*", and describes certain minimum requirements to be met by such a plan in order to comply with the Act and qualify for the incentives. A third factor has been the encouragement of New Mexico's Fire Planning Task Force to develop CWPPs that are regional in scope. The Association recognized the parallels and overlap of these factors, and formally committed to develop this plan in conjunction with the Intergovernmental Council (IGC). Subsequently, several other organizations have begun separate and independent efforts to develop CWPPs that incorporate parts of the region described in this document. In order to avoid a sense of competition and promote collaboration, the ECRFPA has chosen to title this document as its Annual Operating Plan – Wildfire. Communities listed here may choose to use the document as a CWPP at their discretion.

The focus of this planning effort has been to produce a document that is practical and useful at the local level. The planning process will be on-going on an annual cycle. This document should be regarded as a "snapshot" for the current year. The methods utilized in this year's planning were sometimes crude, and the data often incomplete. Both objective and subjective information has been utilized. While none of the entities involved would describe the result as sophisticated, all are in agreement that both the effort and the product are valuable.

This document is organized into three major sections:

- A description of the planning area (protection zone)
- An assessment of risk from wildfire
- Planned risk reduction activities for the next year

Much of the risk analysis is map based in order to create a multi-dimensional understanding of the relationships between wildland fuels, development, historical fire occurrence, and response capability and limitations. Plans for risk reduction activities are organized around modifications to wildland fuels, improving fire resistance of structures and infrastructure, and enhancement of fire response capacity.

It is important to note that this planning effort has occurred at a grassroots level, and has been funded entirely within the operating budgets of the entities and organizations involved. No outside funding has been utilized, and this plan is entirely a product of those who must implement it.

Description of Enchanted Circle Protection Zone

Geographic Setting & Plan Boundaries

The land area incorporated in this plan is based on the “Colfax/Taos” Community Protection Zone as published in the 2005 New Mexico Communities At Risk Assessment Plan. The boundaries have been modified slightly by extending the western edge of the protection zone to the course of the Rio Grande River, and by extending the southern boundary to coincide with the Taos/Rio Arriba County line. These changes were made in order to incorporate the Picuris Pueblo, and the unincorporated communities of Cerro, Sunshine Valley, Vadito, Penasco, Rodarte, Chamisal, and Trampas. In addition, the communities of Taos Ski Valley and Pot Creek were not listed in the 2005 Colfax/Taos Protection Zone, but have been incorporated into the Enchanted Circle Protection Zone.

The planning area for this Protection Zone overlays and incorporates parts of Colfax and Taos Counties, and the incorporated municipalities of Angel Fire, Eagle Nest, Taos, Taos Ski Valley, Questa and Red River. It also includes the Pueblos of Taos and Picuris.

Land Ownership Pattern

Federal lands constitute the majority of the acres encompassed within the protection zone. These lands are under the management of the following agencies, listed in order of greatest number of acres:

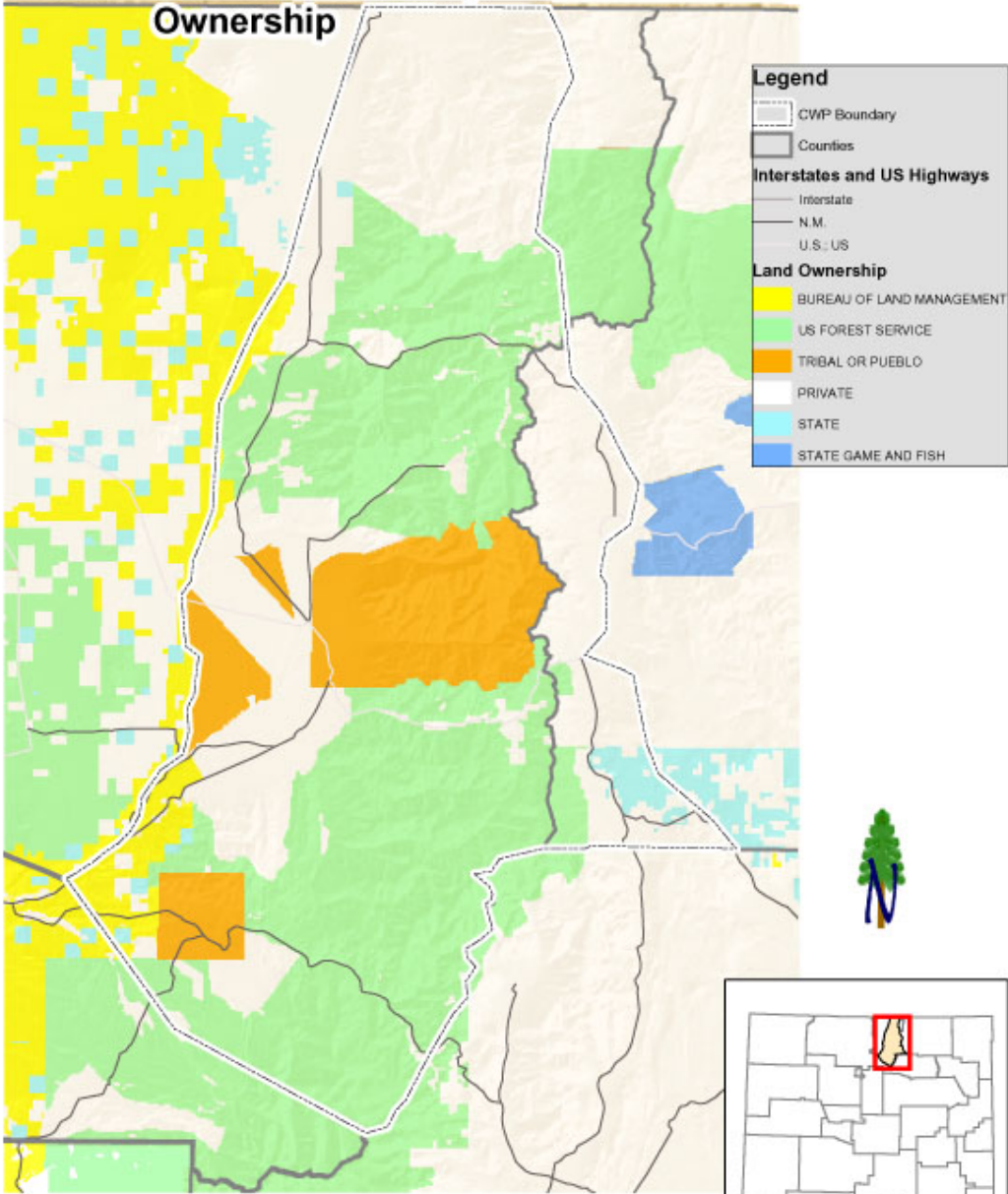
- USDA Forest Service, Carson National Forest
- DOI, Bureau of Indian Affairs
- DOI, Bureau of Land Management

Most of the private land on which development has occurred exists in narrow bands along major drainages and transportation routes, with long and intricate boundaries with federal lands.

See the map on the following page for detail:

Colfax - Taos CWP Planning

Ownership



Legend

- CWP Boundary
- Counties
- Interstates and US Highways**
 - Interstate
 - N.M.
 - U.S. / US
- Land Ownership**
 - BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
 - US FOREST SERVICE
 - TRIBAL OR PUEBLO
 - PRIVATE
 - STATE
 - STATE GAME AND FISH



Datum: NAD83 Projection: UTM, Zone 13N
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Communities In The Protection Zone

The following communities have been identified within the Enchanted Circle Protection Zone:

- Amalia
- Angel Fire
- Arroyo Hondo
- Arroyo Seco
- Black Lake
- Cerro*
- Chamisal*
- Costilla
- Eagle Nest
- El Prado
- Idlewild
- La Lama
- Lakeview Pines
- Latir
- Penasco*
- Picuris Pueblo*
- Pot Creek*
- Questa
- Red River
- Rodarte*
- Shady Brook
- Sunshine Valley*
- Taos
- Taos Pueblo
- Taos Ski Valley*
- Trampas*
- Vadito*
- Valle Escondido

* Communities that do not appear in the 2005 Colfax/Taos Protection Zone listing.

Public Opinion

A community based public opinion survey was conducted as part of this year’s planning process. Participants were asked to review a list of common concerns regarding the impact of wildfire on communities, and to rank in priority order their three most significant concerns. They had the option to write in and rank concerns that did not appear on the predetermined list. The surveys were distributed within the various communities by members of the planning group. The results were then tabulated on a community by community basis. While the sample size of this survey was too small to be considered scientific, it does provide some important insights into what things the citizens of the Protection Zone consider important regarding wildfire. While all communities tended to rank *public safety* at or near the top, predominantly residential communities ranked *evacuation* and *loss of home* high, while communities with a large commercial business presence tended to rank *impact on local economy* high. The following charts summarize the results of this survey:

Survey Results - Per Town or Village
Calculated Score

	Local Economy	Land Values	Recreation	Public Safety	Forest Health	Air & Water Quality	Evacuation	Traffic	Loss of Home
Colfax D6	8	0	0	17	2	3	2	0	4
Eagle Nest	7	2	8	17	16	17	6	3	32
Latir	4	6	0	51	21	23	24	0	51
Red River	86	16	27	70	26	15	22	3	59
Taos Canyon	0	1	1	17	0	1	6	0	14
Taos Ski Valley	9	1	1	19	1	2	14	0	13
Wheeler Peak	4	14	4	19	7	10	17	1	26

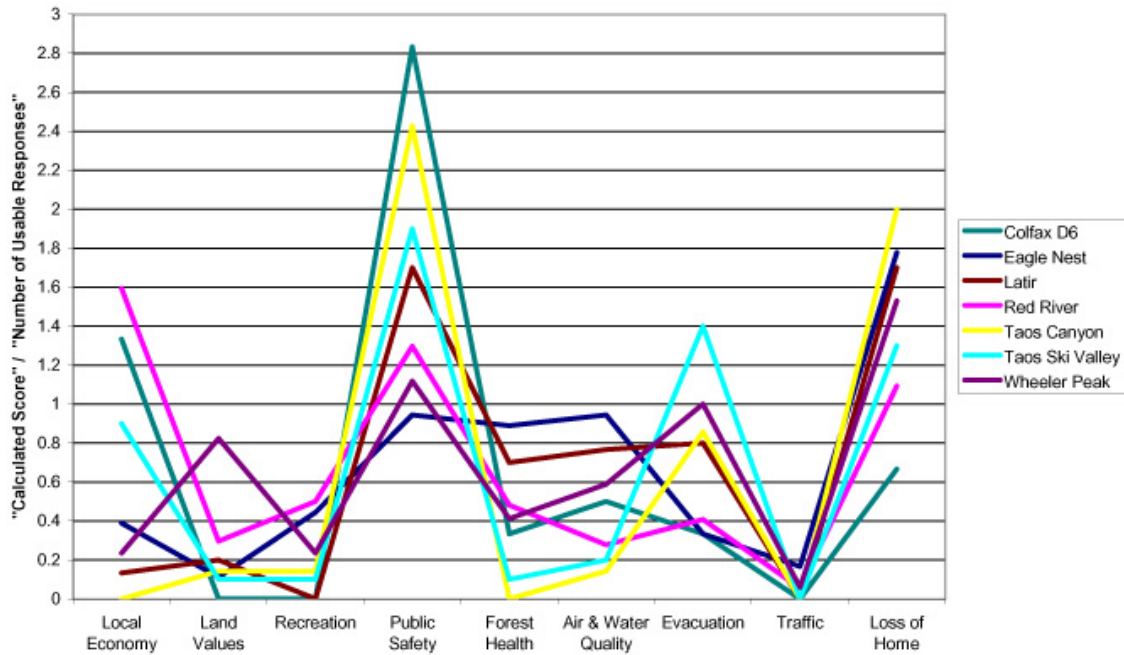
(#1 responses X 3) + (#2 responses X 2) + (#3 responses X 1) = Calculated Score

Survey Results - Per Town or Village
Calculated Score Weighted Per Capita

	Local Economy	Land Values	Recreation	Public Safety	Forest Health	Air & Water Quality	Evacuation	Traffic	Loss of Home
Colfax D6	1.333	0	0	2.833	0.333	0.5	0.333	0	0.667
Eagle Nest	0.389	0.111	0.444	0.944	0.889	0.944	0.333	0.167	1.778
Latir	0.133	0.2	0	1.7	0.7	0.767	0.8	0	1.7
Red River	1.593	0.296	0.5	1.296	0.481	0.278	0.407	0.056	1.093
Taos Canyon	0	0.143	0.143	2.429	0	0.143	0.857	0	2
Taos Ski Valley	0.9	0.1	0.1	1.9	0.1	0.2	1.4	0	1.3
Wheeler Peak	0.235	0.824	0.235	1.118	0.412	0.588	1	0.059	1.529

"Calculated Score" / "Number of Usable Responses" = Calculated Score Weighted Per Capita

2005 CWPP Survey Results
Calculated Score Weighted Per Capita



Survey Results - Total Enchanted Circle
Total Answered By Priority

	Local Economy	Land Values	Recreation	Public Safety	Forest Health	Air & Water Quality	Evacuation	Traffic	Loss of Home
Priority 1	17	3	6	46	8	6	14	0	42
Priority 2	22	10	5	27	12	17	19	2	27
Priority 3	23	11	13	18	25	19	11	3	19
Total	62	24	24	91	45	42	44	5	88

All responses from all areas by priority
 Note: One (1) "Other" Response was received from Rio Fernando that is not included in these figures

Number of Usable Responses

Colfax D6	6
Eagle Nest	18
Latir	30
Red River	54
Taos Canyon	7
Taos Ski Valley	10
Wheeler Peak	17
Total	142

Collaborators

The following entities have collaborated in the development of this plan:

Taos Intergovernmental Council (members listed below)

- County of Taos
- Town of Red River
- Town of Taos
- Village of Angel Fire
- Village of Eagle Nest
- Village of Questa
- Village of Taos Ski Valley

Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association (members listed below)

- Amalia Fire District
- Angel Fire Fire Department
- Cerro Fire District
- Colfax County Fire District 6
- Costilla Fire District
- Eagle Nest Fire Department
- Hondo Seco Fire District
- La Lama Fire District
- Latir Fire District
- Ojo Caliente Fire District
- Penasco Fire District
- Questa Fire Department
- Red River Fire Department
- Rio Fernando Fire District
- Taos Volunteer Fire Department
- Taos Ski Valley Fire Department
- Tres Piedras Fire District
- Wheeler Peak Fire District

New Mexico EMNRD, Forestry Division, Cimarron District

USDA Forest Service, Carson National Forest

DOI, Bureau of Land Management, Taos Field Office

County of Taos

- Emergency Management Department
- Planning Department

Kit Carson Electric Cooperative

PNM

Molycorp

Holy Cross Hospital

Wildfire Risk Assessment

The criteria used to evaluate the risk of wildfire impact on the communities within the Protection Zone include:

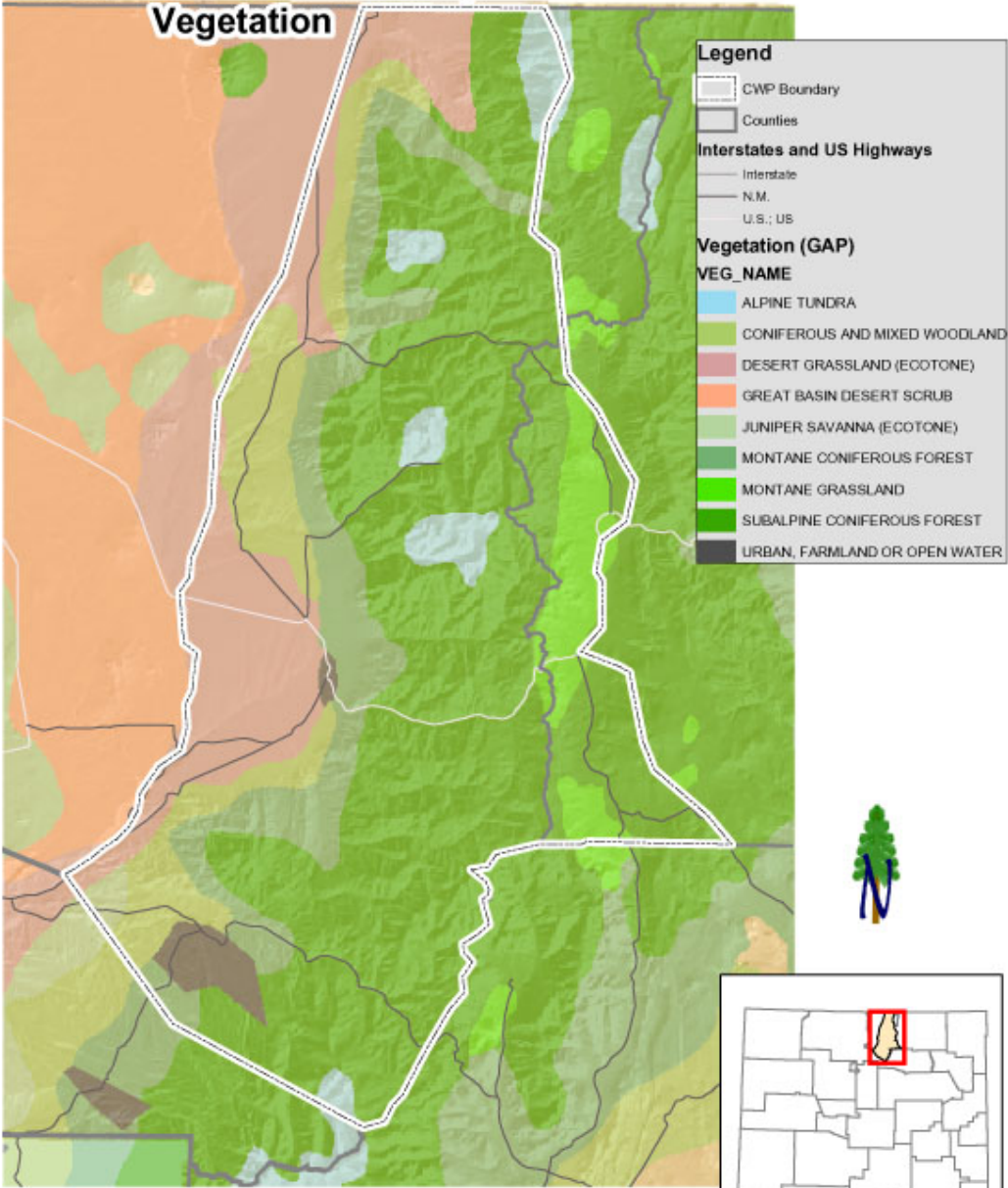
- Wildland fuel types and their current Fire Regime Condition Class
- The location of communities and critical infrastructure
- The historical location of fire ignitions (the three most recent fire seasons for which data is available: 2002 – 2004)
- Current fire response capacity

Wildland Fuels

Elevations in the Protection Zone range from just over 6,000 feet along the drainage of the Rio Grande, to over 10,500 feet in the Village of Taos Ski Valley. Fuel types in and around communities range from high desert grass and sage brush, pinon-juniper, ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, aspen and spruce-fir forest. The following two maps illustrate the distribution of vegetation types, and the fire regime condition class.

Colfax - Taos CWP Planning

Vegetation

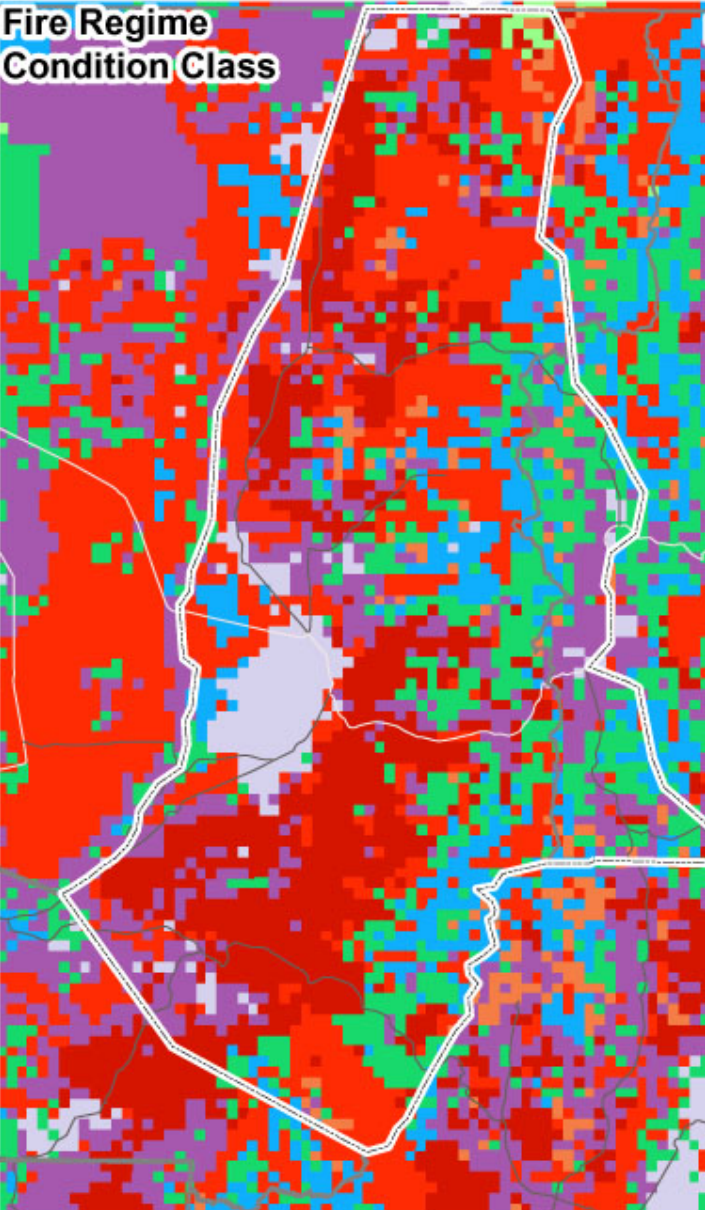


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Colfax - Taos CWP Planning

Fire Regime Condition Class



Legend

- CWP Boundary
- Counties
- Interstates and US Highways
 - Interstate
 - N.M.
 - U.S.; US
- Fire Regime Condition Class (2000)**
- Firereg_condcl**
 - 0-35 yrs; Condition Class 1
 - 0-35 yrs; Condition Class 2
 - 0-35 yrs; Condition Class 3
 - 200+ yrs; Condition Class 1
 - 200+ yrs; Condition Class 2
 - 200+ yrs; Condition Class 3
 - 35-100+ yrs; Condition Class 1
 - 35-100+ yrs; Condition Class 2
 - 35-100+ yrs; Condition Class 3
 - Agriculture & Non-Vegetative Areas
 - Water



Datum: NAD83 Projection: UTM, Zone 13N
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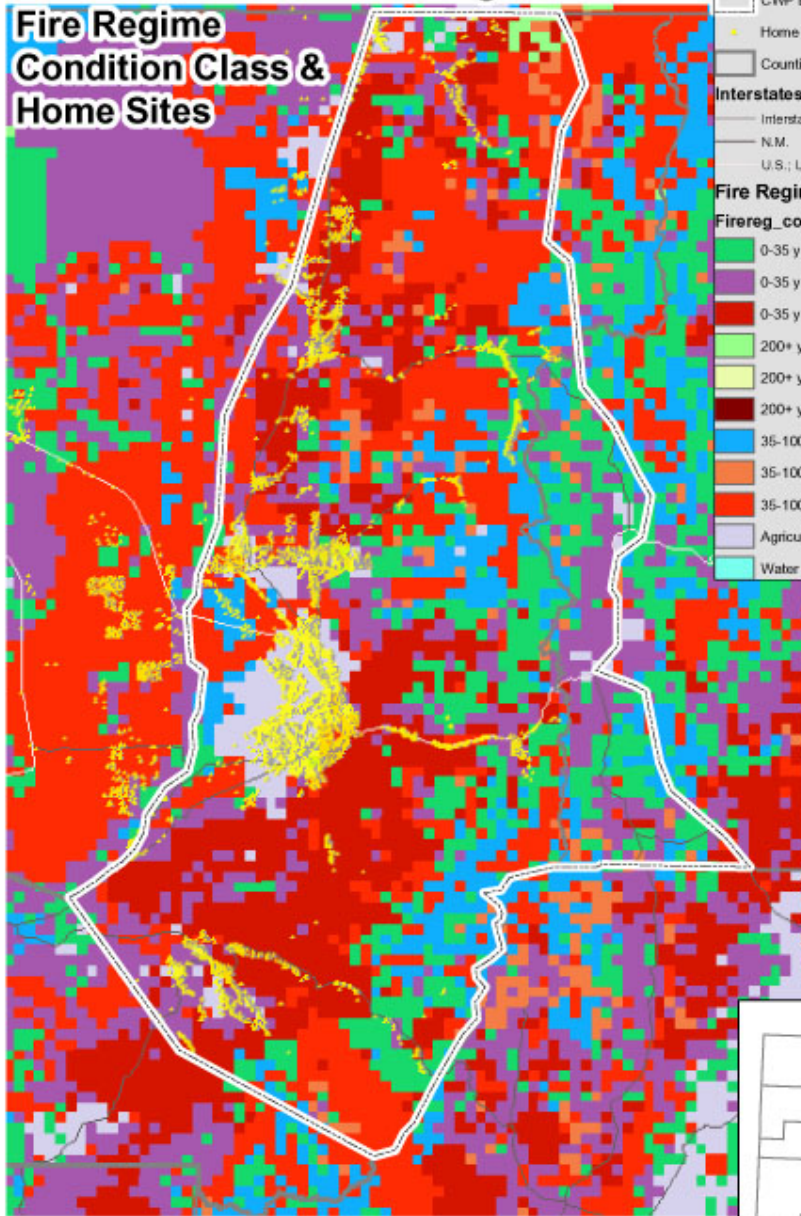
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Distribution of Communities and Development

The following map illustrates the distribution of structures within the Protection Zone.
(Note: data illustrated is from Taos County, Colfax County data is pending)

Colfax - Taos CWP Planning

Fire Regime Condition Class & Home Sites



Legend

- CWP Boundary
- Home sites
- Counties

Interstates and US Highways

- Interstate
- N.M.
- U.S.; US

Fire Regime Condition Class (2000)

Firereg_condcl

- 0-35 yrs; Condition Class 1
- 0-35 yrs; Condition Class 2
- 0-35 yrs; Condition Class 3
- 200+ yrs; Condition Class 1
- 200+ yrs; Condition Class 2
- 200+ yrs; Condition Class 3
- 35-100+ yrs; Condition Class 1
- 35-100+ yrs; Condition Class 2
- 35-100+ yrs; Condition Class 3
- Agriculture & Non-Vegetative Areas
- Water



0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 Miles

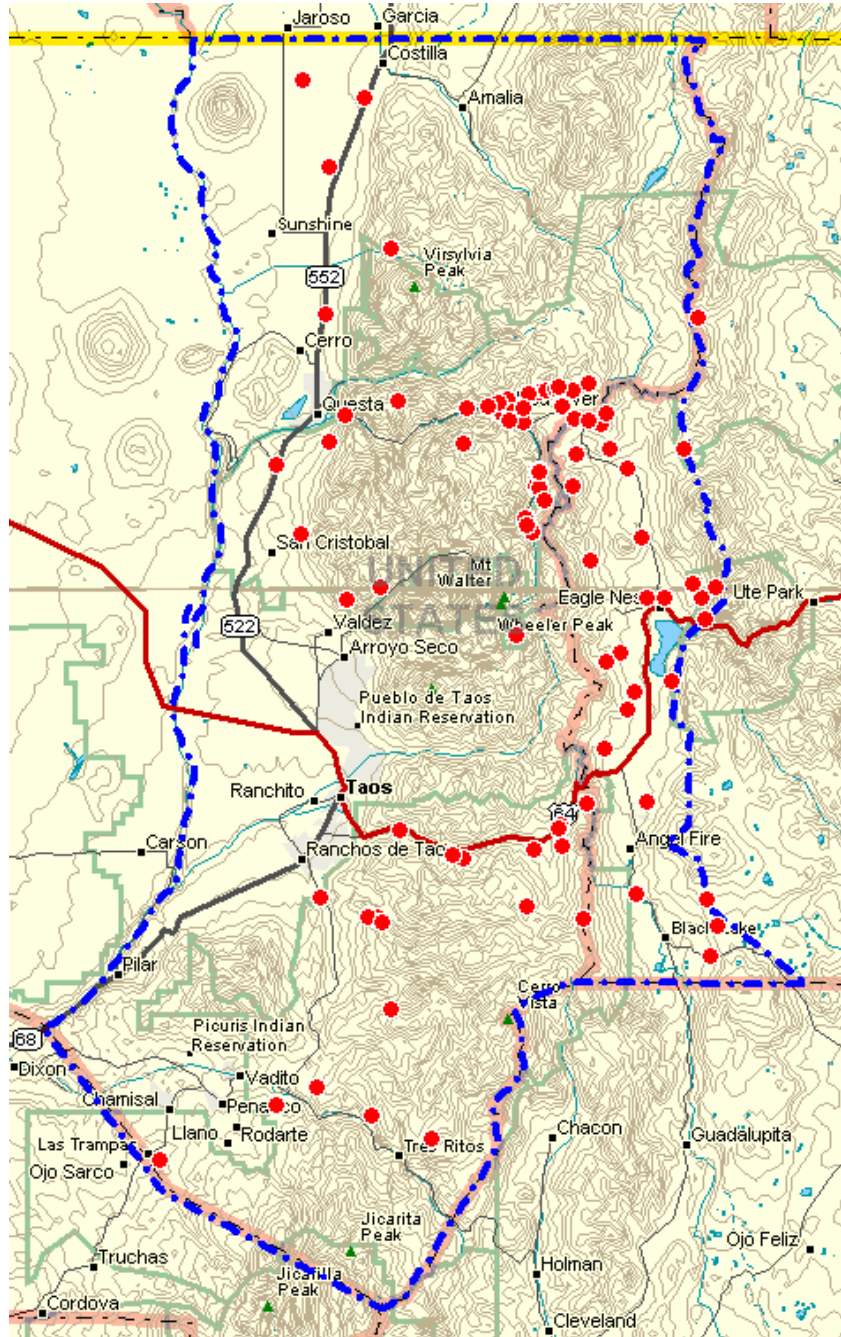


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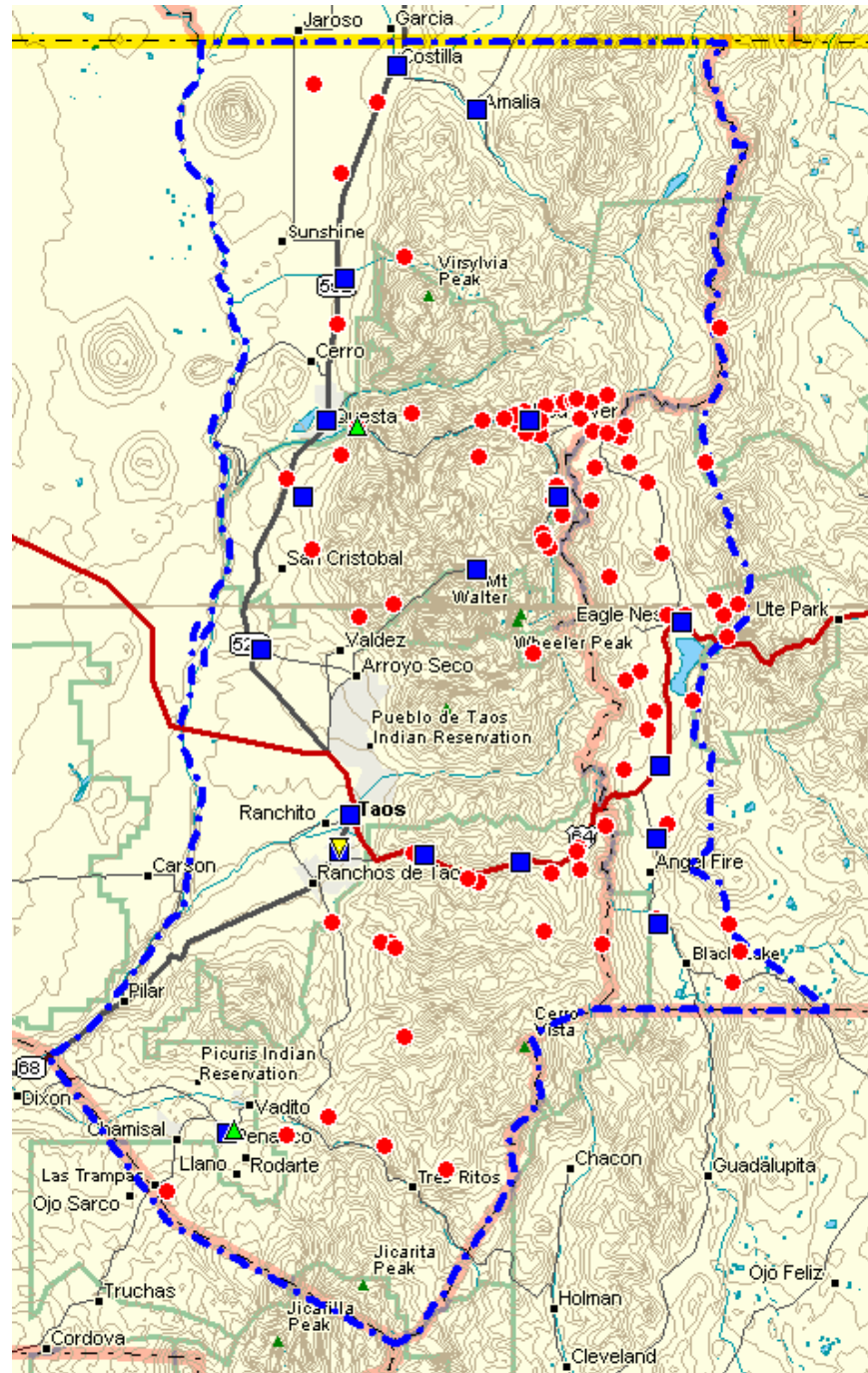
Historical Fire Occurrence

The following map illustrates the point location for wildfire ignitions for the three most recent fire seasons, and their physical relationship to communities. Data on fire locations has been incorporated from the Carson National Forest and local fire departments. Wildfire data recorded and/or reported by local fire departments has not universally included GPS locations. Therefore, while this map is illustrative and useful, it may not accurately depict the number of fires occurring in and around some communities.



Fire Resource Locations

The following map shows the location of fire resources in the Protection Zone. Forest Service District Offices and their associated resources are depicted as green triangles. The BLM Office in Taos is depicted as a yellow triangle. Fire Department stations are indicated by blue squares. These locations are layered over the fire ignition locations in order to illustrate the proximity of resources to areas with a high probability of fire starts.



Community Summaries

The chart that follows summarizes the wildfire risk assessment for each community within the Protection Zone by categorizing that risk as “*High*”, “*Moderate*”, or “*Low*”. Both subjective and objective criteria have been used in this assessment. The primary criteria include:

- Population
 - Number of persons potentially at risk
 - Adequacy of escape routes for the population
 - Suitability of shelter-in-place as a option to evacuation
 - Historical public awareness and behavior
- Wildland fuels
 - Fuel type
 - Fuel condition class
 - Presence of “fuel ramps” that have potential to carry fire into the community
 - The correlation of fuels and terrain
 - Impact of fuels projects (if any)
- Structural criteria
 - Type of construction
 - Structural density
 - Relationship of structure sites to wildland fuels and terrain
 - Defensible space
- Fire History
 - Number of fire ignitions
 - Cause
 - Number of fires that have escaped initial attack
- Fire Suppression Capacity
 - Proximity of initial attack resources
 - Capability of initial attack resources
 - Suitability of resources for fuel type, terrain, and structural density
 - Reliability of initial attack resources
 - Availability of water (engine sources and dip sites)

Community	Type	Risk Class
Amalia	Unincorporated	Moderate
Angel Fire	Municipality	High
Arroyo Hondo	Unincorporated	Moderate
Arroyo Seco	Unincorporated	Moderate
Black Lake	Unincorporated	High
Cerro	Unincorporated	Low
Chamisal	Unincorporated	Moderate
Costilla	Unincorporated	Moderate

Eagle Nest	Municipality	Low
El Prado	Unincorporated	Low
Idlewild	Unincorporated	High
La Lama	Unincorporated	Low
Lakeview Pines	Unincorporated	High
Latir	Unincorporated	High
Penasco	Unincorporated	Low
Picuris Pueblo	BIA	
Pot Creek	Unincorporated	High
Questa	Municipality	Moderate
Red River	Municipality	Moderate
Rodarte	Unincorporated	Low
Shady Brook	Unincorporated	High
Sunshine Valley	Unincorporated	Low
Taos	Municipality	Low
Taos Pueblo	BIA	High
Taos Ski Valley	Municipality	High
Trampas	Unincorporated	Low
Vadito	Unincorporated	Moderate
Valle Escondido	Unincorporated	High

To supplement the summary rating presented above, a round table discussion was conducted in which representatives from various communities discussed their wildfire concerns, loosely organized around the following topics:

- Wildland fuels in and around the community
- Current status of fuels projects
- Typical construction & defensible space
- Typical access and egress
- Greatest wildfire concern (“your worst nightmare”)

An overview of the community comments are presented below.

Angel Fire

The Village of Angel Fire is a resort community situated in a high mountain meadow that is surrounded by heavily forested mountains. The Village limits as a whole is predominantly heavily forested area with many different landowners from ½ acre lots up to 40-acre lots and above. The Village has a series of greenbelts that is owned by a community association called the Association of Angel Fire Property Owners that is natural areas within the Village for habitat corridors and hiking trails that is seriously mismanaged. As such, the Village is subject to several types of natural and man-made hazards that could endanger the health, safety, and economic stability of the community.

Fuels: Primarily ponderosa pine and mixed conifer – continuous fuel beds

Fuels Projects: Currently working on a buffer project along Hwy 434. The Village is the lead agency.

Typical Construction: Predominantly Wood frame a combination of metal and composite roofs, as well as large extensive wood decks on almost every home. Problems include high percentage of absentee owners, and a lot of slash piles on private land including overgrown vacant lots. Major infrastructure includes a major electrical power transmission line (Plains Electric), Hwy 434 and numerous well houses in the forested area for potable water.

Access & Egress: Expansive subdivision road system that can be confusing in the dark or heavy smoke. Generally adequate for fire apparatus. Evacuation could occur in two directions.

Greatest Concern: Fast moving, wind driven fire:

- Started from lightning or recreational use on the forest and burning rapidly into the community
- Illegal or inappropriate slash burning on private land in windy conditions, starting within the community and rapidly spreading.

Other: Village has recently adopted an ordinance requiring defensible space for new construction.

Eagle Nest

Area Described: The area described here includes Eagle Nest proper, Lakeview Pines and Idlewild. Lakeview Pines and Idlewild are of greatest concern and are the focus of these comments. The area shares an extensive boundary with the BIA – Taos Pueblo.

Fuels: Overmature mixed conifer. Fuels are continuous across the BIA boundary.

Fuels Projects: No community project currently in place. Some limited private homeowner defensible space activity. No work underway on BIA side of fence.

Typical Construction: Mostly older construction, wood frame with metal roofs, but wood sided and wood decks are common.

Access & Egress: Steep, narrow unimproved roads with no pull-outs or turn arounds.

Greatest Concern: Any fire threatening or burning in Lakeview Pines or Idlewild because of lack of poor access, lack of defensible space, and lack of safety zones.

Latir

Fuels: Fuels range with increasing elevation from sage and grass along Hwy 522, through PJ and into ponderosa pine. Much of the ponderosa is open with a gambel oak understory. A large percentage of the PJ and ponderosa have been impacted by the bark beetle infestation.

Fuels Projects: Currently there are no community wide fuels projects, nor is there any work being done on the forest side of the boundary. Water supply projects include development and designation of a dip site at Latir Mountain Ranch, a dry hydrant at the same location, and a 10,000 gallon buried cistern at the fire district main station.

Typical Construction: A rich variety, including

- Adobe with multi-layered, built-up roofs (older construction)

- Earthships
- Wood frame with metal roofs and wooden decks
- Log homes with shake roofs.

Access & Egress: Narrow dirt roads with few road signs or turn outs. Road access into the foothills is steep and narrow.

Greatest Concern: Fire impact on watershed and the consequences for the Cerro Acequia.

Rio Fernando

Area Described: The area describes is the canyon of the Rio Fernando, from Palo Flechado Pass to the mouth of the canyon at Taos. It includes two communities listed in the Protection Zone; Shady Brook and Valle Escondido. Landowner Association, Neighborhood Association, and Fire District are good partners. Major transportation and utility route along the bottom of the canyon, including US64, power lines and telephone communications.

Fuels: Predominantly mixed conifer, although lower elevation at the canyon entrance begins in sage and grass, and transitions through PJ and ponderosa pine. There is a lot of drought and insect kill.

Fuels Projects: No major projects on private land. Forest projects include:

- South Shady Brook:
- North Shady Brook:
- La Jara:

Typical Construction: 90% of structures are old wood frame homes with wood decks, poor defensible space and multiple outbuildings. Absentee owners are a problem.

Access & Egress: Major highway – US64, provides two directions of escape and/or access. However, the highway is at high risk of being blocked due to narrow right-of-way and heavy fuels along it's course.

Greatest Concern: Very high use area, including recreational, residential, and transportation (US 64). Worst case scenario - Transient abandons or allows to escape a warming fire in the forest campgrounds at the mouth (west end) of the canyon in windy conditions. Fuels and alignment of the canyon with prevailing winds rapidly spreads fire up canyon, leaving only one escape route and limiting access for responding fire resources.

Red River

Area Described: Includes both incorporated municipality and unincorporated private lands along the course of the Red River from Molycorp to the upper Red River. Also extending to tributaries including Bobcat Creek, Bitter Creek, Mallette Creek and Pioneer Creek.

Fuels: Predominantly over mature mixed conifer, with some ponderosa pine stands in lower canyon. Multiple areas of large aspen stands that are being overgrown by conifer regeneration.

Fuels Projects: Multiple ongoing projects on private land (see below). Projects are prioritized by an urban interface master plan, collaboratively developed in 1997.

- Upper Red River – high priority project due to life safety issues. Funded in 2001 for defensible space and WUI thinning on private land. Nearing completion.
- Campground/Water Treatment Plant – High priority project to protect critical infrastructure (waste water treatment plant), and reduce risk of man caused ignitions around high use FS campgrounds. Questa RD project – thinning around campgrounds and treatment plant. Completed in spring of 2005.
- Bobcat Pass – Funded in 2002 for defensible space and WUI thinning on private land. 30% complete – ongoing.
- Weatherly/McShan – Large parcel properties with extensive federal land boundary. Project will thin boundary buffer zone. Weatherly nearing completion. McShan property in progress. Hazardous fuels mitigation funding. Prior small project on McShan property funded by Taos Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Pioneer Canyon – high priority project. Pioneer canyon is the municipal watershed for the community, and underlies the western boundary of the Ski Area. Pioneer canyon is a high volume recreational use area, with high risk for man caused ignitions. Fire in the canyon has high probability of transitioning to crew fire, impacting both the watershed and the ski area. Partial funding through CFRP in summer of 2005. Work initiated on the ground.
- Composting project – most biomass from the various thinning projects has been chipped. Rapid turn-over composting pilot project initiated in spring of 2005.
- Heating of Public Buildings with woody biomass project – feasibility study initiated in fall of 2004. Feasibility still being studied, and proposal compiled.

Typical Construction: Large commercial business district with wooden decks and walkways, and wood siding – at risk from fire brands and radiant heat. Most residential construction of wood frame, wood sided and large wooden decks. Most roofs are metal, and most building sites are valley bottom. Good and poor access in approximately equal percentages. Infrastructure at risk includes the ski area, watershed, waste water treatment plant, natural gas pipeline, major electrical power transmission line, and State Hwy 38 transportation corridor.

Access & Egress: State Highway 38 provides two directional escape and access to the valley, but is prone to one way being cut off by fire event, as was the case during the Hondo Fire of 1996. State Hwy 579 into upper red river area is one way in and one way out, creating life safety concerns for the 600 homes in the area. Most secondary roads and driveways in upper Red River are narrow with little or no fuel clearance, and few passing or turn-around opportunities.

Greatest Concern: - High recreational use (including overnight camping) in Pioneer Canyon leads to an escaped campfire. Narrow canyon, overstocked with dense fuels and abundant ladder fuels rapidly transitions fire ignition to a crew fire. Lack of escape routes and safety zones limits initial attack opportunity. Fire rapidly spreads within the canyon and up and across the ski area. Fire results in significant damage to the water shed, and loss of winter economy for the community due to damage to the ski area.

Fire Response Capacity

Resources available to respond on initial attack fire starts include federal, state, local fire department, and private contractor resources. Interagency coordination is provided by the Taos Zone Coordination Center.

Federal Resources

Forest Service – Two ranger districts of the Carson National Forest lie within the Protection Zone; the Camino Real Ranger District and the Questa Ranger District. Each ranger district staffs a Type 6 Engine, and is capable of recruiting one or two Type 2 SWFF crews. In addition, the Forest hosts an Interagency Hotshot Crew (Carson Hotshots), and significant overhead qualifications exist on Forest Staff. During peak season, the Forest typically flies a daily aerial recon, but no helitack or SEAT capability is routinely staffed locally.

BIA – Taos Pueblo can typically field Type 6 Engines and Type 2 handcrews. During part of each fire season, they host a Type 3 Helicopter and helitack crew. The status of the Northern Pueblos trainee hotshot crew is uncertain at the time of this writing.

BLM – The Taos Field Office of the BLM maintains a Type 2 IA handcrew, several Type 6 Engines, and a Type 3 Engine. Significant overhead positions also exist within their staff.

State Resources

New Mexico State Forestry, Cimarron District has primary responsibility for non-federal and non-municipal lands within the Protection Zone. They routinely staffs two Type 6 Engines from their District Office in Ute Park (east of the Protection Zone). During peak fire season, they often have an aerial recon capability, may host a Type 2 or Type 3 Helicopter and helitack crew, and utilize contract engines for patrol and initial attack. They often utilize local fire department resources through joint powers agreements to meet their initial attack mission.

Local Fire Department Resources

As part of the Annual Operating Plan of the ECRFPA, this plan focuses most critically on local fire department capacity. Most, but not all local fire departments train and qualify their personnel to NWCG standards. Access to training courses by local FD firefighters is generally good. However, completion of task books in quality training assignments has been more problematic. This is due primarily to two factors. First, most of these local firefighters are volunteers with job and family obligations that limit their ability to

accept two week training assignments. Second, there are only a limited number of personnel within the local fire departments who can function as qualified trainers/evaluators to sign off on task book experiences. As a result, many initial attack experiences go unevaluated and undocumented. With time, this qualification bottleneck should resolve, but it has produced a logjam of personnel currently attempting to qualify at the single resource boss level.

Significant engine and water tender capacity exists within the member departments of the ECRFPA. The mobilization of these resources occurs through a formal dispatch protocol (Enchanted Circle Resource Mobilization Guide) that is updated twice annually. This protocol utilizes an escalating resource assignment scheme that is tied to ERC and preparedness levels. This protocol has proven effective for initial attack, however it is recognized that it will probably be inadequate in an extended attack scenario.

While engine capacity is strong in this group, it is recognized that most areas within the Protection Zone are not accessible to engines. Therefore, additional resources have recently been developed that include a Type 2 IA handcrew, and a CWN helitack module.

There is currently one qualified and experienced structure protection specialist within the membership of the ECRFPA. The association has mounted a concerted effort to increase this capacity, and there are currently 7 trainees with open task books.

Overhead qualifications beyond the single resource boss level are severely limited within the ECRFPA, and this group relies heavily on its State and Federal partners to provide incident management and logistical functions.

As part of this planning cycle, a survey was done of all ECRFPA members regarding wildfire personnel and equipment. The data from the responding departments appears on the following pages.

**Enchanted Circle Fire Association
Fire Apparatus List**

Agency	Engines					Water Tenders		Total
	Type 1 & 2 Structure	Type 3 Wildland	Type 4 Wildland	Type 5 Wildland	Type 6 Wildland	Type 2	Type 3	
Amalia-Ventero Fire District	2				1			3
Angel Fire Fire Department	1				2			3
Cerro Fire District	2				1			3
Colfax County Fire District 6	2				2		2	6
Costilla Fire Department	2				1			3
Eagle Nest Fire Department	2		1		1		1	5
Hondo Seco Fire Department	3				2		1	6
La Lama Fire District	1				1		1	3
Latir Fire District	2				1		1	4
Molycorp Mine Rescue					1	1		2
Ojo Caliente Fire District	2						2	4
Questa Fire Department	5				2	1		8
Red River Fire Department	2				1			3
Rio Fernando Fire District	1				2		1	4
Taos Ski Valley Fire Department	3						1	4
Taos Volunteer Fire Department	4	2			2	1	2	11
Tres Piedras Fire District	2				1	1		4
Wheeler Peak Fire District	1						2	3
Total	37	2	1	0	21	4	14	79

In the following position qualification analysis, it should be noted that a single firefighter might hold several qualifications. Therefore, totals of personnel holding any given qualification (bottom row) should be regarded as accurate, while total number of firefighters (right hand column) is not. Also, it should be obvious from the qualification and trainee charts that not all departments responded to this survey.

**Enchanted Circle Fire Association
Fire Suppression Capacity - Personnel Qualifications**

Agency	FF2	FF1	ENOP	ENGB	CRWB	DOZB	HELB	STEN	STOR	STOZ	TFLD	DIVS	STPS	ICT6	ICT1	ICT3	STAM	SOP3	SOP2	IOF3	IOF2	HECM	HOWN	HEB2	TOTAL	
Amalia-Ventero Fire District																									0	
Angel Fire Fire Department																										0
Cerro Fire District																										0
Colfax County Fire District 6																										0
Costilla Fire Department																										0
Eagle Nest Fire Department																										0
Hondo Seco Fire Department																										0
La Lama Fire District																										0
Latir Fire District	4	3											2													9
Molycorp Mine Rescue																										0
Ojo Caliente Fire District																										0
Questa Fire Department																										0
Red River Fire Department	12	6	6	5	2		2	2	1	1	1	7	4	1		1					4	1			56	
Rio Fernando Fire District	3	5	2	3									3													16
Taos Ski Valley Fire Department	7																									7
Taos Volunteer Fire Department																										0
Tres Piedras Fire District																										0
Wheeler Peak Fire District	5	2	1	2									3													13
Total	31	16	9	10	2	0	0	2	2	0	1	1	1	15	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	101

**Enchanted Circle Fire Association
Fire Suppression Capacity - Personnel Qualifications *Trainee***

Agency	FF12	FF11	ENOP	ENOB	CRWB	DOZB	HELB	STEN	STCR	STBZ	TFLD	DIVS	STPS	IC15	IC14	IC13	STAM	SOF3	SOF2	IOF3	IOF2	HECM	HC1N	HEB2	TOTAL	
Amalia-Ventero Fire District																									0	
Angel Fire Fire Department																										0
Cerro Fire District																										0
Coffax County Fire District 6																										0
Costilla Fire Department																										0
Eagle Nest Fire Department												1														1
Hondo Seco Fire Department																										0
La Lama Fire District																										0
Latir Fire District			1									1										3				5
Molycorp Mine Rescue																										0
Ojo Caliente Fire District																										0
Questa Fire Department																										0
Red River Fire Department	2	3	1				2	1				2		1	2							7				21
Rio Fernando Fire District			1									2		2												5
Taos Ski Valley Fire Department	1																									1
Taos Volunteer Fire Department																										0
Tres Piedras Fire District																										0
Wheeler Peak Fire District		1	1												1											3
Total	0	4	6	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	6	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	36	

Private Contractor Resources

There are a number of private contractors based within the Protection Zone, that provide an important extension of fire suppression capacity in the area. However, the function in a financially precarious environment, have great difficulty maintaining staff, and even greater difficulty providing a recognized qualification system for their employees. The number of contractor resources invariably waxes and wanes with the intensity of each fire season.

Response Capacity Summary

Adequate initial attack fire response within the Protection Zone depends heavily on collaboration and coordination between federal, state, local, and private contractor resources. The current level of coordination and collaboration is reasonably good and improving. However, a cohesive long term development strategy does not currently exist.

Engine resources are relatively plentiful and generally available across all agencies. However, terrain and large roadless areas, significantly limit the utility of engine resources.

Slow mobilization, unpredictable quality, and the need for extensive logistical support also limits the utility of typical Type 2 hand crews for initial attack. Several Type 2 IA hand crews have been developed in the area, and have proven productive. During most of the southwest fire season, Type 1 hotshot crews are relatively available. The development of quality initial attack capable hand crew resources in the area deserves continued emphasis.

The helicopter has also proven itself to be a valuable tool for initial attack in the area. CWN ships are generally available, but a national shortage of qualified helitack personnel has proven to be a limiting factor. The development of a local CWN helitack module has been a slow and painful process, but is now generally available. It deserves continued effort to build depth.

Most homes are saved or lost during initial attack and extended attack. Well qualified and experienced overhead personnel are critical to achieving good outcomes. There is a relative shortage of overhead personnel within the Protection Zone. Continued emphasis at the single resource level (ENGB, CRWB) and ICT4 is well justified. However, additional effort should be directed towards developing Strike Team/Task Force Leader, Division Supervisor, ICT3, and SOF3 qualified personnel. This call for emphasis on developing these overhead positions should not be construed as advocating “fast tracking” the qualification process. Real position skill and confidence comes from well supervised quality training assignments, and rigorous qualification requirements.

Planned Activities

This section summarizes planned activities by the collaborators during the next year, organized into four categories:

- Fuels Projects
- Public Education
- Legal Regulation
- Fire Response Capacity Building

Fuels Projects

Angel Fire

- Highway 434 FEMA Project
 - Objective – to secure Hwy 434 as an escape route and create a fuel break
 - Priority – High
 - Activity – complete work on the ground and evaluation
- Community Slash Pickup Project
 - Objective- to encourage and assist landowners to thin property for forest health and fire mitigation.
 - Priority – High
 - Activity- Make available a grapple and truck type configuration to have a roadside slash pick up project.
- Greenbelt Thinning Project
 - Objective – thin existing community greenbelts to reduce potential for greenbelts to sustain crown fire
 - Priority – High
 - Activity – complete analysis and proposal, and seek funding
- Highway 434 Expansion Project
 - Objective – widen existing Hwy 434 project to improve security of escape routes and strengthen fuel break
 - Priority – Moderate
 - Activity – Prepare proposal and seek funding
- Osha/Zia Extension Project
 - Objective – extend current Osha/Zia thinning project to connect to the Sate project to the east.
 - Priority - Low

Eagle Nest

- Lakeview/Idlewild Boundary Project
 - Priority – High
 - Activity – complete the project proposal and seek funding

Latir

- Latir Defensible Space Project
 - Objective – develop defensible space around private homes in Latir
 - Priority – High
 - Activity – complete project proposal and seek funding
- Latir/El Rito Boundary Project
 - Objective – thin a boundary buffer zone along the private forest boundary in the Latir area. Work on both sides of the fence.
 - Priority – Moderate
 - Activity – collaborate with Carson NF, Questa RD to develop the project proposal. Seek funding for work on both sides of the fence.
- Fire Suppression Water Supply Project
 - Objective – Establish two additional dry hydrant locations
 - Priority – High
 - Activity – Seek funding
- Community Chipper Project
 - Objective – Acquire a chipper and establish a community chipping program to reduce accumulated slash
 - Priority – Moderate
 - Activity – Develop project proposal and seek funding

Pot Creek

- Happy Potters Project
 - Objective – Part of this project will thin a boundary buffer zone around the Pot Creek community.
 - Priority –
 - Activity – Complete NEPA analysis.

Questa

- Forest Thinning for Fire Protection & Education of Youth
 - Objective – thin 50 acres per year to create a fire break outside the Village, and educate local youth on forest management and careers
 - Priority – High
 - Activity – Complete an additional 50 acres of thinning to continue progress on this 3 year project.

Red River

- Pioneer Project
 - Objective – Reduce probability of a crown fire event in Pioneer Canyon Watershed and potential impact on Ski Area
 - Priority – High
 - Activity
 - complete Zone 1 and Zone 4 thinning, slash treatment and monitoring activities planned for this year.
 - Develop test plots in mixed conifer representative of Zone 2
 - Develop CFRP proposal for Zone 2

- Bobcat Pass Project
 - Objective – Develop defensible space and reduce hazardous fuels in the Bobcat Pass / Bitter Creek area.
 - Priority – High
 - Activity – Recruit additional landowners to participate, continue and complete thinning and slash management for properties enrolled in the program

- Composting Project
 - Objective – determine the commercial viability of converting wood chip biomass to compost
 - Priority – Moderate
 - Activity –
 - determine which of the pilot processes is most efficient and apply that process to bulk of existing chips.
 - Begin sales of the product

Rio Fernando

- Campground buffer project
 - Objective – create a buffer fuel break between forest service campgrounds at the mouth of the Rio Fernando Canyon and the private properties to the east.
 - Priority – High
 - Activity – Develop project proposal collaboratively with the Camino Real RD.

Taos Ski Valley

- TSV Sewer Plant Project
 - Priority – high
 - Activity – complete the project proposal and seek funding

Carson National Forest

Camino Real Ranger District

- La Jara
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- LJ Stewardship
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- Lower Taos Canyon
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- Borrego (may be out of CWPP planning boundary)
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- Entranas
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- Chamisal
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- NSA CFRP
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- PC CFRP
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- AF Stewardship
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- RMYC
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- Shady Brook
 - Objective –

- Priority –
- Activity -
- Forest Guild CFRP
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- DL Stewardship
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- DL Mech.
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- Dry Lakes II
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -

Questa Ranger District

- Pioneer
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- Questa/Lama
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -
- TVS
 - Objective –
 - Priority –
 - Activity -

BLM, Taos Field Office

- Copper Hill Project
 - Objective – Hazard fuels reduction and urban interface boundary
 - Priority – Moderate
 - Activity – Continue thinning activity (approximately 200 acres) and conduct maintenance burning
- Wild Rivers Project
 - Objective – Hazard fuels reduction and urban interface boundary
 - Priority – Moderate

- Activity – thinning, sage treatment, maintenance burning – approximately 2000 acres.
- Scout Camp Project (project area adjacent to south boundary of Protection Zone)
 - Objective – Hazard fuel reduction and WUI thinning
 - Priority – Moderate
 - Activity – complete thinning

Public Education

The objectives of the Public Education Plan are:

- To encourage individual property owners to take actions that will enhance the survivability of their home or business from the effects of a wildfire.
- To reduce the number of man caused ignitions in the wildland urban interface.

The Association will be actively involved in regional public education events hosted by the various members and cooperators listed below. In addition, the Association will continue it's tradition of participating in hosted radio talk shows and newspaper articles, interviews and public service announcements to reach a regional audience.

Planned activities of member agencies and cooperators are listed below:

Angel Fire

Angel Fire has hosted a “*Fire, Forest & WaterFair*” annually for the last several years, and plans to repeat that event in May of 2006. The event has multiagency sponsorship, and attracts an estimated 150 to 275 participants each year. It includes FireWise information, as well as education on forest and watershed health.

The Angel Fire Fire Department also publishes an annual newsletter to update the public on fuels projects (proposed, in progress and completed), and sources of fire prevention information. This newsletter is distributed in the Village's water bills. This practice will be repeated in 2006.

Additionally, the Village plans to publish a wildfire brochure that focuses on FireWise practices and explains the Village's new WUI ordinance. This brochure is due out early in 2006.

Colfax County District 6 / Eagle Nest

FireWise Community designation for Taos Pines is nearing reality at the time this document is being published. In addition, a three community effort for FireWise Community designation is expected to kick-off in early 2006 for Idlewild, Hidden Lake, and Ute Park.

The Carson National Forest

The Forest will sponsor certain community events, and participate in events sponsored by other agencies. Specific events on the calendar include:

- Solar Fest
- Rodeo de Taos
- Chama Spring Fling
- Fourth-of-July Festivities in several local communities
- *Fire, Forest & WaterFair* held in Angel Fire

The Forest plans to make presentations in all local school systems, focused on Fire Prevention, Fire Behavior and Forest Health. This activity will involve puppet shows, demonstrations, storytelling and PowerPoint presentations.

In a recently initiated program with the Taos Library, the Forest will sponsor a permanent exhibit with wildfire prevention education material. The Forest plans to expand the program to other libraries in the area.

The Forest plans door-to-door information sharing in select high-risk neighborhoods. In addition, the Forest will provide information at neighborhood association meetings to promote defensible space concepts.

The Forest will conduct an ad campaign at the Taos Storyteller Theater promoting campfire safety.

The Forest will keep the public informed on fire restrictions and public closures through press releases to all media, radio interviews, flyers to local businesses and residents in affected areas, postings in all recreation areas within the forest, and press releases to other Federal, State, Local and Tribal agencies.

Latir

Latir FD plans to continue current activities during the upcoming year, which include individual homeowner fire risk assessment, defensible space education for neighborhood associations, information in neighborhood association newsletters, and keeping the public advised of current fire danger ratings.

During the coming year, plans include completion of an evacuation plan and education of the public on its features, fire prevention education targeted at youth in the community, and to seek funding for an Urban Interface Educator (Fire Prevention Specialist). The community also plans to pursue FireWise community designation, and plans to adopt a strategy to accomplish that goal during this year.

Red River

Red River has implemented a homeowner awareness and education component of its hazard fuel reduction program. This activity involves an on-the-ground hazard and risk assessment of individual properties, development of a hazard reduction plan, and a link to resources to accomplish the plan. This activity will be advertised by flyer and newspaper articles starting in early May, 2006.

As part of the Pioneer Canyon Watershed project, Red River will design a self guided walking tour through a thinning area at the top of the Red River Ski Area. The target audience will be persons taking the summer chairlift ride to the top of the mountain, an estimated audience of 30,000 persons. The objective will be to educate the public on managing forests for reduction of fire risk and improvement of forest health.

The Town will maintain “current fire danger” signs at strategic locations to assure that the public is fully aware of conditions and any restrictions.

During the fire season, Fire Department personnel will conduct door-to-door contact campaigns to talk face-to-face with homeowners about fire safety, and distribute FireWise materials and information.

Legal Regulation

The ECRFPA has endorsed the International Code Council (ICC) Urban Wildland Interface Code as a model. A number of local governments have adopted regulations that use all or part of this code as a basis. Several local governments have phased adoption and implementation plans. The Association provides a forum for sharing experience and recommendations as the various governments move forward with their respective plans, listed below.

In addition, the Association will continue to promote consistency of fire restrictions across agency lines. It is recognized that none of the member agencies have adequate resources to enforce restrictions that are not broadly supported by the public. It is also recognized that the credibility of fire agencies suffer, and public support is lost when fire restrictions are not consistently timed and applied across jurisdictional boundaries.

Angel Fire

The Village of Angel Fire has recently adopted an ordinance that is based on a modified version of the ICC Urban Wildland Interface Code. The ordinance applies to all new construction, and requires thinning to defined criteria for the entire property.

Enforcement will be tied to the footing inspection for new construction. The Village will be evaluating the effectiveness of this new ordinance in the coming year, and sharing their experience with other local governments in the Enchanted Circle. This is the first phase of upcoming changes to begin to encourage the thinning of all lots in the Village especially the vacant lots. The vacant seem to pose a bigger challenge since we have no real enforcement of changes on them. The Village will soon be looking at adopting the full version of the ICC Urban Interface Code in the upcoming year.

Red River

The Town of Red River first incorporated interface criteria in the 2000 revision of the zoning ordinance and regulations. Additional criteria were adopted in the last year in a new fire ordinance, which repeals previous provisions that were contrary to good firewise planning, and refines regulation of open burning in a way to match the degree of restriction to objective fire danger indices. Open burning requires a permit, which is managed through the Fire Department. An existing ordinance closely regulating fireworks remains in effect.

The Town has proposed the ICC Urban Interface Code for adoption, and public hearing on the issue is scheduled for early 2006.

Taos County

Taos County has adopted subdivision regulations that incorporate many of the access and water supply features of the ICC code, which will closely regulate future subdivision development. In addition, the County's recently adopted Land Use Plan addresses individual homes through regulation of new construction. This requires assessment and mitigation of access, slope and hazardous fuels prior to issuance of a building permit. The County plans to continue refining the implementation of this plan during the upcoming year.

Taos County also regulates open burning through a permit process managed through its Fire Districts and enforced by the County Sheriff. Consistency of application and enforcement has been somewhat problematic, and will be a focus for improvement during year 2006.

Fire Response Capacity Building

Effective initial and extended attack response depends heavily to good interagency working relationships. The working relationship between Federal, State and Local resources has seen real progress in recent years and continues to improve. These relationships are strengthened by frequent opportunities to train and work together on the fireline. Continuing these efforts to coordinate and integrate resources will be strongly emphasized during 2006.

The focus of this section of the plan is primarily on activities within the ECRFPA. Plans to enhance fire response capacity in 2006 revolve around the following priorities:

Maintenance of Current Capacity:

There is a continual need to train and qualify new firefighters to offset the gradual attrition of personnel and the advancement of firefighters up the qualification ladder. The ECRFPA's basic wildland firefighter training program (S-130/S-190/I-100/L-180) focuses on hands-on skill building and has been very effective over the past five years. A program will be scheduled for late spring 2006.

A need has also been identified for advanced firefighter / squad boss / engine operator level personnel. S-131 Advanced Firefighter and L-280 Leadership courses will be scheduled for the January – March 2006 timeframe.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, the Taos LEPC has identified a need for ICS training in an interagency, all-hazards environment. An I-200 program and ICS exercise is being proposed for February 2006.

Enhance Hand Crew and Helitack Capacity:

The Enchanted Circle Fire Chasers Hand Crew is a Type 2 IA crew that has been in service for the past three fire seasons. Crew strength has remained in the 12 – 14 member range, with the majority of the crew returning each season. The goals for the crew during the 2006 fire season are:

- Build crew strength to 16
- Reinforce logistical self-sufficiency
- Complete an agreement with Camino Real Ranger District to cooperatively field a 20 person Type 2 IA regular crew.

A local CWN helitack crew became a reality during the 2005 fire season, with the qualification of a helicopter manager. The focus areas for the helitack crew during the 2006 fire season are:

- Complete the qualification of 7 HECM trainees.
- Present a HECM training course during the winter of 2006
- Identify and begin to prepare additional manager candidates
- Reinforce the module equipment cache

While the hand crew and helitack module were both initiated in response to recognized limitations of engines as a local resource, they have developed independently. There is an obvious advantage to having a close relationship between these two resources. An additional focus for 2006 will be to develop a capability to integrate these two resources into an effective initial attack resource.

Enhance Extended Attack Capacity:

Local initial attack capabilities have achieved a degree of reliability and effectiveness in recent years. In contrast, extended attack has been more problematic. The following projects will be initiated in 2006 in order to enhance extended attack capacity:

- Development of extended attack resource mobilization protocols for the Enchanted Circle Mob Guide.
- Identification, training, and qualification of candidates for key overhead positions typically needed in extended attack operations.
- Develop logistics capacity to support extended attack at any location within the Protection Zone.

Signature Pages

Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL of the Enchanted Circle

'Serving Taos County and the Moreno Valley'

Resolution No. 2005-04

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A REGIONAL COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

WHEREAS, the membership of the Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle is vested in the following local governmental entities and school districts within Taos County and the Moreno Valley of Colfax County: Taos County, Town of Taos, Taos Pueblo, Town of Red River, Village of Questa, Village of Taos Ski Valley, Village of Eagle Nest, Village of Angel Fire, Picuris Pueblo, Taos Municipal School District, Peñasco Independent School District, Questa Independent School District, and the University of New Mexico, Taos Campus; and

WHEREAS, it is the mission of the Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle to coordinate regional planning, promote economic development, enhance communication, foster educational opportunities, and provide for the social and economic well-being of our diverse population throughout Taos County and the Moreno Valley; and

WHEREAS, the 'Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003' makes funds available through programs to conduct community protection and wildfire hazard mitigation activities on federal and non-federal lands to qualifying agencies and entities; and

WHEREAS, the 'Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003' requires the development of a plan entitled a 'Community Wildfire Protection Plan' (CWPP) through a collaborative process involving local, state and federal governmental agencies and other local stakeholders as a minimum qualification for funding; and

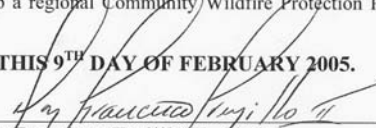
WHEREAS, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division has identified a land area called the 'Colfax / Taos Protection Zone' that is considered to be at risk of a catastrophic wildfire event; and

WHEREAS, the 'Colfax / Taos Protection Zone' closely parallels the jurisdictions of the governmental membership of the Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle; and

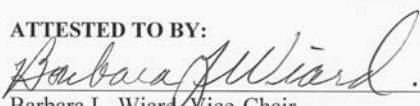
WHEREAS, a collaborative process to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan on a regional basis is encouraged by the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle wholeheartedly supports and endorses a collaborative process spearheaded by the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association to develop a regional Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Colfax / Taos Protection Zone.

PASSED, ADOPTED AND APPROVED THIS 9TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2005.



Don Francisco Trujillo II, Chair
Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle
Vice-Chair, Taos County Board of Commissioners

ATTESTED TO BY:


Barbara L. Wiard, Vice-Chair
Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle
Mayor Pro-Tem, Village of Taos Ski Valley



Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association

ECRFPA Resolution 2005-1

Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association

RESOLUTION 2005-1

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE “COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN FOR THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE WILDFIRE PROTECTION ZONE – CALENDAR YEAR 2006”

WHEREAS, all members of the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association (Association) provide fire protection and prevention services in their respective communities, and

WHEREAS, the members have collectively created this Association for the purposes of sharing resources and promoting improved fire protection and prevention services regionally, and

WHEREAS, the Association’s charter calls for the development of an Annual Operating Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 makes funds available through programs to conduct community protection and wildfire hazard mitigation activities on federal and non federal lands to qualifying agencies and entities, and

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 requires the development of a plan entitled a “Community Wildfire Protection Plan” (CWPP) through a collaborative process involving local, state, and federal governmental agencies and other local stakeholders as a minimum qualification for funding, and

WHEREAS, federal funding agencies rely on the State of New Mexico’s “Communities at Risk Plan”, published annually by the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), for verification that a community has developed a valid CWPP, and

WHEREAS, a collaborative process to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan on a regional basis is encouraged by the Governor’s Fire Planning Task Force, and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division has identified in their “Communities at Risk Plan – 2005” a land area called the “Colfax / Taos Protection Zone” that closely correlates to the jurisdictions of the Association and is considered to be “at risk” of a catastrophic wildfire event, and

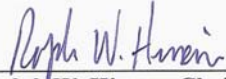
WHEREAS, the member Fire Departments of the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association, the member governments of the Taos County Intergovernmental Council, EMNRD Forestry Division – Cimarron District, The Carson National Forest, Taos Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management, and other entities and stakeholders within the geographic area have collaboratively developed a plan that meets the requirements for a “Community Wildfire Protection Plan” and is entitled “*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – Calendar Year 2006*”:

ECRFPA Resolution 2005-1

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by a vote of the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association at its regular meeting on November 7, 2005, that the "*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – Calendar Year 2006*" be adopted as the Wildfire Chapter of the Annual Operating Plan, and be it further resolved that the plan be forwarded to the New Mexico EMNRD for inclusion in their "2006 Communities at Risk Plan".

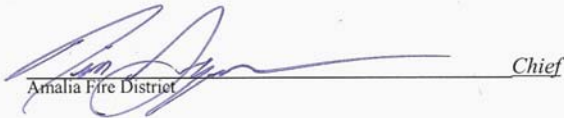
Done this 7th day of November, 2005, at Taos, New Mexico

ENCHANTED CIRCLE REGIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION



Ralph W. Hissem, Chairman

ATTEST:



Amalia Fire District *Chief*



Angel Fire Fire Department *Chief*

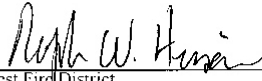
Cerro Fire District *Chief*



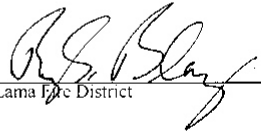
Coffax County Fire District 6 *Chief*

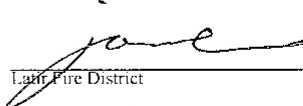
Costilla Fire District *Chief*


ECRFPA Resolution 2005-1

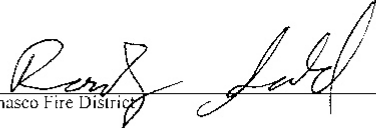

Eagle Nest Fire District *Chief*

Hondo Seco Fire District *Chief*



La Lama Fire District *Chief*


Larr Fire District *Chief*


Ojo Caliente Fire District *Chief*

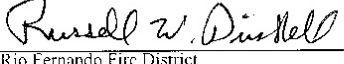

Penasco Fire District *Chief*



Pot Creek Fire District *Chief*


Questa Fire Department *Asst. Chief*



Rod River Fire Department *Chief*


ECRFPA Resolution 2005-1


Rio Fernando Fire District *Chief*


Taos Volunteer Fire Department *Chief*


Taos Ski Valley Fire Department *Chief*


Tres Piedras Fire District *Chief*


Whisper Peak Fire District *Asst. Chief*

Taos County



COUNTY OF TAOS RESOLUTION 2005 -66

TAOS COUNTY
ELAINE S. MONTANO, CLERK
000311864
Book 520 Page 453
1 of 32
11/07/2005 02:46:12 PM
BY MARYJEAN

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE "COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN FOR THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE WILDFIRE PROTECTION ZONE, CALENDAR YEAR 2006"

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 makes funds available through programs to conduct community protection and wildfire hazard mitigation activities on federal and non-federal lands to qualifying agencies and entities; and

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 requires the development of a plan entitled a "Community Wildfire Protection Plan" (CWPP) through a collaborative process involving local, state, and federal governmental agencies and other local stakeholders as a minimum qualification for funding; and

WHEREAS, federal funding agencies rely on the State of New Mexico's "Communities at Risk Plan", published annually by the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), for verification that a community has developed a valid CWPP; and

WHEREAS, a collaborative process to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan on a regional basis is encouraged by the Governor's Fire Planning Task Force; and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division has identified a land area called the "Colfax / Taos Protection Zone" that is considered to be "at risk" of a catastrophic wildfire event; and

WHEREAS, the land area described in the "Colfax / Taos Protection Zone" is known locally as the "Enchanted Circle"; and

WHEREAS, the "Enchanted Circle" lies within the Counties of Taos and Colfax, and Mutual Aid Agreements already exist between these jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, the member governments of the Taos County Intergovernmental Council, the member Fire Departments of the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association, EMNRD Forestry Division - Cimarron District, The Carson National Forest, Taos Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management, and other entities and stakeholders within the geographic area have collaboratively developed a plan that meets the requirements for a "Community Wildfire Protection Plan" and is entitled "*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone - Calendar Year 2006*".

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Taos County Board of Commissioners that the attached "*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone - Calendar Year 2006*" be adopted and forwarded to the New Mexico EMNRD for inclusion in their "2006 Communities at Risk Plan".

TAOS COUNTY
ELAINE S. MONTANO, CLERK
000311864
Book 520 Page 454
2 of 32
11/07/2005 02:46:12 PM
BY MARYJEAN

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 7th day of November, 2005.



Elaine S. Montano
ELAINE MONTANO
TAOS COUNTY CLERK
by: *Virgil D. Martinez*

TAOS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

Gabriel J. Romero
GABRIEL J. ROMERO, CHAIRMAN

Don Francisco Trujillo II
DON FRANCISCO TRUJILLO II, VICE-CHAIRMAN

Nicklos E. Jaramillo
NICKLOS E. JARAMILLO, COMMISSIONER, DIST. IV

Emanuel B. Pacheco
EMANUEL B. PACHECO, COMMISSIONER, DIST. V

ABSENT
VIRGIL D. MARTINEZ, COMMISSIONER, DIST. II

DATE: *11/7/2005*

Vote Record:

G. Romero	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Abstain	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
D.F. Trujillo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Abstain	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
N. Jaramillo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Abstain	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
E. Pacheco	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Abstain	<input type="checkbox"/> Absent
V. Martinez	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Abstain	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Absent

Town of Red River

TOWN OF RED RIVER

RESOLUTION NO. 2005-16

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE “COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN FOR THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE WILDFIRE PROTECTION ZONE, CALENDAR YEAR 2006”

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 makes funds available through programs to conduct community protection and wildfire hazard mitigation activities on federal and non federal lands to qualifying agencies and entities, and

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 requires the development of a plan entitled a “Community Wildfire Protection Plan” (CWPP) through a collaborative process involving local, state, and federal governmental agencies and other local stakeholders as a minimum qualification for funding, and

WHEREAS, federal funding agencies rely on the State of New Mexico’s “Communities at Risk Plan”, published annually by the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), for verification that a community has developed a valid CWPP, and

WHEREAS, a collaborative process to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan on a regional basis is encouraged by the Governor’s Fire Planning Task Force, and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division has identified a land area called the “Colfax / Taos Protection Zone” that is considered to be “at risk” of a catastrophic wildfire event, and

WHEREAS, the land area described in the “Colfax / Taos Protection Zone” is known locally as the “Enchanted Circle”, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Red River lies within the “Enchanted Circle”, and

WHEREAS, the member governments of the Intergovernmental Council of the Enchanted Circle, the member Fire Departments of the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association, EMNRD Forestry Division – Cimarron District, The Carson National Forest, Taos Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management, and other entities and stakeholders within the geographic area have collaboratively developed a plan that meets the requirements for a “Community Wildfire Protection Plan” and is entitled “*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – Calendar Year 2006*”:

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Governing Body of the Town of Red River that the attached “*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – Calendar Year 2006*” be adopted and forwarded to the New Mexico EMNRD for inclusion in their “2006 Communities at Risk Plan”.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 10th day of November, 2005.

TOWN OF RED RIVER

Craig Swagerty - Mayor Pro-Tem
CRAIG SWAGERTY, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Judy Brunson
JUDY BRUNSON
MUNICIPAL CLERK

Village of Angle Fire

Village of Eagle Nest

REC'D NOV 17 2005
**VILLAGE OF EAGLE NEST
RESOLUTION NO. 2005-29**

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE “COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN
FOR THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE WILDFIRE PROTECTION ZONE, CALENDAR YEAR
2006”**

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 makes funds available through programs to conduct community protection and wildfire hazard mitigation activities on federal and non federal lands to qualifying agencies and entities, and

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 requires the development of a plan entitled a “Community Wildlife Protection Plan” (CWPP) through a collaborative process involving local, state, and federal governmental agencies and other local stakeholders as a minimum qualification for funding, and

WHEREAS, federal funding agencies rely on the State of New Mexico’s “Communities at Risk Plan”, published annually by the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) for verification that a community has developed a valid CWPP, and

WHEREAS, a collaborative process to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan on a regional basis is encouraged by the Governor’s Fire Planning Task Force, and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division has identified a land area called the “Colfax / Taos Protection Zone” that is considered to be “at risk” of a catastrophic wildfire event, and

WHEREAS, the land area described in the “Colfax / Taos Protection Zone” is known locally as the “Enchanted Circle”, and

WHEREAS, the Village of Eagle Nest lies within the “Enchanted Circle”, and

WHEREAS, the member governments of the Taos County Intergovernmental Council, the member Fire Departments of the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association, EMNRD Forestry Division – Cimarron District, The Carson National Forest, Taos Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management, and other entities and stakeholders within the geographic area have collaboratively developed a plan that meets the requirements for a “Community Wildfire Protection Plan” and is entitled “*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – Calendar Year 2006*”:

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Governing Body of the Village of Eagle Nest that the attached “*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – Calendar Year 2006*” be adopted and forwarded to the New Mexico EMNRD for inclusion in their “2006 Communities at Risk Plan”.

Adopted and approved this 15th day of November 2005.



Neva Z. Hascall
NEVA Z. HASCALL MAYOR

ATTEST:

Sandra J. Hovey
Sandra J. Hovey
Municipal Clerk
Village of Eagle Nest

Village of Questa

Village of Taos Ski Valley

VILLAGE OF TAOS SKI VALLEY

RESOLUTION NO. 2006-111

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE “COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN FOR THE ENCHANTED CIRCLE WILDFIRE PROTECTION ZONE, CALENDAR YEAR 2006”

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 makes funds available through programs to conduct community protection and wildfire hazard mitigation activities on federal and non federal lands to qualifying agencies and entities, and

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 requires the development of a plan entitled a “Community Wildfire Protection Plan” (CWPP) through a collaborative process involving local, state, and federal governmental agencies and other local stakeholders as a minimum qualification for funding, and

WHEREAS, federal funding agencies rely on the State of New Mexico’s “Communities at Risk Plan”, published annually by the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), for verification that a community has developed a valid CWPP, and

WHEREAS, a collaborative process to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan on a regional basis is encouraged by the Governor’s Fire Planning Task Force, and

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division has identified a land area called the “Colfax / Taos Protection Zone” that is considered to be “at risk” of a catastrophic wildfire event, and

WHEREAS, the land area described in the “Colfax / Taos Protection Zone” is known locally as the “Enchanted Circle”, and

WHEREAS, the Village of Taos Ski Valley lies within the “Enchanted Circle”, and

WHEREAS, the member governments of the Taos County Intergovernmental Council, the member Fire Departments of the Enchanted Circle Regional Fire Protection Association, EMNRD Forestry Division – Cimarron District, The Carson National Forest, Taos Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management, and other entities and stakeholders within the geographic area have collaboratively developed a plan that meets the requirements for a “Community Wildfire Protection Plan” and is entitled “*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – Calendar Year 2006*”:

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Governing Body of the Village of Taos Ski Valley that the attached “*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – Calendar Year 2006*” be adopted and forwarded to the New Mexico EMNRD for inclusion in their “2006 Communities at Risk Plan”.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED this 1st day of November, 2005.

VILLAGE OF TAOS SKI VALLEY



Neal King

NEAL KING, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Vanessa Chisholm

**VANESA CHISHOLM
MUNICIPAL CLERK**

New Mexico Forestry Division, Cimarron District

My signature below indicates my support and endorsement of the "*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – 2006*":

New Mexico Forestry Division, Cimarron District:



Ernie Lopez, Cimarron District Forester

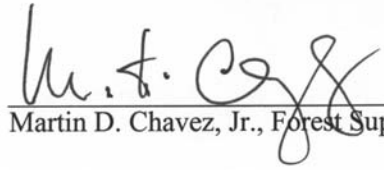
11/15/05

Date

Carson National Forest

My signature below indicates my support and endorsement of the "*Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Enchanted Circle Wildfire Protection Zone – 2006*":

Carson National Forest:



Martin D. Chavez, Jr., Forest Supervisor

11-14-05
Date

Community Annexes

Pot Creek

Pot Creek Community Wildfire Protection Plan



Prepared by:
Ben Kuykendall
Taos, New Mexico

September 2005

Author's Note:

When asked to prepare this document I decided to try to make this an informative working tool for the residents of Pot Creek. My hope is that it will motivate you to help preserve your beautiful community; however, it is easy to sit on good intentions. I am only sharing the following incident in hope of inspiring you to act on those good intentions.

Shortly after noon on May 5, 1996 I received a call from my wife's sister. She lived a few miles south of Questa in a beautiful log cabin. She had in fact built it by hand having cut standing dead trees, hauled them off the mountain and positioned each log in its place. These stood out in contrast to the white chinking that had been pressed by hand between each log. We had discussed the fuels around her home and the need for removing the oak brush and making a safer zone around the house for several years.

That afternoon she and her husband had a thinning contractor on site explaining what she wanted done when she saw a small column of smoke down towards San Cristobal. She knew I had just returned from a fire in Ruidoso so she called me to report the smoke. I glanced out my window, south of Taos, saw the smoke and called the Carson Dispatch Office. Paul said he would roll someone immediately to check it out.

I looked out again only a couple of minutes later and quickly called dispatch back. I told Paul to forget sending anyone to check it out, but to call Albuquerque and get tankers airborne. About four hours later the fire swept over their home and they lost their dream. The air tankers managed to save several structures that had defendable space around them. Theirs was not one of them. The contractor did help them load a few personal items before they fled.

The Hondo Fire still holds the national record for rate of spread through that fuel type, piñon juniper. The trees densities were about the same as they are around Pot Creek.

Chapter 1. Rapid Responders Information and Maps

The following maps show general location, access, and fuel loading levels for the Pot Creek community.

Map 1. General Location. Pot Creek is located approximately 5 miles south of Talpa on State Road 518.

Map 2. Community Boundary with Access Roads.

- Map base is topographic to help provide slope information.
- Residential area is on north end.
- Overhead electrical lines are along virtually all roads in this area.
- Ft. Burgwin (SMU) is in central portion.
- Electrical is primarily buried in this area.

Map 3. Community Fuel Loading Levels (topographic based)

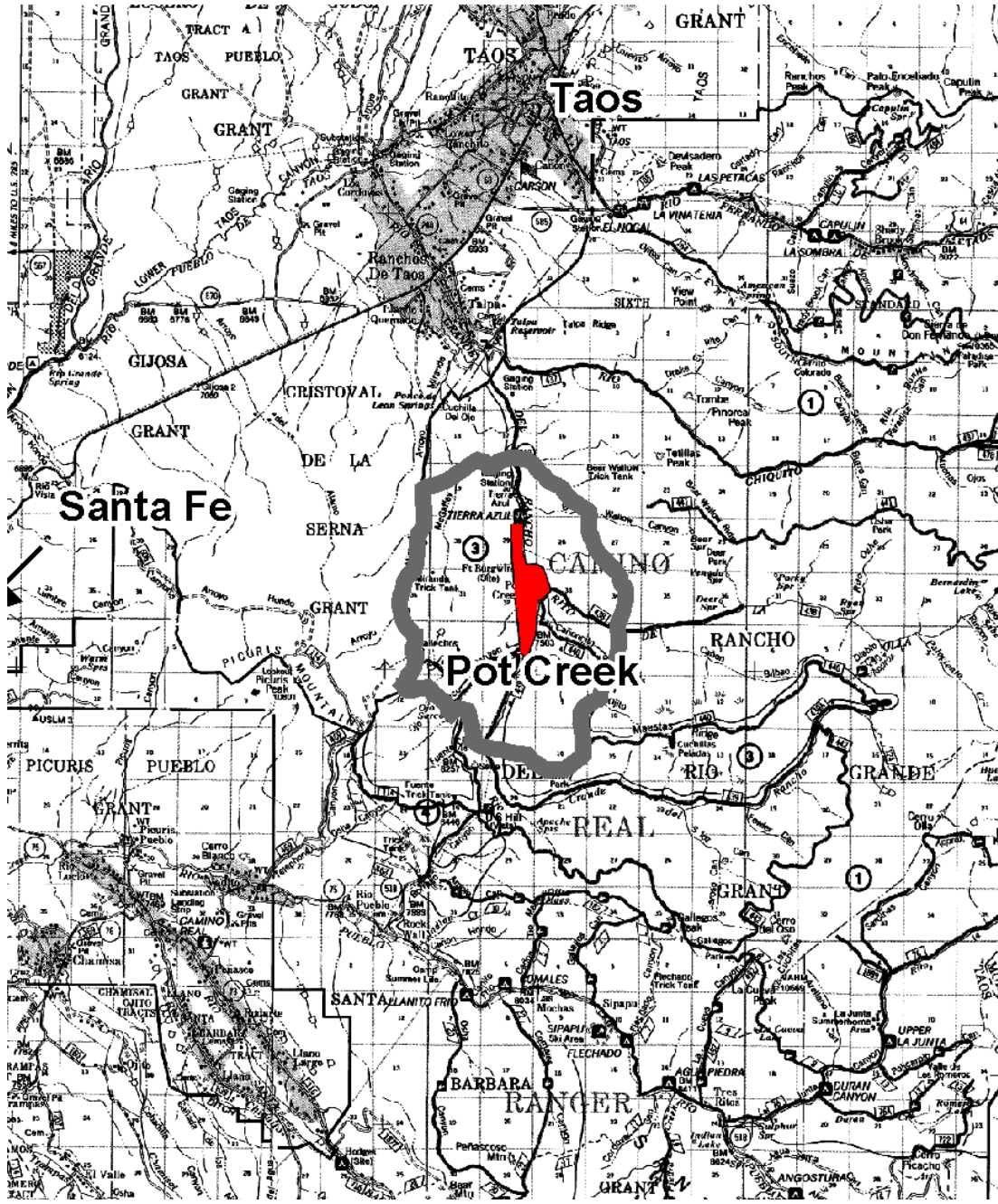
- Note old saw mill site east of community. There are extensive saw dust piles in this area.

Map 4. Community Orthophoto

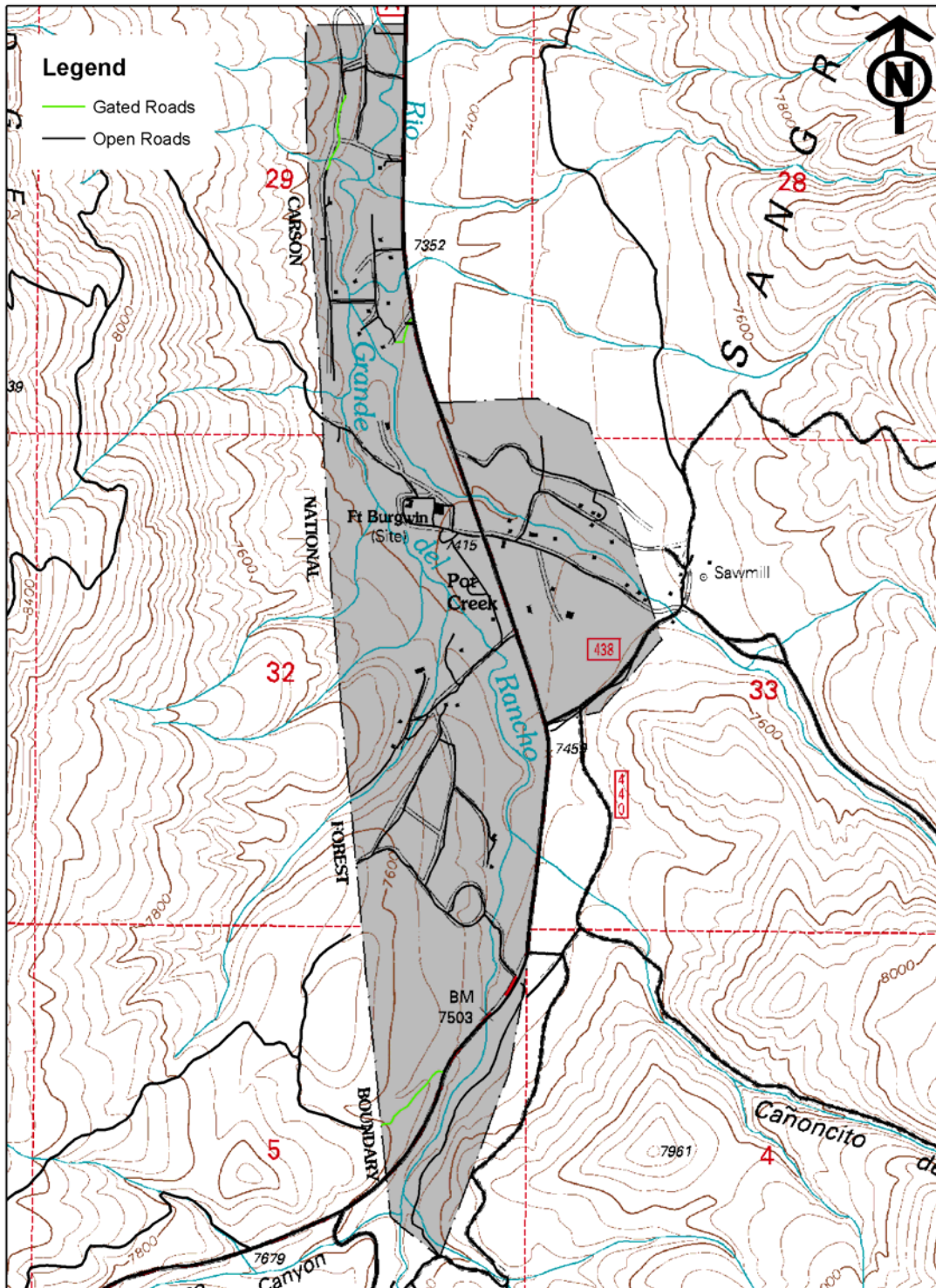
- This map provides aerial photo landscape perspective.
- Bridges are marked by X. These provide draft locations. Caution should be taken as no load limits are posted on any bridge. However, propane tanks are located across bridges and apparently delivery trucks are accessing all residences so bridges can handle at least moderately heavy loads.

Map 5. Fuel Loading Map for Surrounding Forest)

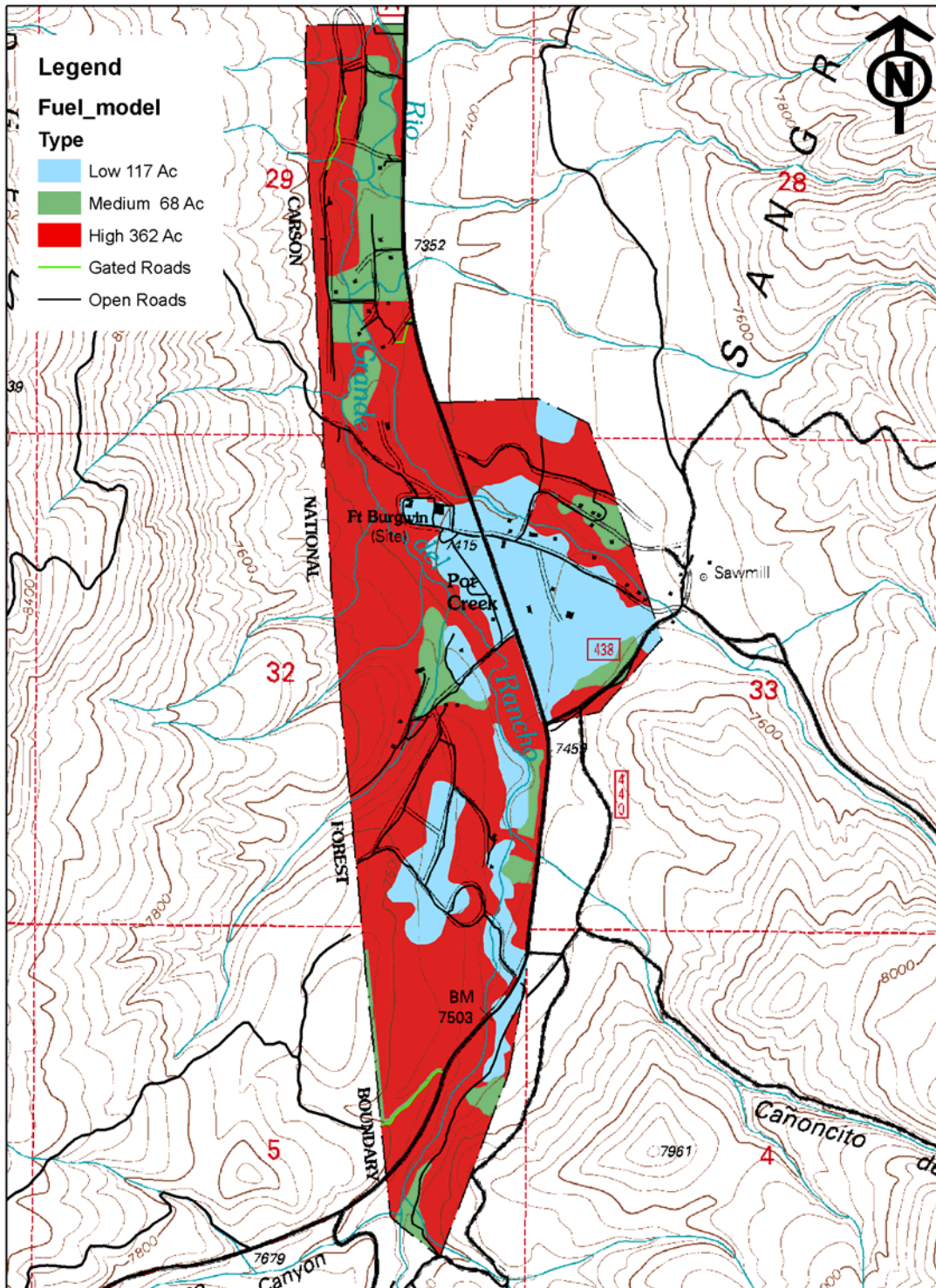
- WUI boundary also shown



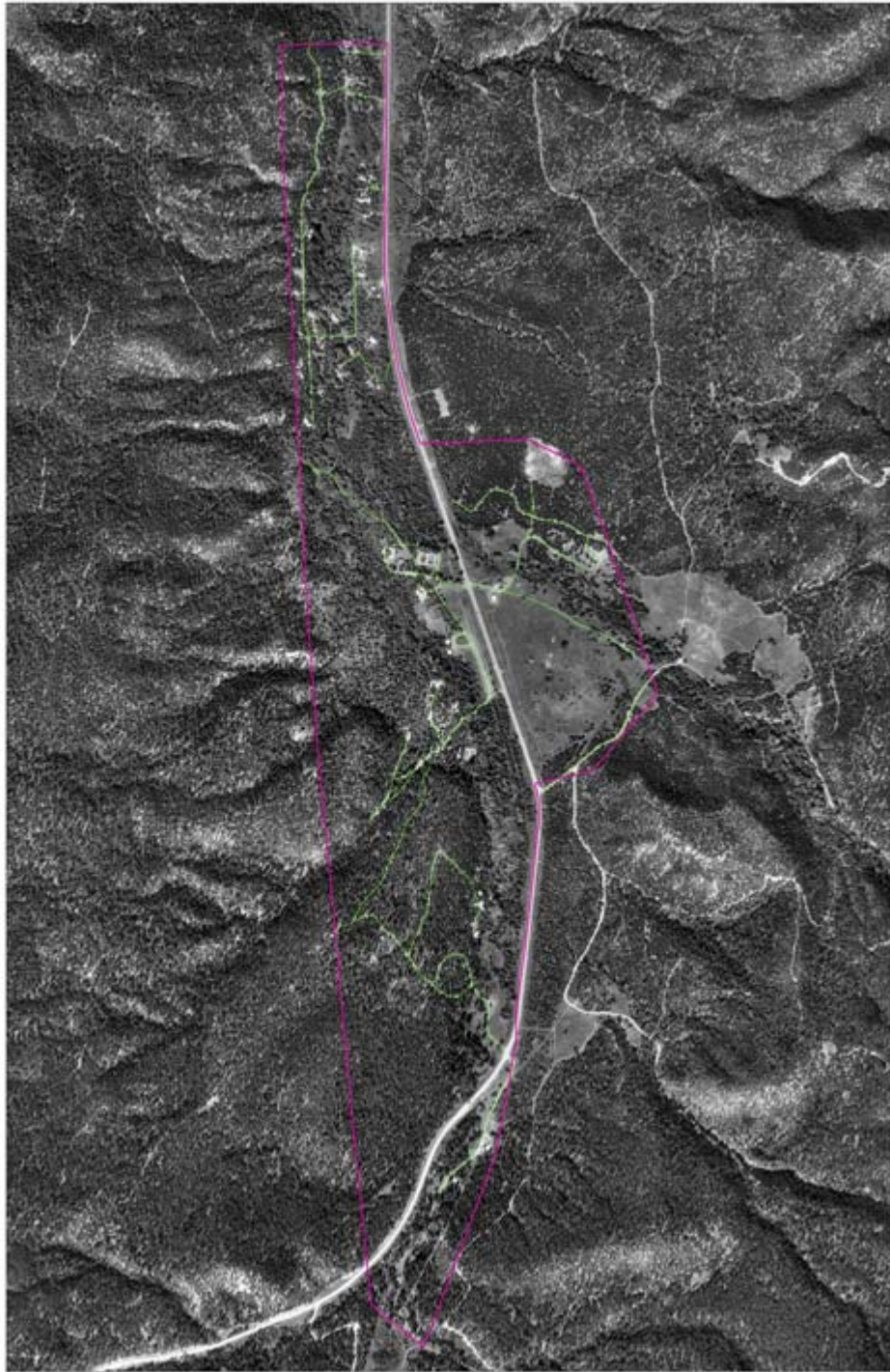
Map 1
Location



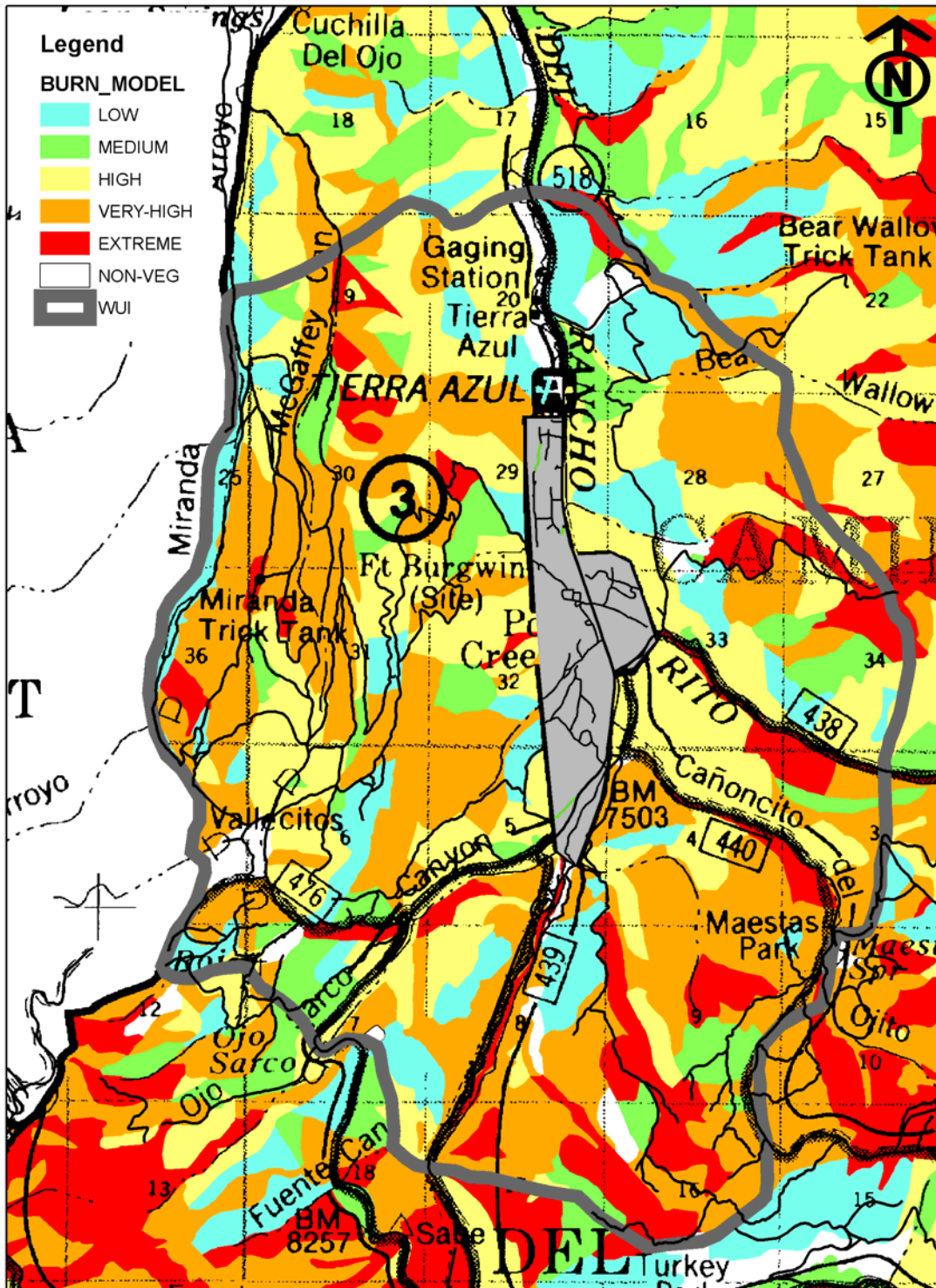
Map 2
Pot Creek Private Land Boundary, Roads, and Access



Map 3
Topography with Community Fuel Loading Levels



Map 4
Orthophoto of Community



Map 5
National Forest Fuel Loading Levels

Chapter 2. Guide to Community Preparedness

A community fire preparedness plan is much more a continuing process as opposed to a single document. This guide is intended to help community members understand more about fire behavior and go forward in this process. There are different types of fires to which different preparedness objectives should be planned. This chapter also provides the community with an assessment of the existing conditions regarding fuels related fire risks.

The photos and narrative are to help you, as residents, to understand the concepts of developing or improving defensible space and how to reduce ignitability of structures and protect your personal property. This includes providing the information necessary to understand the relationships between maintaining scenic beauty of the community and your personal property, as well as, the degree of acceptable risk. It will identify the types of actions community members can take to “reduce” the risk of exposure to catastrophic wildfire through fuels reduction while maintaining aesthetic values.

Examples of Fire Behavior

The following examples are certainly an over simplification of fire behavior, but these hypothetical scenarios are intended to demonstrate the need of **various strategies** for community protection.

Example 1. A fire may start close by, such as in your neighbor’s backyard. This fire will obviously not have room to generate a lot of heat moving in your direction. It should be easily controlled. However, this depends on the conditions between you and your neighbor. If you have dense vegetation all the way between his backyard and your house, your chances just went from good to bad.

In this case, making sure:

- 1) a zone exists where trees have some space between their crowns,
- 2) lower limbs are trimmed to eliminate the fuel ladder from the ground to lower branches of trees, and
- 3) fallen dead material has been removed.

These measures will make a lot of difference (see the section on improving defensible space).



Continuous canopy closure provides conditions for extreme fire heat and rapid rates of spread through a community. This is very high fuel load rating.



Areas that have been thinned and trimmed still provide a woodland environment, while considerably decreasing the risk of wildfire. Because the area around this stand of trees is open it is a low fuel rating.

Example 2. A lightning strike hits a dead tree on the National Forest about a quarter of a mile from the community property line. The fire is now burning towards the community. In this case, a zone of reduced fuels along the boundary will force the fire from the canopy to ground fuels (needles and small branches). This will slow the rate of spread and provide firefighters a good opportunity to catch and put the fire out. Even a fairly narrow fire break of a few hundred feet can be quite effective.

This type of fuel break does not have to look like a barren landscape. The zone can still have the appearance of a forested area and can be esthetically pleasing. But it should look much cleaner, with more open spaces between trees and a more visually open appearance between the ground and lower branches.



This area has been moderately, but uniformly thinned. Although tree canopies are still fairly close, both ground and ladder fuels have been removed from the understory. This type of treatment is effective, with a moderate to low fuel rating.



This photo shows the edge between an untreated and a thinned area. The area on the right will provide an effective zone where firefighters could work, while the area on the left would be too hazardous. The area on the left is a high fuel rating while the area on the right is low. Leaving a variety of conditions can provide ecological and visual diversity and significantly reduce fire hazards if planned properly.

If the Example 2 fire does make it into the community, then conditions adjacent to residences are even more important, as this fire will likely have more potential energy and a larger front. Remember, the hotter the fire, the greater its ability to cause something to ignite at a farther distance. The fire break feature is also important in reverse, and may protect thousands of acres of National Forest System lands from a fire that started in the community and is moving onto the National Forest.

Example 3. In this example, let's say numerous dry lightning strikes have occurred on the Serna Land Grant. Conditions are hot, dry, and windy. Fuel moisture is very low and trees are dense with high amounts of dead and down material. In this example, a fire can generate conditions some refer to as a "firestorm." Fires, such as the Encebado or, especially, the Hondo, generated tremendous heat that carried burning embers thousands of feet into the air and dropped them far ahead of the actual front of the fire. Numerous spot fires can be started up to a mile ahead of the main fire front. This is the type of fire which can just run right over the top of woodland or forested communities such as yours.

In this case, the fuel break that worked well in Example 2 is not adequate security. Also, the conditions within the residential area are even more important to reduce ignition potential. This example demonstrates the need for long-term planning at a landscape level to reduce fuel densities across much larger areas. It is important that adequate acreages of fuels reduction treatments are done to force wildfires out of the canopies and onto the ground. This is to keep that “firestorm” energy from ever developing. It is also important to establish a WUI boundary large enough to allow and assist the cooperating agency the opportunity to do such management, while still maintaining or even improving biological diversity. Both the location map (Map 1) and the forest level fuels map (Map 5) show the WUI boundary for Pot Creek. This boundary was developed in conjunction with the Camino Real Ranger District, Carson National Forest.

Existing Conditions

Pot Creek community is in an area of high fire risk. It has been mapped into three categories or fuel condition ratings based on fuel characteristics.

These are simply high, medium, and low ratings, which are recommended by the national guidelines for developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP’s). Most photos are referenced to provide residents with visual examples to reference fuel ratings. Map 3 shows the overall ratings for areas within the community (entire private land boundary of Pot Creek).

The existing conditions will also dictate how firefighters will attack a fire in an urban setting. Community members should understand that in the event of a large fire, firefighters will triage homes down to the ones they think they can save. In other words, if your residence has dense tree and brush cover close to your home, they may drive right by to one that has defensible space around it.

Fuel Types

Vegetation types within the Pot Creek community include ponderosa pine, piñon-juniper, riparian, and grasslands. Each has areas ranging from low to high fuel loadings.

Ponderosa pines occasionally occur as individual trees scattered through the piñon-juniper type. Ponderosa pine as a fuel type really only occurs along the southern edge of the community on a couple of larger parcels of private property.

Piñon-juniper is the dominant fuel type associated with the residential portions of the community. Even though much of the residential zone is mapped as medium fuel loading, the community overall is still at high risk. The medium rank is due to the very intermingled conditions ranging from low to high. Even though there are areas of low fuel densities, most are still surrounded by high fuel load zones.

Riparian areas close to the Rio Grande del Rancho generally have lush green vegetation such as willows, which are not highly susceptible to spreading fire. The exception may be areas where juniper trees have dense lower branches, which could cause trees to torch.

Grasslands are considered to be in the low fuel density category. However, where “cheatgrass,” a non-native annual brome, has become dominant, it can be hazardous. Once dry, this grass becomes a flash fuel connecting other fuel types.

Improving Defensible Space

Although mentioned earlier, this term simply means firefighters have enough room between the nearest fuel source and your home to defend it from the fire. Some homeowners in Pot Creek have good defensible space around their houses, while others do not.

Maintaining Aesthetic Values

People live in woodland and forested areas because of the aesthetic values for which areas like Pot Creek offer. The concern residents may have is that this value may be lost if they thin around their homes. This is probably the main reason people are reluctant to embark on the task of reducing fire risk. *Trees are important for shade, landscaping, visual barriers, and wildlife habitat, and can still be maintained for these uses while significantly reducing the fire hazard.*

A Recommended Approach

General Thinning - If you want a visual barrier between you and your neighbor, first identify which trees are essential for this purpose. Even with a zone of denser trees, it is likely some of the small, stunted trees can be removed and still meet your objectives.

Next, look at the area between your residence and the trees you are using as the visual barrier. Identify and remove most of the small trees that are being crowded by larger trees. Once these are removed, it will allow you to better

visualize and assess the remaining trees and to identify which ones you think are special and really want to keep. Generally the largest trees with the most unique branching are the ones you want to retain. Before removing any of these, first look for general health. Some may have extensive porcupine damage (large patches of bark missing in piñons or ponderosas), insect damage in your piñon trees, or large patches of mistletoe in piñon or juniper. If you have lost trees to bark or twig beetle, those should go first.

The minimum objective is to achieve about 20 feet of open space between tree canopies. There are no set rules. If you find your two favorite trees are close together, then try and increase the space from those to the next tree.

Reducing the Fuel Ladder - The lower branches of trees often provide a means for a ground fire to climb into the canopy. This is called a fuel ladder. It is likely, there will be several trees from the general thinning you are not sure about removing. Before removing those, begin trimming the lower branches. Both piñon and juniper often have very unique growth characteristics that can be extremely attractive. This is often masked by dense lower branches.

Start by lopping off the smaller branches and retaining the larger ones. Cut them off close to the main branch(s). Work up the tree until you get five to six feet above the ground, selectively grooming the tree as you work up. This step alone can significantly reduce fire hazards on your property. It will also make some trees jump out as special and identify others as ones that can be thinned out to reduce any canopy crowding. Since both species are excellent firewood, cutting any branches over about 1.5 inches to firewood lengths will also reduce the amount of slash disposal required.



Even though there is some interconnecting canopy, this photo shows a couple of nicely groomed junipers with the fuel ladder removed and the unique growth form now displayed.

Shade trees are often a desirable feature next to the house. Remember, the closer trees are to your home the greater the risk of ignition. If you decide to keep shade trees close to your home the more important it is to remove any fuel ladder branches. Grooming the small branches from these trees even higher will help mitigate the presence of a fuel source adjacent to your home. Brush removal against walls and fences, and especially near shade trees, is even more important where shade trees are retained close to your home.

Slash Removal - Thinning and removing lower limbs can produce tremendous amounts of unwanted slash. In addition, there may already be fallen dead limbs and leaf material that add to ground fuels. It is very important to remove the dead and down litter along with the lower limbs. If you have left a row of denser trees for a visual barrier, it is still important to remove any dead lower branches and ground litter in this zone.

Always think safety when dealing with slash removal. Use leather gloves and boots, wear a long sleeve shirt with protective fabric, a hard hat, and always wear eye protection. If you are using a chain saw, wear protective chaps and, with any noisy equipment, use hearing protection.

There is a direct relationship between the safer you decide to make your property, and the amount of slash disposal that will be necessary. At a

community level, acquiring and sharing the use of a commercial chipper is a great way to treat slash. Chips can be used in landscaping to control unwanted weeds and brush around other plants and trees. They are also much more easily disposed of and can even be sold.

Brush piling and burning is also a means of slash disposal. If this is done, select a location with plenty of space. -- well away from any sources of fuel overhead electrical lines. Keep the pile size fairly small. Have plenty of water hoses ready and coordinate with the local fire department. Also check the weather conditions. More than one large and devastating fire has been started by burning trash.

Assistance

There are a number of sources of financial assistance for thinning projects. Having this CWPP to reference may increase chances for approval of grant/assistance proposals. Especially if requested through New Mexico State Forestry. Ernie Lopez at Ute Park is the contact for information regarding how to apply for State Forestry assistance. Completed plans should help with potential State Legislature funding. For Community assistance programs through the US Forest Service contact the grant coordinator Ignacio Peralta (758-6200) at the Carson National Forest in Taos. Taos Soil and Water Conservation District (751-0584) also has programs for thinning assistance on private lands.

Thinning for fire preparedness is also hard work and can be hazardous. You may need to hire this work to be done, especially if you are not skilled with a chain saw. It should not be too difficult to find a contractor. One source for contracting this type of work is Rocky Mountain Youth Corps.

Other Safety Practices

There are a variety of around-the-home mitigation measures or maintenance practices that can commonly reduce ignitability or aid in fire fighting efforts. Fire department and agency handouts are also available that will provide a more comprehensive list of things to consider. The following suggestions are limited to items that are both common and can make measurable differences in case of a fire incident.

Mowing - Mowing is a simple measure to control flash fuels. This is recommended for all grassy areas, but especially if they are adjacent to trees with branches all the way to the ground. If there are larger patches of

cheatgrass, it is a good idea to reseed the area with a mixture of both cool and warm season grasses to gradually over take this invasive annual species.

To keep it simple, use a mixture of smooth brome and sideoats grama. Mowing the patch of cheat grass while still green and before the seeds have matured will help. All of these cheatgrass plants grow from new seed each year so reducing the seed production will make a difference. If the area will not be watered, wait to broadcast this seed mixture in mid-July to take advantage of the summer rains and improve chances of establishment after germination.



At mid-summer the cheat grass in this photo is tinder dry, while the perennial brome is still green. If ignited on a breezy day, it could quickly torch the junipers with the low branches.

Firewood storage - This is an unexpected fuel source if there is a wildfire incident. Try to keep your wood pile away from the house. A small metal roofed shed can prevent falling embers from landing in this concentrated dry fuel source. Do not store firewood under a wooden deck. If you have thinned during the summer months, protect your remaining piñon trees by stacking any piñon for firewood and covering it with plastic for about three weeks during hot weather. Cover all the edges to not allow any air under the plastic. Dispose of other slash quickly. This measure is recommended due to the recent outbreak of piñon bark beetle. They are attracted to recently cut slash and can infect the trees you intended to keep.

Building Maintenance and Construction - If you are planning home upgrades, consider using materials that have fire safety ratings for exterior surfaces. Metal or other non-flammable roof material reduces fire hazards tremendously.

Fire Retardants - Now there are spray products available that can be applied to flammable features of your home such as porches, decks, fences, roofs and even surrounding vegetation. These are used only if a fire is on going, is moving in your direction and/or if you are likely to be evacuated. One such product is “Barricade Fire Protection Gel.” More information can be found on line at, <http://www.barricadegel.com/>. These products are very effective and can be rejuvenated for several days by just spraying water on the surface of the treated area.

Accessibility - Having adequate fire engine access to all sides of your home can help in the fire fighting effort when time is critical. This does not have to be a road, but can be just an adequate opening.

Water Sources - All bridge locations are identified on the base map in Chapter One. One thing that can make these potential water drafting locations more useable is some simple rock placement that creates a small pool to submerge a drafting hose in the stream next to the bridge. If these are naturally present, don't try to improve on nature. Check for these after the runoff season each year.

Communications - Don't assume someone else will notify both the local fire department and the Forest Service. Given the current urban interface conditions, both should be notified immediately in case of a fire.

Propane Tanks – Propane tanks and a community wild fire are not a good mixture. Safety can be improved by removing all unnecessary nearby fuels from around your tank.

Community Fire Station – This is an important objective for the community. It should be strategically located close to or within the community, and should be equipped with an engine, a small commercial chipper and a 10 -14 foot tandem-axel trailer with a dump bed for slash disposal, and a small 8 – 10 foot single axel trailer equipped with a portable pump, hose and sprinkler system. This last item relates to the old sawmill and extensive sawdust piles immediately adjacent to the community.

Community members should understand that once a fire gets started in a sawdust pile it will likely be a problem that persists until winter snow pack

snuffs it out. These fires will smolder deep into the sawdust and become the perpetual pain in the neck fire. There is really no effective way to just put it out. You can dump multiple engine loads of water on these but the saw dust has an exceptionally high absorption rate and it will simple not soak down deep enough to reach the smoldering fire. Days or even weeks later it will pop up and start to burn on the surface. Fire crews can knock it down only to repeat the process over and over. When it does flair up it usually puts out a lot of smoke and people get concerned. It is especially a concern if it flairs up on an exceptionally windy day.

Chapter 3. Future Planning

Being Involved with Forest Service Project Planning

Unless achieved through a community grant program for which funding is intended for that purpose, the Forest Service cannot expend federal funds on private land. The Forest Service can, however, work with communities on National Forest System lands adjacent to the community.

There are numerous laws that apply to all projects on public lands. The two that are most important with regard to your involvement in this effort are the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the recently passed Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA).

NEPA is the overall guide for project planning for any federal agency. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act makes plans such as this Community Wildfire Protection Plan more important, as it establishes a definitive and more applicable boundary for the Pot Creek WUI. This boundary (see Map 5) has been coordinated with the Forest Service. As a result of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, Forest Service projects within such boundaries are given higher priority for planning and implementation. This is important for both short-term and long-term project planning.

Current and Previous Projects

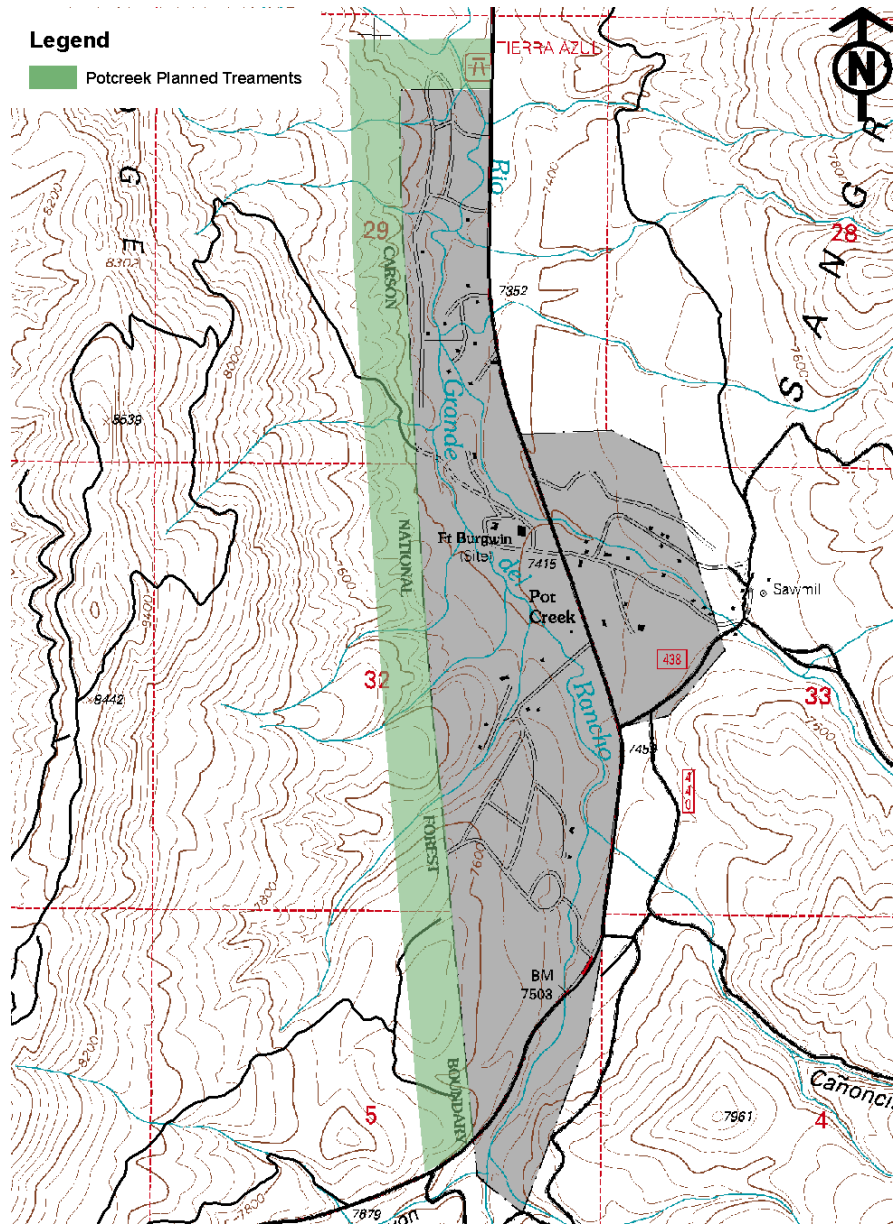
In the past ten years, there have been several fuelwood sales, thinning, and prescribed burning projects that have reduced fuels within the Pot Creek WUI boundary area. These include the Vallecitos/Pot Creek fuel wood and thinning due south of the Pot Creek community. This fuel wood project totaled 123 acres and is now being followed up with some contract thinning. The Deer Park Rx burn in the mid 1990's reduced dead forest floor fuels on about 200 acres on the ridge east of the community. The Turkey Park I (130 acres) and The Turkey Park II (179 acres) thinning projects are located southeast of the community. These are currently ongoing and will likely be followed up with Rx burning. These are all relatively important fuel reduction projects, however, these account for a relatively small percentage of the overall WUI.

Once a “planning decision” has been made, the opportunity for any official input to help shape the direction of the project is past. Therefore, it is important to know how to provide input to the project planning early in the process. To make sure you have the opportunity for input, contact the Camino Real Ranger District (758-6234) and ask to be placed on the mailing

list for all projects within the Pot Creek WUI boundary. When contacted by the Forest Service of an upcoming planning proposal, make sure your comments or suggestions are made in writing within the timeframes outlined in their proposal.

Planning for Future Projects

There is currently an approved grant for the Healthy Forest Happy Potters Project of which a portion is designated to be used for thinning along the western boundary of the Pot Creek community on the National Forest. The following shows the initial proposal for that work.



Map 6
Healthy Forest Happy Potters Project

Although the grant has been approved, the planning decision (NEPA) document has not been prepared by the Forest Service. To understand the planning options available to the Forest Service, the following is a brief explanation of the various levels of analysis required for project planning by the National Environmental Policy Act.

NEPA has three levels of analysis. The minimum level is called a “categorical exclusion” (CE). This level is for certain projects specifically identified in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30) for which it has been determined they have minimum impacts. These projects may be excluded from being analyzed through an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. Although there are environmental constraints and requirements, planning of projects that fit under these categories is usually simpler and takes less time. There are various limitations, such as acreage limits, which must be adhered to in order to stay within the criteria for a CE. Up until September 2005, a decision under a CE (“decision memo”) was not subject to the administrative appeal process (36 CFR 215). A recent court ruling has now made Forest Service decisions on these smaller projects subject to public notice, comment, and appeal.

NOTE: The proposed map for the “grant” included an area that crosses the Rio Grande del Rancho north of the community. This portion crosses riparian habitat along with occupied threatened and endangered species habitat. This small area is not important to the overall project but more importantly can not be included in the Forest Service “proposed action” and qualify as a CE. Both of these situations are defined as “extraordinary circumstances” which disqualify a project as a CE.

The next level is the “environmental assessment” (EA). An EA determines whether the effects of the project may or are significant and therefore an environmental impact statement must be prepared. This level is designed for projects that encompass larger areas and generate more complexity with regard to the resources involved in the proposal. There is a more extensive analysis and public involvement and generally requires more time to complete.

The Healthy Forest Restoration Act was specifically intended to provide a more streamlined approach to the EA process for situations exactly like determining long range projects for the Pot Creek community. It does this, in part, by reducing the alternatives to be analyzed in the EA and by replacing the appeals process with an objection process. An HFRA project

does require the proposed action be developed in conjunction with the community. After a proposed action is developed and if there is disagreement within the community, then an additional alternative must be developed and analyzed to address those concerns. Although somewhat expedited, the EA still requires a thorough analysis of effects and does take more time than a CE project.

The highest level of analysis is the “Environmental Impact Statement” (EIS). This is a progression which is done when a “Finding of No Significant Impact” (FONSI) cannot be determined as a result completing an EA. Although a possibility, it is less likely that long-term planning for the Pot Creek WUI would result in an EIS.

The one resource of significant concern is, of course, the archaeological values along the east-side of the Pot Creek community. One solution is to simply avoid this area. However, the fuel densities in the immediate area of the main archaeological concentrations are also high. A catastrophic fire could result in a total loss of the piñon and juniper overstory and be devastating to the natural setting for this unique historical resource. Developing a proposed action to include this area is important to both the community and the protection of those values. An approach that adequately mitigates the impacts of fuel reduction and improves the security of the archaeological values and the community should be a compatible and achievable objective accomplished through the preparation of an EA.

Regarding the “Healthy Forest Happy Potters” project and given the fact there is already an approved grant and the necessary wildlife and archaeological inventories are completed for that area, the planning options are somewhat dictated. There is a need for combined approach for developing future projects. It should incorporate both the use of the CE for a smaller area in the immediate vicinity of Pot Creek (the Happy Potters project) and follow up with a long range plan to address the entire wildland urban interface area for your community.

Unless there is a change in current Forest Service priorities, the analysis for the Healthy Forest Happy Potters Project should be prepared some time in the spring of 2006. This is a high priority location for any project planning on the Carson National Forest and would offer some immediate improvement for community protection. As stated earlier, this is an important component of the overall effort, but will not provide adequate protection from a large scale problem fire. This project proposal does not

involve significant acreage and could be done under a categorical exclusion. This would allow for work to start sooner rather than later.

This effort could then be followed up by using the EA process to determine the highest priority areas within the entire WUI to treat for fuels reduction. This planning effort would include scientifically selecting stands that are strategically important for thinning as well as those that can remain untreated for wildlife habitat diversity. By no means is it necessary to thin the entire area to achieve adequate fuels reduction to reduce the intensity of a large scale wildfire. With strategic locations developed for thinning, it should not surprise you if the total treatment area is not as high a percentage as you might think would be necessary to achieve the desired results.

Treatments that result in achieving a good distribution of biological diversity and range of tree size classes are probably adequate to effectively reduce total forest fuels to a level to avoid the “problem” or “catastrophic wildfire.” In other words, improving forest health can be very much consistent with achieving effective fire planning goals. Again, the objective is to have enough of the key areas with tree canopy densities open enough to get a fire out of the canopy and on the ground, where it can be effectively fought. This would include larger projects at a larger landscape level and would take a number of years to complete.

Community Input

Community members should meet with the Camino Real Ranger District to determine how these two efforts can best meet the needs of the Pot Creek community and the management objectives of the Carson National Forest. This should be done quickly so the NEPA process can be initiated as soon feasible, and to determine what possibilities and time frames are likely for long-range planning.

Because of the complexity of such planning, it is understandably difficult for private individuals to develop meaningful input to these processes. The following are some items for your consideration. Remember, there are no set rules on thinning densities and this is your opportunity to help make it look like what you want it to look like and meet your objectives.

In a smaller area such as the portion along your western boundary, you would likely want the majority of that zone thinned to some degree. Generally, you will want to make sure adequate thinning is done so the project is not a wasted effort. However, you may also want to recommend a variation in thinning densities to avoid a homogenous appearance. This

could also be done in a slightly non-linear pattern adjacent to the private property boundary to maintain a more natural look. Some precautionary suggestions are that north slopes and drainages can be thinned more than south facing slopes. Although thinning on the south facing slopes is recommended, excessive thinning can dry out the site, which can be counter productive.

Another precaution is along the southern boundary, where there are ponderosa pine fuel types. It is generally accepted that ponderosa pine can be thinned to around 40 basal area¹ for optimal fire safety. However, not all stands of ponderosa pine are the same. In the Pot Creek area, most pine stands have a remnant of Gambel oak in the understory. If thinned too heavily, the oak will receive enough sunlight to be released. All sites vary, but somewhere around 60 to 70 basal area the oak will begin to flourish. As the oak responds it can, over time create its own fuel type and become a fuel ladder in the understory as well as become a permanent maintenance problem.



This area adjacent to the water tank was thinned about ten years ago and there was very little oak present at the time of thinning. This amount of oak is not a problem, but you can see how the oak has responded in the spot of increased sunlight. As crown densities increase over time, more trees can be removed to reduce the potential for crown fires and still maintain adequate shading to prevent a heavy oak invasion.

¹ Basal area is a forest management term that refers to a measure of total tree area per acre. It is difficult to visualize but if all the trees were cut off at four feet above ground and the surface area of the stumps measured and totaled, this would be the basal area which is calculated in square feet per acre.

There is no question there is somewhat of a trade-off on acceptable risk, but the ponderosa will also respond to the thinning and grow faster. It is easier to thin the ponderosa every decade or two to reduce the canopy closure, than to deal with excessive oak in the understory. It is at least a topic that should be discussed with Forest Service personnel to determine what level of thinning best provides long-term benefits.

Another option with regard to the Healthy Forest Happy Potters Project is a modification to the western boundary. The boundary of the project proposal is not limited by the area for which the grant was submitted. In discussions with Forest Service fire personnel; there are good reasons for improving the effectiveness of the project by a non-linear and slightly expanded western project boundary. However, this will require additional archaeological clearances be completed prior to signing a decision, thus extending the time frame for initiating the project.

Given the grant funding is now available, extending the timeframe may not be a good idea. A reasonable option would be to consider any of the proposed expansion in the long-range planning for the entire WUI.

Regarding the planning of thinning treatments and fuels reduction within the WUI boundary, there are two options. If for any reason the community or the Camino Real Ranger District is not completely comfortable with using the modeling approach to strategically select the stands for thinning, then a hybrid approach could also be used. In this option some additional stands could be selected and added to the project proposal. There is nothing wrong with incorporating some good old fashioned fire experience and professional judgment to accommodate for subtleties in nature. Most modeling programs, no matter how improved they have become, are not sophisticated enough to adequately account for all of nature's subtleties.

The following map is simply a priority recommendation on where to first examine future fuels reduction treatments. This map does not limit selecting other priority stands or areas for thinning. For example, the area immediately to the east of the Pot Creek community is certainly a concern. But for the most part, large fires in northern New Mexico have typically moved from the southwest to the northeast.

