

GAME TRAIL FORESTRY COMMITTEE:
DECEMBER 2ND MEETING MINUTES:

Members in attendance: Chairman, Judy Wait oversaw the meeting. Other members in attendance were Chip Wait, Steve Vittum, Cloyce Miller, Dennis Billings, Keith Simmons, Val Philpott, Cindy Erickson, Skip Zopf, Fred Balmos, Wayne Eisenbrandt, Joe Humpfer, Jim Schomaker and guest Phil Strongin.

Judy opened with a comment that most of the beetle inspections were completed and that only four trees were marked for further inspection by the forestry professional. It was mentioned that we should be looking at Pinion Pine as well as the larger trees. Next, Judy brought up the subject of fire mitigation and what our role as an advisory committee should be. It was suggested that we should have a standard form that would be sent to every home and lot owner and ask that they complete it. They could ask us for information or help. Hopefully this would increase owner awareness of fire concerns and simple mitigation strategy for each property.

We then had a guest speaker, Mark Thomas of the Chaffee County Fire Dept. and County Fire Mitigation Officer. Mark referred us to "Wildfire Plan.org. (a copy may be found on our Forestry Committee page). He said that Game Trail continued to maintain a 39 rating which just makes it into the "moderate fire risk rating." This is rechecked about every two years and our last one was in 2008, so we are due again. A rating loss of only one point could mean that we would be rated "High Fire Risk" so it was suggested that we continue to follow our fire mitigation plans as well as do some additional mitigation tasks like asking that every owner complete the forms that he supplied: "Assessment Guide" and a "Structural Evaluation Worksheet." He further suggested that some of us should read "The Art of Wildfire Fighting" and perhaps attend the Colorado Fire Camp.com Training #131-90 "red card" fire fighter training. There is a cost for the 4-day training camp held at Ponderosa Lodge in Maysville CO., but it would be reasonable as we could commute rather than using their overnight accommodations.

Mark made several interesting comments about fire prevention as follows: "Most of the houses that burned down in the recent Boulder fire were started from burning grass too close to the homes rather than from trees". He suggested that grass should be cut short twice a year at least 30 feet from each structure and even further on the down hill side. He said that the long grasses known as Buffalo grass may not be dense enough for concern but that clump grasses get very hot when burning.

We should cut down Mountain Mahogany that is under our trees, as it will ignite the trees themselves. Southern exposures were of higher concern because of the sun exposure that can heat up and dry out the tree needles.

Sloped lots of 35% or more create extremely high increased risk and speed up the fire's movement exponentially.

Laddering of trees close to the houses should be 8 feet high by their standards, but in no case should you leave large limbs that slope down toward the ground when laddering, as a ground fire may easily ignite them even if green.

Don't be fooled because the needles are green as they burn hotter than the brown dead ones.

With regard to having the fire department defend your home, homeowners must have a sufficiently wide ingress and escape route for the fire equipment. If their truck cannot turn around, they will not enter your driveway. They will not jeopardize their equipment. The fire equipment needs to be closer than one hundred feet from your structure so that the standard equipment can reach.

After the Boulder fires, home insurance companies are increasingly interested in preventive work being done on individual lots, but also on entire interface communities. This may eventually affect insurance rates.

Mark also agreed to come out and walk a few homes to point out any needed fire mitigation. He left a variety of maps, forms and pamphlets for our education.

These are at Chip and Judy's house and are available for anyone to borrow and read. We will try to attach or scan some onto the Forestry web page.

After the speaker was finished, a discussion of how to move forward followed.

Those of us on the committee agreed to complete the fire risk forms that were to be put on the Forestry Committee Page and evaluate them at our next meeting in Feb. Phil Strongin, president of the association, made a strong suggestion that we need to move forward in adding fire mitigation to our association's goals.

Meeting was then adjourned.