Fire Panel Notes 7-11-12

Community conversations are Susie Bonds, Rory Mullett, Erik Juergensmeyer

Missionary Ridge stories

- people (panicking and) breaking through roadblocks (to save pets and personals)
- helicopter evacuating (including vacationing campers) people’s dogs (Mesa verde contract helicopter)

Action Items

- Homeowner plan:
  - get insurance, photograph everything, Identify what you would take with you ahead of time
  - clearly mark driveways with address (free through “reflective address signing” through LPC building)
  - access data from (red zone project, SW conservation corps) websites and get assessment/ information from home
  - Consider fire mitigation and safe building materials (keep receipts, seek tax deductions/credits for (up to 50% of cost (max of $2,500))), establish post-fire flooding plan
  - Consider safety of firefighters when considering mitigation
  - Work with neighbors and get specialists on properties to identify plan to get area healthy, defensible space (have conversations with neighbors—talk about dangers and risks)
  - Encourage HOA’s to work with firewise (individuals can become a volunteer), learn about mini grant opportunities to get subdivision started
  - re-register reverse 911 lists in community (use of cell phones), subscribe online to receive emergency messages, subscribe to national weather service for emergency alerts,
  - pay attention to emergency alerts (like not using cell phones for recreation during emergencies) to not overwhelm system
  - follow information updates (looking relevant websites)
  - be personally responsible: go to websites, research and do tutorials (SW Colorado fires. Org, national firewise site, Colorado state forest, 72 hour preparedness kit) (search internet for “fire mitigation”),
  - pay attention to predictions (fire danger indexes and snow water equivalency) as we are getting good at tracking data
  - in emergency, rely on own instincts to be safe
  - engage with community more (property owners, fire agencies, reach out to others)
  - in emergency, use humane society as resource

- Community:
o create new large scale plan for energy reduction (fire ecology),
o continue testing emergency communication processes (reverse 911),
o continue relying on a number of different technologies (land lines, cell phones door to door, website updates),
o encourage local TV coverage for safety
o consider continuing redzone project (through conservation corps) website that gives information on home? Info owned by fire dept.
o continue large scale fuels mitigation of public lands (seeking funding)
o Avoid tragedies by helping people with special needs (identify individuals, establish plan)
o Continue to get out in field early and provide public information
o Look into process of speeding up state permits and clean air permits that are needed to get in order to have a controlled burn
o Encourage free enterprise to mitigate fuels
o Support public safety employees more
o Brainstorm new plan for appropriate ways to adequately fund and share responsibilities of emergency preparedness (voters turning down funding plans) (find way to eliminate county and city bickering)

Craig’s Fire Ecology Background

• Our area forests are storing a lot of energy within energy cycle. The Western US is too dry and too cool for sufficient biological decomposition. Fire is the main decomposer. Fire needs to play its natural role
• 1910 forest service learned from big Idaho and Montana fires that we should suppress all fires by 10 am the next day. 98% of all fire starts are suppressed. Natural processes are being suppressed.
• Natural fire interval of 10-15 years no more
• The fires we have now are not the natural ones –as much as 90 times the amount of energy exists. Fires are now catastrophic. Fires don’t burn in natural way.
• Fire-adapted eco systems
• Are there triggers (drought, mountain pine beetles, etc.)? climate change. We can tack snow equivalency

Audience questions

• Reverse 911 process: re-register 911 lists in community (use of cell phones)
• Status of current system?

Panelists
1. Michelle Herringer (Missionary Ridge victim) = lost home in 2002. 6-21-2002. 4 month old infant. Home behind bar-d (stevens creek). Purchased home without thinking about forest safety and forest health. Had a bad dream before MR fire and bought super insurance, worked on getting land healthy—required lots of labor (falling big pond’s on own was too hard, too expensive to hire others). How does our fire ecology affect home value. Decks were built around pond’ for aesthetics.

2. Pam Wilson (Firewise) = home threatened by debris fire, public information officer, firewise group works to educate citizens

3. Mick Stores (Durango Fire and Rescue Authority) = first responder, make contacts through dispatch, identify who is responsible based on need. Brush truck or fire engine sent to scene


5. Butch Knowlton (LPC Office of Emergency Services) = Colorado law requires lieutenant with sheriffs’ dept. coordinate all agencies. building codes and land use. Sherriff is fire warden. Coordinated effort funded by taxes

6. Lt Ray Shupe (DPD) = supervises police employees. Police set up assist role with DFRA. Work with roads/transportation. Work on evacuations (in worst case scenarios). Reference to national guard presence during missionary ridge

7. Sgt. Dan Bender (LPC sheriff’s office) = 32 yrs of service means seen a lot of fires. Public information officer. Emergency management liaison to coordinate sheriff’s office duties (traffic control, pre-evacuation notices (door to door), evacuation enforcement, patrol property,

8. John Anderson (interested citizen) = home threatened by valley fire (2002). Created Unified fire district (2004). Approved but not funded. Worked on last proposal that too was rejected by voters. (Hermosa, Durango, Animas districts):

9. Evan Buchanan (DSNGRR) = Superintendent. RR mitigation of right of way. RR revenue enables dsngr to patrol/mitigate/enforce right of way. Seek information from DFRA. Have a crew follow trains and put out fires. Long and lengthy challenge

10. Chris Nelson (LPC humane) = Director of animal services. 500 cats and dogs taken in during missionary ridge (gerbils, fish, turtles). LPC Humane is a resource for other counties. Fires are stressful times for pets. Many evacuation centers will not take pets. (Fire season is kitten season.) MR fire as learning experience.

Pre-panel Discussion

Natural fire cycle of every 15 years has been thwarted, Extended drought, climate change= more fires

Does fire enable trees to reseed? Yes, it’s vital for some

Dan Bender has weber fire pictures

Pam’s Firewise Materials

- The firewise “neighborhood ambassador program” (tax deductions)
• Forestry newsletter (CSU Extension)
• Defensible space management zones