

Ridgewood Community Wildfire Protection Plans

In 2002 the Hayman fire exploded, burning for three weeks due to dry fuels, dense forest, and extreme weather. Smoke and ash filled the air and many were evacuated from their homes. 138,000 acres were burned, the fire raging so hot that some soils were sterilized. One hundred thirty two homes were destroyed and Teller county residents realized that our pleasant life in the forest was endangered.

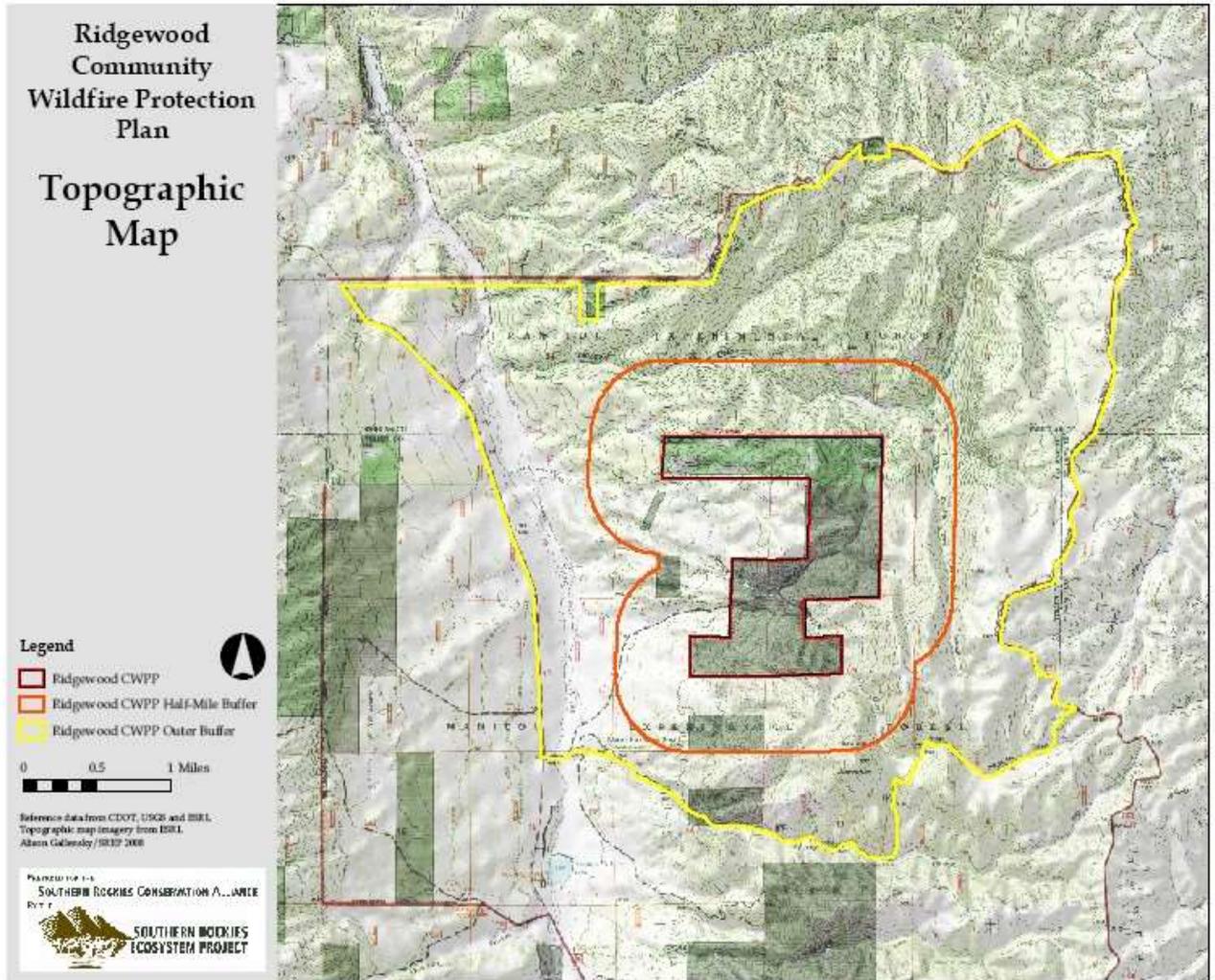
In 2004 Teller County wrote a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, outlining procedures that would reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire, and assessing wildland fire risk for communities in the county. Ridgewood was rated high risk for crown fire and property loss. *The TCWPP is available at www.co.teller.co.us/Commissioners/The_CWPP.pdf*

In 2008 a Ridgewood Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was authorized, identifying fire hazards in the community and prioritizing recommendations to reduce those risks. The plan was written with cooperation from Colorado State Forest Service, US Forest Service, Manitou Experimental Forest and NE Teller Fire Department. The community took steps to address those recommendations and updates to the original plan were written in 2011 and 2016 as more scientific information became available. The original plan is still operative, additional plans further define new projects to improve our risk of surviving a wildland fire. Yearly assessments of the projects accomplished and development of additional goals for the community are made by the Ridgewood Community, NETCFPD, CSFS and USFS.

A topographic map of the Ridgewood CWPP area, projects listed for the 2008 CWPP, 2011 and 2016 Updates are shown in the following pages. The complete plans are available on the Ridgewood web site www.ridgewoodlink.org.

RIDGEWOOD SUBDIVISION CWPP PLAN AREA

The red line outlines the subdivision land; the orange line outlines a half-mile buffer zone for consideration of primary fuels mitigation projects tying in with community mitigation; and the yellow line is the outer zone of plan consideration, composed of Hwy 67 on the west, Hotel Gulch FR 346 on the south, Rampart Range on the east, and FR 300 & FR 344 on the north.



COMMUNITY WILD FIRE PROTECTION PLAN 2008
COMMUNITY HAZARD RECOMMENDATIONS AND MITIGATION PROJECTS PRIORITIES

1. Increase the fire safety, traffic visibility, and overall forest health along Spruce Road by thinning and clearing fallen and dead trees in Manitou Experimental Forest, the Teller County Roads and Bridges right of way, and private land along the road. Ridgewood has only one road for ingress and egress; County Road 79, known as Spruce Road. The mitigation along Spruce Road is a top priority of the Ridgewood CWPP. This would be an ongoing project. Attachment 1 is a letter from Chief Lauria, NETCFPD, indicating the need for mitigation along Spruce Road. The recommendations include road width and mitigation within the subdivision right-of way. Attachment 2 is a letter from Dave Root, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), recommending that two switchbacks on Spruce Road be treated to the defined standards. This project would include representatives of Teller County Roads and Bridges, USFS, Manitou Experimental Forest and private landowners along the road.

2. Encourage and educate property owners of the need to establish defensible spaces around their homesite and take actions to reduce structural ignitability. CSU Extension publication # 6.302 “**Creating Wildfire Defensible Zones**” by F.C. Dennis, (4) is a good resource homeowners can use for planning how to reduce wildfire risk through creation of defensible space to meet current Colorado State Forestry standards for Zones One, Two and Three. NETCFPD and other county departments are canvassing properties within their district using a computer software program called Red Zone. This stored data will greatly assist fire departments when responding to alarms. Once Red Zone data is collected by NETCFPD it will greatly assist property owners to identify fire mitigation actions that would enhance their survivability in case of a wildland fire. Defensible space requires maintenance and reevaluation each year.

3. Encourage and educate property owners of the need to have a driveway that is wide enough to accommodate fire equipment and emergency vehicles. Driveways need the minimum of thirteen feet width and twelve foot overhead clearance. Defensible space should be established along the driveway by removing stressed, diseased, dead or dying trees and shrubs. Thin and prune the remaining trees and shrubs. Extend thinning all the way to the main access road. This enhances home site safety and the aesthetics of the property. An excellent guide for effective defensible space is, “*Creating Wildfire Defensible Zones*” by F.C.Dennis, CSFS publication no.6.302. This is available online at the Colorado State Forest website or through the district office in Woodland Park.

4. Reduce wildfire hazards within the community. Identify areas of federal and private land where biomass reduction in high risk areas is needed to reduce threats to the community and community infrastructure. Introduce the concepts of area wide effective forest thinning and creating fuel breaks for fire management planning. A fuel break is a line of defense, an easily accessible strip of land of varying width (depending on fuel and terrain), in which fuel density is reduced, thus improving fire control opportunities. Large continuous tracts of dense timber are thinned, remaining trees are pruned to remove ladder fuels and ground fuel and dead trees are removed. Strategically located fuel breaks separate large tracts of dense timber and can slow fire spread under normal burning conditions. “The Buffalo Creek Fire in Jefferson County (1996) and the High Meadow Fire in Park and Jefferson Counties (2000) slowed dramatically wherever forest thinning had been completed.” (5) Ridgewood terrain is often steep and rocky and difficult for a large scale fuels treatment project. There are ridge lines present that could be treated to reduce the risk of crown fires. The specific areas for fuel break placement would be customized for Ridgewood and maintained periodically. A healthier forest is more resistant to insects and disease.

5. Encourage residents to post a clearly visible house address signs (letter height of 4”), practice family fire drills and fire evacuation plans.

6. Protect the integrity of Ridgewood’s water system by creating defensible space surrounding the well housing areas. Create the defensible space to meet current Colorado State Forestry standards for Zones One, Two and Three. Defensible space should be maintained periodically. The Colorado State Forest Service publication, *“Fuel Break Guidelines for Forested Subdivisions and Communities”*, by Frank C. Dennis is a good guideline to use.

7. Coordinate arrangements for a chipping program for slash reduction. The Coalition of the Upper South Platte (CUSP) has been working with residents to chip materials that have been removed in their mitigation efforts. This alternative for property owners who cannot haul away their slash should be continued.

8. Keep a fire danger sign current at the entrance to the subdivision.

9. Continue the Ridgewood Emergency Calling Tree for emergency resident notification. The Calling Tree should be updated at least quarterly. Inform homeowners that emergency notification by Reverse 911 will utilize cell phone numbers if registered with the sheriff’s office. To register cell phones for Reverse 911 go to www.elpasoteller911.org, click on the Cell Phone/Reverse 911 link.

10. Request that Intermountain Rural Electric Association (IREA), the servicing utility company, move power lines along Spruce Road to just one side of the road.

11. Restore the forest to a healthier condition, thus decreasing the risk of catastrophic crown fires while reducing the threat of bark beetle epidemics and other insect and disease threats.

12. Conduct yearly assessments of the projects accomplished and develop additional goals for the future. Assessments will be made by the Ridgewood Community, NETCFPD, CSFS andUSFS.

2008 RIDGEWOOD COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

- 1. Roadside thinning along Spruce Road as identified by NETCFPD Chief Lauria.** This includes area in Manitou Experimental Forest and Ridgewood Subdivision: December, 2009
- 2. Educate community home owners about defensible space and provide options for removal of slash materials.** Defensible space information can be obtained by using either the Colorado State Forest web site <http://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/community-wildfire-protection-plans/> or the FIREWISE website <http://www.firewise.org/>. Establish a committee to develop the Firewise Community designation for Ridgewood and set up tours to homes having done site work: August, 2008 and annually.
- 3. Reduce biomass in Ridgewood's outer buffer zone (Manitou Experimental Forest).** This would require mitigation in specific areas by the USFS. Page 18 shows "Fuels Project in the Pikes Peak Ranger District." Ridgewood has benefited from extensive thinning in the Manitou Experimental Forest, especially on the western borders. Remaining areas in the buffer zone on the southern side and eastern side of Ridgewood are very dense and mitigation would reduce the threat of fire moving from the forest into the subdivision. Catastrophic crown fire remains a threat until the forest is restored to health: **December, 2010.**
- 4. Create defensible space for well housing areas and utilities.** Trees near power lines should only be removed by trained professionals. **December, 2010**
- 5. Create fuel breaks in areas identified by CSFS** and shown on the following page, page 16. The fuel breaks are prioritized to complement the thinning along the main access road, Spruce Road. Zone One is the area by the first switchback, Zone Two is around the second switchback, Zone Three is thinning along southern edge, Zone Four is thinning in the northeastern corner, and Zone Five is thinning along the northern border of the subdivision.
- 6. Continue chipping program with CUSP: Twice annually.**
- 7. Work with homeowners on thinning program across property lines; Annually.**
- 8. Engage community leaders to join CWPP Board** to enhance community involvement and celebrate accomplishments: **Annually**
- 9. Develop informational conduits to communicate the CWPP to all residents. Post the Ridgewood CWPP plan on the Ridgewood site, <http://www.ridgewoodlink.org>.**
- 10. Continue to evaluate CWPP progress and add new goals and projects: Annually**

CWPP 2011 New or Amended Priorities

After review and discussion, the following are the revised goals for the Ridgewood CWPP for 2011-15.

#1 Fuel Mitigation and Forest Health

- Encourage cross-boundary projects to create fuel breaks in areas identified.
- Continue bi-annual slash chipping project available to all residents.
- Continue mitigation on common areas and volunteer assisted projects.
- Pursue other funding and grant opportunities for cross-boundary mitigation projects.

#2 Education

- Provide information to residents regarding defensible space recommendations.
 - i. Have handouts available at community meetings.
 - ii. Include information in packet for new owners
 - iii. Include references to other websites on Ridgewood website
- Provide forest health information regarding insect and disease.
 - i. Include current status and information on website
 - ii. Have insect and disease handouts available at meetings and in new resident packets.
 - iii. Provide CSFS contact information in newsletter and on website.
- Host tours of completed projects and invite guest speakers.
 - i. Consider placing signs to draw attention to completed projects
 - ii. Continue drawing attention to demonstration sites where appropriate
 - iii. Select guest speakers with relevance to CWPP actions for community meetings.
- Use website and newsletter to keep residents aware of grant opportunities and related activities throughout the subdivision.
 - i. Assign committee member to coordinate website information.
 - ii. Regularly include information in any mailings to residents and on bulletin board.

#3 Leadership and Maintenance

- Retain CWPP committee and encourage community members to actively participate in fire mitigation and forest health committees.
 - i. Report annually to RHOA Board and residents and CSFS on prior years' accomplishments.
 - ii. At a minimum, meet monthly April through Oct annually
- Evaluate projects on common areas and road easements for necessary maintenance and any insect or disease outbreaks.
- Continue cooperative discussion with adjacent public land managers regarding biomass reduction in close proximity to Ridgewood.
- Encourage community members to actively participate in community forest health and fire mitigation committees.
- Become a "Firewise Community" and maintain this designation annually.

#4 Life Safety and Emergency Issues

- Encourage and educate owners to have adequate driveway dimensions for emergency vehicle access
- Encourage residents to post clearly visible address signs and develop personal family emergency procedures.
- Maintain Fire Danger sign at subdivision entrance.
- Maintain Fire Danger sign at subdivision entrance.
- Maintain emergency calling tree for resident notification.

Project Implementation

Conditions such as slope, vegetation type and density, and access vary widely across the Ridgewood landscape. As specific areas or properties within the priority zones are indentified for treatment, prescriptions for the individual project and selection of implementation method will be determined with the assistance of CSFS. Inspection for tree health, erosion potentials and consideration of wildlife sensitive areas can be brought into the decision by seeking professional advice.

Funding

Projects that have mitigated more than 30 acres within Ridgewood have been funded by individual homeowners and through matching grant participation. More than 560 hours of labor have been donated by the many volunteers who help their neighbors and those who are unable physically or financially to take part. Plans are underway to set up a CWPP Implementation Fund to assist in matching dollars where required by cross boundary or common land projects such as the protection of well sites and water supply tanks. Various projects to raise these dollars are under discussion or in the initial planning stages.

Note: Colorado currently has a state tax deduction available concerning payments made for fuel mitigation on private property through 2013.

Advice and direction from your tax preparer is recommended.

Looking Ahead

The Ridgewood CWPP committee is an ongoing volunteer organization. Regular monthly meetings are held April through October. All residents are invited to participate on the committee or to request information and assistance. Please contact any CWPP committee member for more information.

As Ridgewood moves forward into the next decade, this plan is intended to provide guidance to continue to keep our residents informed, maintain our forest in healthy condition, and reduce the threat of high intensity wildfire to the subdivision.

**After review and discussion, the following are the revised goals for the Ridgewood CWPP for
2016 – 2026**

1 Become a Fire Adapted Community

Encourage community recognition that each resident is responsible for how they choose to manage their property and how those choices directly affects the overall safety of the community and the firefighters that protect it. “Reality is that in a major wildland fire there will not be enough fire resources or fire fighters to protect each home.”

2 Officially Link Ridgewood CWPP Committee with the Ridgewood HOA Board.

Officially affiliate as a standing committee on the Ridgewood Home Owners Association Board. Attend HOA Board meetings to communicate relevant CWPP actions and goals.

3 Fuel Mitigation, Firewise Landscape and Forest Health

Continue promoting hazardous forest fuels removal to reduce fire intensity and create defensible space.

Continue Bi-annual slash chipping project with CUSP available to all residents.

Utilize CSFS “Ridgewood Insect and Disease Information” in Appendix C of Updated 2016 CWPP. Utilize CSFS “Ridgewood Fuel Break Prescription” in Appendix D of the Updated 2011 CWPP

Pursue grant opportunities for mitigation projects.

4 Firewise Construction

Provide information concerning fire behavior: fuels, weather and topography.

Promote use of selected building materials and components to reducing structure ignitability. Expand knowledge of the part decks, gutters, roofs, vents, siding and wood fences play in exposing the structures vulnerability to advancing fire.

Provide architectural committee with Firewise construction information for new construction

5 Education

Provide information to residents regarding defensible space recommendations. Provide information on Firewise landscaping features to reduce structure ignitability.

1. Provide handouts at community meetings.
2. Include information in packet for new owners.
3. Provide references to specific educational websites on Ridgewood website. Promote Ready Set Go.

(See Appendix E)

Promote signing up with NIXLE and Teller/EIPaso E911, home and cell phones.

Petition the Ridgewood HOA to consider re-establishing the emergency calling tree.

Provide forest health information regarding insect and disease.

Provide CSFS contact information in newsletter and on website.

Provide guests speakers relevant to CWPP goals for community meetings.

Use website, bulletin board, and newsletter to keep residents aware of grant opportunities, Firewise principles, Ready Set Go information, and related CWPP activities.

Provide website links for CSFS, USFS, and NE Teller Fire department to be posted on Ridgewood website.

6 Research Community Fire Fighting Capabilities

Utilize NETCO Fire Marshal to evaluate community water resources for fighting fires. Identify and research condition of fire protection water resources.

Promote highest standard of resource operations.

Investigate the possibility of refurbishing and maintaining the fire protection cistern, located on upper Spruce Road.

Research the dry hydrant at Manitou Lake and search opportunities for refurbishment or replacement.

7 Leadership and Maintenance

Encourage community members to actively participate in fire mitigation, Firewise principles and forest health committees.

Evaluate projects on community fire protection resources and road easements for necessary maintenance.

Maintain the Firewise designation annually.

Provide easily accessible Ready Set Go information and Firewise Principles on website. Incorporate recognition that advance planning saves lives.

8 Emergency Evacuation Route

Identify possible secondary emergency evacuation routes.

Investigate the possibility of improving FR 346 so that it could be used as a secondary evacuation route.

Promote early evacuation to reduce congestion on single egress route. Work with the USFS and distribute findings.

9 Support USFS Use of Prescribed Fire

Promote awareness that fire is a natural occurrence in the wildland. Through careful planning, preparation and monitoring, prescribed fire has a place in reducing forest fuels, creating a fire safe environment.

Encourage the USFS to utilize prescribed fire to maintain healthy forests adjacent to Ridgewood.

10 Seek Grant Funds for Vegetation Management, Evacuation Program and Water Supply Cistern