

Fish Creek - Sanctuary Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Steamboat Springs, CO

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The following members mutually agreed with the spirit and contents of this Fish Creek – Sanctuary Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP):

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04/10/2007

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David McIrvine

04/04/2007

Date

This plan has been reviewed by the Routt County Board of County Commissioners and found to meet the criteria for Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPS) set forth by the Colorado State Forest Service.

/s/ Nancy J. Stahoviak

Nancy J. Stahoviak
Chairperson, Routt County Board of County
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05/01/2007

Date

/s/ Chuck Vale

Chuck Vale
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND - INTRODUCTION	1
OBJECTIVES FOR THE FISH CREEK – SANCTUARY CWPP	3
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN	4
Step 1 – Convene a Decision-making Core Group	4
Step 2 – Federal, Colorado State and Local Agency Participation	5
Step 3 – Engage Interested Parties	7
Step 4 – Working Map of the Community at Risk	8
Step 5 – Community Risk Assessment – Local Wildfire Response Capability, Fuel Hazards, Risks of Wildfire Occurrence, At-Risk Homes, Businesses and Other Establishments at Risk	8
Step 6 – Establish Community Priorities and Recommendations	12
Emergency Preparedness	12
Education / Reduce Structural Ignitability	13
Fuel Treatment Projects	14
Step 7 – Develop an Action Plan and Assessment Strategy	17
Step 8 – Finalizing the Community Wildfire Protection Plan	18
Appendix	19

BACKGROUND – INTRODUCTION

The Mountain Pine Beetle and Spruce Bark Beetle devastation is overwhelming throughout the North American Rocky Mountains, state of Colorado, Routt County and lands within and bordering the Sanctuary development in Steamboat Springs. Extended years of drought and arid conditions, winters without usual extreme temperature cascades and the near hurricane force winds of the 1997 Routt Divide Blowdown near the west border of the Mount Zirkel wilderness have been cited as chief contributors to the alarming Routt County beetle induced tree loss. The nearly 150 homes within the Sanctuary development are situated along or in close proximity to the lower Fish Creek canyon drainage and within the east border of the city limits of Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The development borders Mount Werner Water to the north, the Sheraton Golf Course to the west, the Routt National Forest to the south and east and is adjacent to multiple other residential communities within the city limits. Within the Routt National Forest are the Fish Creek National Recreation Area and extensive areas designated as wildlife. The upheaval of beetle induced tree loss and available hazardous fuel substrate has been most apparent among the conifers abundant on the south ridge preservation area and along the banks of Fish Creek. After conferring with community experts and homeowners, a plan of action was developed during a formal meeting convened at the Steamboat Springs District office of the Colorado State Forestry Service on **September 21, 2006**. Our extensive roster of experts included Kent Foster of the USFS, John Twitchell of the CSFS, Bart Brown of the CSFS, Bob Struble of the Steamboat Springs Rural Fire Protection District, George Hine (arborist) of the city of Steamboat Springs and Don Read (tree removal contractor with Foxfire Fuelwood). Additionally in attendance were members of the community including Tom Campbell of the Country Club Highlands Partnership (representative for the Sanctuary development) and Park Smalley and Dave McIrvine of the Sanctuary HOA (board members of the homeowners' association).

For nearly seven (7) years there has been an aggressive Sanctuary development beetle spraying, underbrush removal and limited tree cutting program in place that has mitigated near total conifer loss within the immediate residential areas and along the hiking trails that extend along the periphery of the north, east and south sides of the Sanctuary development. The extensive tree-spraying program, administered by Sol Solutions and generously funded by Country Club Highlands Partnership, has been limited by owner consent spraying near private dwellings, and for habitat safety has not included areas along Fish Creek. The spraying has not included many areas along the steeply sloping conifer dominated south and north ridge preservation areas. The relatively sun-sheltered, south ridge preservation area is a mature, species diverse forest dominated by lodgepole pine and spruce and appears to have the most obvious beetle induced conifer loss and presence of hazardous fuelwood. Repeated years of drought and precipitation levels below historical norms have resulted in highly vulnerable habitat with an ominous abundance of hazardous fuel. The consensus

amongst our experts is that, given the ample substrate of fuels, the fire hazard is and will remain high for an extended period of years or even decades. This is particularly overt on the south ridge preservation area and also on the wind and very sun exposed north ridge preservation area, which is dominated by high-density scrub oak. Seasonal alpine thunderstorms, high levels of bicycle and pedestrian trail use during spring and summer, occasional unauthorized campfires and the ongoing residential building activity within the area all have potential to increase wildfire risk. The combination of increased fire hazard and risk have the potential to result in a wildland fire in this interface setting and could result in loss of property, human life or both. Imperatively, implementing actions can reduce both fire hazard and risk. To be truly effective, treatment and fire mitigation must be considered a very long-term endeavor.

As demonstrated in numerous other communities, an effective action plan must include establishing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 directs federal agencies to collaborate with communities in developing hazardous fuel reduction projects and in the prioritization of treatment areas as outlined by the community's CWPP. The CWPP identifies strategies and directs specific tactics for reducing available wildfire fuels and optimizes fire fighting response resources while improving overall forest health, which in turn reduces wildfire fuels.

The completed CWPP will evolve and mature to address community wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness and structure protection, and will provide an obligatory vehicle for optimizing agency funding efficiency. Hazard mitigation is key though in the event of catastrophic wildfire or megafire, a streamlined response may save lives, alleviate injuries, property loss and devastation.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE FISH CREEK – SANCTUARY CWPP

- Engage in comprehensive forest planning and prioritization.
- Provide a mechanism for federal agencies to respond effectively to community priorities.
- Facilitate community forums with ongoing open dialogue regarding management modalities and options.
- Provide maximum flexibility for members of the community to determine the substance, direction and detail of their plans.
- Merge expectations, goals and objectives of the community and landowners into a coherent and attainable plan to reduce wildfire risk.
- Coordinate strategies with the currently available excellent fire protection personnel from multiple sources and agencies across property boundaries.
- Coordinate funding from multiple sources to achieve realistic and enduring results.
- Achieve one hundred per cent participation in the Sanctuary homeowner conifer tree spraying for those “at significant risk” trees.
- Preserve the health and beauty of the community viewshed and watershed while simultaneously reducing wildfire risk.
- Establish a desirable, high standard, dynamic CWPP to serve as a model for nearby communities who may consider developing a CWPP.
- Have a representative of the CWPP represent and continuing participation in the monthly Bark Beetle Task Force Meeting at the District Office of the Colorado State Forest Service.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

Multiple federal organizations and agencies have collaborated most successfully to develop the widely cited August 2005 “Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities.”

STEP 1 – CONVENE A DECISION-MAKING CORE GROUP

At the request of the Sanctuary development homeowners association, wildfire-forestry experts from multiple agencies and community leaders convened for a round table discussion at the Steamboat Springs office of the USFS on September 21, 2006. Key in the discussion was the increasing regional high wildfire hazard, the need to establish a CWPP and to engage nearby community partners and neighbors in a common goal. The scope of the CWPP may well include the City of Steamboat Springs, Routt County, Steamboat Springs Ski Corporation, Mount Werner Water District, Steamboat Springs Ski Touring Center, Sheraton Golf Course as well as the Elkins Meadow, Mountain View Estates, Fairway Estates, Ranch at Steamboat, Burgess Creek development as well as others within the area though not currently familiar to the author at this time.

A review of the **9/21/2006** informational meeting and discussion with input from the other Sanctuary HOA board members took place on **9/22/2006**. That same day, Tom Campbell representing Country Club Highlands Partnership, Jeff Crochiere of Sol Solutions and Dave McIrvine of the Sanctuary HOA viewed some of the most highly affected areas along the south ridge preservation area. This resulted in some additional “re-spraying” of some highly at risk trees previously sprayed in June 2006 along the hiking trail later that fall.

Information from the **9/21/2006** meeting at the Steamboat Springs office of USFS, the high risk for wildfire and the preliminary plan for the Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP was formally presented to homeowners attending the annual Sanctuary homeowners association meeting **October 5, 2006** by Kent Foster of USFS, Tom Campbell and Dave McIrvine. The recruitment of other interested homeowner volunteers for development of the Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP included Mary and Jim Darcy, Gary Hay, John and Patty Kerst, Bill Neff and Jerry Schmidt.

STEP 2 – FEDERAL, COLORADO STATE AND LOCAL AGENCY PARTICIPATION

Attendees at the **9/21/2006** meeting at the Steamboat Springs office of the USFS included:

- Kent Foster, USFS (FMO, forester)
- John Twitchell, CSFS (forester)
- Bart Brown, CSFS (forester)
- George Hine, city of Steamboat Springs (arborist)
- Bob Struble, Steamboat Springs Rural Fire Protection District (firefighter)
- Don Read, Foxfire Fuelwood-Oak Creek, CO (contractor)
- Tom Campbell, representative for Country Club Highlands Partnership/developer Martin Hart.
- Park Smalley, homeowner / vice president of the board Sanctuary Homeowners Association
- Dave McIrvine, homeowner /secretary of the board Sanctuary Homeowners Association.

Attendees at the first CWPP development meeting on **12/01/06** at the Steamboat Springs office of the USFS included:

- Kent Foster, USFS
- John Twitchell, CSFS
- Bill Neff, Sanctuary homeowner
- Gary Hay, Sanctuary homeowner
- Jerry Schmidt, Sanctuary homeowner
- Jim Darcy, Sanctuary homeowner
- Dave McIrvine, Sanctuary homeowner and HOA board member

We discussed the need for a functioning CWPP, the detailed CWPP step process and discussed strategies of increasing public and homeowner safety including tactics such as creating shaded fuel breaks, creating more defensible space, removal of ladder fuels and plans for the next CWPP development meeting. John Twitchell emphasized that the CWPP goals and priorities must be developed by the homeowner members. An extensive discussion ensued on when to invite additional CWPP members to the current core group. The majority of development members felt that a smaller, more focused core group would be more likely to achieve rapid success with some initial hallmark projects in the spring and summer of 2007. Additional partners would be asked to formally participate in future meetings once the CWPP was near completion.

Attendees at the **1/05/07** CWPP development meeting at the Steamboat Springs office of the USFS included:

- John Twitchell, CSFS
- Mark Cahur, USFS
- Bill Neff, Sanctuary homeowner
- Gary Hay, Sanctuary homeowner
- Jerry Schmidt, Sanctuary homeowner
- Jim Darcy, Sanctuary homeowner
- John Kerst, Sanctuary homeowner
- Dave McIrvine, Sanctuary homeowner and HOA board member

At this forum with help of John Twitchell (CSFS), Mark Cahur (USFS) and some forest service maps we constructed our “work in progress WUI”. With some additional maps we plan to finalize the drawing of the WUI at our 2/02/07 meeting. We also discussed preliminary work involved for steps 5 and 6 of the CWPP.

Attendees at the **2/02/07** CWPP development meeting at the Steamboat Springs office of the USFS included:

- Kent Foster, USFS
- John Twitchell, CSFS
- Bob Struble, SSRFPD
- Dave McIrvine, Sanctuary homeowner and HOA board member

Discussed at this meeting was a revised WUI based on natural landmarks, ridgelines and man made structures and streets. The WUI currently approximates 4000 acres though our final WUI map will have a grid to have this more accurately determined. Kent and John reported on some updates from the last Beetle task force meeting for area officials earlier in the week. There appear to be areas throughout the region but especially up on the ski mountain that has such devastation they are more accurately considered to be “in salvage mode”. There have been some clusters of Douglas Fir beetle loss along the steep canyon just east of Mt. Werner Water and north of Fish Creek as well as other locations in Routt County. This relatively new minor player to area has added to the mix of already troublesome conifer loss throughout the county. Dave McIrvine was able to ask fire protection questions specific to our area and sought important advice from Bob Struble. Importantly, there appears to be some “matching” state agency funds available in spring of 2007 for some small collaborative projects such as the junction of the Sanctuary south ridge preservation area behind lots 66 and 67 and the adjoining USFS lands. In an unrelated though important development, the plans have been finalized for the construction of the Mt. Werner water tank east of Burgess Creek development and construction will take place during the summer of this 2007. Some future, collaborative, fire mitigation projects could tie in with the water tank development and the Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP.

Attendees at the **3/16/07** CWPP development meeting at the Steamboat Springs office of the USFS included:

- Kent Foster, USFS
- John Twitchell, CSFS
- John Kerst, Sanctuary homeowner
- Dave McIrvin, Sanctuary homeowner and HOA board member

Discussion at the **3/16/07** meeting included further modifications needed, particularly on step 6 of the CWPP, location of underbrush removal concentration, the nearly completed WUI map, the proposed collaborative (via the “Good Neighbor Agreement”) project along the south ridge preservation area of Sanctuary taking place this summer, the mid April departure of Kent Foster from the Fire Management Officer to recreation and the **4/18/2007** deadline for the CSFS grant application. This proposed collaborative project would take place on this targeted area located on both USFS and private lands and would be funded by Colorado State grant and matching private funds from the Sanctuary.

STEP 3 – ENGAGE INTERESTED PARTIES

Though the scope of the CWPP remains limited due to its inherent “non-binding” nature, we feel strongly that additional participants should be invited to this important community opportunity. Potential CWPP participants may include but are not limited to the Steamboat Springs Rural Fire Protection District, USFS, CSFS, Mount Werner Water and Sanitation District, City of Steamboat Springs, Steamboat Ski Touring Center, Sheraton Golf Course, Steamboat Ski Area, Yampa Valley Electric Association, Atmos Energy, Ranch at Steamboat Condominiums and adjoining developments such as Elkins Meadow, Fairway Meadows, Mountain View Estates, Burgess Creek as well as others though not currently familiar to the author at this time.

Preliminary contact has been made with Bill Davis, president of the Fairway Meadows HOA, Paul Franklin the developer of Elkins Meadows and Jay Gallagher of Mt. Werner Water and Sanitation District. Informally, representatives at Burgess Creek, Sheraton golf course and Steamboat Ski Area are aware of the existence of Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP development group. Additional partners will be contacted and invited to participate in this maturing and ongoing community forum in the fall or winter of 2007.

STEP 4 – WORKING MAP OF THE COMMUNITY AT RISK

At our **12/01/06** meeting, Kent Foster provided a satellite map of the canyon and the adjacent areas. Based on unprofessional though common citizen values and fire fighting technical concerns we constructed our “in progress” WUI with help of Mark Cahur and John Twitchell. On **2/02/07** the WUI was further amended with additional aerial mapping based on geographic terrain, roads, ridgelines and defensible space.

On Forest Service lands, the different Management Area (MA) allocations from the Routt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) were overlaid to identify the type of management activities that the USFS is permitted to perform on USFS lands to address the needs of the CWPP. This WUI map was finalized on **3/9/07** and is located at the end of the text.

STEP 5 – COMMUNITY RISK ASSESSMENT – LOCAL WILDFIRE RESPONSE CAPABILITY, FUEL HAZARDS, RISKS OF WILDFIRE OCCURRENCE, AT-RISK HOMES, BUSINESSES AND OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS AT RISK

Widespread community participation is essential substrate for a viable, inclusive and functional CWPP. Fortunately, Routt County and particularly the city of Steamboat Springs possess a high level of expertise with regard to wildfire prevention, knowledge and personnel. We feel most fortunate to have active participation and enthusiastic counsel in the development of our Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP from Kent Foster (USFS), John Twitchell (CSFS), Mark Cahur (USFS) and Bob Struble (Steamboat Springs Rural Fire Protection District). Dave McIrvine attended the **3/1/07** Bark Beetle Task Force Meeting and met with additional members of the FireWise community.

In the expert opinion of members representing multiple agencies, the risk of Mountain Pine Beetle and less so the Spruce Bark Beetle conifer loss and the resulting increased wildfire risk for our area will surely continue. For many years the Steamboat Ski Area and the USFS have been collaborating to reduce the widespread mortality of conifers on the ski area using several tactics. In spite of this hardened effort some of these targeted areas are turning into salvage operations due to the mortality of some large lodgepole pine stands. In Routt County and in another area within the WUI, the fire hazard is increasing in pockets of Douglas Fir mortality. One location for this new activity exists just upstream from the land surrounding Mt. Werner Water and Sanitation District on the north side of Fish Creek.

Reduced existing snow pack, numerous consecutive years of subnormal precipitation, reduced numbers and duration of extreme winter temperatures, fewer spring and summer thunder storms, warmer summer peak temperatures throughout the southwest and heightening seasonal and year round inhabitant density and building are potential contributing wildfire risk factors surely not to improve. Seasonal wildfire risk may be successfully mitigated in spite of these adverse conditions.

➤ Fuel Hazards and Risk of Wildfire Occurrence

The lower Fish Creek canyon-Sanctuary development and adjacent wildlife areas represent an invaluable viewshed for the community at large and simultaneously is a high wildfire risk area in the epicenter of the WUI.

➤ Fuel Hazard

The two vegetation types that are of the greatest concern from a hazardous fuels standpoint are the dead and dying conifers and stands of Gambel Oak (scrub oak). The beetle conifer devastation is overt with widening clusters of hazardous fuel along the steep canyon mountainsides and the hundreds of pitch tube laden mature conifers infested with beetle larvae. These dead trees will ultimately fall to the forest floor, increasing the levels of surface fuels. The dangerous combination of increased surface and ladder fuels could augment fire intensities that surpass ground based capabilities.

Gambel Oak dominates the arid mountainsides facing toward the south and west within the lower Fish Creek canyon and beyond the WUI boundaries. Fire hazard in these stands increases as the stands grow older, due to increased biomass production and accumulation of ground litter. Fire intensity in these stands during times of high to extreme fire danger also has the potential to exceed firefighter capabilities of initial attack resources.

Gas tanks, utilities, vehicles, the increase in dwelling density and the number of flammable ancillary structures must additionally be considered as fuel type.

➤ Risk of Wildfire

Routt County and the area surrounding Steamboat Springs continue to be a recreation destination for tourists and part-time residents. The high concentration of day time human activity and motor vehicle density from inhabitants and visitors using the hiking-bicycle paths, USFS lands, the Fish Creek parking lots, Steamboat Ski area mountain biking and hiking trails accessed via the gondola, unauthorized camp fires, use of the Sheraton golf course with gasoline powered carts and a robust residential building environment

coincide with the peak wildfire danger during the late spring, summer and early autumn months. The steepness of the mountainsides, often exceeding thirty per cent alone, represents a significant risk factor for impossible to control wildfire.

The Routt County climate is typical for the arid southwest and receives an abundance of thunderstorms that bring much needed spring and summer rainfall. Lightning remains a common sentinel event for many mountain wildfires, though historically lightning-ignited wildland fire within the CWPP area has been a rare historical event. The vast increase in fuel loading and the trend towards drier conditions may augment the risk.

Wildfire may originate from within or outside of the WUI though the summer prevailing winds arise primarily from the west and southwest. The continuing residential housing boom and the increasing population density within the urban growth boundary have the potential to increase human caused risk.

➤ Homes, Businesses, Water and Essential Infrastructure at Risk

There are 145 building parcels in the Sanctuary development. An estimate of the number of other homes within the WUI and business structures such as Mt. Werner Water, USFS buildings at Fish Creek Falls, Steamboat Ski Area and the Sheraton Golf Course will need to be established. Most of the structures and decks are constructed with wood products, though the majority of the roofs are shingled.

Preserving the Fish Creek watershed is invaluable. Fish Creek alone provides the sole water source for the majority of Steamboat Springs' residents, all of the families within the Sanctuary and nearly all people in the surrounding developments.

The majority of the residential home sites are within the city limits of Steamboat Springs. The fire hydrant locations are standard and accessibility during all seasons as well as routine maintenance and equipment checks are up to code. Map locations of the hydrants and fire risk status signage may improve community FireWise awareness.

Emergency water access within the WUI includes multiple sites along Fish Creek, the ponds at Elkins Meadow, the pond at Mt. Werner water and the ponds on the Sheraton Golf Course. Additional nearby sources of water include Stagecoach Lake, Lake Catamount, Yampa River, ponds at Haymaker Golf Course and Walton Pond.

A list of handicapped or special needs residents who may require additional assistance will be obtained.

➤ Roads, Driveways, Overpasses and Structures

The overwhelming majority of roads within the WUI are paved and well maintained by the city of Steamboat Springs and Routt County with satisfactory signage. All of the driveways within Sanctuary are paved as are the majority of driveways within the WUI. Unpaved roads and culverts will support emergency vehicles and equipment. The visibility of all house numbers may need to be ensured. The overpasses over Fish Creek are satisfactory for all emergency vehicles and there are two major thoroughfares via South Steamboat Boulevard and Fish Creek Falls Road. Satisfactory maintenance and the integrity of existing hiking trails and fire roads must be preserved for both egress and firefighter access.

Above the intersection with North Steamboat Boulevard, Fish Creek Falls Road represents a “one way in and out” thoroughfare for the residents as well as visitors to the ever popular Fish Creek Falls Recreation Area.

➤ Utilities

Nearly all of the telephone and power lines are tunneled below the ground with the sewer, cable television and natural gas. Notification, feedback and input from representatives of the Yampa Valley Electric Association and Atmos Energy are integral to the CWPP.

There are few if any above ground propane tanks in the residences outside of the city limits within the WUI.

➤ Livestock

There are a very limited number of livestock (mostly horses) within the WUI.

➤ Emergency Services

The fire fighting community at large and emergency services at nearby Yampa Valley Medical Center are excellent though may need to be augmented in coming years given the current population growth estimates.

➤ Commercial Uses

A portion of the Steamboat Ski Area is located within the CWPP boundary. Mountain biking and hiking are the primary summertime activities on the ski mountain and are accessed from the gondola. Structures include the slope maintenance shop, outbuildings and ski lifts. Materials consistent with commercial operations (gas tanks, etc), and other storage buildings need to be considered in these areas. The Steamboat Ski Area operates within permitted guidelines established by the USFS, which ensures safe operating standards.

A portion of the Sheraton Golf Course, clubhouse and outbuildings are located within the CWPP boundary.

The Ranch at Steamboat Condominiums is also located within the CWPP boundary.

STEP 6 – ESTABLISH COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

HIGHEST PRIORITY

➤ Project Number 1 – Reduce Human Caused Fire Risk

Place fire danger status signs (6) at optimal locations, such as the picnic area parking lot at the junction of Aspen Wood Lane and South Steamboat Boulevard, the trailhead at the end of Clearwater Trail at Mt. Werner Water, the trailhead at the cul-de-sac of Elkridge Court, the cul-de-sac of Aspen Wood Drive, the trailhead at the end of Forestview Court and Fish Creek Falls parking lot.

➤ Project Number 2 – Optimize Emergency Notification

Establish land line telephone, cellular phone and e-mail emergency notification registries that may be submitted to appropriate county authorities for expeditious “reverse 911” notification. Establish a special needs resident list for those needing additional aid during an evacuation. This list would be provided to several available homeowner resident volunteers who might be able to aid those in special need.

➤ Project Number 3 – Evacuation Plan

The primary key to success is fire hazard mitigation though simultaneously the CWPP must provide contingencies for the worst case scenario. That said, we will plan with local fire, police, sheriffs and emergency medical personnel to establish escape routes and a plan for expeditious evacuation and relocation sites.

MODERATE PRIORITY

Work with community experts and fire experts to establish an on-line FireWise reference syllabus for education on mountain beetle infestation, fire prevention, fire preparedness and in home fire prevention. This could be linked with the Colorado State Forest Service, city of Steamboat Springs and the Sanctuary HOA web site.

Maintain and augment current hiking trail and fire road access to be used as anchor points for fire equipment, vehicles and personnel access. Work with fire fighting personnel to find viable sites for helicopter landing sites and locations for helicopter water bucket “dip” access. Deepening some “dip” sites such as the pond at Mt. Werner Water to at least 3 to 4 feet may be necessary.

LOWER PRIORITY

Ensure highly visible house numbering on residences and encourage placement of emergency key lock boxes. We will obtain city and county map location of existing fire hydrants within the CWPP and to ensure fire equipment fitting compatibility amongst all involved fire fighting agencies.

EDUCATION/REDUCE STRUCTURAL IGNITEABILITY

It is essential to promote FireWise concepts with continued removal of underbrush near dwellings within the Sanctuary development and encourage other partners within the WUI to participate in reducing wildfire risk.

HIGHEST PRIORITY

➤ Project Number 1

We will partner with community authorities to provide fire danger information, FireWise concepts and prevention to the residents via the HOA meetings and development web site.

MODERATE PRIORITY

➤ Project Number 2

Yearly we will provide ongoing FireWise concepts, updating information gained from participation in the Bark Beetle Task Force and new fire danger information to the residents via the Sanctuary development (www.steamboathoa.com) and city web sites.

➤ Project Number 3

Establish a basic checklist for resident evacuation. Advise and recommend residents and new homeowners of more fire resistant flora and integrate the Sanctuary Architectural Review Committee approval process with recommendations for more fire resistant roofing and siding materials. Encourage existing residents and owners ready to build dwellings to visit the city of Steamboat Springs web site (www.mapper.sbs.gov/net) for evaluation of their home fire rating risk.

LOWER PRIORITY

➤ Project Number 4

Inform contractors and subcontractors of the existence of the CWPP and if necessary help to monitor fire hazards at selected building sites.

➤ Project Number 5

Provide input and a community voice for proposed high density building projects within the CWPP by attending city planning and council meetings.

FUEL TREATMENT PROJECTS

Our experts have voiced strong concern and the need for additional targeted shaded fire breaks, hazardous fuelwood and ladder fuel removal. Treatment strategies for specific areas also include expanded June conifer spraying, underbrush removal as well as ensuring trail maintenance and road access for fire fighting and emergency vehicles.

HIGHEST PRIORITY

Reduce ignitable underbrush and maintain defensible space near structures and on adjacent forest service grounds where hazardous fuels buildup will result in the inability to meet Forest Plan Standards for fire management (see Appendix on page 19).

➤ Project Number 1

A modest though key collaborative project involving the USFS, CSFS and the Sanctuary development will begin in Spring 2007. Integrally related and interested parties have identified ground zero as the junction of USFS lands (MA 7.1) and private land along the south ridge preservation area. The targeted area approximates 30-35 acres; 100 feet on both sides of the obliquely coursing hiking trail located south of Aspen Wood Drive and behind parcels 62 through 72 of the Sanctuary development. CSFS and accumulated private funds from the Sanctuary development will be used jointly to remove dangerous fuelwood and dying, beetle infested conifers at the interface of and including USFS (MA 7.1) and private lands. The expected duration of the project will be 1 to 2 weeks during the month of June 2007 and will require heavy equipment (i.e. Timco, skidder) for the larger timber removal. Access to the hiking trail will be via the cul de sac at the east end of Aspen Wood Drive and will require temporary weekday hiking trail closure.

➤ Project Number 2

Interested parties have identified a heavy concentration of conifer death, dangerous fuelwood and the emergence of the Douglas Fir beetle on USFS lands (areas MA 7.1 and 4.3) immediately east of the Mt. Werner Water District along the steep north facing canyon sides of Fish Creek. Fuelwood removal and replanting will mitigate Fish Creek erosion and preserve drinking water quality.

HIGHER PRIORITY

➤ Project Number 3

We will plant new conifer and deciduous trees before the removal of deceased trees along Fish Creek between the hiking trail and Clearwater Trail. Not only will this obviate Fish Creek bank erosion, it will preserve shaded areas for fish integrity and mitigate elevated water temperatures, thereby reducing algae formation. The remaining conifers along Fish Creek are at particularly elevated beetle risk since safety restrictions have precluded preventative spraying within 25 feet of a natural body of water.

Expand annual beetle tree spraying for those sentinel and salvageable trees at highest risk above the hiking trails on the south ridge preservation area, ridge areas, near structures and adjacent forest service grounds.

MODERATE PRIORITY

➤ Project Number 4

Collaborate with the Western Area Power Authority (WAPA) to maintain defensible space to protect the power grid and ensure the flow of power. The WAPA transmission power line runs adjacent to the northern boundary of the CWPP.

➤ Project Number 5

Identify reasonable mechanical fuel reduction needs while maintaining and improving wildlife habitat opportunities in the Gambel Oak dominated north ridge preservation and ridge hiking trail between the Sanctuary and Elkins Meadow developments.

➤ Project Number 6

Maintain communication collaboration with the Steamboat Ski Area on the established and ongoing bark beetle management and fuels reduction program. In previous years the Steamboat Ski Area has left their snow making equipment charged during wildfire seasons of very high risk.

➤ Project Number 7

In an unrelated though important community development, the Mt. Werner Water and Sanitation District will construct a new water tank and access road in the Burgess Creek drainage during the summer of 2007. Thinning on both sides and establishment of a fuel break at the end of the access road would tie in with thinning and/ or prescribed burning of Gambel Oak on southerly facing crest just south of the south ridge preservation (area MA 7.1 and 8.22). Encourage and endorse proposed Forest Service prescribed burning, in particular of "at risk" areas. The Burgess Creek CWPP endorses the above mentioned proactive prevention treatment plan.

➤ Project Number 8

After completion of project number one, treat additional beetle caused mortality hot spots in future years within the USFS (area MA 7.1).

➤ Project Number 9

Collaborate and maintain the vegetation of the Fish Creek Falls Recreation Area to meet Forest Plan and visual standards.

➤ Project Number 10

Reduce the potential for further Douglas Fir mortality in the Fish Creek drainage utilizing established treatment tactics, pheromones and other future proprietary modalities thereby assuring a vegetative break between the diseased stands and residential dwellings.

LOWER PRIORITY

➤ Priority Number 11

Remain open and mindful of newer investigational or proprietary modalities for beetle treatment and pheromone use. Actively collaborate and participate in beetle mitigation research.

STEP 7 – DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

The homeowners of the Sanctuary Development and the fire community at large readily acknowledge the heightening possibility of wildfire throughout our region and abroad. It is imperative that proactive planning and fire mitigation in high-risk areas be aggressively undertaken to reduce the wildfire possibility close to home. The projects listed in Step Six are considered invaluable to many of the inhabitants within the WUI. Private citizens, individuals from the Steamboat Springs Rural Fire District, Colorado State Forest Service, Routt-Medicine Bow National Forest Service, Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, City of Steamboat Springs and Routt County may be requested for initiating projects based on land ownership and/or jurisdiction.

Fire mitigation albeit expensive and limited for homeowners and agencies alike will be exponentially less costly than restorative measures and estimates. The authors of the Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP and members of the community believe that each measure listed in detail is not only critical for human and wildlife safety but is imperatively time sensitive.

The Fish Creek-Sanctuary community would urge that the measures listed as highest and higher priorities be initiated by summer of 2007 and completed by late spring of 2008.

Projects listed as moderate or lower priority should be considered for initiation as soon as possible but before summer of 2008.

The members of the community at large and authors of the Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP will periodically review and reassess projects/measures quarterly within the CWPP forum, yearly at the Sanctuary HOA annual meeting and periodically at the monthly Bark Beetle Task Force meetings.

STEP 8 – FINALIZING THE COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

The development of Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP was initiated and energized by the Sanctuary homeowners. The development of the CWPP was collaboratively enhanced with extensive input from noted key members of the USFS, CSFS and SSRFD. We acknowledge and wish to thank those individuals mentioned throughout the CWPP development and this document. Without their tutelage, this quality project would have never been possible.

The CWPP development process has already produced measurable results with improved communication, identification of problem areas, expanded knowledge base, community awareness and member participation in the community based Bark Beetle Task Force. The collaborative project described as **project number one** in the **FUEL TREATMENT PROJECTS** is expected to commence pending grant approval by the Colorado State Forest Service.

The Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP will evolve, mature and be regularly monitored to address community wildfire response, hazard mitigation and community preparedness to enhance structure protection and most importantly prevent loss of life. Included in the evolution, we hope to aid other nearby communities and developments embark on the CWPP process.

APPENDIX

The Routt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, 1997 Revision, breaks the forest into different management areas (MA), and each MA having a different emphasis. The area adjacent to the Sanctuary Subdivision is designated as a 7.1 MA (Residential Forest Interface). This MA is the closest definition to the wildland urban interface (WUI) in the Forest Plan, and was limited to less than ½ mile from the Forest Boundary. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 further defines the WUI, and allows communities to identify their specific WUI boundary in the development of their CWPPs. The working team further identified the WUI boundary for the Fish Creek-Sanctuary CWPP based on values at risk identified in the process.

The Forest Plan for the Routt National Forest identifies fire management strategies for the various management area allocations throughout the Forest. These strategies vary from direct attack (e.g. full suppression) to prescriptive management (e.g. wildland fire use to benefit Resources). These strategies are further described in the Routt NF portion of the Northwest Colorado Fire Management Plan. The area within the CWPP boundary is designated as “B” polygon, where fire is suppressed in all situations. Fire management strategies within the CWPP include direct and perimeter control of fires. The Forest Plan also specifies the use of prescribed fire to meet resource objective for reducing fuel accumulations.