

Get Spring Mountain Ranch Ready For the 2020 Fire Season

Living with Fire

Wildfires are arguably the biggest risk to our safety, cabins, and community in McCall and Spring Mountain Ranch (SMR). Climate change and other factors are increasing the frequency and severity of catastrophic wildfires throughout the west, but there are many simple things we can do as individuals and communities to reduce the risk of wildfires. This newsletter provides a quick summary of wildfire risk reduction and mitigation activities that you can participate in around Spring Mountain Ranch, and information which can help you reduce the risk for your lot, cabin, and your neighbors.

Growing Threat

The threat of wildfires is growing throughout the west, and McCall is not immune. Fortunately local, state and federal government agencies have been proactive in reducing wildfire fuels (burnable vegetation) and maintaining strong firefighting capability. However, the same can be said about many communities around the country which have experienced catastrophic wildfires in the past few years. The sad truth is that few areas are able to keep pace with the growing threat, and that we will continue to see more severe fires in the future. The question is not if the McCall and SMR areas will experience a wildfire – its when will it happen, how bad will it be, and how prepared will we be.

Understanding Wildfires

Wildfires science can be complex, but here a few simple principles to keep in mind:

- Mid-July through Mid-September is generally the worst season for wildfires in the McCall area, but heat waves and drought can move up and/or prolong the fire season.
- Fire behavior (spread, intensity) is governed by topography, weather, and fuels. Simply put, wind, heat, and drought make wildfires more intense and difficult to suppress.
- Wildfires move/spread primarily through dead and live vegetation, but embers can spread fire from burning vegetation or structures.
- While many wildfires are caused by lightning, most are accidentally caused by people due to campfires, smoking, fireworks, equipment operation and other everyday activities.
- Firefighters often run out of staff and equipment when there are severe or multiple wildfires.

Creating FireWise Communities

Both McCall and Valley County are active participants in [FireWise](#) – a national program to reduce or mitigate the risks of wildfires. This program allows them to tap into mitigation expertise and grant funding. Among many other projects, they played a big part in the recent thinning and brush removal on the Nokes property on the south border of Spring Mountain Ranch.

The SMR FireWise committee was formed by our HOA to work with the city and county to help educate SMR landowners and coordinate risk reduction activities throughout our community. The group has been inactive for a few years, but we are trying to get going again. Our goals for this year are to recruit several new members, provide basic risk reduction information to SMR owners, provide a dumpster for brush disposal, and to create a long term action plan for consideration at the September 2020 HOA meeting.

What You Can Do This Spring

There is a list of online information with more detailed information at the end of this newsletter, but here are a few basic things to consider to better prepare for a wildfire:

1. Have you done all you can do to reduce the spread of fire on your property? The next section provides more detail on what you can do, and most of them are simple and easy.
2. Have you signed up for emergency notifications? Valley County and McCall use Code Red to send emergency alerts. Visit the [website](#) for more information and to sign up.
3. Do you have an evacuation plan if a wildfire occurs? Keep in mind that you may not have any advance warning and have to evacuate in minutes. Remember that heavy smoke, trees falling across roads, and traffic jams are common during evacuations. At a minimum, your evacuation plan needs to include your primary and secondary escape routes, emergency phone contacts, medications, and critical legal papers. Additionally, don't forget your pets in your plan. See the link below for additional information.
4. Is your property's street number clearly marked? You want to make it easy for firefighters to find your property in case of a fire.

Reducing Fuels and Wildfire Risk

Two factors have emerged as the primary determinants of a home's ability to survive a wildfire – quality of the defensible space around the home and the home's structural ignitability. Together, these two factors create a concept called the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ), which includes the structure and the space immediately surrounding the structure. To protect a home

from wildfire, the primary goal is to reduce or eliminate fuels and ignition sources within the HIZ.

Defensible space is the area around a home or other structure that has been modified to reduce fire hazard. In this area, natural and manmade fuels are treated, cleared or reduced to slow the spread of wildfire. Defensible space zones do not need to be barren, but do require you to rake up needles, cut underbrush, remove dead limbs, and remove low tree limbs. The [Colorado Defensible Zones Guide](#) has more detailed information and photos, but keeps its fairly simple. Defensible space gives your home a fighting chance against an approaching wildfire.

Structural Ignitability refers to the ability of your cabin to resist igniting during a wildfire. Most people realize that the heat of vegetation burning near a cabin is a threat, but the ability to withstand burning embers is equally, if not more important. Most of our cabins in SMR have oiled cedar siding that can ignite very easily if an ember gets trapped in a crack or eave, and our roofs capture dried needles that are easily ignited. The ideal time to address home ignition risk is when the structure is in the design phase, but the [Colorado Defensible Zones Guide](#) details simple steps you can take to reduce the ignitability of an existing home.

Brush and Yard Waste Disposal

We are lucky to have a number of free options for disposing of brush and yard waste from fire mitigation preparation. Here are some of your options for 2020:

1. SMR HOA has arranged for a dumpster to be located at the NE corner of [Bitterroot Dr. and Fireweed Dr.](#) from June 3rd to June 17th . This dumpster is for brush and yard waste only (it costs the HOA considerably more if other trash gets mixed in the dumpster).
2. There will be a dumpster located across from the McCall fire department May 22 - June 3.
3. The Valley County landfill will accept residential brush and yard waste free of charge from May 11 through October 22. They also will accept other residential materials (tires, old lumber, etc...) June 3 through June 6, and September 24 through September 26 – see their [website](#) for more information.

We Need Your Help and Suggestions

Your help is essential if we are going to improve wildfire readiness in our community. Send your suggestions or questions on how we can improve to John Segar at segar.john@gmail.com. Also consider joining our small team and helping us organize brush bins and other activities. It takes very little time, and does not require any specialized knowledge or experience. Contact segar.john@gmail.com if interested.

Additional Information

- General Info
 - Living with Fire in Valley County - http://www.co.valley.id.us/wp-content/uploads/Brochure_2016.pdf
 - Get Ready for the Fire Season - <http://idahofirewise.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/cafscXgetXdefXspace.pdf>
 - Homeowners Checklist - <http://idahofirewise.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/cafscXhomeownersXchecklist.pdf>
 - Are you Firewise? - <http://idahofirewise.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/firewiseXdefXspaceXtips.pdf>
 - How to Prepare Your Home for Wildfires - <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Firewise/Fact-sheets/FirewiseHowToPrepareYourHomeForWildfires.pdf>
- Property Evaluation
 - Property Evaluation & Self-Certification Guide - <http://idahofirewise.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/odfXpropXevalXselfXcertXguide.pdf>
- Defensible Space
 - Protecting Your Home from Wildfire: Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones - https://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/FIRE2012_1_DspaceQuickGuide.pdf
- Structural Ignitability
 - FireWise Construction: Site Design & Building Materials - <https://static.colostate.edu/client-files/csfs/pdfs/firewise-construction2012.pdf>
- Emergency Alerts
 - <http://www.co.valley.id.us/departments/sheriffs-office/departments/911-communications-center/code-red/>
- Preparing for Evacuation
 - <https://www.wildlandfirersg.org/Resident>
- Wildfire Season Information
 - Idaho Fire Restrictions - <http://www.idahofireinfo.com/p/fire-restrictions.html>
 - Fire Restriction Hotline: 1-844-433-4737
 - Idaho Fire Info – <http://www.idahofireinfo.com/>
 - Payette NF fire email updates (daily when there is fire activity) – <http://bit.ly/2ApwgZ3>

