



News Release

Fishlake National Forest



For Immediate Release

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FOREST SERVICE HELPS HOMEOWNERS PREPARE FOR WILDFIRE THREAT

Recreation residence owners in the Fish Lake Basin are getting some personal attention from the Fishlake National Forest to help them prepare for the threat of wildfire in their community. National Forest specialists are helping homeowners so they can reduce the risk of wildfire damage to their homes, and provide for public and firefighter safety. The objective is to maintain fuel conditions in order to reduce the rate of spread and the intensity should a fire be ignited in the Fish Lake Basin.

Nearly 130 homeowners in the basin are assessing their residences with help from Jill Ivie, Zone Fire Prevention Officer, and Kent Chappell, Fuels Program Manager on the Loa/Teasdale Ranger District. On June 17, 2005 they met with the homeowners' association board to discuss the forest's concerns for the potential for wildfire in the area.

"After we've initiated this project, there will be some annual maintenance required," Chappell said. He went on to say that, "We hope to nurture an ongoing partnership with the homeowners, so that they can create the defensible space that might make all the difference if we should see a wildfire in Fish Lake Basin."

In addition to private residences, campgrounds and Forest Service administrative sites may be at risk. In the past three years, two wildfires burned within five miles of the area in mixed conifer and

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Homeowners Prepare for Wildfire 2/2/2/2/2/2

sage, vegetation types similar to those found in the basin. The Johnson Fire in 2002 and the Mt. Marvine fire in 2003 burned over 2,000 acres combined.

For their part, interagency fire crews are working on Forest Service sites, particularly near Twin Creeks and campgrounds at Fish Lake. They're removing hazardous trees, a practice which is allowed in order to repair or safely maintain recreation sites and facilities. Ivie and Chappell are meeting individually with each homeowner to encourage them to take the same measure to protect their personal property. And they give them the tools they need to be successful.

Ivie explained that they go over an assessment form together and determine an effective defensible space for each lot. Defensible space refers to that area between a house and the surrounding wildlands where the vegetation has been modified to reduce the wildfire threat. It also provides a place where firefighting equipment and personnel can effectively make a stand against a fire. Ivie said that "it's really a different story for each home." They also give the homeowners brochures about living with fire that have information to help them protect their personal property.

"We want them to keep their lot lean, clean and green," Ivie said. It's a valuable lesson that may benefit homeowners whether or not the threat of wildfire is imminent. In order to be "lean," property owners are asked to prune shrubs and cut back tree branches, especially within 15 feet of a chimney. "Clean" requires the removal of all dead plant material from around the home; this includes dead leaves, dry vegetation and even stacked firewood. Gutters should also be cleaned regularly so that the litter in them can't ignite the roof. To be "green" requires simply taking care of the plants you do have around your home. Make sure that they are healthy, as stressed plants are more likely to burn. Water them regularly during the hot summer months.

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Homeowners Prepare for Wildfire 3/3/3/3/3

These measures taken by homeowners have proven to be, in some cases, the difference between saving their homes or losing them to a wildfire.

The boundaries of this fire safe improvement project include the residences in the area south of Jorgenson's Creek, north of Doctor Creek, west of Fish Lake and east of the Fish Lake Hightop. If you would like more information about how to provide defensible space around your home, call your local fire department, County Fire Warden, or Jill Ivie, phone (435) 896-1573, e-mail Jill_Ivie@blm.gov.

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PHOTO OUTLINE

TO BE FIREWISE—Kent Chappell, far right, explains how to be firewise to David Maurer, left and Anna Maurer, center. The couple are residents of Hurricane, Utah and own a home in the Fish Lake basin. The Fishlake National Forest urges all residents in the basin to become “lean, clean and green,” which may help to protect their home from the threat of wildfire.

30