

East Fork Fire Protection District

OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE

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East Fork Fire Protection District, local residents, and State Working Toward Fire Adaptive Community Status



Minden – The East Fork Fire Protection District, several local residents, and the Nevada Division of Forestry met this week to discuss the process and objectives of participating in the Nevada Network of Fire Adapted Communities Program. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group defines a fire adapted community as “A human community consisting of informed and prepared citizens collaboratively planning and taking action to safely coexist with wildland fire.” More fully, fire adapted communities are knowledgeable,

engaged communities where actions of residents and agencies in relation to infrastructure, buildings, landscaping and the surrounding ecosystem lessen the reliance on extensive wildfire protection actions and enable the communities to safely co-exist with fire as a natural ecological process of the surrounding landscape. Because every community is unique, the steps and strategies they take to improve their wildfire resistance will vary from place to place.

A big component of the Nevada Network of Fire Adapted Communities Program is the development of Community Wildland Fire Protection Plans. Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are the result of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 which, as part of a historical bipartisan legislative effort, call for communities to collaborate with state and local agencies to identify wildfire hazards, community vulnerabilities and determine priorities for hazardous fuels and other wildfire mitigation projects on federal and private lands in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). It also allows communities to develop and list priorities that affect their ability to survive a wildland fire in their area. Egress, education and water availability are some of the other issues that communities may address in their plans. Each community collaborates with local fire, as well as surrounding land and fire management agencies to identify risks and outlines strategies to address them.

While still in the beginning stages, the Fire District, State, and those community representatives, have established some immediate objectives and hope to draw more community members into the process to assist in making communities safer. The District is considering establishing five to six geographic areas that have similar threats and hazards and are seeking community

representatives from those areas. Currently, residents from Holbrook Highlands, Job's Peak Ranch, Sheridan Acres, and Jacks Valley areas are participating. The Lake Tahoe area is well ahead of the East Fork jurisdiction, having a CWPP in place which has been used to secure grant funds for on the ground mitigation efforts. The Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District serves as the local agency in that area.

Year-round fire seasons have become the new normal, which means people living in fire-prone areas need to be prepared for wildfires threatening their properties any day of the year. The month of April ended with near normal precipitation and temperatures and the wildland fire outlook is trending towards drier and warmer than normal conditions by late May. The outlook for May through August is far below average precipitation and above average temperatures. These conditions will create high wildland fire potential the greatest across the entire Sierra Front and along the Pinenut Range, on the east side of the valley, and in Southern Douglas County.

The group hopes to be able to apply for grant funds to not only develop the CWPP's but also to fund on the ground fuels management work. The Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District has done some exceptional work in their jurisdiction and in the Tahoe Basin under similar programs. Developing strong relationships with the BLM and USFS is essential to the group's success, noted District Chief, Tod Carlini. "We currently enjoy very positive relationships with both agencies and have been able to do implement effective projects over the years, all with grant funds." One of the most successful programs, managed by East Fork Fire Deputy Fire Chief and Fire Marshal, Steve Eisele, was the Compost Combustible Program. Over the years when funding was available, the district was able to establish compost sites in several locations throughout the district.

Once the CWPP areas are established within the District, the group will be soliciting additional public participation in the form of representation from the various communities within the District and to further awareness related to wildland fire and living in the urban interface. The Nevada Division of Forestry is the lead coordinating agency statewide for the Nevada Network of Fire Adapted Communities Program, which facilitates partnerships between communities, local fire protection agencies, land management agencies and other essential collaborators required to accomplish the task of making communities more adapted to the presence wildfires.

The month of May is Nevada Wildfire Awareness Week. The East Fork Fire Protection District is prepared to provide evacuation training to community groups, HOA's, and in other community forums.

If you would like additional information, please contact the East Fork Fire Protection District office at 775-782-9040 and for more information about wildland fire safety and defensible space, please visit the Living with Fire website at livingwithfire.info. For more information regarding the Nevada Network of Fire Adapted Communities, please contact Michael Beaudoin at 775-684-2519 or go to <http://forestry.nv.gov/fire-adapted-communities/>