

# Jefferson-Como Fire Protection District

# The Phoenix



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[www.jcfpd.org](http://www.jcfpd.org)

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## Jefferson-Como Fire to Impose Mitigation Impact Fee to New Construction Permits.

In an effort to minimize and prevent the ravages of Wildland fire to our community, JCFPD has elected to impose an impact fee to all permits applied for through Park County related to new residential and commercial construction within the JCFPD.

With the devastating effects of wild-fire witnessed in and around Colorado over the past few years, Fire Chief Skip Wilson, as well as the JCFPD Board, have elected to impose a \$250.00 impact fee on all new residential and commercial construction permits within the fire district.

While Chief Wilson, as well as the district fire board, were reluctant to impose another fee on their community; each felt that it was the prudent thing to do. With federal grant monies drying up in light of the U.S. economic climate, monies collected from such fees will aid in maintaining, and equipping Wildland fire-fighting apparatus and personnel.

The collected revenues will offset administrative expenditures for "on-site" surveys to homeowners that will be required to mitigate their properties in order to create a defensible space for

firefighters to safely protect such properties. A Certificate of Occupancy will NOT be issued by Park County to a new home/business owner unless proper

properties for weed control and landscape mulch. This will also lessen the amount of burning required of disposed forest products that emit more particulates into the atmosphere.

It is JCFPD's goal to achieve an 85% compliance to property mitigation and defensible space creation. We encourage ALL property owners to help meet this goal!

Chief Wilson has fielded many calls from insurance carriers as well as property owners that insuring "un-mitigated" properties will become

a thing of the past. Chief Wilson wants to ensure that folks coming to the district for recreation and to escape the business of their lives can do so without the fear of total loss of property and dreams that they have worked so hard to achieve.

If you are an existing homeowner and would like a site survey of your property please call us and we will help you!

You can reach us at our administrative office by calling (719) 836-2082. We will schedule you for a survey. We will also provide you all publication materials to ensure you protect your wonderful properties for years to come.

Please help us to help you. Have a great summer in South Park!



mitigation efforts have been achieved on the building site.

JCFPD fire personnel will come to a home or business owner's site and point out what needs to be done to create a defensible space. Those same personnel will come back after mitigation for a final inspection. If proper mitigation is completed and all Park County building codes have been met, the property owner will be issued a Certificate of Occupancy.

The monies will also be used to fund the purchase of a commercial grade chipper (s) for community residents to use for "treating" slash from their properties. The treated slash can then be recycled back into those

# Vegetation Management/Mitigation



## **Prescribed Burning:**

Prescribed burning is the intentional introduction of fire, under favorable weather and fuel conditions, in order to remove old vegetation (fire fuel). Some experts believe that prescribed burns, set under carefully monitored conditions, can safely remove old fuel and present a barrier to the spread of wildfire while minimizing erosion potential and improving habitat. However, other experts believe that any man-imposed action upon wild lands is unnecessary and possibly detrimental.

Proponents of prescribed burning observe that in areas with more frequent fires, especially forests and woodlands, vegetation tends to consist of fewer but larger trees, enhancing drought survival capabilities. In addition, some studies have shown that more frequent, smaller, and less intense fires favor animal populations by increasing plant and habitat diversity.

The U.S. Forest Service has successfully conducted prescribed burns. However, private landowners sometimes are reluctant to allow projects on their lands due to the liability concerns. Therefore, some large beneficial projects are halted because one landowner refuses permission to allow his/her land to be burned.

Currently, all land management agencies burn less than 3,000 acres totally. Proponents esti-

mate that 27,000 acres would have to be burned annually to make any significant impact on the fire situation!

## **Chemical Treatments:**

Herbicides have been successfully used to convert some chaparral-covered areas to grass lands and to reduce the understory vegetation load in forests. They may have some use in maintaining clearance around structures and in reducing the costs of maintaining fuel breaks. Herbicides can provide advantageous affects when applied to cut brush stumps to maintain clearance around structures. However, the policies of many land management agencies preclude pesticide use in quantities large enough to have any significant impact on the over-all fuel problem.

## **Mechanical Treatment:**

Mechanical methods of vegetation management include bulldozing, crushing, chaining, large brush crushers, and hand clearing. Many of these methods rely on burning the crushed brush in the winter periods of damp weather. Hand-cutting or chipping with the chips being reapplied to the site, is feasible for small areas but becomes cost prohibitive on large acre projects.

## **Biological Treatments:**

Goats, sheep and cattle have been suggested for years as a means of reducing fuel load, especially near developed areas. Cattle and sheep are an economical and effective method of reducing the annual grass

crop but the won't eat certain varieties of forbs or weeds. Grazed lands are actually less likely to ignite and the intensity and spread rate of fires are greatly reduced. However, history has shown that excessive understory fuels of the forest fire regime are driven by the age of the fuels rather than the ignition sources.

## **Fuel Breaks:**

Fuel breaks are generally strips of land many miles long and 200-400 feet across where the vegetation is greatly reduced but not completely removed. They are designed to be in places where the fire's intensity will be greatly reduced, giving the firefighters an opportunity to halt the fire's progress. Fuel breaks may be covered in grasses or low growing shrubs. Within a forest, they may be constructed by removing the lower branches of trees and clearing the understory vegetation.

Fuel breaks can be helpful as locations to control prescribed burns or wildfire flanks. However, they have not proven very successful in directly stopping wind or fuel driven fires, since these fires spread by throwing embers up to 1/2 of a mile in front of the flame front, thereby starting "spot" fires.

The fuel break system was envisioned as a grid so that fires would be limited in size by running into a break where they would be controlled. Fuel breaks proved helpful along the flanks of a fire but were not effective in stopping the frontal assault of a wildfire, (cont. on page 3)

Setting a prescribed burn operation.

"...27,000 acres would have to be burnt annually to make a significant impact on the present fire situation!"

Goats are an example of biological treatments to Wildland mitigation efforts.





# Vegetation Management/Mitigation

jurisdictions also require trimming, pruning, mowing, and selective removal of non-irrigated shrubs in the area between 30-100 foot from the structure, which is called the “fuel modification zone”. Unfortunately, many homeowners ignore the need for defensible space, because they misunderstand the “clearance” concept. They believe it to mean the complete removal of any and all vegetation on the land around their homes. Other homeowners do not want to touch any native vegetation for aesthetic or environmental reasons. Other homeowners do not have the time or the money to remove and dispose of vegetation, which could involve costly tree trimming and landfill charges. Prescribed burning is a less costly option for creating defensible space, but smoke can be a nuisance, especially in more densely populated areas.

(cont. from page 2)  
 where the fire-building effects of topography and prevailing winds overcame the limiting effects of the fire breaks. Fuel breaks are labor intensive and, therefore expensive. In recent years wildland agency monies have been directed away from fuel breaks toward prescribed burning across larger tracts of heavy, older fuel or vegetation areas.

### Defensible Space:

Inadequate clearance around structures has been repeatedly identified as the major factor in the destruction of homes in wildfires. Defensible space is an area around a structure where vegetation is cleared or reduced to slow the spread of wildfire toward the structure. The reduced volume of fuels results in a reduction of fire intensity, allowing firefighters to remain with the structure during a wildfire.

Recommendations for adequate defensible space vary depending on factors such as proximity to Wildland vegetation, type and age of the vegetation, and the slope of the land. Within Park County, most jurisdictions are beginning to require a fire “clearance” area around homes. Clearance is defined as the removal of shrubs and grasses within 30 feet of a structure. Irrigated ornamental plants are allowed within the 30 foot clearance zone. Most

weed control, erosion control, and mulch.

In communities that provided such services in the past, it was found that the response was overwhelming. Single resource agencies could not keep up with the demand of homeowners. Forming an operational co-op between residents, private companies and out-right ownership to a community chipper would be beneficial. Coupling available community resources with a good dose of human patience is paramount to successful program development.

“Coupling available community resources with a good dose of human patience is paramount...”

Chipping operations can be community based or provided by private, state, or federal agencies.

### Chipping:

Chipping is the mechanical reduction of large vegetation into smaller pieces. Chipping the brush and returning the chips to the area is an ecologically sound method of disposal. Chippers are complex and potentially dangerous machines that require a skilled operator. They are also expensive, and are not generally available in rental yards. Establishing a community co-op for “chipping days” may be a viable alternative; In that everyone contributes to the costs and the benefits. Chip disposal is generally not a problem. Most homeowners would cart the material away and deposit the chips at their properties for

