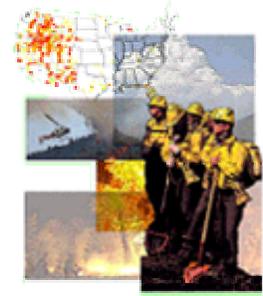


## NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

### Southwest Colorado Hosts Wildfire Prevention and Education Month San Juan Public Lands, Durango, CO



“What Are You Waiting For?” was the theme for southwest Colorado’s Wildfire Prevention and Education Month in April 2003. Local, state, federal and non-profit partners joined together to present activities and workshops to make people aware of wildfire hazards and mitigation efforts on both public and private land.

One of the main activities were tours to demonstration sites showing mitigation treatments completed by a hydromower, hand thinning, and horse-drawn teams. Mesa Verde National Park shared the success of their recent fuels-reduction work, which saved many of their employee’s residences and historic structures last summer. And a tour to private property that went undamaged during the Valley Fire last summer showed that defensible space does work. Another tour took participants into an area burned in the Missionary Ridge Fire to view new growth and rehabilitation efforts.

Almost 100 people attended a National Firewise Workshop mid-month that was hosted by the Durango Fire & Rescue Authority. Scholarships were offered by the San Juan Public Lands Center to volunteer fire department personnel, emergency service personnel, and local residents who could not otherwise have attended. Local residents attending the session expressed an interest in trying to establish a community-driven fire education and prevention council, and will be holding a kick-off meeting in May.

Screenings of the “After the Fire” video were held in Pagosa Springs, Bayfield, Durango, Ignacio, and Cortez. The educational video, released this spring, was developed to alert residents to the dangers still facing them in the aftermath of the Missionary Ridge and Valley Fires last summer. The video also promotes the benefits of defensible space. State Representative Mark Larson and State Senator Jim Isgar hosted a special Town Hall meeting in Pagosa Springs to show the video and talk about how to reduce wildfire fire hazards. At one point last summer, there were large wildfires burning to both the east and west of Pagosa Springs.

Following last summer’s Missionary Ridge Fire, the Durango Fire & Rescue Authority developed an outstanding PowerPoint presentation, complete with music, documenting the fire’s history, and they have been taking their show “on the road.” During April, their presentation was shown in several southwest Colorado communities.

The San Juan Public Lands Center (FS/BLM) and the San Juan Mountains Association teamed up and had Fire Prevention Booths at an Ag Expo in Cortez and a Home Show in Pagosa Springs. Mitigation specialists will be busy for the next couple of months responding to requests from homeowners for wildfire mitigation assessments.

Additional informational meetings were held in Montezuma County to explain a mapping process that the County and Office of Community Services have been working on for the past year to identify areas of high wildfire risk.

The month's activities were funded by the San Juan Public Lands Center and a grant that the San Juan Mountains Association received from the National Forest Foundation. Other partners include the Colorado State Forest Service, Durango Fire & Rescue Authority, local fire departments, Office of Community Services, and KSUT public radio, our media sponsor. In addition to announcing event information, KSUT hosted a week-long series of interviews with mitigation contractors, fire department personnel, and others about the benefits of wildfire hazard mitigation.

Partners hosting the events were encouraged by the public's response and are planning to host a similar event next spring.

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