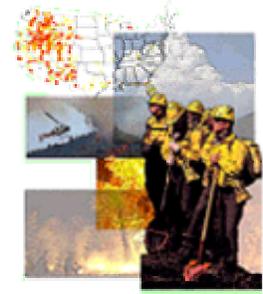


## NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

### Firewise Southwest Colorado San Juan Public Lands, Durango, CO



One of the recommendations of the La Plata County Community Fire Plan, which was completed in 2002, was to develop a Fire Council. While the Fire Chiefs and others talked about it some, nothing happened until spring of 2003 when the Durango Fire & Rescue Authority hosted a National Firewise Workshop as part of Fire Prevention and Education Month in April. Almost 100 people attended the Workshop and over half of them lived in La Plata County. Deputy Chief Dan Noonan encouraged the group to think about harnessing their collective energy and enthusiasm and starting a Fire Council.



The community-driven Council held a kick-off meeting in May and now the third Tuesday of every month and is known as FireWise - Southwest Colorado. The primary purpose of the Council is to provide a forum for solution-oriented education outreach and on-the-ground projects. The Council strives to work in conjunction with priorities identified in the County Fire Plans, developed in 2002.

The Council is supported by "Community Partners" who include but are not limited to: Colorado State Forest Service; San Juan Public Lands Center (Forest Service & BLM); La Plata County Planning Department; Durango Fire and Rescue Authority, and the Office of Community Services at Fort Lewis College. The Community Partners attend meetings, serve on Committees, and offer help, support and in-kind resources.

The meetings are open to any interested citizens and an e-mail tree also exists for those who want to stay informed on happenings of the group. The Council elected officers and finalized by-laws in December 2003.

The Council is divided into three interest areas: education/awareness, regulations/policy, and on-the-ground efforts. The Education arm has developed five "Wildfire Awareness" brochures that target not only homeowners, but also real estate and insurance professionals. They are titled:

- 1) Fire's Natural Role
- 2) Preparing for Wildfire
- 3) Finding the Right Mitigation Contractor
- 4) Increasing Your Property Value
- 5) Getting Involved With Community Efforts

The On-the-Ground group is investigating slash-disposal options, including working with Native American tribes in New Mexico to take some of the material, and other alternatives.

The policy group is looking at county efforts to promote better access, and the use of building material regulations.

Contact: Kristine Borchers, Council President at 970-533-7078.