

## Firewise Status Report: 13 September 2015

Dear Pine Forest Owners Association Members,

On behalf of the Board and the Pine Forest Firewise Committee, I am writing to update you on the status of our Firewise efforts and plans. It seems like a bit of an odd thing to say, but thank goodness we still have the need for a Firewise plan, right?!

First, I want to thank everyone who has already implemented Firewise principles on their property. There has been a lot of that work underway the past few months, including installation of at least eleven new blue address signs, along with under-deck screening and lower wall metal-cladding, placement of gravel to create no-fuel zones around houses, and, of course, a lot of limbing up and other ladder fuel removal! When we had to evacuate, I, for one, had a little more peace of mind than last year, knowing the work that we had done already.

That said, there's still a lot to do, as I learned when Kirsten Cook conducted my home assessment last Friday. So, here's where things stand:

**Firewise Designation:** We are currently finalizing Pine Forest's application packet and will be submitting it to Kirsten in the next week or two. Of the five requirements for applying, we have already completed four: 1) forming a Firewise committee (Heide Andersen, Kent Hitch, Lynn Lewicki, Rose O'Donnell, Jim Wurzer, & myself); 2) obtaining a community risk assessment from Kirsten (we'll be posting that document very soon); 3) holding a Firewise Day (satisfied by our discussion at this year's annual meeting); and 4) investing a minimum of \$2 per capita in Firewise actions (satisfied by this spring and summer's ladder fuel removal efforts). We are currently putting the finishing touches on the final requirement, Pine Forest's Firewise action plan for the next year. Details of that plan will be on the website very soon, as well.

**Additional Ladder Fuel Reduction & Tree Thinning (Timber Sale):** These are two important elements of our Firewise action plan. In late spring/early summer, Brothers Fire completed ladder fuel removal on ten lots in Pine Forest, adding to similar work that several of you had already done or were conducting on your own. In addition, Berrigan Forestry completed green tagging of trees that either are too close to a structure or are unhealthy due to beetle or other infestation, mistletoe, disease, or structural damage. Removal of tagged trees will not only reduce the risk of a catastrophic fire in Pine Forest, but will also greatly improve the health of our forest. The tagging occurred throughout Pine Forest, on both individual- and association-owned properties.

As we have been discussing since the annual meeting, conducting the thinning as a timber sale will, we hope, provide some funds for additional Firewise efforts, such as additional ladder fuel removal. Over the summer, more than 80 Pine Forest owners returned signed release forms authorizing removal of the tagged trees; thank you! We have been planning both to start the tree thinning and resume the ladder fuel reduction work this month (September). However, we learned just this week from Bill Berrigan that, due to the extensive fires in eastern Washington this summer, the glut of burnt timber has driven down the prices significantly, with some mills not even taking unburnt timber right now. If we were to proceed with the timber sale this year we might well incur a significant financial loss, which could necessitate a special assessment to the homeowners. Bill is fairly confident that prices will rebound next spring, so, the Board has reluctantly decided to postpone the sale.

We anticipate that many of the stapled green tags might not endure through the winter. To avoid having to repeat the process of identifying problem trees, we are planning to come through when Bill returns on 22 September & spray a paint band on the tagged trees for which we have signed releases. Please advise Kim, Anne, Kent, Lyn, Brad, &/or me by 22 September if you have a problem with that plan.

I imagine many of you are as disappointed as we are, but we want to be confident that the timber sale will at least break even. The additional time will give us the opportunity to address concerns that some of you expressed about the release form, so we can possibly have even greater participation. In the meantime, we can continue other Firewise efforts. Please checkout the new Pine Forest Firewise program materials on the Pine Forest website.

Thank you again,

Heather Dean  
Firewise Committee Member  
Pine Forest Board Member