

SUMMARY OF THE HOTCHKISS CWPP

This is the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Hotchkiss Fire District (HFD). The plan encompasses all the land within the District, meets all state and federal requirements for Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and will become part of the Delta County Fire Plan. The plan is the result of more than twenty years of experience fighting wildland fires in the District, and seven years of concentrated effort to reduce the risks wildfire presents to our citizens and our firefighters.

Since 2001, the Fire District has assisted landowners by providing grants for fuel reduction projects. Based on those projects, the HFD was able to ask that Fuel Reduction Projects be performed on BLM lands adjoining the Fire District. Maggie McCaffrey of the BLM noted that the Hotchkiss Fire District had already completed many of the components required for the completion of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, or CWPP and suggested we complete a formal plan which will be needed for future funding of these type projects. A series of meetings were held in 2007 to work on the plan.

This plan documents the efforts of the Hotchkiss Fire District and other agencies to reduce the risk of wildfires within the District, provides an action plan for the long-term continuation of this work, and employs an integrated approach to solving the wildfire problem by applying several different strategies that have the potential to effect changes on the ground. These strategies include:

- **Acquire and maintain an inventory of the homes and other values at risk from wildfire. This data must be integrated into the County GIS system.**
- **Provide Fuel Mitigation grants to landowners in the Fire District, particularly concentrating on Defensible Space Projects.**
- **Improve fire suppression abilities by acquiring suitable equipment and providing advanced training.**
- **Participate in Delta County's Planning process by advocating that new subdivisions in the Fire District meet Firewise standards.**
- **Take a leadership role in wildfire issues at the County level.**

The Fire District has a population of more than 4000 people residing in approximately 1000 homes, and consists of 115 square miles of private land. Through various agreements, the District has first response on 65 additional square miles of Federal land and lands within other fire districts. Virtually every house in our Fire District has exposure to wildfire during some part of the year.

Wildland Fire Occurrence and History of Hotchkiss FPD

The Hotchkiss Fire District is located on the south-facing side of Grand Mesa, where fuels and topography combine to form a significant wildfire hazard. Typically, the primary fuel types of sagebrush, Gambel oak, and pinyon-juniper woodlands become very dry and capable of supporting a large fire. Delta County has had four fires that have made use of the State's Emergency Fire Fund (EFF), three of these fires impacted Hotchkiss FPD: the Redlands Mesa Fire (1987), the Wake Fire (1994), and the Wolf Park Fire (2007). From Grandview Mesa in the southern part of the Hotchkiss Fire District, one can see the sites of eight large wildfires.

Community Vision/Values

Recognition of the real possibility of another fire similar to the Redlands and Wake Fire has provided much of the impetus for creation of this plan. The Wake Fire occurred immediately adjacent to the east border of the planning area/Fire District and significantly altered the view shed, changed wildlife habitat, and destroyed homes.

The Fire District invited stakeholders and advertised to the community that meetings would be held to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Those attending the first few CWPP meetings in early 2007 identified the following values:

- *Minimize death and injury due to wildfire*
- *Property protection*
- *Reducing the frequency, intensity and size of wildfires in the planning area.*
- *Protecting the view shed*
- *Protect water shed above the Town of Hotchkiss*
- *Reduce the chance of flooding and erosion above and in the Town of Hotchkiss*

Desired future condition/community vision:

The desired future conditions should include lessened ignitability of threatened structures, adequate defensible space around homes in vulnerable locations, more fuel reduction treatments in areas near threatened homes, improved water supplies for fire fighting, and creation of mosaic pattern of fuel reduction in the forests on the water sheds located upstream from the Town of Hotchkiss.

Planning process used to develop vision

The planning process consisted of a series of public meetings, planning sessions and the use of a community wild fire assessment tool/survey. Printed survey forms along with reference maps were made available at six public buildings in Hotchkiss as well as at meetings. Geographic areas of concern, types of concerns, common concerns and desires were multiple-choice selections on the survey form.

Results of surveys

- Number completed: 47
- Types of concerns:
 - Damage to Homes – 72%
 - Loss of Trees- 36%
 - Loss of Viewshed- 30%
 - Dangerous Escape Route's- 17%
 - Watershed Damage - 44%
 - Damage to Wildlife- 49%
 - Defensible Space- 53%
 - Improve Fire Protection- 32%
 - Watershed damage to Leroux Creek? 21%

Risk Assessment Maps

The BLM has provided a Risk Assessment Map, which is based on topography, fuels, roads, number of parcels, and other factors. Areas of concern from the combination of the above factors are portrayed in red shading. This map (see Appendix I) identified several high-risk areas in the Hotchkiss Fire District. One, located on the northern part of Redlands Mesa, has been the focus of much of the Fire District's Fuel Reduction work.

The other major concern, illustrated by the Risk Assessment Map is the area North of Hotchkiss. This is area will be the focus of much of our efforts in the upcoming years. The Hotchkiss Fire District and BLM have worked on a fuels treatment strategy that was summarized in a document that can be found in Appendix K.

A map was made by the Delta County GIS department combining the Risk Assessment Map with data taken from the surveys. This map can be found in a

Appendix J, and shows the public has a special concern is the risk that the town of Hotchkiss faces from the effects of a wildfire North of Hotchkiss. The same map also shows Fuel Reduction Projects completed in the District.

The Inventory and Mapping of the Fire District

Early in 2003, Dennis Hovel from Painted Sky RC&D approached the HFD Fire Chief with a grant proposal to map all the homes at risk from wildfire in the Fire District. It was proposed that the Fire District be divided into four areas. Another factor driving the need for mapping was Delta County's impending change of the addressing system, which had the potential for creating confusion when responding to emergency fire calls.

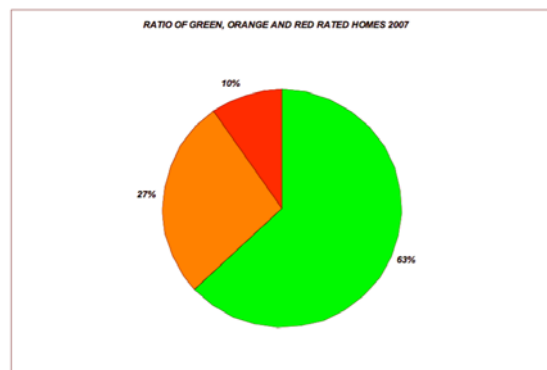
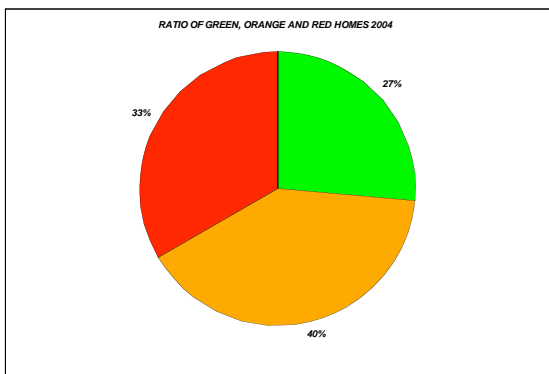
The homes were rated for their likelihood to survive wildfire based on nearby trees, topography, construction materials, and other factors. The scoring is based on Colorado State Forest Service ratings for subdivisions and slightly modified to fit our requirements.

The first maps were printed in early 2004, showing each home's relative risk by displaying its location dot in one of three colors as follows:

- Green - relatively safe, requiring little assistance to survive wildfire
- Orange - requiring assistance to survive wildfire and less safe than green
- Red - may be dangerous to firefighters and impossible to save from a wildfire.

Additionally, a green circle around any of the colored dots indicated that there was a Safety Zone nearby providing a survivable area for a fire engine and crew.

The Preplan Maps were prominently displayed, and elicited strong reactions regarding the ratings of the homes. This proved instrumental in getting many Defensible Space projects started in the Fire District, as homeowners sought to change their score from "red" to "orange" or "green".



2004 (475 homes)

2007 (489 homes)

Updates to the Preplan Maps

In early 2007, the mapping was updated to show houses and the results of the fuel reduction projects, particularly defensible space projects. A method was found to integrate previously collected data into the Delta County GIS system.

The map showing the ratings for the Hotchkiss Fire District can be found in Appendix C.

Fuel Mitigation

In 2001, Hotchkiss Fire District received a Fuel Reduction Grant from the Colorado State Forest Service and BLM. This was the start of the Fire District's long-term commitment to reducing the risk of heavy fuels near homes. More than twenty landowners participated in the first year. The Fire District has directly worked on more than one hundred fuel reduction projects, and provided information and assistance to scores of other projects. See Appendix C for a map showing locations of the projects. See Maps of Fuel Reduction Projects- Appendix F, G, and H.

Our efforts have achieved statewide recognition from the Colorado State Forester, and have extended our services and grants to landowners throughout the County.

Mapping and Mitigation Work Hand-In-Hand

A significant number of landowners have undertaken projects to reduce their homes' risks from wildfire after noting their scores on the 2004 map. Many have stated that one of their main goals was to drop a level in the rating system. The many dynamic changes represented in the above graphs are a major incentive to update the maps, and have to be considered a community success story.

WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION

The Fire District's history and experience in fighting both small and large fires has driven the selection of strategies, tactics, training and the purchase of equipment. Simply put, we have emphasized delivering a strong, quick, and well-directed initial attack on wildland fires. The utilization of the Incident Command System is critical in these events.

Our brush engines are equipped with foam systems, can pump and roll, and have joystick controlled monitors that allow firefighters to accurately direct streams of water on wildfires from inside the cab as the fire engines are moving.

In the initial attack phase, our firefighters are able to quickly put on Nomex jumpsuits over their street clothing, slip into boots that have zippers instead of laces, and get right into the fire engines. Each firefighter has been issued two radios: one VHF radio, and one GPS radio that can send a firefighter's location to each other and to the Incident Commander.

Fires that escape initial attack or directly threaten structures require a quick shift to a different strategy. Using our preplan maps, our firefighters can select homes that are possible to save based on fire conditions and behavior.

Training



Hotchkiss firefighters examine preplan maps, summer 2004

All but our newest firefighters have S-130/190 Basic Wildfire Training, and many firefighters have taken advanced wildfire training and certification at the Colorado Wildfire Academy, such as:

- *Sawyer*
- *S-290*
- *Mapping*
- *Incident Commander*
- *Helicopter Manager*
- *NIMS 100, 200, 700, 800*
- *Communications Section*
- *Liaison*
- *Tactical Decision-Making*
- *Fire Operations in the Wildland/Urban Interface*
- *Engine Boss*

The Hotchkiss Fire District's in-house training includes:

- *Strategy and tactics utilizing our mapping system*
- *Familiarization and use of our fire engines*
- *Incident Command System*
- *GPS training*
- *Structure Protection training*
- *Review of all fires*
- *Firefighter Safety*
- *Sand Table Exercises*
- *Developing water supply for large fires*
- *Working with aircraft*

Fire Suppression Goals for the Future

The Hotchkiss Fire District will seek to improve its strategy, tactics, training and equipment across the board. Specifically, we will:

- Develop and improve our ICS skills.
- Commit to changing our radio system completely to 800 MHz DTR to enhance interoperability.
- Purchase a Heavy Brush Engine/Tender to replace our oldest truck, Engine 4
- Find a way to provide S130/190 training for new firefighters.
- Continue to send our firefighters to the Colorado Wildfire Academy and similar training opportunities.

SAFETY OF CITIZENS AND FIREFIGHTERS

Evacuation

Our mapping and data suggest that a “Protect in Place” (PIP) strategy is possible in the Hotchkiss Fire District, rather than a fully developed evacuation plan. The Protect in Place concept comes with certain risks and can only be implemented on a situation-by-situation basis. The Hotchkiss Fire District will obtain more information on Protect in Place strategies. By examining the pros and cons of this technique, firefighters and the public can get a basic understanding of how PIP could be applied on a wildfire in our Fire District.

Pros:

- Specifically in the HFD, safety zones exist near many of the residences, providing protection from wildfire for both firefighters and residents.
- At present, there are no large subdivisions in hazardous wildfire areas; instead, most lots are several acres or more in size, thus reducing the sheer number of people at risk in any one incident.
- Traffic on roads would be substantially reduced, allowing safer emergency vehicle traffic.
- Capable residents can assist with structure protection on low- risk (green dot) homes, freeing firefighters and equipment to work on other portions of the fire.

Cons:

- The Protect in Place concept is not widely accepted.
- Confusion may result if other officials order evacuation, particularly because the County Fire Plan includes plans and methods for evacuation
- The public and other organizations have come to expect evacuations as an integral part of wildfires. Not ordering evacuations has the potential to create a poor public perception of the Fire District’s management of a fire incident and the mistaken idea that risk is low.
- Risks from mistakes made in the use of PIP, particularly concerning evaluation of resident’s health and the suitability of the safe zone itself.

Resolution:

The Hotchkiss Fire District will create Public Service Announcements to explain to the public that we promise to use evacuations only when and where needed. We will include in the announcement the location of a Designated Evacuation Center, and advise any evacuated residents to check in, regardless of whether they plan to stay or seek other shelter.

TASK SCHEDULE TABLE 2006, 2007, 2008

Who	What	When	How	
Hotchkiss Fire District	Projects and Programs:	2007-2008	1. Conduct Biannual Building Surveys, obtain better mapping software.	COMPLETE
	1. update mapping system,		2. Continue current program of using matching grants to promote individual property owner’s fuel reduction projects.	IN PROGRESS
	2. fuel reduction programs,		3. Conduct large-scale large wildfire training exercises within a 2-year planning cycle.	TBD
	3. improve wildfire response through planning and training,		4. Continue advocacy through participation in the County’s plan review process. Obtain another type II tender.	ONGOING No purchase on tender in near future
	4. Improve water supplies,			

	<p>5. initiate a continuous public education program,</p> <p>6. conduct a biannual survey of residences,</p> <p>7. Administer the CWPP</p> <p>8. Develop web site with comprehensive info for homeowners</p> <p>9. develop plan to explain Evacuation to the District's citizens</p> <p>10. CWPP review</p>	<p>Fall, 07</p> <p>Nov. 08</p>	<p>5. Initiate an ongoing program of public presentations of Fire Wise type information emphasizing structure ignitability.</p> <p>6. hire mapping personnel</p> <p>7. Select committee, schedule meetings</p> <p>8. see www.hotchkissfire.org</p> <p>Organize review meeting</p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>COMPLETE FOR 2007</p> <p>in progress</p>
Delta County	<p>1. Continue to provide Emergency Management support of significant wildfires.</p> <p>2. Continue GIS support of the WUI mapping program.</p> <p>3. Continue incident communications support.</p> <p>4. Provide assistance in evacuation route planning and signage.</p> <p>5. County trucks to have unit markings, visible from ground or air</p> <p>County-wide EFF-type fund</p>	2007-2008	<p>Fire incidents in 2007 received great support</p> <p>GIS department effort to assist mapping, grants to pay for data collection, new addresses needing to be entered.</p> <p>Proceed with 800 DTR system, involve ARES-RACES at incidents</p> <p>NA</p> <p>Proposed</p> <p>Proposed</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>ongoing</p>
Colorado State Forest Service	<p>1. Provide expertise and materials for public education program, fuel reduction projects, and support of this CWPP.</p>	2007-2008	TBD	