

**OURAY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**  
**4 Neighborhood Community Wildfire Protection Plan**  
**WHISPERING PINES, PANORAMIC HEIGHTS, LAKE LENORE,**  
**DEXTER/CUTLER**

AUGUST 2007



## **General Description**

These four neighborhoods were chosen for a common plan because they all lie within a rectangular section (appx. 6 square miles) of the Uncompahgre Valley just north of the City of Ouray. They represent multi-faceted WUI (Wildland Urban Interface) issues and challenges, and have been determined to be one of the seven top priority areas in Ouray County for risk. The conditions do vary between the neighborhoods, but a fire occurring in any one of these specific neighborhoods would present risk to all four neighborhoods.

## **Participants**

16 citizens representing all four neighborhoods, the County Sheriff, the County Emergency Manager, the Ouray Fire Protection District Chief and Board of Directors have all been involved, along with representatives of the State and Federal Forest Management Agencies. We have received support from the Ouray County 911 Board, the Montrose 911 Board with GIS maps, and the BLM with a Communities at Risk map.

## **Components of this Plan**

### **1. WUI**

- All four neighborhoods lie within one half mile of Federally managed lands – both BLM and Forest Service
- While fuel types and densities vary between the four neighborhoods, all are at risk from the effects of wildfire.
- See attached map. Heavy green and yellow lines define Federally managed lands.

### **2. Community Preparedness to respond to wildfire**

- The Ouray Fire Department, which is partially funded by the Ouray Fire Protection District, has 2 Type I engines and a 4,000 gallon Tender equipped with accessories to support wildfire operations.
- The Ouray Fire Department has MOUs or IGAs with the other County Fire response agencies and access to support from within the West Homeland Security Region and the State of Colorado.
- All Emergency Responders within Ouray County have common radio systems and can all interface directly. All Emergency Responders can directly or indirectly interface with all Regional resources and the Federal and State agencies.
- The Ouray Fire Department participates each year in formulating the Ouray County Annual Wildfire Operating Plan with the Colorado State Forest Service and others.
- Some members of the Ouray Fire Department have formal structural fire training and others have wildland fire training, and some have both.
- All Ouray County Emergency Responders including the Fire Department have NIMS/ICS training



## **Components of the plan, continued**

### **3. Risk Analysis**

- A total of approximately 50 homes are involved, mostly year round residents who live and work in the Community. With home prices averaging above \$350,000 in Ouray County, the dollar value is well in excess of \$17.5 million.
- All four neighborhoods are subject to frequent lightning storms during the summer. In this section of the San Juans, the storms can come from any direction but most originate in the south and west. Some of the most intense lightning comes during storms "backing in" from the east.
- Whispering Pines is built among large Ponderosa Pines, with overlapping canopy. There are ladder fuels in the neighborhood, and the houses were built before the County Fire Mitigation Regulations were adopted so the homes are more flammable than new homes would be. In recent times 2 homes have caught fire and threatened the Ponderosa canopy and in both cases rapid response by the Fire Department averted disaster.
- Panoramic Heights has only a few houses close to heavy fuels but proximity to the other locations mean that wind and convection borne sparks and embers would be a direct threat to homes. There is a mix of old and new homes.
- Lake Lenore is largely a summer home location with only a few year round residents. Most of the homes are older with some in locations where direct fire fighting is almost impossible and water sources difficult in spite of the lake. Mixed fuels from Ponderosa and Spruce to Pinyon/Juniper/Oak Brush are dominant with some Aspen.
- Dexter/Cutler has few homes, but of high value, and both elderly and children living year round. This area has long stretches of heavily timbered roads and many informal campsites on both BLM and Forest lands near the houses. This area is not frequently visited by Forest or BLM officials and the Sheriff has limited authority relating to fire unless a fire-ban is in effect.

### **4. Fuels Treatment Priorities**

- Top priority is the one half mile of the Cutler Creek Road (14A) north of the Lake Lenore subdivision due to heavily fueled steep ravines and unregulated camping on the Federal Lands. Substantial reduction of fuels within the 60 foot road right-of-way is imperative followed by clearing of most of the fuels from the ravines on Federal land. Either hydro-axe or hand clearing would work.
- A "safe zone" just north of the Lake Lenore property would provide some measure of protection for the residents both from Lake Lenore and from the Dexter/Cutler area. This area is largely clear of substantial fuels now but needs further clearing and probably annual treatments. There would be a choice of treatment methods. *see map*
- The roads thru Lake Lenore, and particularly the County Road also need removal of the fuels close to the road. Outside the County Road r.o.w. the land is private.



## **Components of the Plan, continued**

1

- Whispering Pines fuel issues are mostly on private parcels. Clearing underbrush and trimming lower branches on the Ponderosas would be a treatment that contractors or homeowners can accomplish without specialized machinery.
- Some of the larger private properties would benefit from "sculpted" thinning, otherwise known as treatment "polygons" as done on the Uncompahgre Plateau Project. Area wildlife would benefit from this process in most cases.

### **Other Treatments besides fuels:**

- Both the Dexter Creek Road (14) and Cutler Creek Road (14A) need improvements. Widening, turnouts, and a larger turn around at the Forest Boundary are high priorities. Key trees need to be left in place for traffic safety, road definition, and speed control.
- The water line to Whispering Pines needs to be enlarged where it crosses the Batchelor Switch Bridge to match the line on either side of the bridge.
- Two additional "Dry Hydrants" need to be constructed at Lake Lenore to provide access to the lake water for firefighting.
- The limited capacity cistern at Lake Lenore needs to be enlarged to support a longer duration fire flow to the hydrants present.
- Additional water storage facilities need to be constructed near the Forest Boundary on both the Dexter and Cutler Creek Roads.

### **5. Recommendations regarding ways to reduce structural ignitability**

Ouray County already requires class A roofing materials in any area with a fuel component. Ouray County also has a points system to meet fire resistance standards that must be met for a building permit for any new homes or any substantial remodel of an existing home. These standards are based on NFPA data and are applicable to the situation in Ouray County.

## **IMPLEMENTATION:**

### **2007**

- Get road improvements to Dexter and Cutler Creek Roads done
- Get trees substantially thinned along the affected County Roads, keeping other factors incorporated in the treatments
- Purchase materials for, and install this season if possible two new dry hydrants at locations noted on the map at Lake Lenore
- Upgrade the water main under the Batchelor Switch Bridge
- Carry forward "In-Kind" dollar credits toward future grants if work by the County exceeds present grant requirements



## 2008

- See that the dangerous ravines are cleared on the Federal lands involved
- See that the "Safe Areas" on Federal lands are cleared and maintained
- Consider pursuing completion of County Observatory Park status for the BLM parcel that presently supports unregulated camping ( this process was started several years ago). *see map*
- Encourage private land fuels treatments thru an annual education process to be conducted by the Fire Department in cooperation with the County
- Obtain grant support and upgrade and construct water supply reservoirs at key locations *see map*
- See if cooperation can be obtained to establish an "emergency only" alternative route out of the Cutler Creek Road area along the original County Road which now connects with "Red Stone Road" but is presently totally impassible for any type of vehicle.
- Prepare specs for a wildland fire type vehicle for the Ouray Fire Department and give consideration to an appropriate housing location if grant funds are available for either or both items
- Ask the voters in the Ouray Fire Protection District to eliminate the TABOR tax restriction which is inhibiting the ability to adequately fund needed improvements as growth continues
- Purchase Fire Cache equipment and tools for the neighborhoods as appropriate

## ATTACHMENTS:

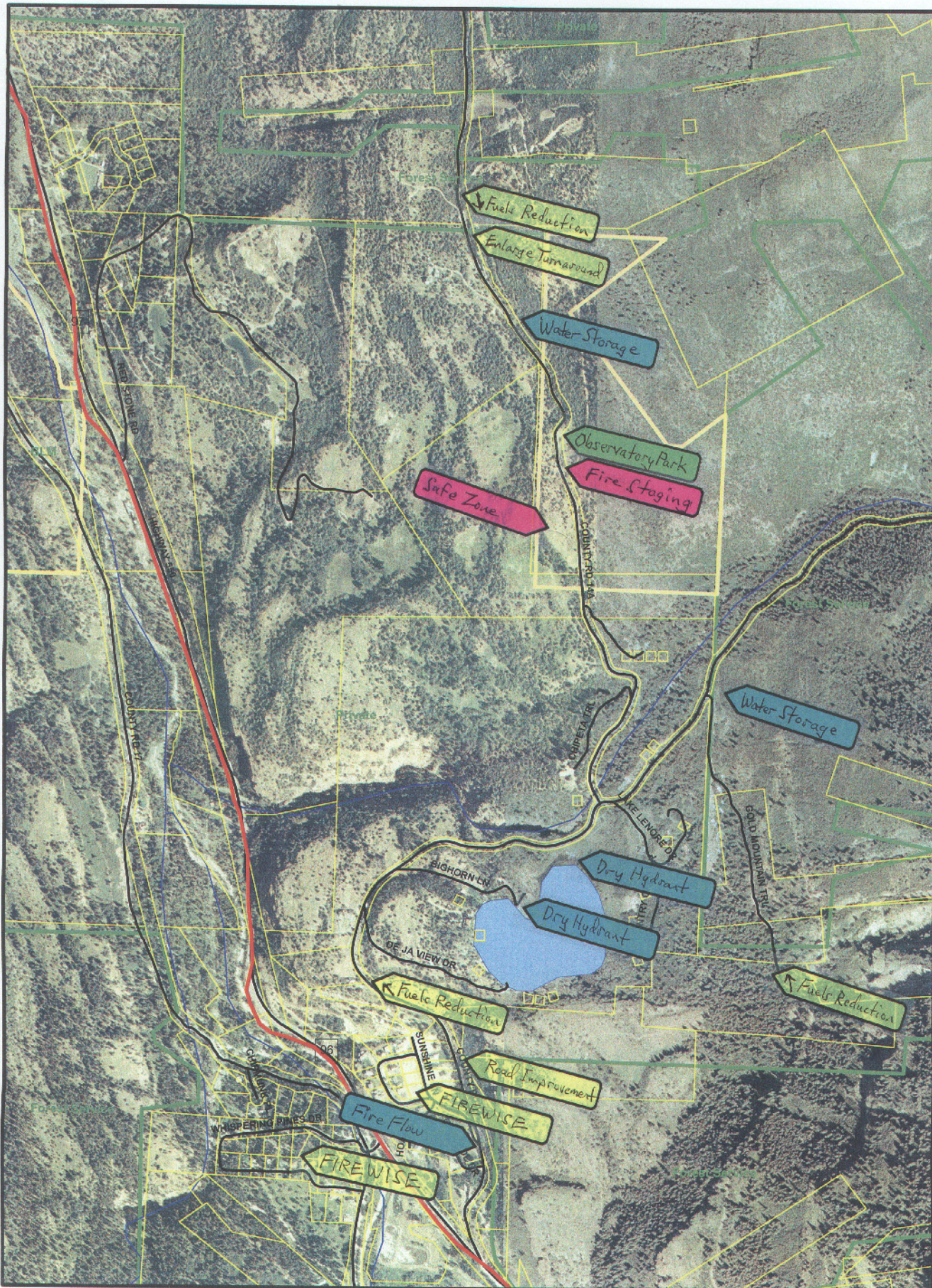
- Communities at Risk map
- Ouray Fire CWPP map

## APPROVALS:

Ouray County Sheriff	<u>Domine Mather Jr</u>	Date <u>09-05-2007</u>
Ouray Fire Chief	<u>[Signature]</u>	Date <u>09/05/07</u>
State Forest Office	<u>Joel Hohenstein</u>	Date <u>9/8/07</u>
Interagency Fire BLM/Forest Service	<u>Steven D. Ellis</u>	Date <u>09/05/07</u>



# Ouray Fire CWPP



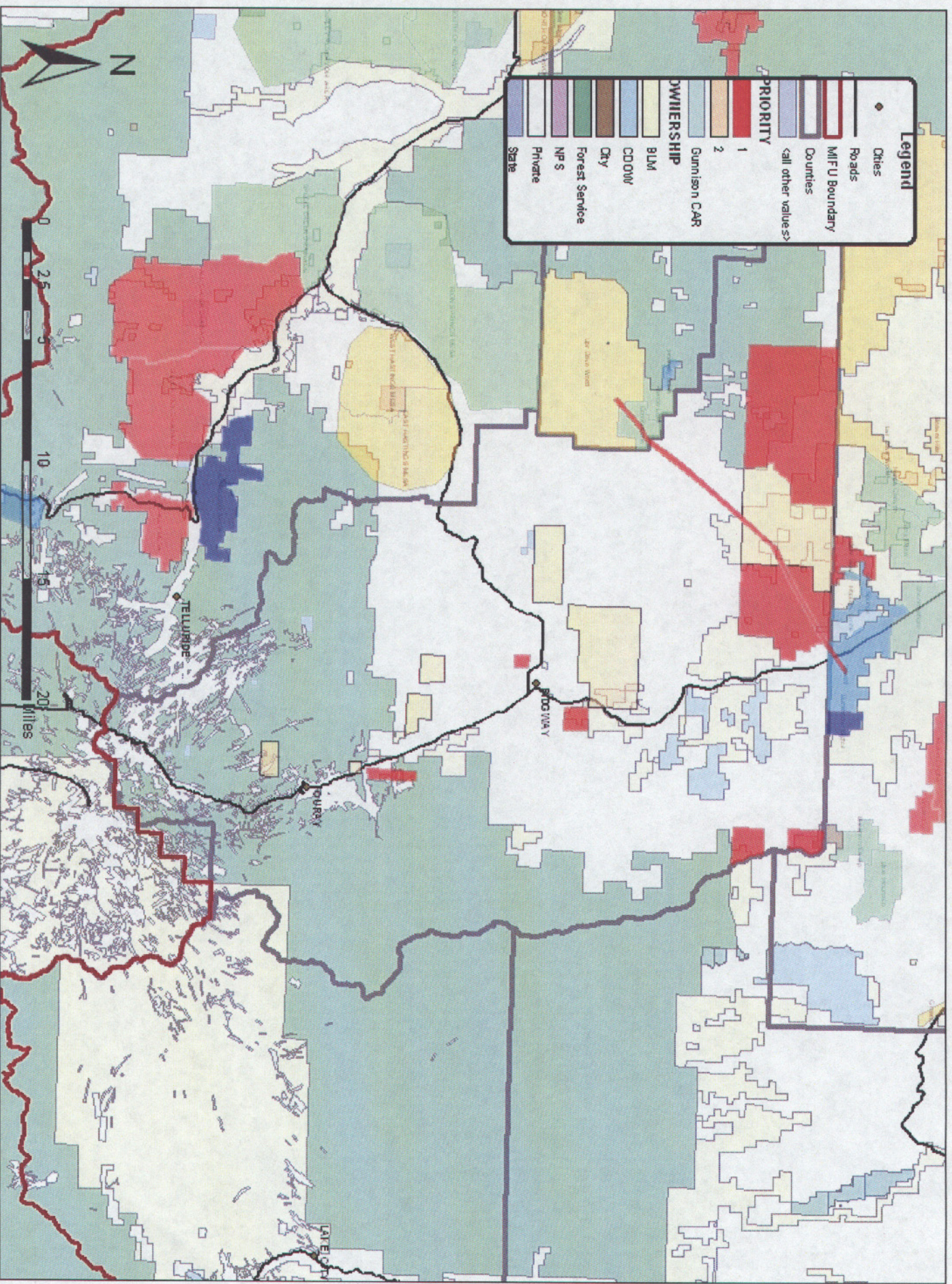
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Ouray Fire CWPP 11/17/2017, Matt Goshaw, E-911 System Administrator, City of Ouray, CO Dept. 0151017



## Prioritized Communities at Risk





**CWPP 4 NEIGHBORHOODS – VALUES TO BE PROTECTED**

<b>VALUES</b>	<b>AFFECTED</b>
<b>LIFE Residents and Responders</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>HOMES Primary, Vacation</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>BUSINESSES</b>	<b>PH, D/C</b>
<b>WILDLIFE</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>FLORA, including invasive species mgmt.</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>WATERSHED</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>ESTHETICS</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>HISTORICAL SITES</b>	<b>D/C, WP</b>
<b>HUNTING SEASON SAFETY</b>	<b>D/C, LL, WP</b>
<b>ROAD USE SAFETY</b>	<b>D/C, LL, WP</b>



<b>RISK FACTORS</b>	<b>AFFECTED</b>
<b>NARROW DEAD END ROADS</b>	LL, D/C
<b>INADEQUATE FIRE VEHICLE TURN AROUND</b>	LL, D/C, WP
<b>ONE WAY ROAD SECTIONS</b>	LL, D/C, WP
<b>NO SAFETY ZONES</b>	LL, D/C
<b>HEAVY FUELS NEXT TO ROAD</b>	LL, D/C, WP
<b>"CHIMNEY GEOGRAPHY" WITH FUELS</b>	LL, D/C
<b>MULTIPLE DISPERSED CAMPSITES (ignition source)</b>	D/C
<b>LIMITED WATER SUPPLY</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>DENSE PJ/OAK BRUSH</b>	LL, D/C
<b>DENSE FOREST CANOPY</b>	LL, D/C, WP
<b>"LADDER FUELS"</b>	LL, D/C, WP
<b>DEAD TREES with needles still on</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>LIGHTNING, PRIOR FIRE HISTORY</b>	D/C, WP



## CWPP 4 NEIGHBORHOODS FUELS PRESCRIPTION DEXTER/CUTLER

### Overall

This Dexter/Cutler neighborhood has the top priority for improved ingress and egress safety since there is only one access. Initially, only the County Road right-of-way can be treated due to time constraints, but the Forest Service and BLM will be asked to look at how their lands affect the WUI and consider treatments to support those done initially. This will entail clearing of a *Safety Zone* and a *Staging Area*, along with substantial thinning of fuels in relevant ravines. This prescription will address recommendations for the Federal Agencies to consider as well as a basis for contracting the r.o.w. clearing. Homesite improvements will be planned and executed as well beginning next year with needed support. Homesites will be evaluated for wildfire defensibility.

A future stage of improvement for this neighborhood will involve addition of a water supply reservoir if funding is available, in addition to private land fuels treatments, some of which have already been done. Informational and identification signage may be of value to the desirable educational component of this overall plan.

The fuels prescription given here has already been presented and demonstrated to the Lake Lenore neighborhood as well as the Dexter/Cutler neighborhood and meets with their approval also for their road segments.

### Fuels Prescription

The Cutler Creek Road (C.R. 14A) is generally located in a north/south configuration along the east side of the Uncompahgre Valley approximately three miles north of the City of Ouray at an 8,000 to 8,500 foot altitude. Three types of areas are to be addressed here: the roadway r.o.w. itself, slope conditions, and the open woodland savannah adjoining the road.

#### ROADWAY R.O.W.

The County Road through here is a 60 foot r.o.w., appx. 30' on either side of the center line. The majority (90%) of the fuels (mostly oak brush and juniper) will be removed from the r.o.w. with some preservation of browse shrubs such as mountain mahogany, and a *plum tree*. Smaller fuels will be "chipped" and spread, not to exceed 2" depth, over the areas treated, partly to discourage brush regeneration. Larger trees removed will be limbed and cut into 6' lengths to allow for removal as firewood. Some pinyon, spruce, and ponderosa "character trees" will be retained but trimmed of lower branches and undergrowth (ladder fuels). Trees saved will be located to improve traffic safety by defining the roadway. A side benefit to the treatment will be improved sight distance for vehicles on now blind corners. Some wildlife cover for small animals and birds will be retained where it would not contribute to spreading wildfire.



#### UPSLOPE/DOWNSLOPE

Outside the road r.o.w. downslope areas will be treated 2:1 over upslope areas with removal of trees and shrubs and with additional attention on south and west facing slopes. Crown cover will be reduced to less than 25%, favoring pinyon and ponderosa pines. Juniper and oak brush will be substantially removed. Extra thinning will be conducted both downslope and where the road curves to reduce the likelihood of fire jumping the road if it is utilized as a fire perimeter during an event. The power lines in the area will receive similar treatment along with removal of any trees that could cause a fire by arcing. Substantial thinning will have the added advantage of discouraging the more irresponsible dispersed camping and open fires which occur now due to the seclusion of heavy canopy.

#### OPEN WOODLAND SAVANNAH AREAS

There are only two areas that are of this type. They are recommended for removal of overstory vegetation and shrub components. Again a few "character" trees such as older mature, spruce, ponderosa, doug fir and pinyon would be considered for retention with removal of ladder fuels if the trees themselves are not in bad locations. The first area would be a "safety zone" and so designated on the map and GPSd. It is a triangular shape of perhaps 2 acres, with the road on the east side, the Smith Ditch (an irrigation ditch) on the west, and heavier cover on the north. A second mostly open area near this first is recommended for a staging area with trees largely removed again in a triangular area bounded on the north and west by the County Road, and the east by an old historic road to the Newsboy and Slide Mine ruins. There is a third staging or safety area now at the Forest Boundary due to the work done by the County to enlarge the turn-around for fire equipment. This area could have the safety value enhanced by removal of several downslope trees to a distance of 100' from the base of the turn-around fill.



## CWPP 4 NEIGHBORHOODS CONTACT LIST

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Alan Staehle	Ouray Emergency Planning	325-4823
		596-0400
Matt Goetsch	METSA 911 Coordinator	240-1458

Updated September 4<sup>th</sup> 2007



