

# Del Norte Fire Protection District

## Community Wildfire Protection Plan



LAND STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATES, LTD.

# Community Wildfire Protection Plan Del Norte FPD

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## I. PREFACE:

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a local wildfire protection plan that can take a variety of forms, based on the needs of the community. The CWPP may address issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, or structure protection – or all of the above.

The process of developing a CWPP can help a community clarify and refine its priorities for protection of life, property and critical infrastructure in the wildland-urban interface. It also can lead community members through valuable discussions regarding management options and implications for the surrounding watershed.

CWPPs also improve a community's ability to compete for grants to fund hazard mitigation projects prevention and preparedness education of residents in the community.

The wildland urban interface (WUI) is another term found throughout this document. It can be simply described as the geographical area where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with wildland or vegetative fuels. For the purposes of community wildfire protection planning a more specific definition is used. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act defines wildland-urban interface as:

- a.) an area extending ½ mile from the boundary of an at risk community.
- b.) an area within 1.5 miles of the boundary of an at risk community, including any land that;
  - 1. has a sustained steep slope that creates the potential for wildfire behavior endangering the at risk community,
  - 2. has a geographic feature that aids in creating an effective fire break, such as a road or ridge top,
- c.) an area that is adjacent to an evacuation route for an at risk community that requires hazardous fuels reduction to provide safer evacuation from the at risk community.

## II. COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Del Norte Fire Protection District (DNFPD) Community Wildfire Protection Plan covers the most hazardous part of Rio Grande County which is located in the San Luis Valley in south central Colorado. It covers an area of approximately 306 square miles or 195,840 acres and ranges in elevation from 7,600 feet on the eastern side to over 12,400 feet on its southern boundary. The Rio Grande River and South fork of the Rio Grande are the major drainages. The Del Norte FPD provides both structure and wildland fire protection to most of Del Norte FPD. The US Forest Service provides protection for the public lands at higher elevations.

Several small towns are included within the area. Del Norte is the county seat and the largest town in the fire protection district. South Fork is the other major community within the fire protection district. US Hwy 160 and State Highways 112 & 149 are the three principal travel routes through the area. The following vicinity map identifies the location of the area and its proximity to the remainder of the San Luis Valley.

Ninety eight subdivisions and summer home areas are lumped into eight Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas within DNFPD. They are listed in Table 1. 57,775 acres have been designated as WUI in the fire protection district.

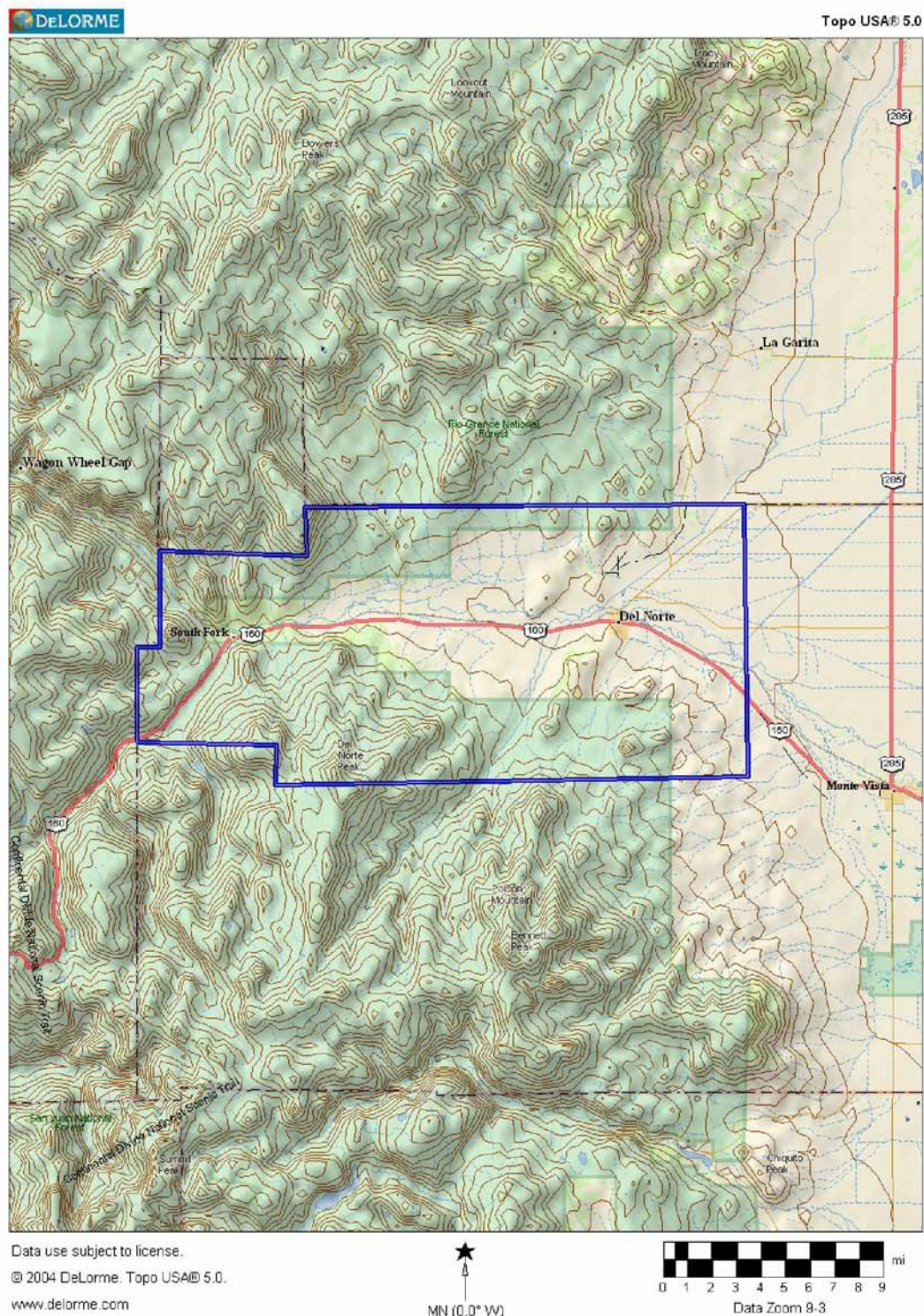
Lower elevations are dominated by grass, chico, pinyon pine and cottonwood bosques along the river. The valley floor also has some center pivot irrigated land where potatoes, grains and hay are raised. Higher elevations transition to ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir/aspen montane and Engelmann spruce forests. Ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir and spruce forests are generally dense enough to sustain a substantial crown fire resulting in a high fire risk.

The east side of Del Norte FPD is characterized by rural subdivisions with parcels ranging from two to thirty five acres. Chico and grass are the dominant fuel types and will carry moderate intensity, fast moving wildfires on a dry windy day.

Public lands in the form of Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Land Board, and US Forest Service are present in the Del Norte FPD. This means that wildfire hazard mitigation opportunities and responsibilities are spread among private and public entities.



# Del Norte FPD Vicinity Map



US Hwy 160 and Colorado State Highways 112 and 149 provide primary paved access with numerous high quality County gravel roads providing access to the various neighborhoods. Road quality within subdivisions varies dramatically.

DNFPD has two fire stations, one in Del Norte and the other in South Fork. Mutual aid from other Fire Districts such as Monte Vista, Center Creede, Alamosa, and several Conejos county FPDs take considerable time to arrive on scene.

The initial CWPP Core Team meeting was held on February 5, 2009. Participants included members of the Del Norte FPD Fire Protection District, Rio Grande County Office of Emergency Management, Colorado State Forest Service, US Forest Service and Land Stewardship Associates.

The Core Team reviewed the overall wildland fire protection situation in the protection district and discussed issues, concerns and opportunities. WUI boundaries were delineated on a map. Station wildland resource inventories were discussed.

Table 1 Wildland Urban Interface Communities Del Norte FPD

WUI Name	Acres
Auga Ramon	11,903
Old Woman Creek	1,975
Pinos Creek	3,680
Plaza	1,971
Pinon Hill	5,828
San Francisco	12,799
South Fork	16,994
Valley Bottom	2,625
Total Acres	57,775

### III. COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The overall risk within Del Norte FPD from wildland fire varies from extreme to low depending upon a wide variety of factors. This section will discuss the facets considered that led to the overall ratings.

#### Fuel Hazards

Dense ponderosa pine and Douglas fir stands cover mountainous portions of the planning area while grass and shrub types are found at lower elevations. WUI areas cover the full spectrum of fuel hazards.

Foothills grass and shrub fuel loading are highly variable ranging from good strong fuel models 1 & 2 and some 6. Fires in the denser grass and shrub types can be very difficult to control on the typical dry, windy afternoon common in the region. See Appendix B for a full discussion of Fuel Models

Fuel models associated with the mountainous WUIs include 1, 2, 6, 8, 9 and a blend of 1/2 and 2/6. All stands adjacent to structures with crown densities greater than forty percent are problematic. Continuous surface and crown fuel arrangement, both horizontally and vertically, render this area susceptible to torching, crown fire, and ignition by embers, even under moderate weather conditions.

The following maps showing DNFPD WUIs, Wildfire Hazards and Fuel Models indicate the majority of the WUIs have a fuel hazard assessment of moderate to high. Local topography and poor vehicle access further aggravates fire behavior and control.

WUI Map 11x17

See SLV GIS/GPS website for these maps.

Fire Hazard Map 11x17

See SLV GIS/GPS website for these maps.

Fuel Model Map 11x17

See SLV GIS/GPS website for these maps.

## Risk of Ignition and Wildfire Occurrence

Wildland fires have burned throughout the fire protection district ever since lightning and dry biomass have been present on the landscape. An astute observer will note the many old fire scars in forested areas. Charred stumps, snags and large aspen stands date back to the late 1800s when drought combined with lightning to create a vegetative mosaic we enjoy today. Wildfires were less prevalent during the 1900s due in part to a moister climate and to rapid initial attack of small fires. The recent increase in wildfire numbers and intensity is attributable to a prolonged drought and forest stands that are much denser and hence; more prone to hot crown fires.

The Million Fire of 2002 burned over 11,000 acres in Rio Grande County and destroyed 33% of the structures in Willow Park subdivision. The Sand Dunes Fire of 2000 burned over 8,500 acres in one burning period and destroyed one structure in Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve.

The Malo Vega Fire of 2006 is a harsh reminder of what is in store for much of the forested area in the region. Over the course of just a few days it burned over 13,000 acres. Fortunately no structures were in its path. Forbes Wagon Creek Ranches and Paradise Acres were evacuated during the peak of the fires spread. Highway 160 was also closed for several days due to smoke and fire operations.

Low fuel moistures and relative humidity are common in the area, as are periods of high winds. When dry, windy conditions coincide, the stage is set for large, troublesome wildfires. Human population is increasing in the area. Fires originating in or near communities are the most immediate concern, but fires starting well beyond the boundaries of the WUI area can have profound effects upon the communities if they burn with typical rates of spread and intensity. Rapid rates of spread and long distance spotting (1/4 to 1 mile) are the norms for fires in the vicinity.

The most common wildland fire hazard on the valley floor is vegetation along irrigation ditches. Traditionally land owners clean the irrigation ditches annually by burning the accumulated weeds and grass from the previous year in the spring before the next irrigation season. Typically the area experiences strong westerly winds in the spring and often the ditch-cleaning fires escape and ignite adjacent fuels and sometimes nearby structures. Consequently spring ditch burning season is one of the most hazardous for escaped wildfires.

Areas classified as high to moderate fuel loading are the most worrisome. Table 2 provides fire behavior predictions for several fuel models under representative weather conditions.

Table 2: Del Norte FPD WUI Fire Behavior Predictions

FUEL MODEL	RATE of SPREAD (ft/hr)	FLAME LENGTH (Feet)	SIZE @ 1 HOUR (Acres)	PERIMETER @ 1 HR. (Miles)	SPOTTING DISTANCE (Miles)
101	1,069	2	11	0.51	0.06
1	8,910	5	624	4	0.6
2	1,947	6	30	1.74	0.6
6	2,818	7	62	1.29	0.6
8	172	1	0.2	0.08	0.6
9	1,254	4	10	0.54	0.6
1/2	6,408	8	322	2.9	0.5
2/6	3,360	8	89	1.5	0.5

*Note: Flame lengths shaded in orange exceed the 4 foot hand crew control threshold. Crown fires are likely when canopy closure exceeds 40%.*

In fuel model 1, grass is the primary fire carrier. Fuel model 2 is composed of a mix of grass and shrub wherein the shrubs add fuel bed depth and fire intensity. Young dense stands of conifers are usually classified as fuel model 6 when the crowns will be the primary carrier of fire. Tall, dense sagebrush is also fuel model 6. Short needled stands of spruce and fir are fuel model 8. Taller closed canopy ponderosa pine stands usually are classified as fuel model 9 due to the long needled litter layer that covers the ground. The combination of fuel models 1/2 and 2/6 best represents the fire characteristics manifested by fires in the vegetative mosaics found in the grass/shrub and the shrub/pinyon transition zones.

### Community Values at Risk

*Values* – There are eight communities, “neighborhoods”, or subdivisions with concentrated home sites in the Del Norte FPD WUI areas. Table 3 gives a summary of the neighborhood wildfire hazard evaluations. Many have heavy fuels nearby and around them. Others have rather light fuels in their vicinity.



Less than a third of the structures have recognizable defensible space. Many have flammable material near by, on the porch or under decks, increasing their vulnerability. Composition and wooden roofs tend to hold pine needles and forest debris allowing accumulations that also increase vulnerability to fire brands. Most of the structures are vulnerable to wildfire damage occurring from firebrand ignition and/or radiation ignition due to the heavy forest fuels within the area. The details of neighborhood hazard evaluations are contained in Appendix G: Subdivision Hazard Evaluation Form.

Table 3: Neighborhood Wildfire Hazard

Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
Mill Creek	San Francisco Creek	Alamo & Tewksberry	Pinion Hill Ranches
Log Haven	Pronghorn Ranch	Aqua Ramon	
San Francisco Ranchos	Embargo Creek	Castle Rock	
Rio Vista	Indian Hills/Trails	Elk Creek Ranch	
Ponderosas	Willow Park	Hidden Valley	
Old woman Creek	Alpine village		
Plaza	Bear Creek		
Valley Bottom	Alder Creek Meadows		
	Beaver Mtn. Estate		

*Access* – The primary and secondary road access within the DNFPD area is good. Road access within the various neighborhoods is much less predictable. Not all developments have more than one way into or out of the WUI, while others have two means of departure but one is so substandard that normal passenger vehicles would not be able to use it. Roads within subdivision areas and driveways are often narrow and steep. Turnarounds are marginal or lacking. Road signs and home / cabin addresses are spotty at best. There are many dead end roads that are very hazardous during wildfire operations and evacuations. The roads in Pinon Hill Ranches are especially problematic because they are narrow and rough.

*Risk* – Because survivable space is lacking around many home sites and natural fuel continuity and steep slopes within some of the

neighborhoods, it would be very difficult to protect some home sites from wildfire during periods of high to extreme fire danger.

*Evacuation* – Evacuation planning is needed to minimize fire emergency confusion and risk to residents who might be asked to evacuate in the event of an emergency. Appendix D provides location of evacuation routes and other fire control features including safety zones, and guidelines for developing an evacuation plan.

In many cases sheltering in place may be a better option than attempting to notify and evacuate the occupants of sparsely developed, large subdivisions like Pinon Hill Ranches

Sheltering in place is the norm in Australia where fire spread rates compromise evacuation procedures. Australians converted from evacuations to sheltering in place because they were not able to safely notify and remove residents from the large areas covered by wildfire. Once a family realizes their best option for surviving a wildfire is staying home they look at their property differently. To shelter in place one must have a good safety zone around their home and a very fire resistant structure. Fire shutters and cisterns are the norm. Once the flaming front passes the occupants can go outside and take action on any smoldering embers near the structure.

Sheltering in place is an alternative to evacuation that needs to be considered for areas where notification of occupants is time consuming and fire spread rates are high.



*Steep, rough roads combined with heavy fuel with steep slopes, makes evacuation notification and evacuation very hazardous.*

## Local Preparedness and Protection Capability

Del Norte FPD has two fire stations as follows: (1) Del Norte, (1) South fork. Del Norte FPD has \_\_\_\_\_ volunteer firefighters. Colorado State Forest Service has the following Del Norte FPD equipment listed as available for wildfire suppression assignments:

### Del Norte

ITEM	#
Total Volunteers	28
Brush Truck Type VI	2
Type IV CSFS	1
Water Tender Type II (3,000 gal.)	2
Engine Type 1	1
Aerial Platform	1
TurboDraft	2
800 mhz Digital radios	28

### South Fork

ITEM	#
Total Volunteers	15
Brush Truck Type VI	3
Water Tender Type II (3,000 gal.)	2
Engine Type III CSFS	1
Engine type I	1

*Source: CSFS CERF 5/24/06*

*Water Supply:* The Rio Grande River, Beaver, Pinus & San Francisco Creeks are all reliable sources of water year round. During dry spells other creeks in the area may have reduced flows to the point that they are difficult to draft out of. There are numerous springs, ponds, ditches and few lakes throughout the area. Reaching them to draught water can be problematic with large fire apparatus. DNFPD has two Turbo Draft inductors that facilitate filling tankers wherever sufficient water can be found.

Fire wells are another option for providing water for wildfire suppression. They are normally wells associated with agricultural activities. There are

several in the South Fork area that provide reliable water, even when the river and creeks are frozen in the winter.

#### IV. COMMUNITY MITIGATION PLAN

The Core Team developed the following mitigation plan based on their knowledge of the wildland fire issues in Del Norte FPD. The strategy basically addresses survivable space needs with some fuel treatments on public lands.

Essential to the success of the plan is the involvement of the private landowners. Implicit in the plan is "ownership of the fire problem" by private landowners. While Del Norte FPD and CSFS have worked hard to promote survivable space and land management, private landowners must accept responsibility for completing work on their own lands. Incorporated in the private land treatments is the task of working with individual landowners to improve survivable space in the ignition zone around the buildings.

##### Commendations:

Del Norte FPD has several "Turbo Draft" inductors that are capable of using water from rivers, reeks, ponds and ditches. Turbo Drafts allow them to use water closer to the structure or wildland fire they are working on. This eliminates the need for long shuttles with tenders and can, at times provide virtually unlimited water right at the fire scene. Forbes Wagon Creek Ranches (FWCR) has a CWPP in place and is actively working to reduce wildland fire hazards within the development. A copy of the FWCR CWPP can be found in appendix M.

The fire board also encouraged Rio Grande County commissioners to recently include fire hazard mitigation measures in the Rio Grande County Land Use Development Code; the first such codes in the San Luis Valley.

The residents of Masonic Park had a Wildfire Hazard Assessment & Mitigation Plan developed in 2002 that guides their hazard reduction efforts. It is in Appendix L.

## Fuel Hazard Reduction

One of the best ways to reduce structure loss in the wildland urban interface is to avoid placing structures in close proximity to flammable vegetation. However, it is unlikely that development in the WUI will decline as long as property owners have the right to live in forested areas.

The other option is to reduce the intensity of wildfires that will burn through areas surrounding structures. Much of this responsibility falls on the homeowner, developer and future purchasers. When isolated developed parcels are scattered across forested lands the question becomes how culpable are State and County governments for developments placed in naturally hazardous vegetation. In the past, private land owners have expected someone else to do most of the fire hazard reduction on lands immediately adjacent to subdivisions. This convenient transfer of responsibility to someone else saved developers and individual homeowners money and allowed them to have a more "*natural setting*" around their home. When the inevitable fire burns across the landscape it does not discriminate between developed and undeveloped land. Crown and spot fires have a way of neutralizing well intended, limited scale, fuel reduction projects. A well tended forest a half mile from a structure may reduce the intensity of a fast moving wildfire but it will not significantly improve survivability of structures in developments that have not completed their own fire hazard reduction work.

A long overdue movement is in the wind. WUI fires are very expensive and dangerous. Wildland fire agencies are starting to expect folks to tend to their structures survivability. Placing firefighters in the path of a fast moving, high intensity fire to save structures is not an acceptable practice today.

Reducing flammability around all structures is the key to preventing structure loss. The Colorado State Forest Service and FireWise program have excellent brochures on all facets of structure fire hazard mitigation.

One of the most cost effective tools land managers have to treat large expanses of wildland is prescribed burning. Prescribed fire is an appropriate tool to reduce fire hazard and at the same time promotes long term vegetative health. This plan recognizes the value of prescribed burning and supports its use in reducing landscape level wildfire hazards in the county.

Appendix A: Maps: contains maps of fuel treatment for the various DNFPD WUIs. They depict locations of the suggested treatment areas listed in Table 4. Priorities for reducing fuel hazards were based on the following criteria:

*Priority 1:* Protection of structures; survivable space around structures and areas adjacent to communities.

*Priority 2:* Thin or mowing fuels along roads for evacuation and firefighter ingress and egress.

*Priority 3:* Prescribe burn all ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir areas within and adjacent to WUIs on public lands.

Table 4: Fuel Treatments Planned on Public Lands Within WUIs in DNFPD

WUI AREA	COMPLETED (Acres)	PLANNED (Acres)	PLANNED COSTS (\$)	PRIORITY
Auga Ramon	1,716			-
Pinon Hill	1,734			-
South Fork	716	511	306,600	1
Totals	4,166	511	306,600	

*\*Costs are based on conifer fuel treatment is based on \$600/acre.*

Table 4a: Fuel Treatments Planned on Public Lands Adjacent to WUIs in DNFPD

WUI AREA	COMPLETED (Acres)	PLANNED (Acres)	PLANNED COSTS (\$)	PRIORITY
Auga Ramon	662			-
Old Woman Creek		1,136	681,600	2
Pinos Creek	943			-
Pinon Hill	1,267			-
South Fork	629	3,145	1,887,000	1
Totals	3,501	4,281	2,568,600	

*\*Costs are based on conifer fuel treatment is based on \$600/acre.*

To date public agencies have spent close to two and a half million dollars within the WUI areas to reduce wildfire hazards and another two million in close proximity to the WUI areas.

Future plans call for 2,500 acres of prescribed burning and 2,342 acres of hand or mechanical hazard reduction.

The figures above do not include the *critical* need for hazard reduction around individual structures.

Pinon Hill Ranches has substantial dead down woody fuels immediately adjacent to the roads. This material is the debris associated with road construction. It compromises the roads effectiveness as an evacuation route and also as a fire control feature. Apparently there was some recognition of the problem and people were allowed to remove firewood from this debris. There is still slash to remove to make the roadways safer during wildfires.



*This is just one example flammable of road construction debris Pinon Hill Ranches subdivision.*

## Wildfire Prevention and Fire Loss Mitigation

Prevention strategies focus on education, burning restrictions and closure orders. There is a need to improve the process of initiating and coordinating fire restrictions. The best and most favored approach is to develop uniform actions based on the National Fire Danger Rating System adjective ratings. In depth discussions about thresholds for various restrictions can occur during the winter and be automatically triggered when fire hazard warrants, without a flurry of last minute phone calls. Prearranged actions take a lot of the hassle out of the implementation of fire restrictions and facilitate communications among cooperators.

## Ditch Burning Coordination

Ditch burning is responsible for several fires each spring. Ditches are burned during relatively calm morning hours. Latent embers are then rekindled when the inevitable afternoon winds pickup. Hay piles, power poles, structures and vehicles have all been victims of ill timed agricultural burning.

There is a need to develop a fair and simple process of coordinating open burning, particularly spring ditch burning. The best and most favored approach is for there to be a County policy that requires people who want to do open burning to call the fire department before igniting a burning project and after controlled burning (particularly ditch burning) is complete. This action would reduce false alarms and also give the property owners daily weather information such as high wind predictions, Red Flag Warnings, etc. that might warrant burn postponement.

## Survivable Space

Survivable space is the key to structure survival. Del Norte FPD along with CSFS will initiate an on going program to encourage individual landowners to redeem their responsibility while living in wildfire prone areas. This includes advocating FireWise home construction.



## Home Ignition Zone



*A home with its immediate surroundings (about 100-150 feet from the structure) is the home ignition zone.*

Recent research into the cause for loss of homes during wildfires indicates that home ignitability, rather than wildland fuels, is the principal cause of home losses during wildland/urban interface fires. Key items are flammable roofing materials (e.g. cedar shingles) and the presence of burnable vegetation (e.g. ornamental trees, shrubs, wood piles, and pine needle accumulation) immediately adjacent to homes (Cohen, 1999).

The home ignition zone includes a home and its immediate surroundings within 100 to 150 feet of the structure. Fuel conditions within this zone, to a large degree, will determine whether a home will survive a wildfire. High intensity fire behavior beyond the home ignition zone does not transfer enough energy directly from its flames to ignite a wooden structure. The fuels surrounding a home within the home ignition zone principally determine the potential for directly igniting the home. Firebrands lofted from extreme wildfires must directly ignite on a structure to be an effective ignition source. If firebrand ignitions occur in the fuels surrounding a home, then those fuels determine the home's ignition potential. Thus, regardless from how far firebrands travel a home's exterior materials and design principally and fuels in the home ignition zone determine its ignition potential from firebrands.

The primary and ultimate responsibility for home wildfire protection lies with private homeowners, not public land management agencies (or taxpayers). It is critical that special attention be given to removing fuels in the home ignition zone as well as preparing a defensible space around

structures to improve their chances of surviving a wildfire. This includes insuring that there are no combustible materials like concentrations of pine needles, dry grass, hay or straw, firewood, deck furniture, open windows, open vents, household trash, flammable materials such as gasoline, diesel or paint thinners, paper boxes, and fabrics near the structure or in the home ignition zone for fire brands to land on. In the past few years research has found that a significant number of homes destroyed in wildfires burned as the result of the presence of combustible materials within the home improvement zone. Some homes burned as long as 8 hours after the fire front passed.

## Communications

Hand held radios are an important communications tool during wildland fire control activities. Firefighters are often scattered across the fire area and not necessarily in close proximity to their trucks. Communication between the lookout and personnel on the fireline is critical. DNFPD recently converted to digital radios as directed by the FCC. They have discovered many blind spots within the Fire Protection District, including inside the fire stations. There is a technical fix for this problem but it is expensive. It requires the purchase of a mobile repeater system to be installed on one of the fire trucks.

## County Wildfire Standards for Subdivisions

Rio Grande County currently requires a wildfire hazard mitigation plan for new subdivisions. It does not describe the contents of the plan or suggest any standards for mitigation. Private land development in fire prone areas should not be permitted without wildfire hazard reduction as part of the improvement. Land development without attendant fire hazard reduction exacerbates the fire hazard problem and perpetuates the expenditure of public funds to protect structures in a wildfire situation.

Many of the basic wildfire hazard issues such as poor access i.e.; one way ingress and egress, steep/narrow road grades, cul-de-sac diameter, vegetative flammability, building construction, roofing materials and survivable space requirements are best addressed at the time a subdivision is being designed and approved.

The County can also take a significant step in reducing structure losses from wildfire by stipulating the following improvements in the building permit process:

- At least two ways into and out of the subdivision

- Adequate driveways with turn-arounds suitable for use by fire fighting equipment
- Street signs constructed of non-flammable materials
- Addresses that are posted at the intersection of the main road and the driveway
- Propane tanks that are at least 75 feet from structures
- Fire resistant siding and roofing materials
- Chimneys and stove pipes will have caps and spark arrestors

These few requirements will have substantial impacts on survivable space and first responder efficiency.

#### Strategic Recommendations:

Del Norte FPD relies on volunteers to provide all the fire services for a large area. Adding additional work such as FireWise consultations and working with County Commissioners to improve planning, zoning, road and bridge standards will increase the workload for this dedicated but over-committed group.

We recommend funding a part time CWPP project coordinator. This staff would work throughout Del Norte FPD with the Office of Emergency Management to provide onsite FireWise consultations to WUI residents and develop grant proposals for fuel treatments on private land. Since all twelve FPDs in the San Luis Valley have recently completed CWPPs that included the need for part time CWPP project coordinators, there may be an opportunity for fire.

#### State Tax Incentives for Wildfire Hazard Mitigation:

House Bill 1110 created a five year program from 2009 to 2014 that allows landowners to deduct the actual costs of their wildfire mitigation, up to \$2,500 from their state income tax. The program allows each landowner to get credit for fifty percent of the cost of wildfire mitigation up to a total of \$2,500. To get the full credit the total mitigation costs must be \$5,000 or greater. The work must be done in accord with an existing Community Wildfire Protection Plan to qualify.

Colorado State forest Service will be administering the program and verifying the actual work completed. This is a good incentive for individual landowners to improve survivable space around their structures. They can get their personal labor recognized at decent hourly rates.

Table 5: Implementation Items, Priority & Cost

MITIGATION ACTION	PRIORITY	ESTIMATED COST (\$)
Provide FireWise information to all property owners with structures on their land and new property owners and applicants for building permits	1	1,000/ yr
Work with the County Commissioners to develop a County policy for spring ditch burning coordination. This includes publicizing the policy.	2	2,000
Conduct one FireWise workshop for WUI residents.	3	800/yr
Provide interested parties with FireWise on site consultations. (@ \$150 each) estimate 50 consults over next 5 years.	4	7,500
Install "No Outlet" signs at the beginning of all dead end roads.	5	60,000
Purchase two digital radio repeaters for the Chief's vehicles.		200,000
Reduce ground fuel loading and crown fire potential on State and Federal lands in and adjacent to WUIs	6	2,893,200
Total		\$3,164,500

*NOTE: The first 4 priorities will best be accomplished via a part time CWPP coordinator.*

## V. IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

Implementation:

Table 6: Action Plan for Completing the CC CWPP; identifies the responsibilities and tasks necessary to accomplish the job at hand. The priorities and responsibilities have been negotiated and agreed to by Core Team and various named individuals.

The Core Team will

- Seek funds for the purpose of hiring and possibly cost- sharing a coordinator (implementation manager) who, among other things, would do the following:
  - Provide the leadership needed to implement this plan.
  - Establish a wildfire prevention attitude in the community.

*Note: In other Counties the coordinator is one of the local fireman who knows the county, is experienced and can work part time; a retired fire manager from a federal or state agency who wants to work part time; or an available school teacher who is trained and familiar with fire protection and suppression policies and procedures.*

*Since all twelve FPDs in the San Luis Valley have recently completed CWPPs that included the need for part time CWPP project coordinators, there may be an opportunity for fire protection districts to jointly fund and share a position for this purpose.*

The CWPP Coordinators roles will be to:

- Strengthen public understanding, acceptance and participation in CWPP operations and improvement projects.
- Ensure follow-up to commitments by the community or within the community and on behalf of the Center FPD goals.
- Facilitate Core Team operations. This group will act as an advisory board to represent the community as a whole. This entity would do the following:
  - Set priorities, develop and administer fund raising activities, interact with and coordinate with County, coordinate with State and Federal agencies on behalf of the community as a whole, and ensure follow up on all operations and/or activities.

Table 6: Action Plan for Completing the Del Norte FPD CWPP

MITIGATION ACTION	TARGET DATE	ASSIGNED TO	COMPLETED ü
Provide FireWise information to all property owners with structures on their land and new property owners and applicants for building permits	July 15, 2009	CWPP Coordinator & Rio Grande County Planning & Zoning Department	
Work with the County Commissioners to develop a County policy for spring ditch burning coordination. This includes publicizing the policy.	August 1, 2009	Fire Chiefs	
Conduct one FireWise workshop for WUI residents.	September 15, 2009	CWPP Coordinator	
Provide interested parties with FireWise on site consultations. (@ \$150 each) estimate 50 consults over next 5 years.	Ongoing	CWPP Coordinator	
Install "No Outlet" signs at the beginning of all dead end roads.	May 2010	POAs	
Purchase two digital radio repeaters for the Chief's vehicles.	December 2009	DNFPD Board	
Reduce ground fuel loading and crown fire potential on State and Federal lands in and adjacent to WUIs	November 2014	CSFS & USFS	

## Monitoring:

Monitoring progress is a crucial part of seeing any plan through to completion. Given the values at risk it will be important to assess accomplishments on an annual basis. We expect more homes to become survivable. The Core Team should revisit the CWPP and associated accomplishments every two years and make adjustments to the plan as needed.

## Appendices

Appendix A: Maps

Appendix B: Fuel Model Descriptions

Appendix C: Fuel Hazard Reduction Guidelines

Appendix D: Evacuation Planning Guidelines

Appendix E: FireWise – A Homeowners Guide to Wildfire Retrofit

Appendix F: Fuelbreak Guidelines for Forested Subdivisions & Communities

Appendix G: Road & Driveway Specifications for Emergency Access

Appendix H: Del Norte FPD Triage

Appendix I: Subdivision Hazard Evaluation Form

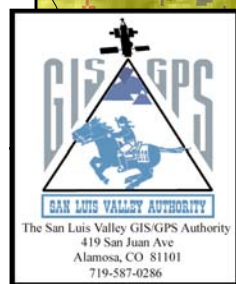
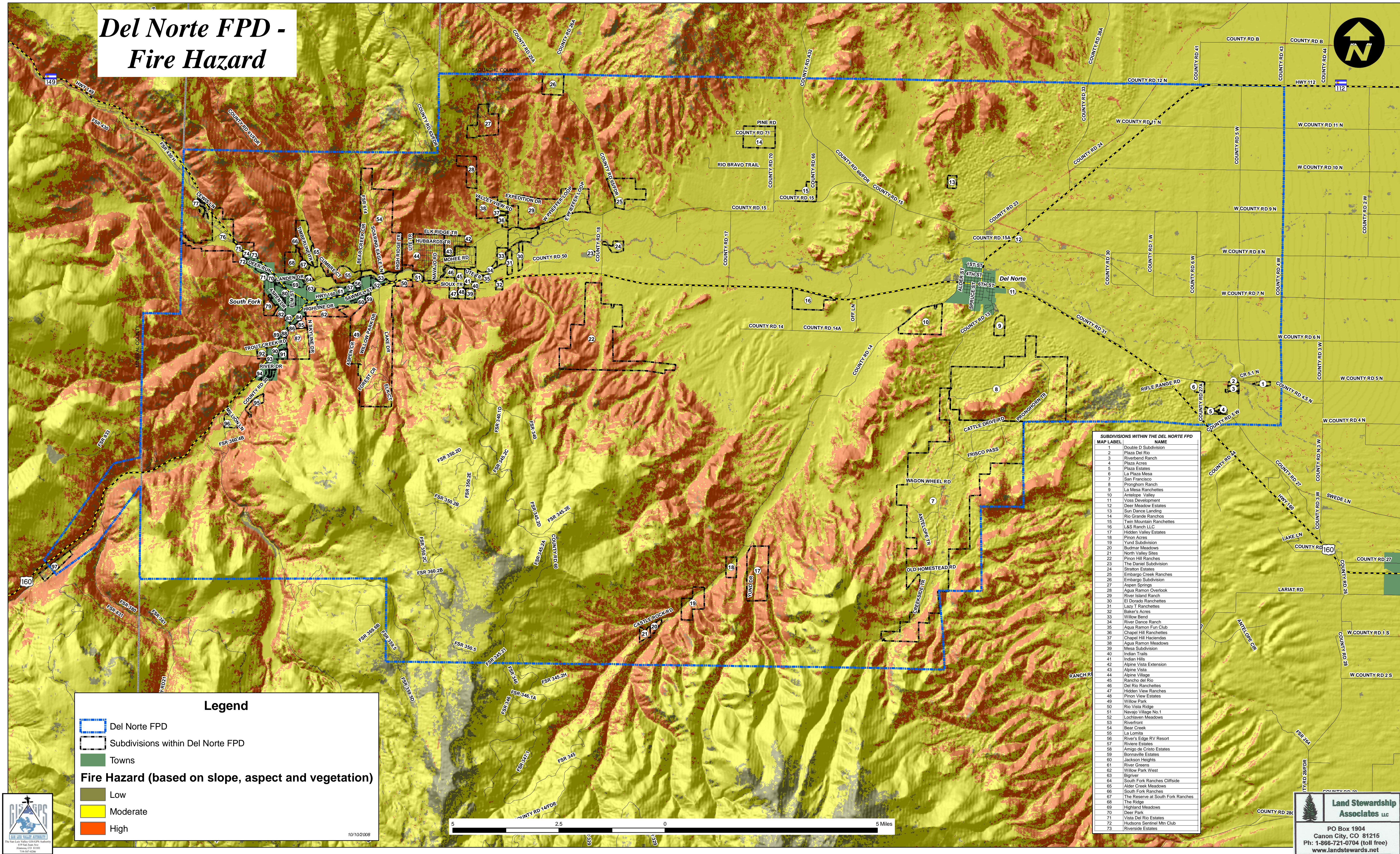
Appendix J: Definition of Terms

Appendix K: References and Publications

Appendix L: Masonic Park Wildfire Hazard Assessment & Mitigation Plan

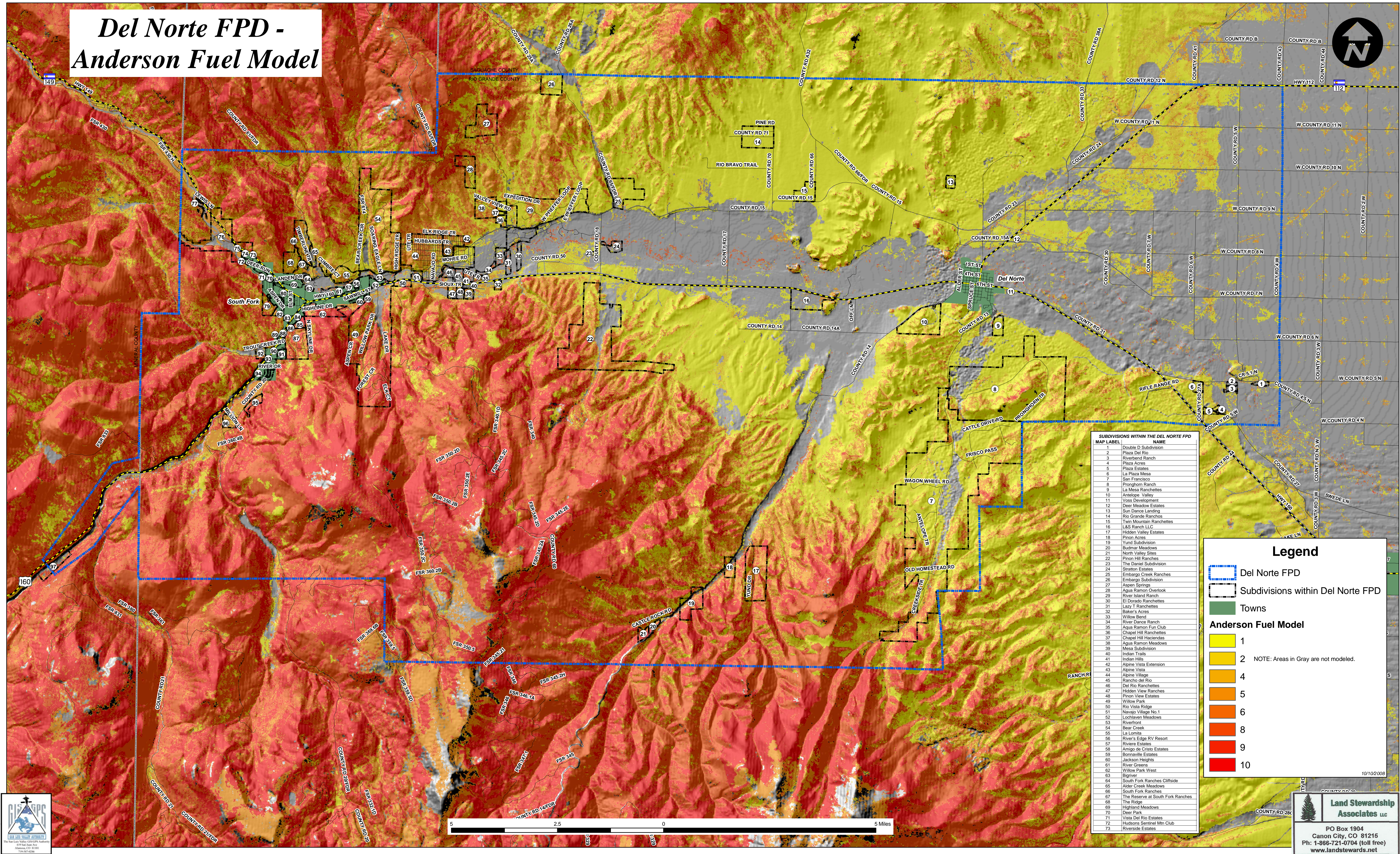


# Del Norte FPD - Fire Hazard





# Del Norte FPD - Anderson Fuel Model



SUBDIVISIONS WITHIN THE DEL NORTE FPD	
MAP LABEL	NAME
1	Double D Subdivision
2	Plaza Del Rio
3	Riverbend Ranch
4	Plaza Acres
5	Plaza Estates
6	La Plaza Mesa
7	San Francisco
8	Pronghorn Ranch
9	La Mesa Ranchettes
10	Antelope Valley
11	Voss Development
12	Deer Meadow Estates
13	Sun Dance Landing
14	Rio Grande Ranches
15	Twin Mountain Ranchettes
16	L&S Ranch LLC
17	Hidden Valley Estates
18	Pinon Acres
19	Yund Subdivision
20	Budmar Meadows
21	North Valley Sites
22	Pinon Hill Ranches
23	The Daniel Subdivision
24	Stratton Estates
25	Embargo Creek Ranches
26	Embargo Subdivision
27	Aspen Springs
28	Aqua Ramon Overlook
29	River Island Ranch
30	El Dorado Ranchettes
31	Lozy J. Ranchettes
32	Baker's Acres
33	Willow Bend
34	River Dance Ranch
35	Aqua Ramon Fun Club
36	Chapel Hill Ranchettes
37	Chapel Hill Haciendas
38	Aqua Ramon Meadows
39	Mesa Subdivision
40	Indian Trails
41	Indian Hills
42	Alpine Vista Extension
43	Alpine Vista
44	Alpine Village
45	Rancho del Rio
46	Del Rio Ranchettes
47	Hidden View Ranches
48	Pinon View Estates
49	Willow Park
50	Rio Vista Ridge
51	Navajo Village No.1
52	Lochaven Meadows
53	Riverfront
54	Bear Creek
55	La Lomita
56	River's Edge RV Resort
57	Riviere Estates
58	Amigo de Cristo Estates
59	Bonnville Estates
60	Jackson Heights
61	River Greens
62	Willow Park West
63	Bigview
64	South Fork Ranches Cliffside
65	Alder Creek Meadows
66	South Fork Ranches
67	The Reserve at South Fork Ranches
68	The Ridge
69	Highland Meadows
70	Deer Park
71	Vista Del Rio Estates
72	Hudsons Sentinel Mtn Club
73	Riverside Estates

**Legend**

Del Norte FPD

Subdivisions within Del Norte FPD

Towns

**Anderson Fuel Model**

1

2

4

5

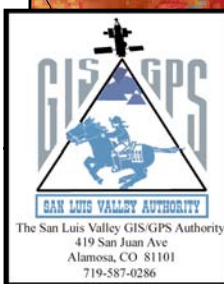
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8

9

10

NOTE: Areas in Gray are not modeled.

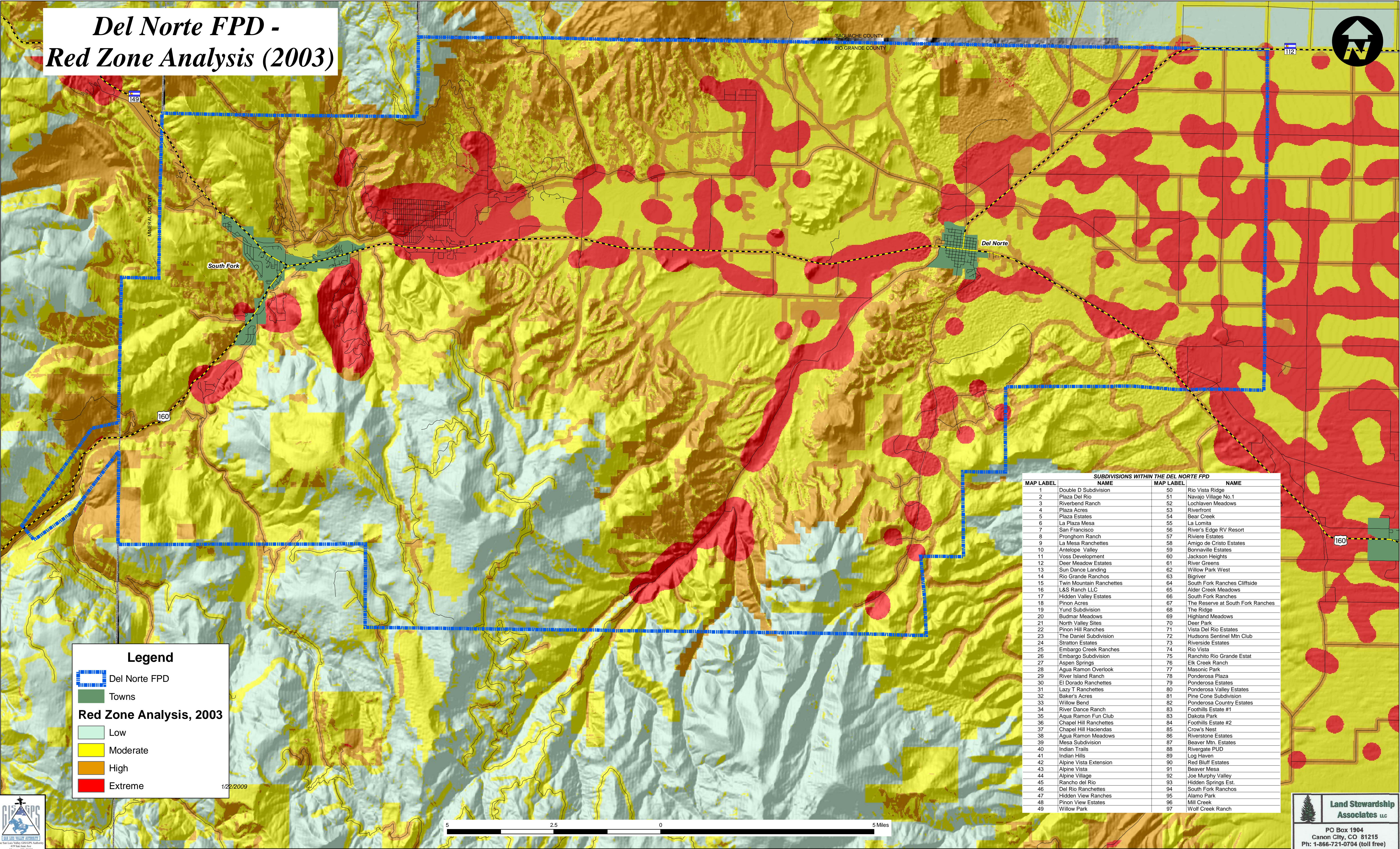


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# Del Norte FPD - Red Zone Analysis (2003)



**Legend**

Del Norte FPD

Towns

**Red Zone Analysis, 2003**

Low

Moderate

High

Extreme

1/22/2009

SUBDIVISIONS WITHIN THE DEL NORTE FPD			
MAP LABEL	NAME	MAP LABEL	NAME
1	Double D Subdivision	50	Rio Vista Ridge
2	Plaza Del Rio	51	Navajo Village No.1
3	Riverbend Ranch	52	Lochleven Meadows
4	Plaza Acres	53	Riverfront
5	Plaza Estates	54	Bear Creek
6	La Plaza Mesa	55	La Lomita
7	San Francisco	56	River's Edge RV Resort
8	Pronghorn Ranch	57	Riviere Estates
9	La Mesa Ranchettes	58	Amigo de Cristo Estates
10	Antelope Valley	59	Bonnville Estates
11	Voss Development	60	Jackson Heights
12	Deer Meadow Estates	61	River Greens
13	Sun Dance Landing	62	Willow Park West
14	Rio Grande Ranchos	63	Biggins
15	Twin Mountain Ranchettes	64	South Fork Ranches Cliffside
16	L&S Ranch LLC	65	Alder Creek Meadows
17	Hidden Valley Estates	66	South Fork Ranches
18	Pinon Acres	67	The Reserve at South Fork Ranches
19	Yund Subdivision	68	The Ridge
20	Budmar Meadows	69	Highland Meadows
21	North Valley Sites	70	Deer Park
22	Pinon Hill Ranches	71	Vista Del Rio Estates
23	The Daniel Subdivision	72	Hudsons Sentinel Mtn Club
24	Stratton Estates	73	Riverside Estates
25	Embargo Creek Ranches	74	Rio Vista
26	Embargo Subdivision	75	Ranchito Rio Grande Estat
27	Aspen Springs	76	Elk Creek Ranch
28	Agua Ramon Overlook	77	Masonic Park
29	River Island Ranch	78	Ponderosa Plaza
30	El Dorado Ranchettes	79	Ponderosa Estates
31	Lazy T Ranchettes	80	Ponderosa Valley Estates
32	Baker's Acres	81	Pine Cone Subdivision
33	Willow Bend	82	Ponderosa Country Estates
34	River Dance Ranch	83	Foothills Estate #1
35	Agua Ramon Fun Club	83	Dakota Park
36	Chapel Hill Ranchettes	84	Foothills Estate #2
37	Chapel Hill Haciendas	85	Crow's Nest
38	Agua Ramon Meadows	86	Riverstone Estates
39	Mesa Subdivision	87	Beaver Mtn. Estates
40	Indian Trails	88	Rivergate PUD
41	Indian Hills	89	Log Haven
42	Alpine Vista Extension	90	Red Bluff Estates
43	Alpine Vista	91	Beaver Mesa
44	Alpine Village	92	Joe Murphy Valley
45	Rancho del Rio	93	Hidden Springs Est.
46	Del Rio Ranchettes	94	South Fork Ranchos
47	Hidden View Ranches	95	Alamo Park
48	Pinon View Estates	96	Mill Creek
49	Willow Park	97	Wolf Creek Ranch



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# Agua Ramon WUI



SAGUACHE COUNTY

RIO GRANDE COUNTY

## Agua Ramon WUI

BLM	99.1
USFS	4,096.0
PVT	6,873.6
SLB	834.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,903.4</b>

**Legend**

Wildland Urban Interfaces

**Parcels**

Unimproved

Improved

**Public Lands**

BLM

COLORADO

NPS

USFS

USFWS

Del Norte FPD 2/21/2009

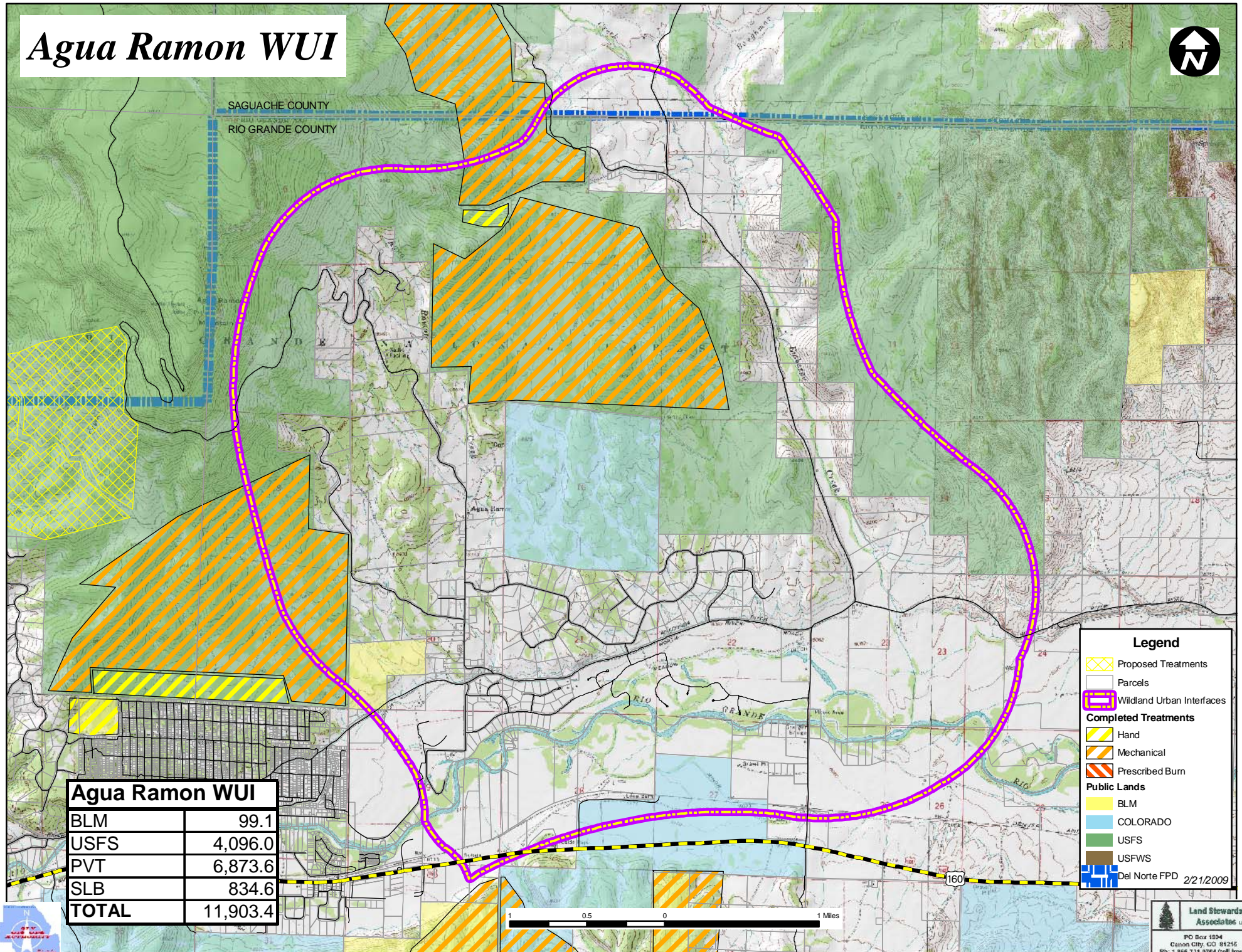
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# Agua Ramon WUI



SAGUACHE COUNTY  
RIO GRANDE COUNTY



## Legend

- Proposed Treatments
- Parcels
- Wildland Urban Interfaces
- Completed Treatments**
  - Hand
  - Mechanical
  - Prescribed Burn
- Public Lands**
  - BLM
  - COLORADO
  - USFS
  - USFWS
  - Del Norte FPD 2/21/2009

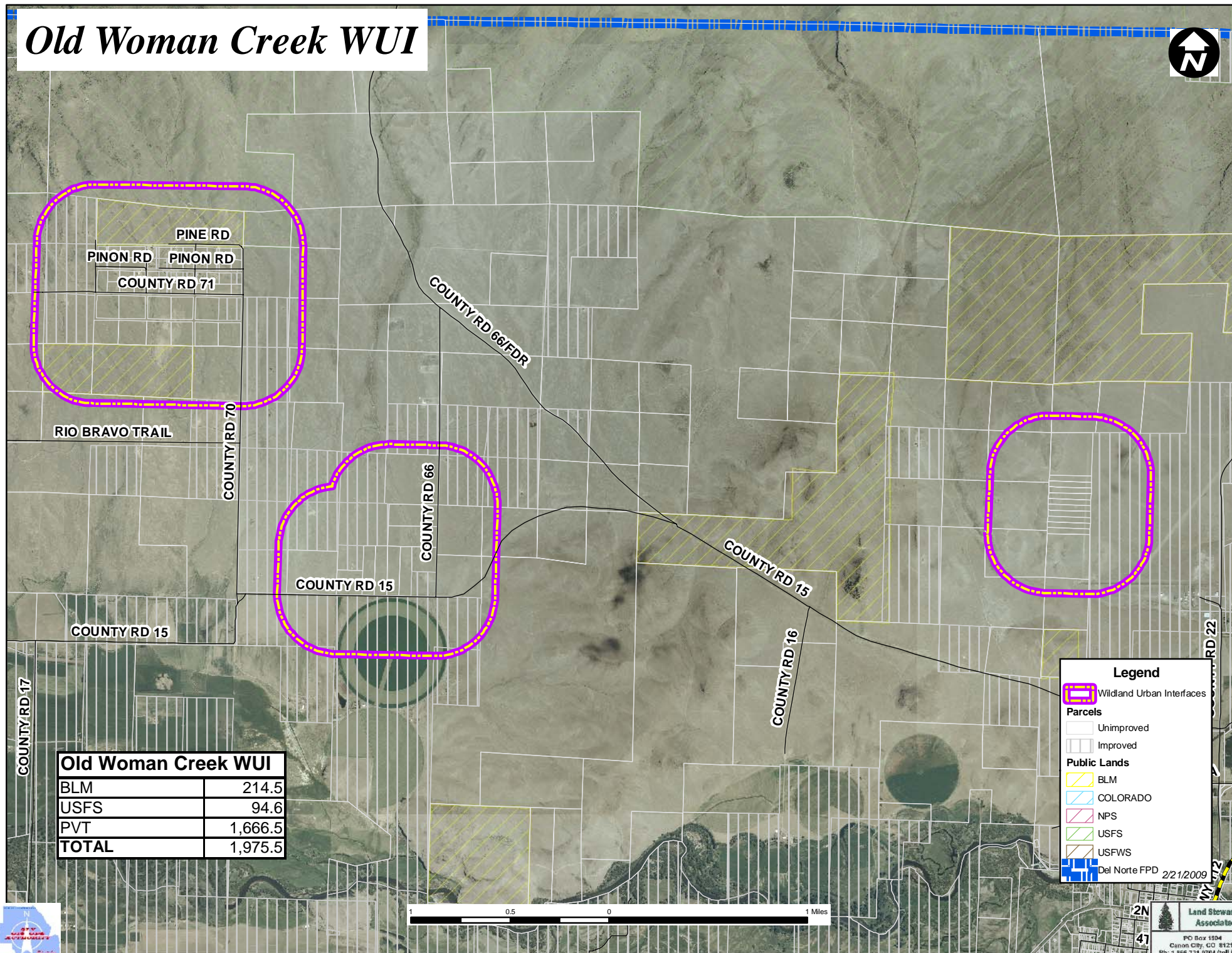
## Agua Ramon WUI

BLM	99.1
USFS	4,096.0
PVT	6,873.6
SLB	834.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,903.4</b>

1 0.5 0 1 Miles



# Old Woman Creek WUI



Old Woman Creek WUI	
BLM	214.5
USFS	94.6
PVT	1,666.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,975.5</b>

**Legend**

Wildland Urban Interfaces

**Parcels**

- Unimproved
- Improved

**Public Lands**

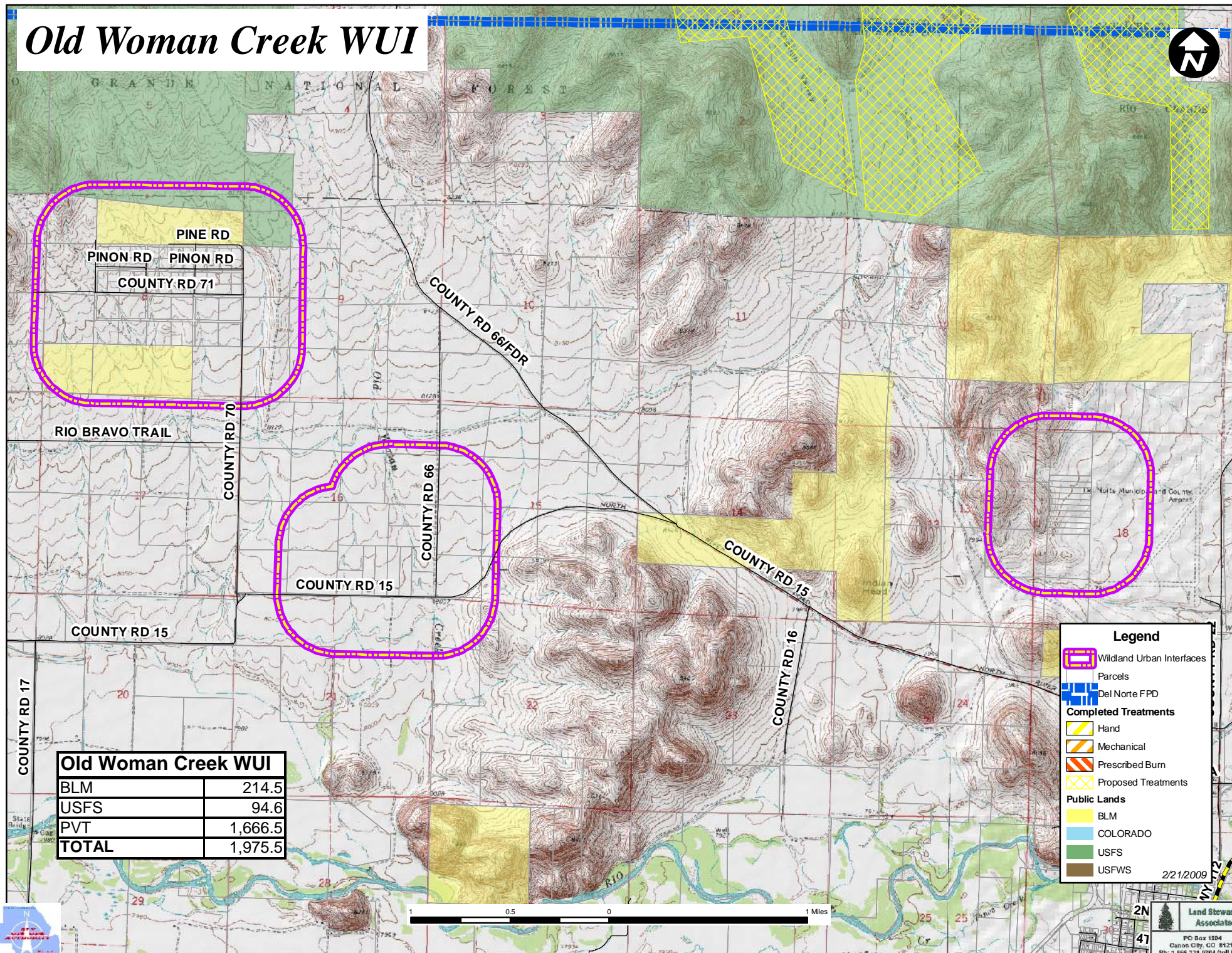
- BLM
- COLORADO
- NPS
- USFS
- USFWS

Del Norte FPD 2/21/2009





# Old Woman Creek WUI



Old Woman Creek WUI	
BLM	214.5
USFS	94.6
PVT	1,666.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,975.5</b>

**Legend**

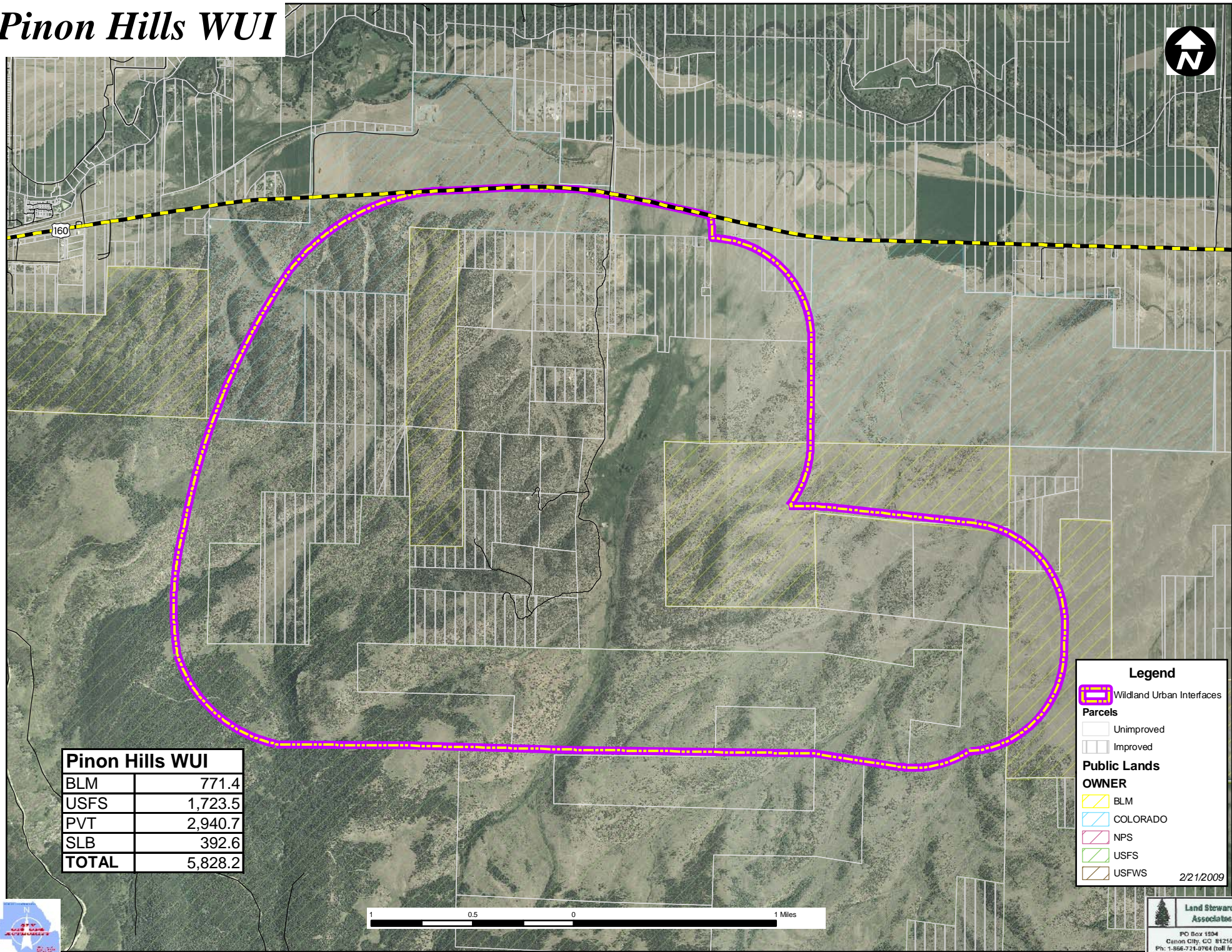
- Wildland Urban Interfaces
- Parcels
- Del Norte FPD
- Completed Treatments**
  - Hand
  - Mechanical
  - Prescribed Burn
  - Proposed Treatments
- Public Lands**
  - BLM
  - COLORADO
  - USFS
  - USFWS

2/21/2009



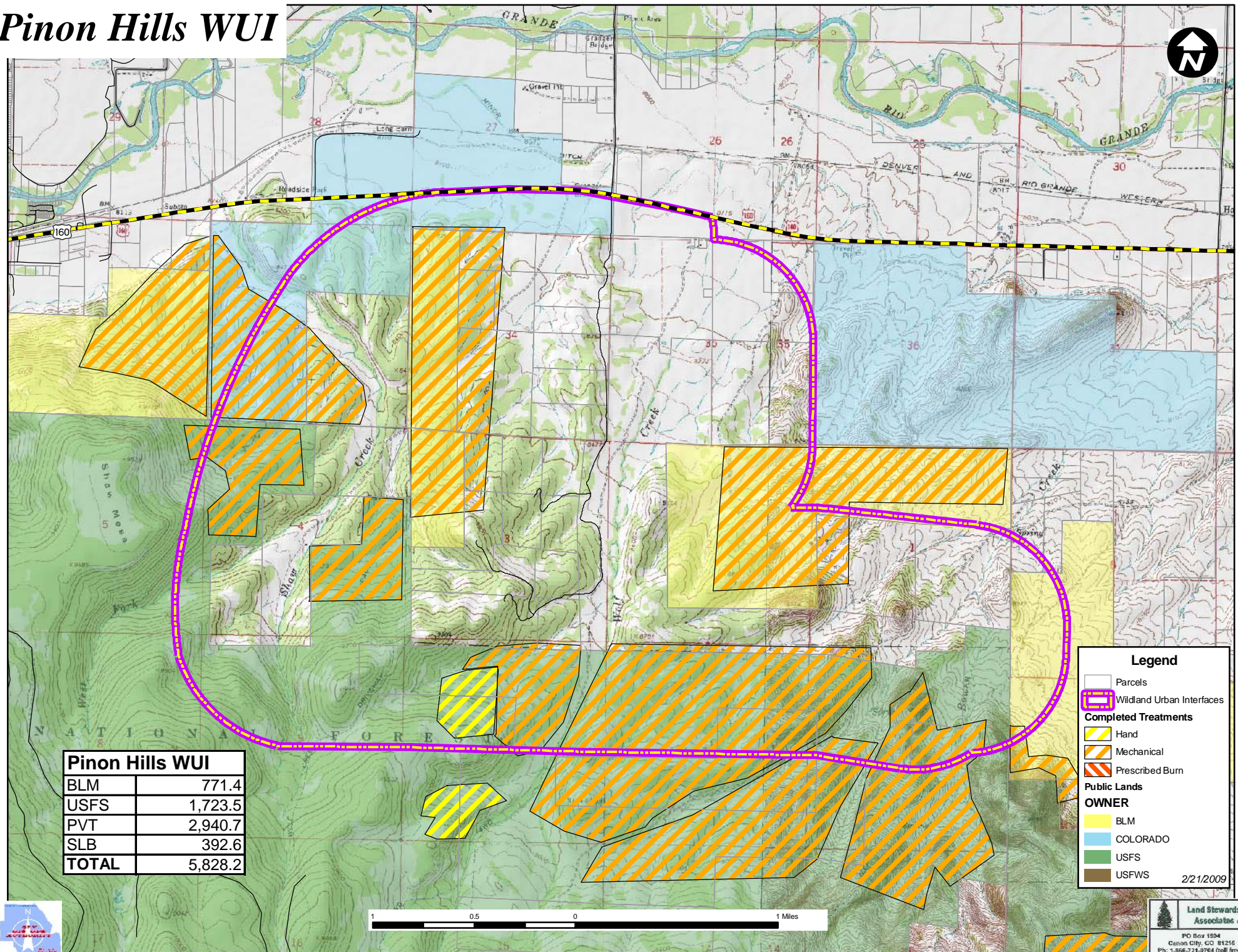


# Pinon Hills WUI





# Pinon Hills WUI

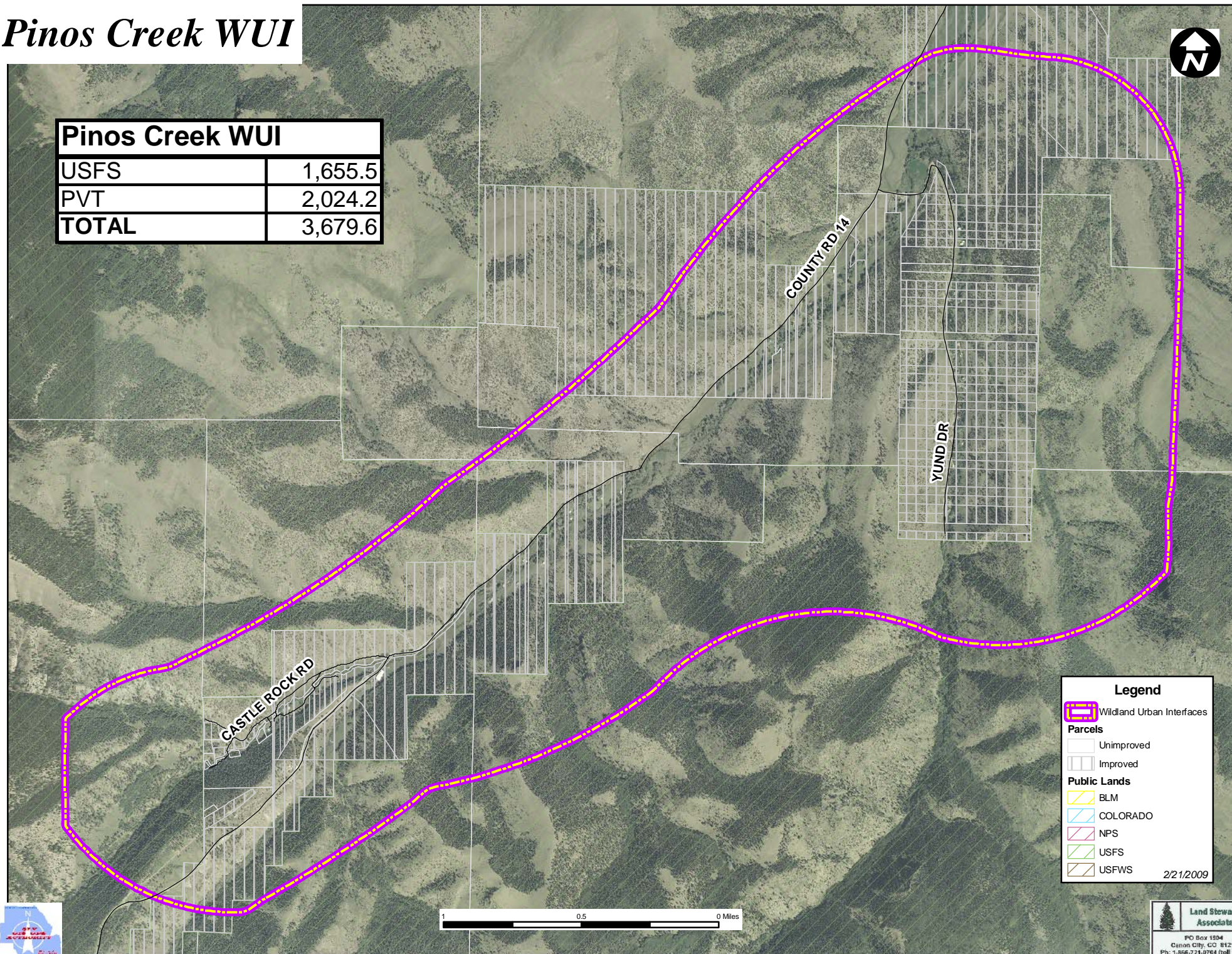




# Pinos Creek WUI

## Pinos Creek WUI

USFS	1,655.5
PVT	2,024.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,679.6</b>



**Legend**

Wildland Urban Interfaces

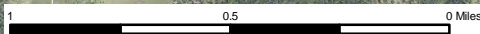
**Parcels**

- Unimproved
- Improved

**Public Lands**

- BLM
- COLORADO
- NPS
- USFS
- USFWS

2/21/2009

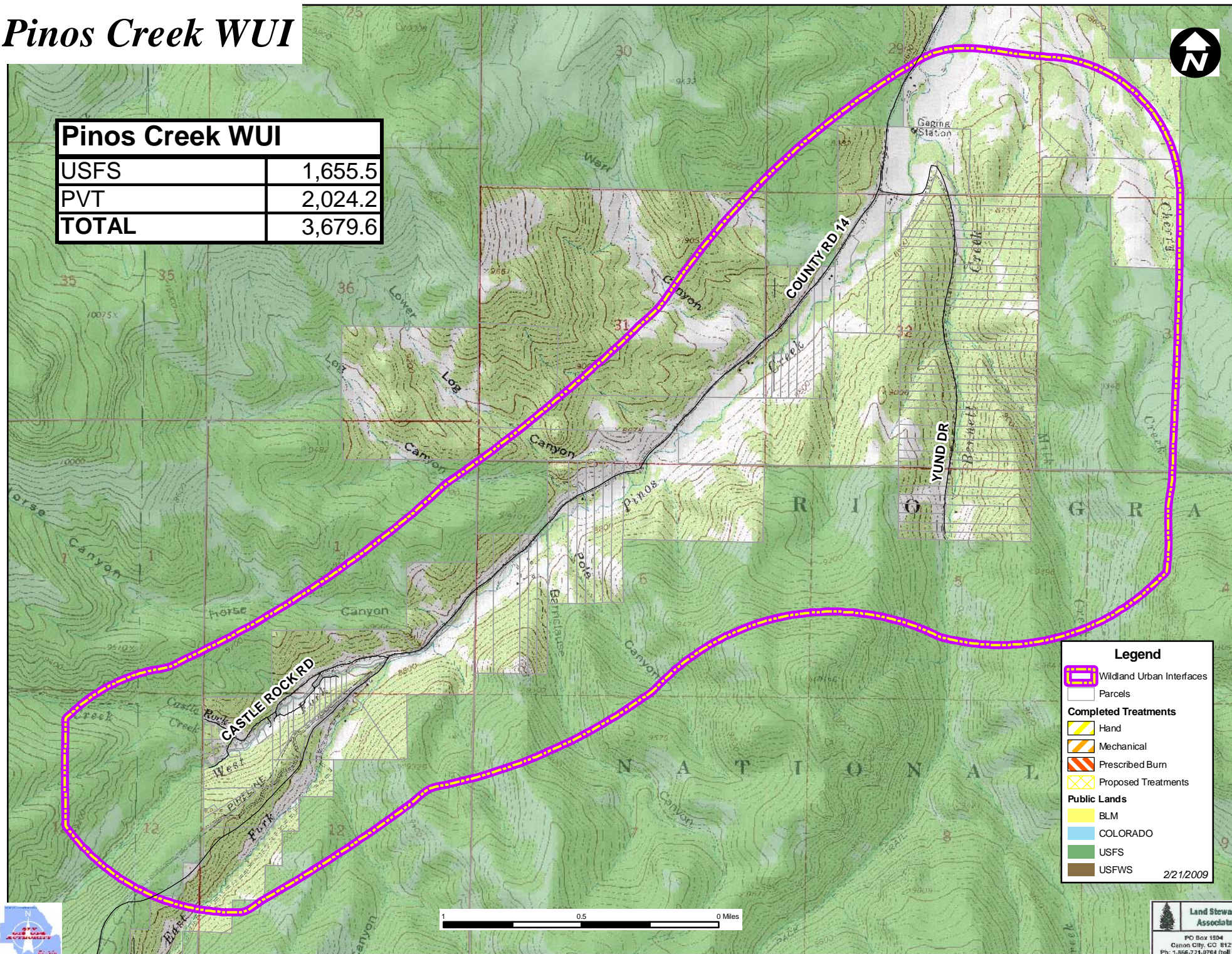




# Pinos Creek WUI

## Pinos Creek WUI

USFS	1,655.5
PVT	2,024.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,679.6</b>



### Legend

- Wildland Urban Interfaces
- Parcels
- Completed Treatments**
  - Hand
  - Mechanical
  - Prescribed Burn
  - Proposed Treatments
- Public Lands**
  - BLM
  - COLORADO
  - USFS
  - USFWS

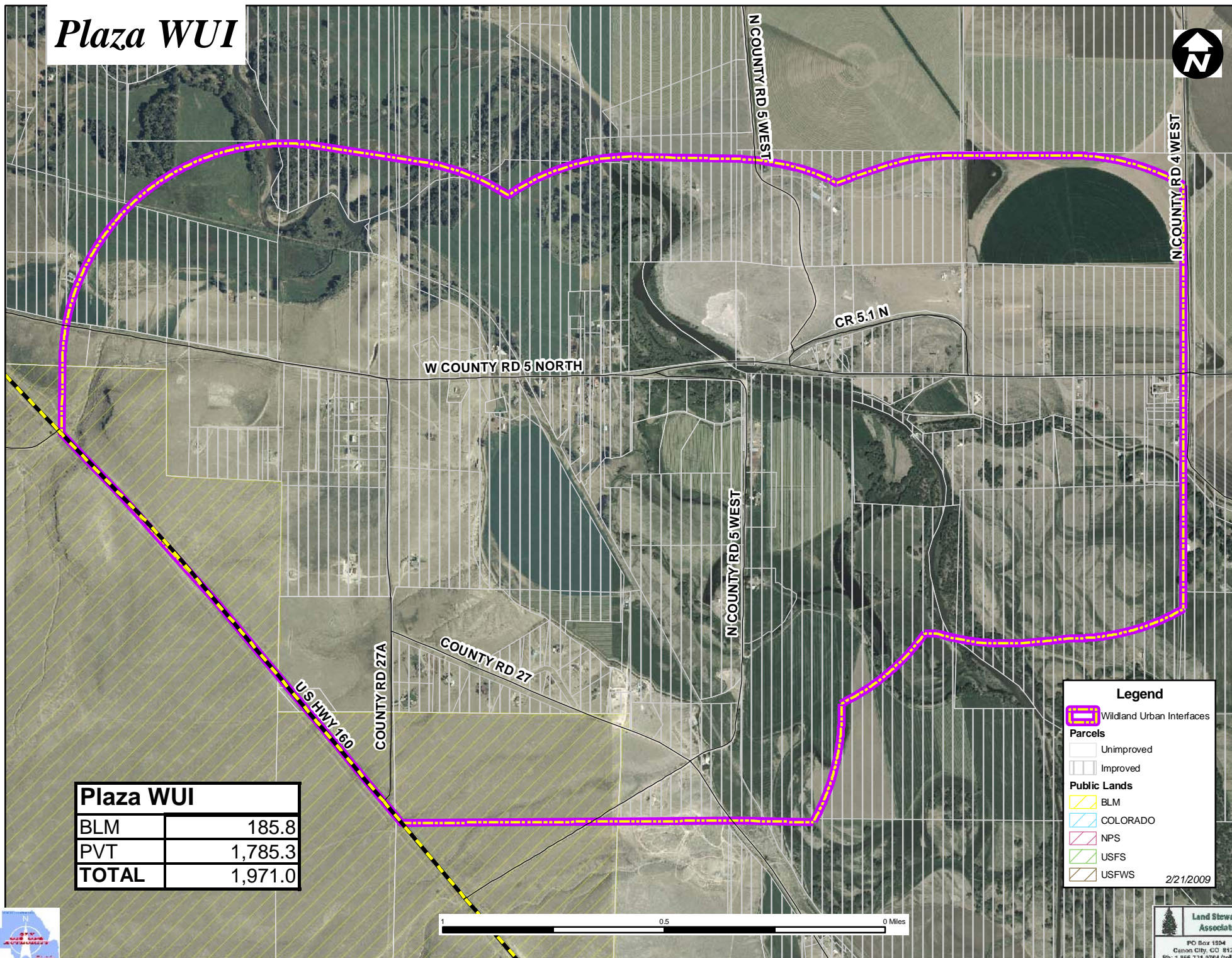
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1 0.5 0 Miles



# Plaza WUI

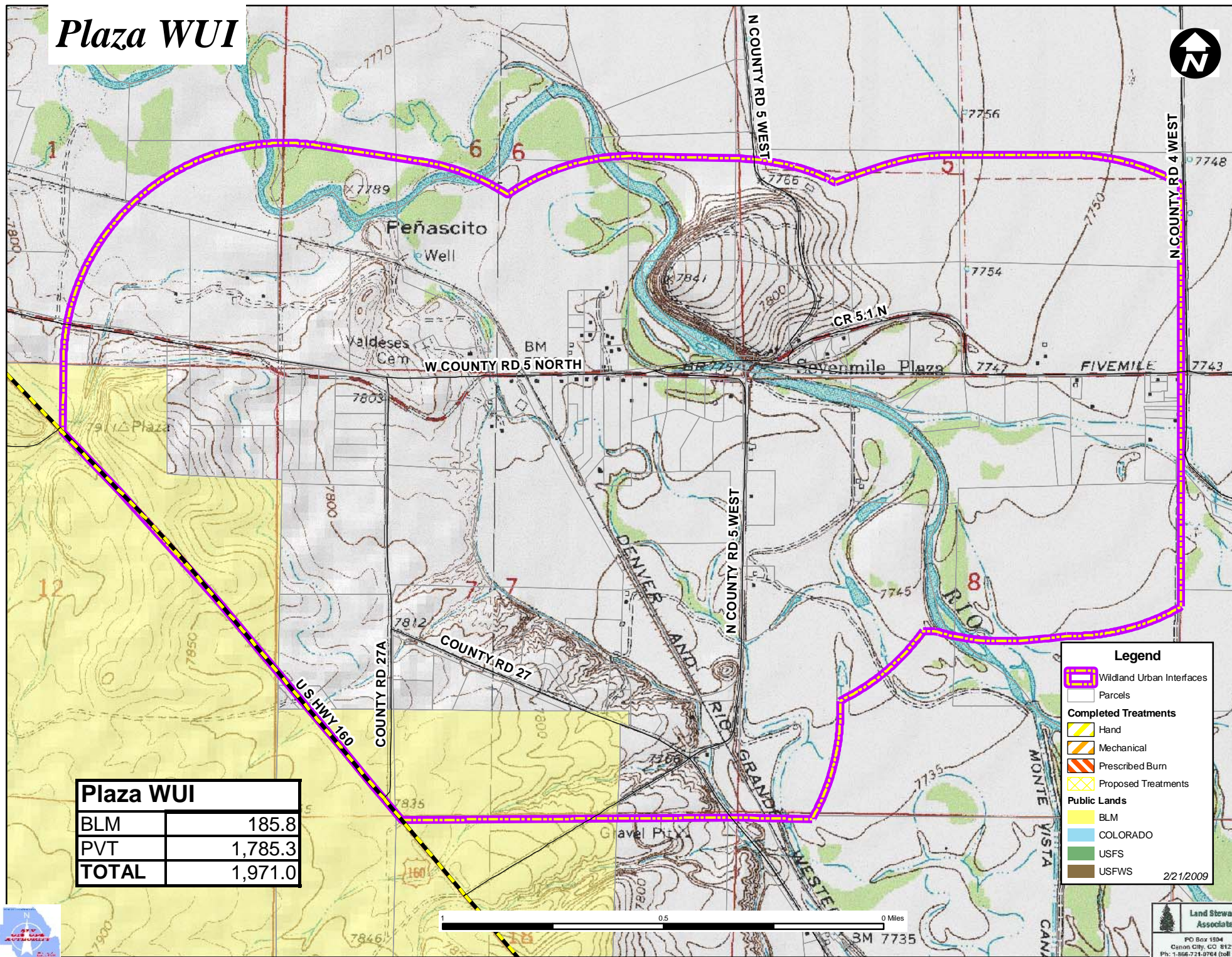


Plaza WUI	
BLM	185.8
PVT	1,785.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,971.0</b>





# Plaza WUI



Plaza WUI	
BLM	185.8
PVT	1,785.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,971.0</b>

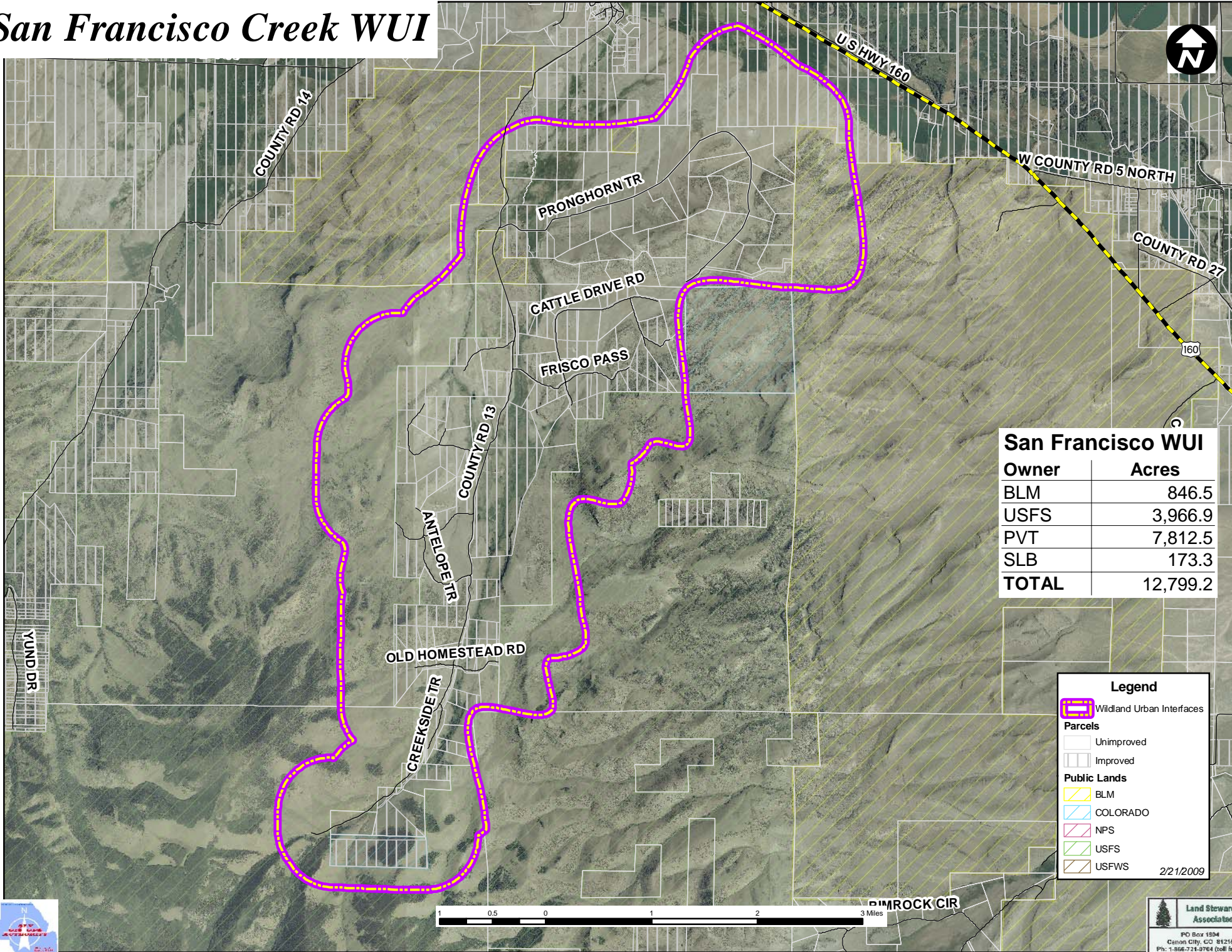
**Legend**

- Wildland Urban Interfaces
- Parcels
- Completed Treatments**
  - Hand
  - Mechanical
  - Prescribed Burn
  - Proposed Treatments
- Public Lands**
  - BLM
  - COLORADO
  - USFS
  - USFWS

2/21/2009



# San Francisco Creek WUI



San Francisco WUI	
Owner	Acres
BLM	846.5
USFS	3,966.9
PVT	7,812.5
SLB	173.3
TOTAL	12,799.2

**Legend**

Wildland Urban Interfaces

**Parcels**

Unimproved

Improved

**Public Lands**

BLM

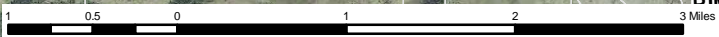
COLORADO

NPS

USFS

USFWS

2/21/2009



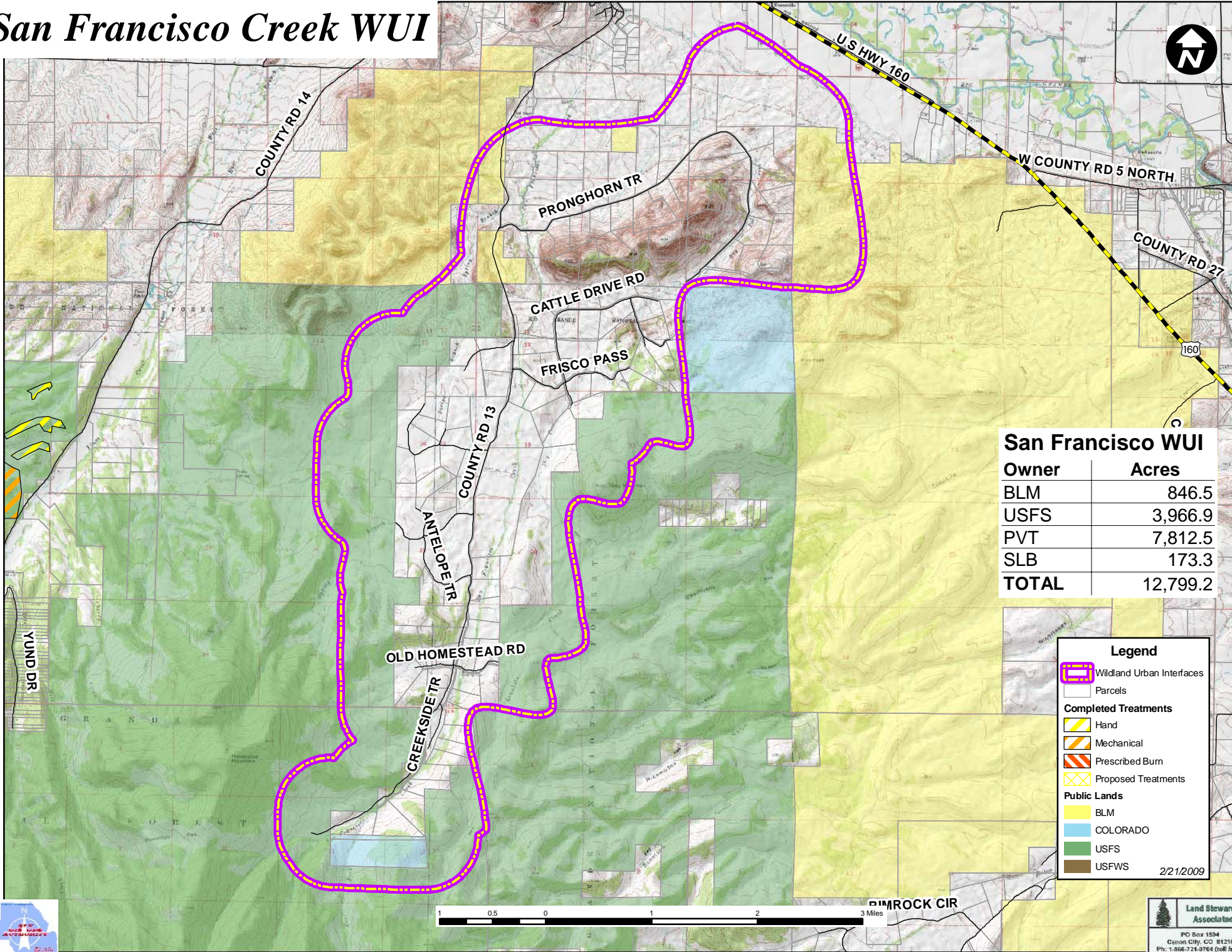
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# San Francisco Creek WUI



San Francisco WUI	
Owner	Acres
BLM	846.5
USFS	3,966.9
PVT	7,812.5
SLB	173.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,799.2</b>

**Legend**

Wildland Urban Interfaces

Parcels

**Completed Treatments**

Hand

Mechanical

Prescribed Burn

Proposed Treatments

**Public Lands**

BLM

COLORADO

USFS

USFWS

2/21/2009



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# South Fork WUI



South Fork WUI	
BLM	786.2
USFS	6,995.9
PVT	8,753.5
SLB	458.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,994.3</b>

**Legend**

Wildland Urban Interfaces

**Parcels**

Unimproved
 Improved

Del Norte FPD

**Public Lands**

BLM
 COLORADO
 NPS
 USFS
 USFWS

2/21/2009



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# South Fork WUI



South Fork WUI	
BLM	786.2
USFS	6,995.9
PVT	8,753.5
SLB	458.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,994.3</b>

**Legend**

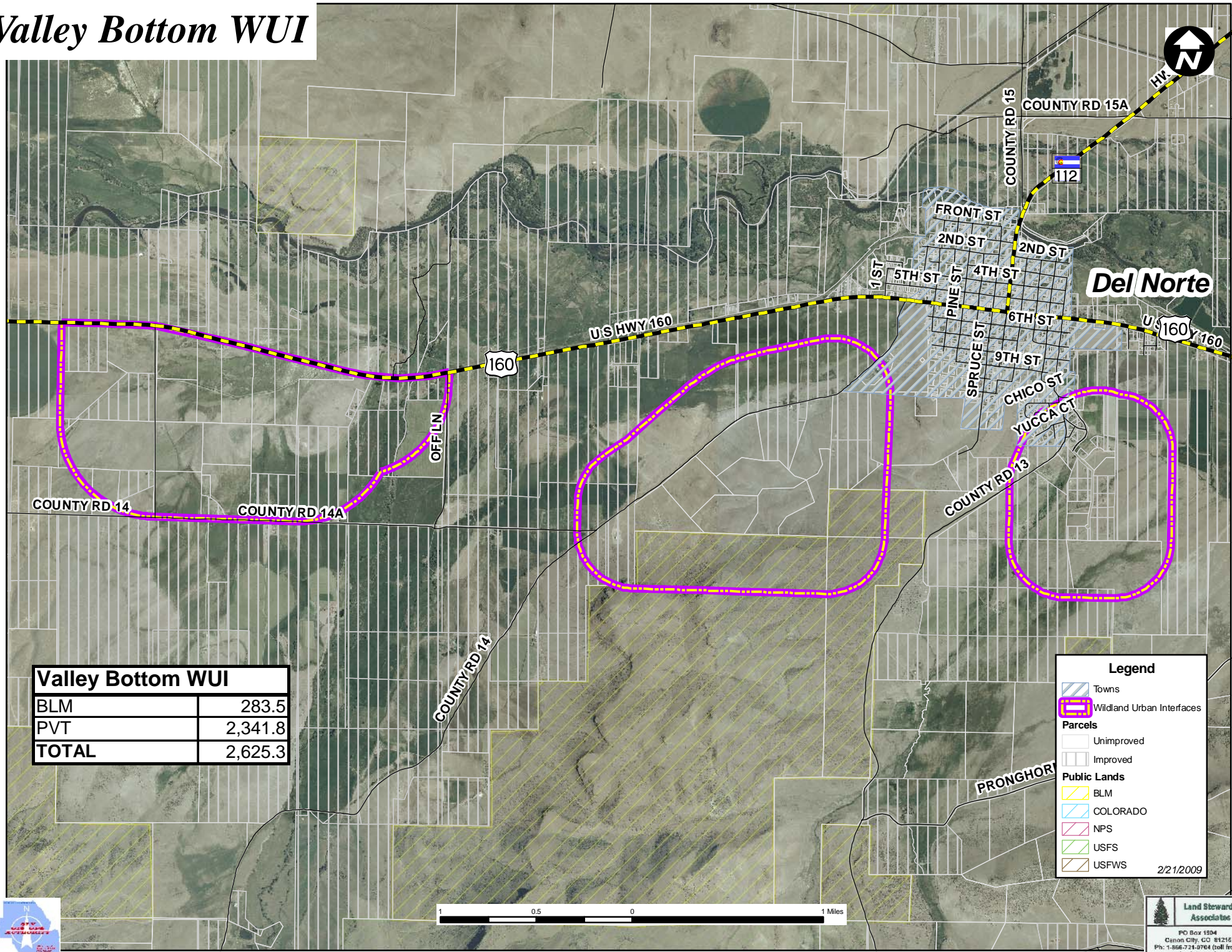
- Wildland Urban Interfaces
- Parcels
- Completed Treatments**
  - Hand
  - Mechanical
  - Prescribed Burn
  - Proposed Treatments
- Public Lands**
  - BLM
  - COLORADO
  - USFS
  - USFWS
  - Del Norte FPD 2/21/2009



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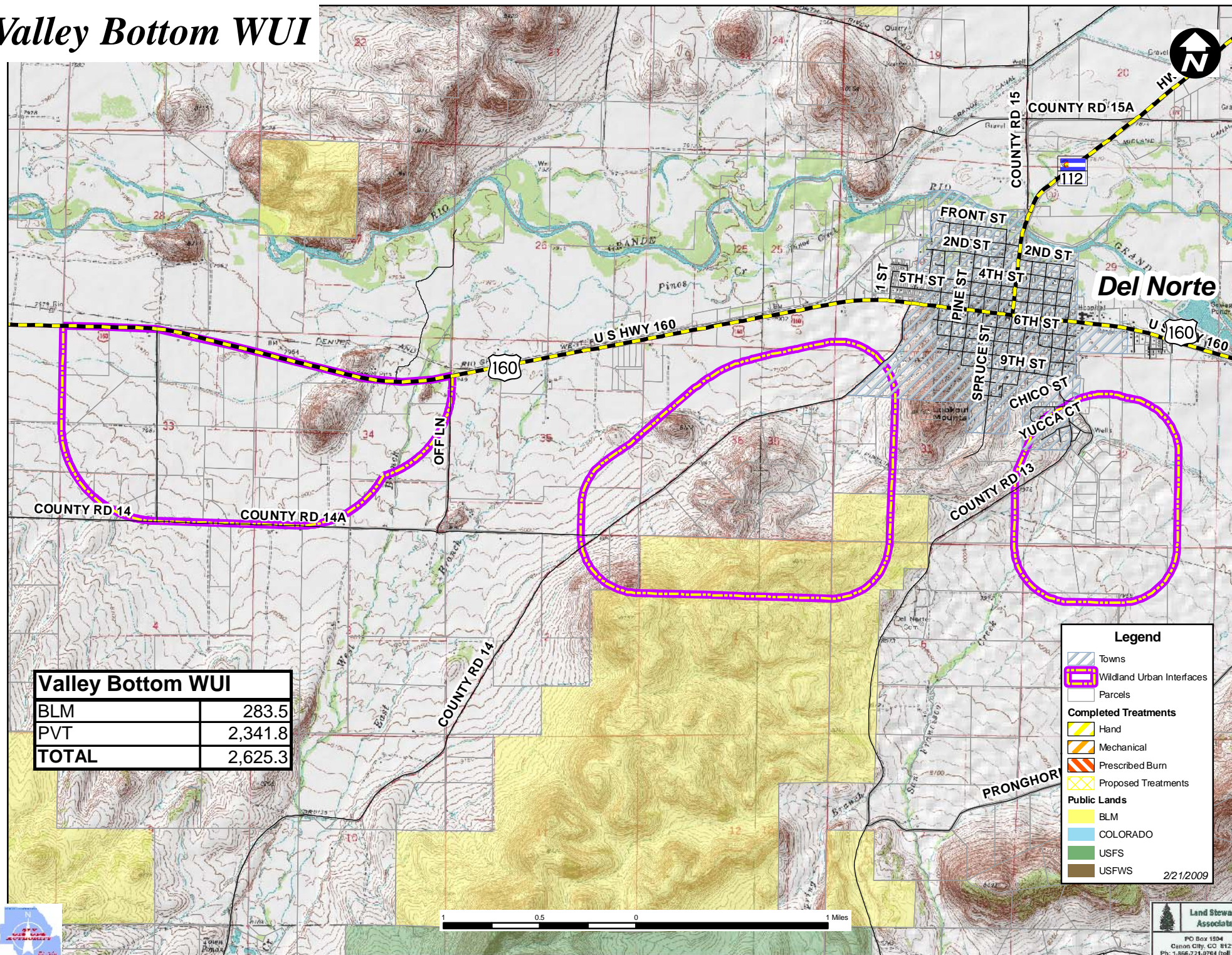


# Valley Bottom WUI





# Valley Bottom WUI





## APPENDIX B – Fuel Model Descriptions

The primary fuels within the Del Norte Fire Protection District (FPD) are forested land, shrub areas and grasslands. Douglas-fir/aspen montane forests cover the mid-slope while Engelmann spruce and alpine meadows are found at the higher elevations. Douglas-fir and spruce forests are generally dense enough to sustain a substantial crown fire resulting in a high fire risk.

### Fuel Model 1

Fire spread is governed by the fine, very porous, and continuous herbaceous fuels that have cured or are nearly cured. Fires are surface fires that move rapidly through the cured grass and associated material. Very little shrub and timber is present, generally less than one third of the area.

### Fuel Model 101

Is also a grass fuel model but it has much sparser and shorter grass than a typical Fuel Model 1.

### Fuel Model 2

Fire spread is primarily through the fine herbaceous fuels, either curing or dead. These are surface fires where the herbaceous material, in addition to litter and open sagebrush contribute to the fire intensity. Open shrub lands that cover one-third to two thirds of the area may generally fit this model; such stands may include clumps of brush that generate higher intensities and that may produce firebrands.

### Fuel Model 6

Fire spread is primarily through dense shrubs with juniper and pinyon pine that ranges in height from 6 to 15 feet. There are occasional pockets of debris distributed throughout the unit. Fires require moderate winds, greater than 8 mph at mid flame height. Fire will drop to the ground at low wind speeds, if there is no ground slash, or at openings in the stand.

### Fuel Model 8

Ground litter is composed of short needles such as pinyon, spruce or Douglas-fir. Slow burning fires with low flame lengths are generally the case, although the fire may encounter an occasional "jackpot" or heavy concentration that can flare up. Only under severe weather conditions involving high temperatures, low humidities, and high winds do the fuels pose high fire hazards.

#### Fuel Model 9

Fires run through the surface litter faster than model 8 and have longer flame height. Concentrations of dead-down woody material will contribute to possible torching out of trees, spotting and crowning. The pure stands of aspen represent this model. In the fall, after the associated grass and forbs have cured, this fuel will burn more intensely and is temporarily more of a threat.

#### Fuel Model 10

The fires burn in the surface and ground fuels with greater fire intensity than the other timber litter fuels. Any forest type may be considered if heavy down material is present; examples are insect or disease ridden stands, wind-thrown stands, overmature situations with dead fall, and aged light thinning or partial cut slash. Crowning out, spotting, and torching of individual trees are more frequent in this fuel situation, leading to potential fire control difficulties.

#### Fuel Model 11

It is very similar to fuel model 10 but with more dead-down fuel on the ground. Fire line construction is more difficult, spotting and crowning are also more active.

## APPENDIX C – Fuel Hazard Reduction Guidelines

### *MINIMUM TREE SPACING – RULE OF THUMB* *Strive to reduce crown density to 40% or less.*

Ponderosa Pine/Douglas Fir: Convert stem diameter from inches to feet and add 7 more feet.

Example: A Ponderosa Pine 8" in diameter at DBH will have a spacing of 8 feet plus 7 feet for a total of 15 feet to the next tree.

Tree spacing does not necessarily need to be even. In fact, the fuel treatment area will look more natural if the spacing varies and small clearings are intermingled with small groups of trees. The important focus should be on breaking up fuel continuity – both horizontally and vertically.

If trees are very tall in relationship to their diameters, implement the thinning work over a long enough time to allow the standing trees to develop their wind firmness and resistance to snow bend. Thinning when trees are small helps reduce prevent these vulnerabilities. Thinning in patches and designing the thinning to minimize wind effect can be done depending on location. All of these can be used but can best be accomplished with the assistance of an experienced forester.

An important part of fuel hazard reduction is removal of the ladder fuels; particularly when adequate thinning cannot be accomplished. Therefore, the following is important to do within a timber canopy.

- ü Prune trees to 6 or 10 feet above the ground, depending on slope, leaving at least 1/3 live tree crown
- ü Remove tree reproduction from under the canopies of remaining trees
- ü Remove sagebrush, oak or any other flammable brush from under the canopies of remaining trees. Reduce the size and height of remaining clumps of brush
- ü Remove all dead forest debris within defensible space and fuelbreak areas.
- ü Reduce concentrations of dead forest debris within other areas
- ü Remove trees recently killed by mountain pine beetle\* or other disturbances within defensible space and fuelbreak areas.

ü Reduce numbers of trees recently killed by mountain pine beetle\* or other disturbances in other areas. Only 1 to 3 dead trees per acre are needed for wildlife habitat purposes

*\*Note: Proper slash disposal procedures should be implemented to avoid attracting Mountain Pine or other bark beetles to the project area.*

## APPENDIX D – Evacuation Planning Guidelines

### Background

The growth of urban development in forested wildland areas in recent years has resulted in a potentially hazardous situation. People are attracted to forested areas seeking solitude and to escape the pressures of everyday life. Large land holdings have been subdivided into small, affordable acreages for cabin sites or remote homes. The new generation of small lot landowners value individual trees and have often built their cabins under the cover of or within these overstocked forests. Cabins are constructed on prominent points or ridge tops for the view or they are tucked into the forest canopy seeking solitude. In order to minimize the impact of their presence on the land driveways are often narrow with inadequate opportunities to turn around at the building site. At the same time, wildfires have been aggressively suppressed allowing dead fuels to accumulate to alarming levels and young trees to establish in high densities. These ladder fuels provide a “leg up” for a wildfire to burn into the tree crowns and move rapidly under windy conditions. Little attention has been paid by landowners to the potential destructive capacity of an uncontrolled wildfire.

In an emergency wildfire situation that threatens the lives and property of residents in the area, the Del Norte Fire Protection District, in consultation with the county sheriffs, fire suppression teams and land managing agencies, may recommend that residents evacuate to a safe area. Prior evacuation planning is essential to implement this action effectively.

By definition, evacuation is a protective action—moving people from a place of danger to a place of relative safety. It is a temporary mass movement of people that collectively emerges in coping with threats to area residents and visitors.

An Evacuation Plan will facilitate the orderly evacuation during an emergency wildfire situation. Step by step actions provide critical information and guidance for fire suppression and law enforcement personnel during an emergency situation. Each subdivision, home site development area or land owner association should be strongly encouraged to develop an evacuation plan for their area that identifies potential evacuation routes and critical information (locked gates, inadequate bridges, etc) for a variety of wildfire threat scenarios.

### Critical Contacts

Rio Grande County Sheriff	719-657-4000
Rio Grande County Office of Emergency Director	719-588-1204
Colorado State Patrol	719-589-5807
Colorado State Forest Service	719-587-0915
Colorado Division of Wildlife	719-587-9600
Colorado State Office of Emergency Services	
Rio Grande National Forest, Saguache Ranger District	719-655-2547
Pueblo Interagency Fire Center/Fire Dispatch Center	
Federal Emergency Management Agency	
Local News Media	
KSLV Radio	719-852-3581
KGIW Radio	719-589-6644
RRZA Radio	719-589-9057
KSPK Radio	719-589-2666



### Check List When Potential for Evacuation Exists

- 1) Close back country roads and trails at trail heads
- 2) Post on bulletin boards information regarding fire danger
- 3) Set up a local Information Center where residents and visitors can access up-to-date information and status regarding wildfires that pose a threat to the area
- 4) Provide routine updates on wildfire conditions for local radio and television stations as the threat increases
- 5) When the fire suppression team and land managing agencies ( US Forest Service and Colorado State Forest Service) believe evacuation may become necessary, notify the Rio Grande County Sheriff and County Emergency Preparedness Director
- 6) Fire suppression team and land managing agency managers should meet and coordinate with the Sheriff and County Emergency Preparedness Directors to decide if an evacuation is necessary. The decision to evacuate should be made and implemented well before the evacuation needs to be complete. Local conditions and the fire's rate of advance will dictate timing and trigger points
- 7) The Sheriff, after consultation with the land managing agencies and County Emergency County Emergency Preparedness Director makes the decision to evacuate the threatened area and implements the actual evacuation
- 8) Notify residents and visitors of the Order to Evacuate
  - Siren to alert visitors in the back country Law enforcement patrol vehicles with public address systems announce evacuation order
  - House-to-house verification that threatened home site developments are completely evacuated
  - Law enforcement vehicles and ATVs drive back country roads and trails to assure evacuation
  - Use one color flagging to mark secondary roads/trails at their junction with the primary road (evacuation route) when notification is in progress then change to another color when verification is complete on that road/trail.
- 9) Drive evacuation routes installing free standing traffic control signs at key road intersections and opening locked gates or cutting fences to allow exit.
- 10) CSFS notify Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- 11) Notify Colorado State Patrol Assign law enforcement to direct traffic at critical road junctions

The officer in charge of the evacuation will make the decision regarding which evacuation route to use at the time. Depending on the situation the decision may be to use any or all of the routes to evacuate the threatened area.

## Emergency Evacuation Routes

Primary emergency evacuation routes are suggested but should be validated with landowners and land management agencies involved prior to the onset of an emergency need for evacuation. These primary evacuation routes should provide multiple opportunities for evacuating traffic to exit the area. Hazardous fuel concentrations should be treated along primary evacuation routes by creating shaded fuelbreaks to reduce canopy cover to 40 percent or less and treat slash and combustible debris within 200 to 300 feet of either side of the road. Tributary roads should be identified in local developments and treated similarly to facilitate a safe and orderly evacuation.

WUI COMMUNITY	WAYS IN & OUT	ROAD IDENTIFIERS
Agua Ramon	3	FSRs 630 or 640 & CR 15
Old Woman Creek	2	CR 66 or CR 15
Pinon Hills	1	Pinion Hills Rd to US Hwy 160
Pinos Creek	1	CR 14
Plaza	Many	CRs 4, 5, 5W, 27 & 27A
San Francisco Creek	1	CR 13
South Fork	3	US Hwy 160 east or west & CO Hwy 149
Valley Bottom	Many	US Hwy 160, CRs 13, 14, 14a

### Estimated Time to Implement an Evacuation

The decision to evacuate a threatened area must be made well in advance of the time the fire is expected to threaten residents, visitors and facilities.

### Fire Behavior and Evacuation Timing

Spread Component (SC) is the key fire danger component to monitor. The spread component is a numerical value derived from a mathematical model that integrates the effects of wind and slope with fuel bed and fuel particle properties to compute the forward rate of spread at the head of the fire. Output is in units of feet per minute. A spread Component of 31 indicates a worst-case, forward rate of spread of approximately 31 feet per minute.

The inputs required in to calculate the SC are wind, slope, fine fuel moisture (including the effects of green herbaceous plants), and the moisture content of the foliage and twigs of living, woody plants.

Since characteristics through which the fire is burning are so basic in determining the forward rate of spread of the fire front, a unique SC table is required for each fuel type.

When considering spotting, the rich diversity of fuel types scattered throughout the County, and the likelihood of wind, it may be prudent, when fire danger is Very High,

to consider starting an evacuation process when fires are burning within 10 miles of down-wind subdivisions or home site development areas (urban interface area). Knowing the SC for the most prevalent fuel type between where the fire is and where the home site developments are can best refine this judgment call. With a SC of 44 a fire will cover 2 miles or more within 4 hours. If the SC is 22 the fire will cover at least one mile within 4 hours and 2 miles within 8 hours. If the SC is 11 the fire will cover two miles within 16 hours. If the SC is 5 the fire can cover two miles within 32 hours.

Remember the lessons of some Colorado fires:

- The Buffalo Creek Fire ran nearly eleven miles in 4.5 hours
- The Hayman Fire ran at least 16 miles in one afternoon

### Timing

Evacuation planning needs to take into account how long it will take to notify residents that an evacuation is necessary, how long it will take for them to get ready and start driving out of the area and then how long it takes to actually drive to a safe area. This determination should be made locally for each development area or subdivision and then validated before it is used during an emergency.

Every situation will be different but it is reasonable to estimate the minimum time required to be no less than 4 hours to complete the process. As much as three hours may be required to notify residents and visitors and get them started moving and another hour to get everyone out of the area. Residents and visitors closest to the advancing threat should be notified first. Once they are driving out of the area it will take them up to an hour in most cases to exit the area if traffic is flowing at a rate of 10 to 20 miles per hour.

Driving time should be measured on each of the potential evacuation routes by driving at a conservative speed depending on road conditions and how many people are expected to be evacuated to approximate how long it would take to drive the route during an evacuation providing traffic was moving at about that rate. The following table displays the type of information that needs to be incorporated in the Evacuation Plan.

### Travel Time for Evacuation Routes

Beginning Point	Ending Point	Time Required	Miles Traveled	Average Speed

GPS Locations for Critical Features and Facilities – This table provides GPS coordinate locations

for critical points referred to.

Feature	GPS Location

### Recommendations

- Negotiate agreements with neighboring private land owners and land managing agencies to allow evacuation across their property on their roads and through their locked gates.
- Negotiate an agreement to thin fuels along the evacuation route between the subdivision or home development area and safe areas.
- Upgrade roads on evacuation routes by widening curves, providing water bars to prevent erosion and thinning fuels along these emergency exits.
- Construct and store freestanding "Fire Exit Directional Signs" or "Evacuation Route" for use in marking evacuation routes.
- Develop a specific evacuation procedure and assign responsibilities to County staff.

# Is Your Home Protected



## From Wildfire Disaster?



A Homeowner's Guide  
to Wildfire Retrofit

# acknowledgments

The staff of the Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) wishes to acknowledge the valuable input of all those involved in the preparation of this booklet. In particular, we extend our thanks to:

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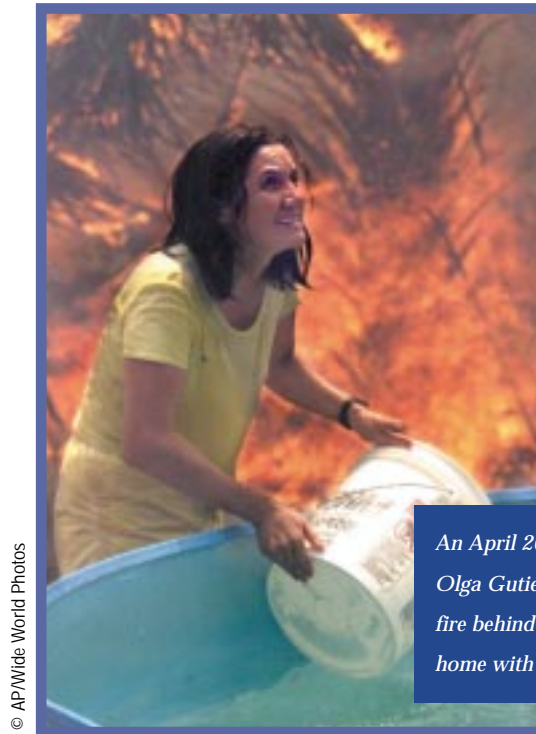
## **Disclaimer**

*The purpose of this document is to provide homeowners with guidance on ways to retrofit and build homes to reduce losses from wildfire damage. It contains suggestions and recommendations based on professional judgment, experience and research and is intended to serve only as a guide. The authors, contributors and publisher disclaim all warranties and guarantees with respect to the information in the document and assume no liability or responsibility with respect to the information.*

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***"Nature...she pardons no mistakes."***

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*



© AP/Wide World Photos

*An April 2001 Florida wildfire caused Olga Gutierrez to desperately fight a fire behind her Port Charlotte, FL home with water from her pool.*

In 1993, a wildfire in a dry canyon north of Laguna Beach, California, raced toward hundreds of nearby homes, giving residents little advance warning of its awesome destruction. More than 14,000 acres and 440 homes went up in flames.

In the nearby Mystic Hills neighborhood, 286 homes were totally destroyed. Yet, there was one white house left standing in the midst of hundreds of piles of smoking ash that remained of its neighboring homes. This sole surviving house was built with fire prevention in mind. It stood as an example of how homes can, with a little extra attention, better withstand nature's perils. The practical methods used in and around that house can help reduce the chances of future wildfires from reducing communities to ashes. This guide is designed to make that one rare exception of survival a more common occurrence in the future.

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# Large Fire Locations

January 1 to October 3, 2000



*Courtesy National Interagency Fire Center  
Boise, Idaho*

# introduction

**N**early every state has been devastated by wildfires in the last century. More than 140,000 wildfires occur on average each year. Since 1990, more than 900 homes have been destroyed each year by wildfires.

So, what can you do to protect yourself, your home and property from wildfires? This guide will help you understand

- why your home is at risk, and
- how you can reduce the risk to your home and property.



*Bitterroot National Forest, Montana  
John McColgan  
FairBanks, AK • August 6, 2000*

# wildfires and your home

## The Wildland/Urban Interface Problem

**W**ildfires occur regularly. Whether started by humans or by lightning, they are part of a natural cycle that helps to maintain the health of our forests. Today, more than ever, people are moving into remote areas, with the desire to "get back to nature," without addressing the dangers that exist around them.

A tremendous wildfire danger exists where homes blend together with the wildland, creating the wildland/urban interface. The addition of homes there interrupts the natural cycle of wildfires. Ultimately,

this contributes to a dangerous build-up of old vegetation, leading to an uncontrollable wildfire.

## You and Your Local Fire Department

In a wildfire, your local fire department has two priorities – to remove you and your family from harm's way and to stop the progression of the wildfire. If your home happens to be in the wildfire's path, they may or may not be able to protect it – there are simply no guarantees.

Consequently, you must take action before a fire starts.

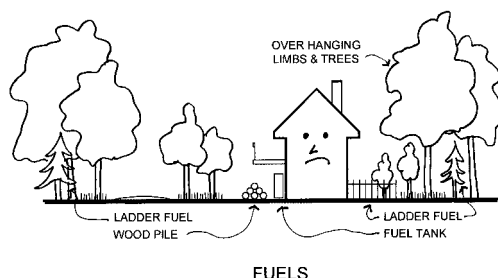


© J Smalley, NJ • Pine Barrens

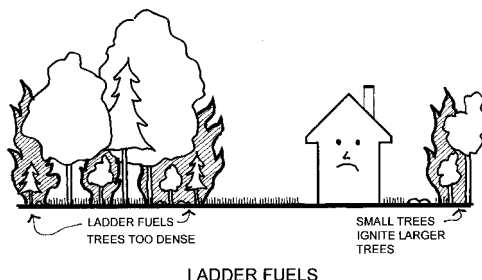
## Just the Right Conditions

Conditions must be just right for a wildfire to start and spread. Specifically, fuel, weather and topography work together to determine how quickly a wildfire travels and at what intensity.

**Fuels:** The two basic fuel types in the wildland/urban interface are vegetation and structures.



**Vegetation:** Fuel in its natural form consists of living and dead trees, bushes and grasses. Typically, grasses burn more quickly and with less intensity than trees. Any branches or shrubs between 18 inches and 6 feet are considered to be ladder fuels. Ladder fuels help convert a ground fire to a crown fire (tree tops) which moves much more quickly.



**Structural Density:** The closer the homes are together, the easier it is for the flames to spread from one structure to another.

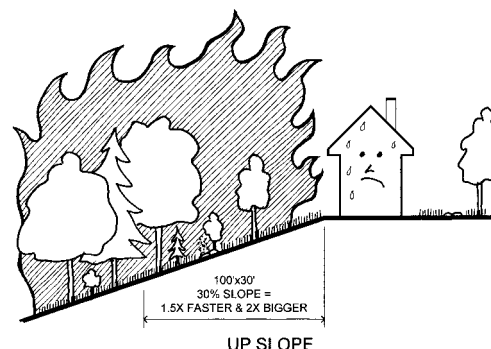


STRUCTURAL DENSITY

**Weather:** High temperatures, low humidity, and swift winds increase the probability of ignitions and difficulty of control. Short and long-term drought further exacerbates the problem.

**Slope:** Slope is the upward or downward incline or slant of terrain. For example, a completely flat plain represents a 0% slope and a hillside that rises 30 feet for every 100 feet horizontal distance represents a 30% slope.

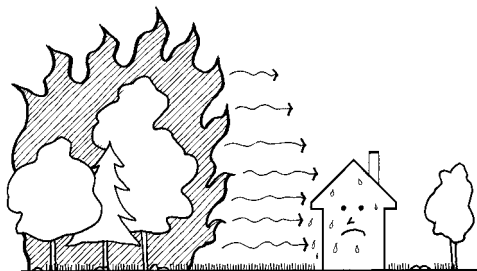
Hot gases rise in front of the fire along the slope face, pre-heating the up-slope vegetation, moving a grass fire up to four times faster with flames twice as long as a fire on level ground.



## How Your Home Catches Fire

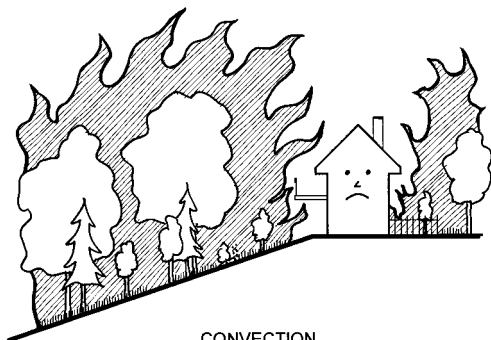
There are three ways that the wildfire can transfer itself from the natural vegetation or other burning homes to your home – through radiation, convection or firebrands.

**Radiation:** Wildfires can spread to your home by radiating heat in the same way a radiator heats your rooms in the wintertime. Radiated heat is capable of igniting combustible materials from distances of 100 feet or more.



RADIATION

**Convection:** Contact with the convection column (flames) may also cause the wildfire to ignite your house. Typically, the convec-



CONVECTION

tive heat column rises vertically, within the smoke plume.

**Firebrands:** Firebrands are burning materials that detach from a fire during strong convection drafts in the burning zone. Firebrands can be carried long distances – more than a mile – by the winds associated with the wildfire.



FIREBRANDS

In all cases, your home's building materials and design play a significant role in establishing the level of exposure that can be endured before ignition from radiation, convection, firebrands or any combination of these three.

## Taking Inventory – Is Your Property at Risk?

The first step in establishing your risk is to assess your property. The table on page 5 lists numerous factors and issues that you should consider.

This assessment will give you a good sense of your property's wildfire risk.

## Assessing Your Property

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have wildfires occurred in your area? If so, under what conditions?       | <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a substantial amount of tall vegetation crowded in around your home? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have seasons when wildfires are more likely to occur?              | <input type="checkbox"/> Do tree limbs extend over your home?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you live in hilly or flat country?                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Are the trees in good condition or are they dying?                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are there areas around your home that are more susceptible to a wildfire? | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a woodpile in close proximity to your home?                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do you border wildland?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Do you have any fuel tanks nearby?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have you used native vegetation in your landscaping?                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Is a wood fence attached to your home?  |

### What's Your Risk Level?

The rough categories that follow on page 6 are not meant to give you an absolute score, but are to help guide you when deciding how to best protect your home.

### What You Can Do To Reduce Your Risk

Homes in a wildland/urban interface area can be designed and maintained to increase the chances of surviving a wildfire without the intervention of the fire department.

This guide will help you protect your home on two different fronts:

- Your Home's Landscape
- Your Home's Building Materials and Design



### Low Risk Areas:

- Little or no history of nearby wildfires
- Humid climate, short dry season
- Flat terrain (no grades greater than 9%)
- Limited wildland
- Home not crowded by trees
- Landscape includes native vegetation
- Manmade fuels at least 50 feet from your home.
- Fire hydrant within 300 feet
- Easy access for fire trucks

### Moderate Risk Areas:

- History of wildfires
- Climate includes a dry season less than 3 months
- Hilly terrain (grades average between 10% and 20%)
- Bordering a wildland with light brush, small trees or grass
- Trees are located in close proximity to your home
- Native vegetation has or has not been incorporated into your landscape
- Manmade fuels are within 50 feet of your home
- Fire hydrant within 500 feet
- Access for fire trucks

### High Risk Areas:

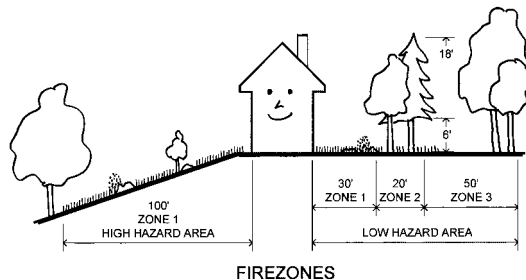
- History of nearby wildfires
- Dry climate with a dry season more than 3 months
- Steep terrain (grades average over 20%)
- Forested wildland within 100 feet of your home
- Native vegetation has not been incorporated into your landscape
- Trees are crowded within 30 feet of your home
- Manmade fuels within 30 feet of your home
- No fire hydrants
- Limited access for fire trucks

# your home's landscape

## Creating a Survivable Space For Your Home

A survivable space is an area of reduced fuels between your home and the untouched wildland. This provides enough distance between the home and a wildfire to ensure that the home can survive without extensive effort from either you or the fire department.

One of the easiest ways to establish a survivable space is to use the zone concept. Zone 1 is the closest to your home and Zones 2 and 3 move progressively further away.



**Zone 1:** Establish a well-irrigated area around your home. In a low hazard area, it should extend a minimum of 30 feet from your home on all sides. As your hazard risk increases, a clearance of between 50 and 100 feet or more may be necessary, especially on any downhill sides of the lot. Plantings should be limited to carefully spaced indigenous species.

**Zone 2** Place low-growing plants, shrubs and carefully spaced trees in this area. Maintain a reduced amount of vegetation. Your irrigation system

should also extend into this area.

Trees should be at least 10 feet apart, and all dead or dying limbs should be trimmed. For trees taller than 18 feet, prune lower branches within six feet of the ground. No tree limbs should come within 10 feet of your home.

**Zone 3:** This furthest zone from your home is a slightly modified natural area. Thin selected trees and remove highly flammable vegetation such as dead or dying trees and shrubs.

So how far should Zones 2 and 3 extend? Well, that depends upon your risk and your property's boundaries.

In a low hazard area, these two zones should extend another 20 feet or so beyond the 30 feet in Zone 1. This creates a modified landscape of over 50 feet total.

In a moderate hazard area, these two zones should extend at least another 50 feet beyond the 50 feet in Zone 1. This would create a modified landscape of over 100 feet total.

In a high hazard area, these two zones should extend at least another 100 feet beyond the 100 feet in Zone 1. This would create a modified landscape of over 200 feet total.

## The Importance of Maintenance

Once you have created your home's survivable space, you must maintain it or risk losing the benefit of its protection.

# your home's building materials and design

**C**reating and maintaining a survivable space is a necessary first step. The next step is to use fire resistant building materials and construction techniques in retrofitting your home.

## The Ideal Fire-Resistant Home

Keep in mind that a wildfire sees your home as just another fuel

source. The survivable space you construct around your home will keep all but the most ferocious wildfires at bay. However, if the wildfire does break through your first line of defense, an ignition might occur on your home's exterior. The ideal situation is for your home's exterior materials to prevent or retard the flames from burning into your interior walls, soffits, attic area, and rooms.

### Taking Inventory

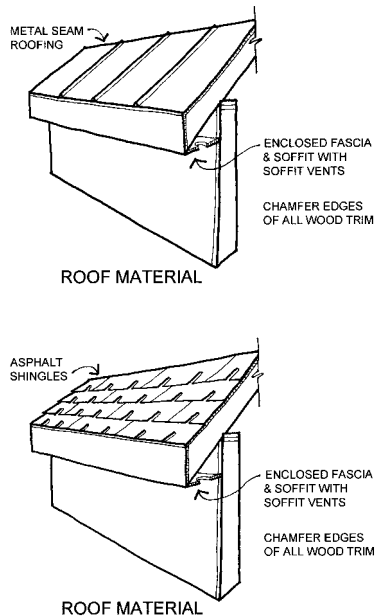
Examine your home's construction and materials. Use the following as a checklist.

- ☐ What type of roof covering do you have? Asphalt, wood, concrete, tile or metal?
- ☐ How are your eaves, fascias and soffits constructed? Are they made from vinyl, wood or metal?
- ☐ What are your home's exterior walls covered with? Are they wood, aluminum or vinyl siding, stucco, brick or concrete masonry?
- ☐ Do you have large windows or sliding glass doors that border or face the wildland? Are they single pane, double pane or tempered glass?
- ☐ How are your home's attic and sub-floor vents protected? Are their covers metal or vinyl?
- ☐ Are spark arresters installed on all your home's chimneys?
- ☐ Does your home have a deck or balcony that overhangs a slope?
- ☐ Is there a porch, garage or wood fence that attaches directly to your home?

## Taking Action

Now you will need to decide on the best modifications for your home, given your risk.

**Roof:** The roof is the most vulnerable part of your home to wildfires. During a wildfire, firebrands can fall on your roof, landing in your roof's nooks and crannies where a fire can easily start. Once your roof covering does ignite, chances are very good that the rest of your home will follow.



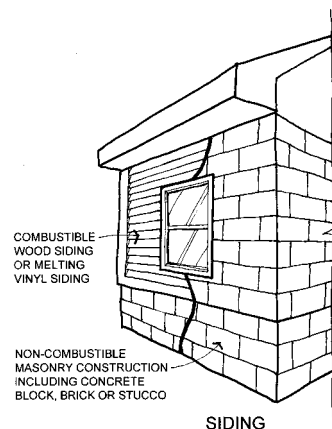
The best way to avoid this situation is to make sure your roof is fire-resistant. The two main fire resistance tests used today include: ASTM E108 and UL 790. There are three levels of classification awarded under the test protocol, A, B, and C, with A being the most

fire resistant. Some treated wood shake shingle products have ratings of Class C or better. Over time, the effectiveness of this chemical is reduced by weathering before the end of the product's useful life and may leave your roof unprotected.

If your roof needs to be re-covered, consider installing a Class A roof covering.

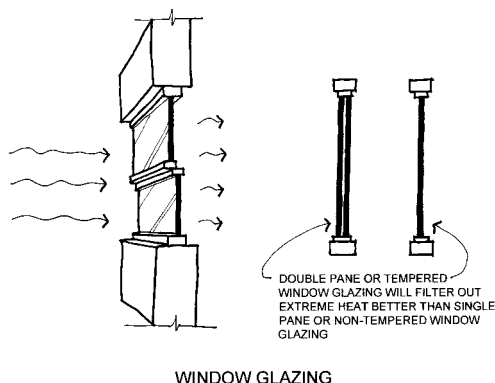
**Exterior Walls:** Exterior walls are susceptible to a wildfire's radiant and convective heat. Although a fire on an exterior wall may not penetrate inside your home, the fire can 'bridge' to more vulnerable areas such as eaves, soffits, vents and windows.

Wall materials that resist heat and flames include cement, plaster, stucco and concrete masonry such as stone, brick or block. Though some materials will not burn, such as vinyl, they may lose their integrity when exposed to high temperature and fall away or melt, providing the fire with a direct path inside the home.



**Exterior Windows, Glass Doors and Skylights:** Exposure to the heat of the wildfire can cause glass to fracture and collapse, leaving an opening for flames and firebrands to enter your home. This applies to both double pane and single pane glass, since double pane glass is only slightly more resistant to heat than single pane glass.

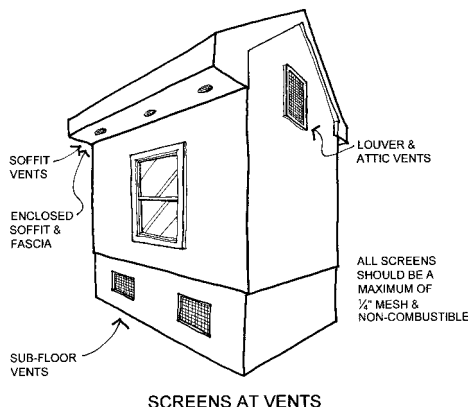
On the other hand, single or double pane tempered glass windows, doors and skylights typically fracture at higher exposures, well above the radiant heat exposures capable of igniting the surrounding wood.



**Eaves, Fascias, Soffits:** Eaves, fascias and soffits are vulnerable to both firebrands and convective exposures.

Eaves, fascias and soffits should be 'boxed' or enclosed with noncombustible materials to reduce the size of the vents. Materials that melt or

burn in relatively low temperatures, such as PVC and vinyl siding, should not be used, since they do not provide adequate protection and can melt in the heat of the wildfire. Non-combustible screening should be used in the vents.

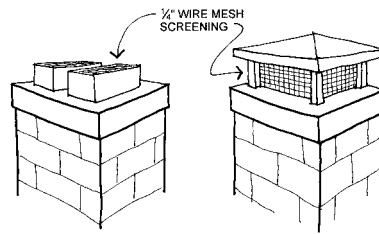


**Attic, Subfloor or Foundation Vents:** Wind and/or direct contact with a fire's convective heat can push firebrands through the vents into your home's basement or crawl space.

Your vent openings should be screened to prevent firebrands or other objects larger than 1/4 inch from entering your home. Both your vents and screens should be constructed of materials that will not burn or melt when exposed to radiate or convective heat or firebrands. Also, these vents should be corrosion-resistant to help minimize required maintenance.

**Fireplace Chimneys:** Windblown embers can access your home through your fireplace's chimney flue. Once inside, these firebrands then collect on flammable objects, greatly increasing the chance of combustion. The situation can also be reversed: embers from your own fire can fly out the chimney and start a wildfire, right in your own neighborhood.

The best way to avoid this situation is to install a spark arrestor made from welded wire or woven wire mesh with openings less than 1/4" wide.

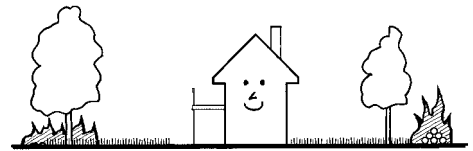


CHIMNEY SCREENS

**Overhangs and Other Attachments:** Overhangs and other attachments include any additional structures attached to a residence such as room pushouts, bay windows, decks, porches, carports and fences. These features are often very vulnerable to convective exposures.

When assessing your home and property, if the feature in question is attached to your home, it should be considered part of your home.

There are a number of ways you can reduce the vulnerability of your home's overhangs and attachments. First and foremost, remove all fuels around these areas. Next, box in the undersides of the overhangs, decks and balconies with noncombustible or fire-resistant materials to reduce the possibility of ignition. For fences, make sure that they don't attach directly to your home.



WOOD PILES, DECKS, FENCES, ETC.

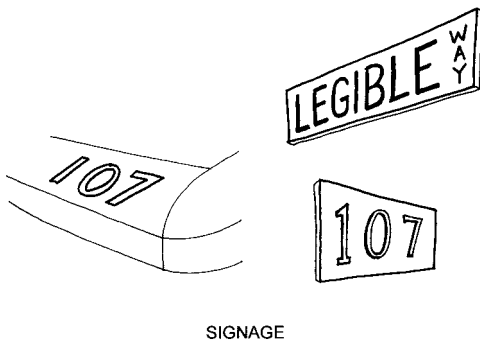


# helping your local fire department

**E**ven if you modify your home's landscape to incorporate the most fire-resistant materials and design into your home's construction, there is no guarantee that a wildfire will not threaten your home. It is important that your local fire department be able to find and defend your home.

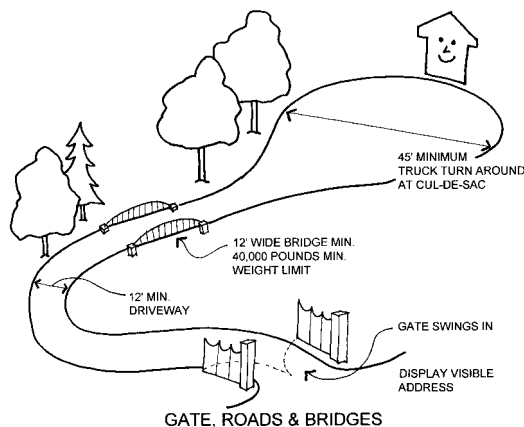
Here are some suggestions on how to modify your property to accommodate your local fire department.

**Street Signs and Numbers:** If made from combustible materials, your street signs and numbers can ignite or melt, leaving the fire department with no ability to locate your home. It is critical that signs and numbers be noncombustible and visible from the road.



**Driveways:** Fire trucks and equipment are quite large and often have difficulty in tight spots. Consequently, your home's driveway must be large enough to accommodate the typical sized trucks. Fire experts recommend a driveway at least 12 feet wide and 13 feet of vertical clearance.

**Gates:** If your home is gated, it is very important that the gate opens inward and be wide enough to accommodate the fire fighting equipment. Experts also recommend that the gate be at least 30 feet off of the main road, so that the equipment can pull off the road to open the gate. If the gate is locked, the lock should not be so strong that firefighters cannot break it in an emergency.



# wildfire safety project list

This list of home improvements is divided into cost categories. You can tackle these projects one at a time, but remember, the more you do, the better protected your home will be against wildfires.

## Category \$ (<\$300)

- Creating a survivable space;
- Maintaining your survivable space;
- Installing fire-resistant signs and address numbers;
- Modifying your attic, sub-floor, and basement vents;
- Installing a spark arrestor on your chimney.

## Category \$\$ (\$300 – \$1000)

- Boxing in overhangs and modifying other attachments;
- Boxing in your eaves, facias, and soffits.

## Category \$\$\$ (>\$1000)







- Re-covering your exterior walls with a more fire-resistant material;
- Replacing single-pane glass windows, doors, or skylights with tempered glass;
- Modifying your driveway, bridges, and gates to accommodate fire trucks.
- Re-roofing your home with a Class A roof covering.

# WILDFIRE PROTECTION CHECKLIST

## Before, During and After: Be Completely Prepared




You will give yourself and your family a better chance of escaping harm during a wildfire by taking as many of the precautions outlined in this brochure as possible. But, these steps are only the beginning. To protect yourself as completely as possible, here are some added suggestions:

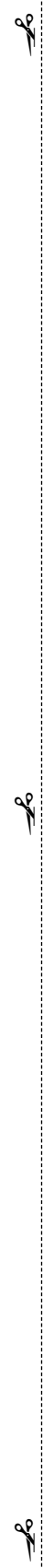
### before a wildfire strikes:

	Know where your gas, electric and water main shut-off controls are and how to turn them off if there is a leak or electrical short. Also, know how to use a fire extinguisher. Make sure all adult and teenage members of your family know how to shut off each utility and to use the extinguisher.
	Become familiar with your community's disaster-preparedness plans and create a family plan. Know where the closest police, fire and emergency medical facilities are located.
	Plan several different escape routes from your home and neighborhood and designate an emergency meeting place for the family to reunite. Establish a contact point to communicate with concerned relatives.
	Put together an emergency kit that includes at least a three-day supply of drinking water and food that needs no refrigeration and, generally, no cooking; emergency cooking equipment, if required; a portable NOAA weather radio; first aid supplies and medications; basic tools, such as a wrench, a flashlight and gloves; portable lanterns and batteries; credit cards and cash; and important documents, including insurance policies.
	Talk to your neighbors about wildfire safety. Plan how the neighborhood could work together before, during and after a wildfire. Make a list of your neighbors' skills such as medical or technical. Consider how you would help neighbors who have special needs such as elderly or disabled persons. Make plans to take care of children who may be on their own if parents can't get home.
	Periodically review your homeowner's insurance policy with your insurance agent or company to make sure that, if you are the victim of a disaster, you have enough coverage to rebuild your home and life.














# during a wildfire:





	If you are warned that a wildfire is threatening your area, listen to your portable radio for reports and evacuation information. Follow the instructions of local officials.
	Back your car into the garage or park it in an open space facing the direction of escape. Shut car doors and roll up windows. Leave the key in the ignition or in another easily accessible location.
	Close garage windows and doors, but leave them unlocked. Disconnect automatic garage door openers.
	Confine pets to one room. Make plans to care for your pets in case you must evacuate.
	Arrange temporary housing outside the threatened area.
	When advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
	Wear protective clothing – sturdy shoes, cotton or woolen clothing, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, gloves and a handkerchief to protect your face.
	Take your emergency kit.
	Lock your home.
	Notify your relatives and the local officials that you have left and where you can be reached.
	Follow the evacuation route that your local officials have identified. If no official route exists, choose a route away from fire hazards. Watch for changes in the speed and direction of the fire and smoke.



If you are SURE you have the time, take additional steps to protect your home:

	Close windows, vents, doors, venetian blinds and heavy drapes. Remove lightweight curtains.
	Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.
	Move flammable furniture into the center of the home away from windows and sliding-glass doors.
	Turn on a light in each room to increase the visibility of your home in heavy smoke.
	Seal attic and ground vents.
	Turn off propane tanks.
	Place combustible patio furniture inside.
	Connect the garden hose to outside taps.
	Place lawn sprinklers on the roof and near aboveground fuel tanks. Wet the roof.
	Wet or remove shrubs within 15 feet of the home.
	Gather fire tools, including a rake, axe, hand/chainsaw, bucket and shovel.

## after a wildfire strikes:

	Listen to and follow the advice and recommendations of the local aid organizations, including the emergency management office, the fire department and the utility companies.
	Check for hazards, such as gas or water leaks and electrical shorts. Turn off damaged utilities. Have the fire department or gas and electric companies turn the utilities back on when the area is secured.
	Check for injuries and administer first aid as needed.
	Check your food and water supplies. Do not eat anything from open containers near shattered glass.



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Insurance Services Office, Inc. The Wildland/Urban Fire Hazard. New York, NY: ISO, 1997

International Fire Code Institute Urban-Wildland Interface Code. Whittier, CA: IFCI, 2000

National Fire Protection Association  
Firewise Landscaping Videotapes (3) and Checklist. Firewise Construction Videotapes and Checklist. Quincy, MA: NFPA, 1994

- Protecting Your Home from Wildfire. Quincy, MA: NFPA, 1987

- Standard for Protection of Life and Property from Wildfire NFPA 299. 1997 Edition. Quincy, MA: NFPA, 1997.

NFPA Journal  
Wildland/Urban Interface Fires. Quincy, MA: NFPA, March/April.

National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Program.  
Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Hazard Assessment Methodology. Washington, DC: 1997

Underwriters Laboratories  
Tests for Fire Resistance of Roof Covering Materials. UL 790. Northbrook, IL: 1997

Alberta Environment Land and Forest Service  
FireSmart: Protecting Your Community from Wildfire. Partners in Protection. Edmonton, Alberta: May 1999.

# appendix I: additional sources of information

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California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF)

<http://www.fire.ca.gov/>

Colorado State University/Colorado Forestry Service

<http://lamar.colostate.edu/~firewise/>

Firewise

<http://www.firewise.org/>

National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC)

<http://www.nifc.gov/>

U.S. Forest Service

<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/>

Wildfire News

<http://www.wildfirenews.com/>



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# Fuelbreak Guidelines for Forested Subdivisions & Communities

By

Frank C. Dennis



*Knowledge to Go Places*



This publication was developed for use by foresters, planners, developers, homeowners' associations and others. Implementation of these measures cannot *guarantee* safety from all wildfires, but will greatly increase the probability of containing them at more manageable levels.



*Inadequate fire planning can result in loss of life or property and costly suppression activities.*



Colorado's forested lands are experiencing severe impacts from continuing population increases and peoples' desire to escape urban pressures. Subdivisions and developments are opening new areas for homesite construction at an alarming rate, especially along the Front Range and around recreational areas such as Dillon, Vail, and Steamboat Springs.

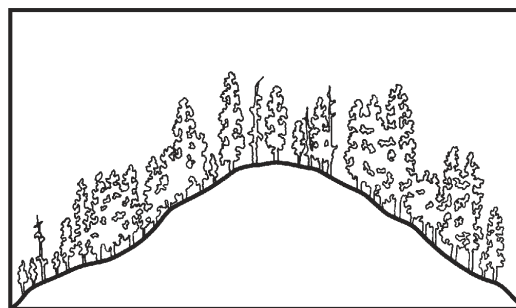
But with development inevitably comes a higher risk of wildfire as well as an ever-increasing potential for loss of life and property. Methods of fire suppression, pre-suppression needs, and homeowner and fire crew safety must all be considered in the planning and review of new developments as well as for the "retrofitting" of existing, older subdivisions.

Fuelbreaks should be considered in fire management planning for subdivisions and developments; however, the following are guidelines **only**. They should be customized to local areas by professional foresters experienced in Rocky Mountain wildfire behavior and suppression tactics.

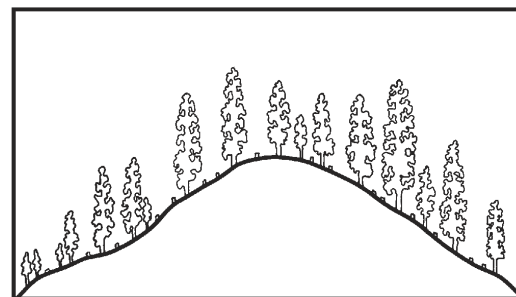
## Fuelbreak vs Firebreak

Although the term fuelbreak is widely used in Colorado, it is often confused with firebreak. The two are entirely separate, and aesthetically different, forms of forest fuel modification and treatment.

- A firebreak is strip of land, 20 to 30 feet wide (or more), in which all vegetation is removed down to bare, mineral soil each year prior to fire season.



*Above, cross section of mixed conifer stand before fuelbreak modification. Below, after modification.*



- A fuelbreak (or shaded fuelbreak) is an easily accessible strip of land of varying width (depending on fuel and terrain), in which fuel density is reduced, thus improving fire control opportunities. The stand is thinned, and remaining trees are pruned to remove ladder fuels. Brush, heavy ground fuels, snags, and dead trees are disposed of and an open, park-like appearance is established.

The following is a discussion of the uses, limitations, and specifications of fuelbreaks in wildfire control and fuels management.

## Fuelbreak Limitations

Fuelbreaks provide quick access for wildfire suppression. Control activities can be conducted more safely due to low fuel volumes. Strategically located, they break up large, continuous tracts of dense timber, thus limiting uncontrolled spread of wildfire.

Fuelbreaks can aid firefighters greatly by slowing fire spread under normal burning conditions. However, under extreme conditions, even the best fuelbreaks stand little chance of arresting a large





*Before and after photos of a forest stand thinned to reduce fuel loads.*

fire, regardless of firefighting efforts. Such fires, in a phenomenon called “spotting,” can drop firebrands 1/8-mile or more ahead of the main fire, causing very rapid fire spread. These types of large fires may continue until there is a major change in weather conditions, topography, or fuel type.

**It is critical to understand: A fuelbreak is the line of defense. The area (including any homes and developments) between it and the fire may remain vulnerable.**

In spite of these somewhat gloomy limitations, fuelbreaks have proven themselves effective in Colorado. During the 1980 Crystal Lakes Subdivision Fire near Fort Collins, crown fires were stopped in areas with fuelbreak thinnings, while other areas of dense lodgepole pine burned completely. A fire at O’Fallon Park in Jefferson County was successfully stopped and controlled at a fuelbreak. The Buffalo Creek Fire in Jefferson County (1996) and the High Meadow Fire in Park and Jefferson Counties (2000) slowed dramatically wherever intense forest thinnings had been completed. During the 2002 Hayman Fire, Denver Water’s entire complex of offices, shops and caretakers’ homes at Cheesman Reservoir were saved by a fuelbreak with no firefighting intervention by a fuelbreak.



*Burned area near Cheesman Reservoir as a result of the Hayman Fire. Note the unburned green trees in the middle right of the photo, a treated fuelbreak.*

## The Need For A Fuelbreak

Several factors determine the need for fuelbreaks in forested subdivisions, including: (1) potential problem indicators; (2) wildfire hazard areas; (3) slope; (4) topography; (5) crowning potential; and (6) ignition sources.

### Potential Problem Indicator

The table below explains potential problem indicators for various hazards and characteristics common to Colorado’s forest types. All major forest types, except aspen, indicate a high potential for wildfire hazard.

Fuel Type	Characteristics			Hazards			
	Aesthetics	Wildlife	Soil	Wildfire	Avalanche	Flood	Climate
Aspen	2	3	3	2	4	3	2
Douglas-fir	2	2	3	5	2	2	3
Greasewood-Saltbrush	4	2	2	2	1	3	3
Limber-Bristlecone Pine	3	2	4	3	4	2	5
Lodgepole Pine	2	2	3	5	4	2	4
Meadow	5	4	4	2	3	4	3
Mixed Conifer	2	1	1	5	3	1	3
Mountain Grassland	5	3	4	3	3	2	4
Mountain Shrub	3	5	4	4	2	2	3
Piñon-Juniper	2	3	4	4	2	3	2
Ponderosa Pine	2	3	1	5	2	2	3
Sagebrush	4	4	3	3	3	2	3
Spruce-Fir	2	3	3	4	5	3	4

Legend: 5 – Problem may be crucial; 4 – Problem very likely; 3 – Exercise caution; 2 – Problem usually limited; 1 – No rating possible

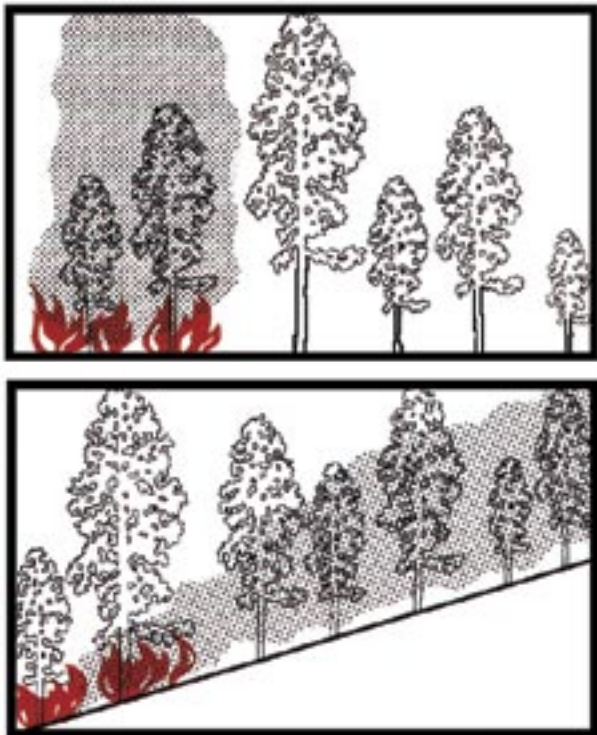


## Wildfire Hazard Maps

The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), numerous counties and some National Forests have completed wildfire hazard mapping for many areas within Colorado, particularly along the Front Range. These maps typically consider areas with 30 percent or greater slope; hazardous fuel types; and hazardous topographic features such as fire chimneys. Wildfire Hazard Ratings may be depicted in several ways. Whatever system is used, areas rated moderate or higher should be considered for fuel modification work.

### Slope

Rate of fire spread increases as the slope of the land increases. Fuels are preheated by the rising smoke column or they may even come into contact with the flames themselves.



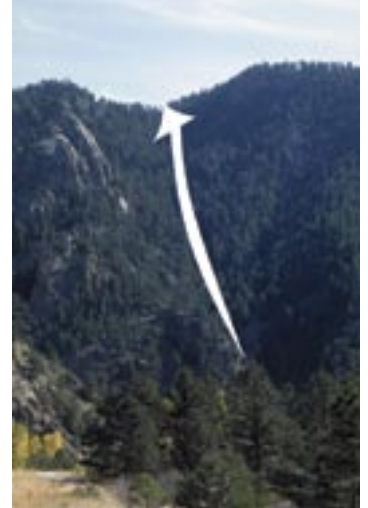
*Fire effects, flat vs steep terrain. Note preheating of fuels on steep ground from passage of smoke column.*

At 30 percent slope, rate of fire spread doubles compared to rates at level ground, drastically reducing firefighting effectiveness. **Areas near 30 percent or greater slopes are critical and must be reviewed carefully.**

### Topography

Certain topographic features influence fire spread and should be evaluated. Included are fire chimneys, saddles, and V-shaped canyons. They are usually recognized by reviewing standard U.S.G.S. quad maps.

- Chimneys are densely vegetated drainages on slopes greater than 30 percent. Wind, as well as air pre-heated by a fire, tends to funnel up these drainages, rapidly spreading fire upslope.



*Chimney.*



*Saddle.*

- Narrow, V-shaped valleys or canyons can ignite easily due to heat radiating from one side to the other. For example, a fire burning on one side of a narrow valley dries and preheats fuels on the opposite side until the fire “flashes over.” The natural effect of slope on fire then takes over and fire spreads rapidly up drainage and uphill along both sides of the valley.



*Flashover in V-shaped valley.*



## Crowning Potential

An on-site visit is required to accurately assess crowning potential. A key, below, helps determine this rating. Fuel modification is usually unnecessary if an area has a rating of 3 or less.

### Crowning Potential Key

	Rating
A. Foliage present, trees living or dead — B	
B. Foliage living — C	
C. Leaves deciduous or, if evergreen, usually soft, pliant, and moist; never oily, waxy, or resinous.	0
CC. Leaves evergreen, not as above — D	
D. Foliage resinous, waxy, or oily — E	
E. Foliage dense — F	
F. Ladder fuels plentiful — G	
G. Crown closure > 75 percent	9
GG. Crown closure < 75 percent	7
FF. Ladder fuels sparse or absent — H	
H. Crown closure > 75 percent	7
HH. Crown closure < 75 percent	5
EE. Foliage open — I	
I. Ladder fuel plentiful	4
II. Ladder fuel sparse or absent	2
DD. Foliage not resinous, waxy, or oily — J	
J. Foliage dense — K	
K. Ladder fuels plentiful — L	
L. Crown closure > 75 percent	7
LL. Crown closure < 75 percent	4
KK. Ladder fuels sparse or absent — M	
M. Crown closure > 75 percent	5
MM. Crown closure < 75 percent	3
JJ. Foliage open — N	
N. Ladder fuels plentiful	3
NN. Ladder fuels sparse or absent	1
BB. Foliage dead	0

The majority of dead trees within the fuelbreak should be removed. Occasionally, large, dead trees (14 inches or larger in diameter at 4 1/2 feet above ground level) may be retained as wildlife trees. If retained, all ladder fuels must be cleared from around the tree's trunk.

### Ignition Sources

Possible ignition sources, which may threaten planned or existing developments, must be investigated thoroughly. Included are other developments and homes, major roads, recreation sites, railroads, and other possible sources. These might be distant from the proposed development,

yet still able to channel fire into the area due to slope, continuous fuels, or other topographic features.

### Fuelbreak Locations

In fire suppression, an effective fire line is connected, or "anchored," to natural or artificial fire barriers. Such anchor points might be rivers, creeks, large rock outcrops, wet meadows, or a less flammable timber type such as aspen. Similarly, properly designed and constructed fuelbreaks take advantage of these same barriers to eliminate "fuel bridges." (Fire often escapes control because of fuel bridges that carry the fire across control lines.)

Since fuelbreaks should normally provide quick, safer access to defensive positions, they are necessarily linked with road systems. Connected with county-specified roads within subdivisions, they provide good access and defensive positions for firefighting equipment and support vehicles. Cut-and fill slopes of roads are an integral part of a fuelbreak as they add to the effective width of modified fuels.

Fuelbreaks without an associated road system, such as those located along strategic ridge lines, are still useful in fire suppression. Here, they are often strengthened and held using aerial retardant drops until fire crews can walk in or be ferried in by helicopter.

Preferably, fuelbreaks are located along ridge tops to help arrest fires at the end of their runs. However, due to homesite locations and resource values, they can also be effective when established at the base of slopes. Mid-slope fuelbreaks are least desirable, but under certain circumstances and with modifications, these too, may be valuable.

Fuelbreaks are located so that the area under management is broken into small, manageable units. Thus, when a wildfire reaches modified fuels, defensive action is more easily taken, helping to keep the fire small. For example, a plan for a subdivision might recommend that fuelbreaks break up continuous forest fuels into units of 10 acres or less. This is an excellent plan, especially if defensible space thinning is completed around homes and structures, and thinning for forest management and forest health are combined with the fuelbreak.

When located along ridge tops, continuous length as well as width are critical elements. Extensive long-range planning is essential in positioning these types of fuelbreaks.



## Aesthetics

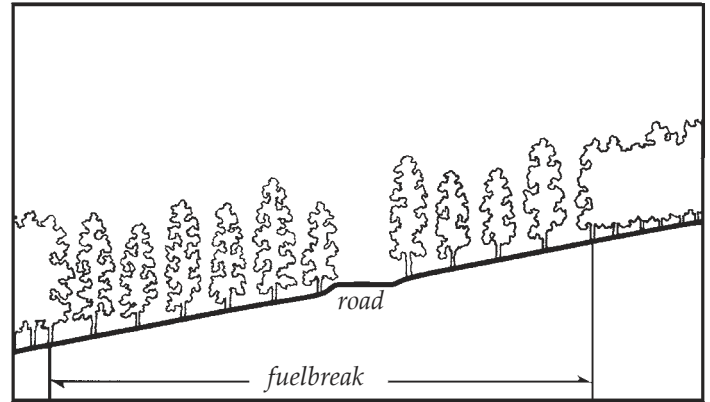
Improperly planned fuelbreaks can adversely impact an area's aesthetic qualities. Careful construction is necessary when combining mid-slope fuelbreaks with roads involving excessive cut-and-fill.



*These photos, far- and near- views of the same site, illustrate that forest can be thinned without impacting aesthetics.*

Care must also be taken in areas that are not thinned throughout for fuel hazard reduction. In such cases the fuelbreak visually sticks out like a “sore thumb” due to contrasting thinned and unthinned portions of the forest. (Especially noticeable are those portions of the fuelbreak above road cuts).

These guidelines are designed to minimize aesthetic impacts. However, some situations may require extensive thinning and, thus, result in a major visual change to an area. Additional thinning beyond the fuelbreak may be necessary to create an irregular edge and to “feather,” or blend, the fuelbreak thinning into the unthinned portions of the forest. Any thinning beyond the fuelbreak improves its effectiveness and is highly recommended.



*Cross-section of a typical fuelbreak built in conjunction with a road.*

## Constructing the Fuelbreak

### Fuelbreak Width and Slope Adjustments

Note: Since road systems are so important to fuelbreak construction, the following measurements are from the toe of the fill for downslope distances, and above the edge of the cut for uphill distances.

The minimum recommended fuelbreak width is approximately 300 feet for level ground. Since fire activity intensifies as slope increases, the overall fuelbreak width must also increase. However, to minimize aesthetic impacts and to maximize fire crew safety, the majority of the increases should be made at the bottom of the fuelbreak, below the road cut.

Widths are also increased when severe topographic conditions are encountered. Guidelines for fuelbreak widths on slopes are given below:

### Fuelbreak Width/Slope

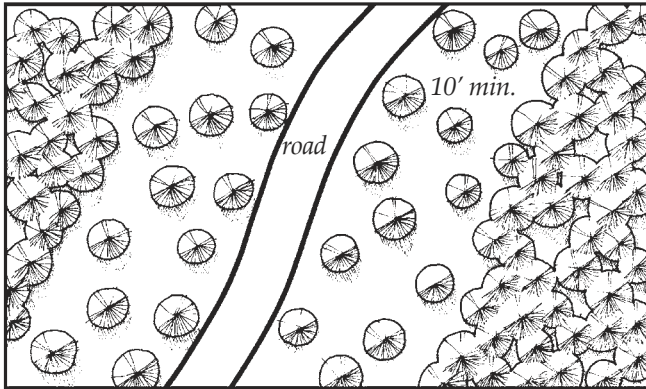
Percent Slope (%)	Minimum Uphill Distance (ft)	Minimum Downhill Distance (ft)	Total Width of Modified fuels (ft)*
0	150	150	300
10	140	165	303
20	130	180	310
30	120	195	315
40	110	210	320
50	100	225	325
60	100	240	340

\*As slope increases, total distance for cut-and-fill for road construction rapidly increases, improving fuelbreak effective width.



## Stand Densities

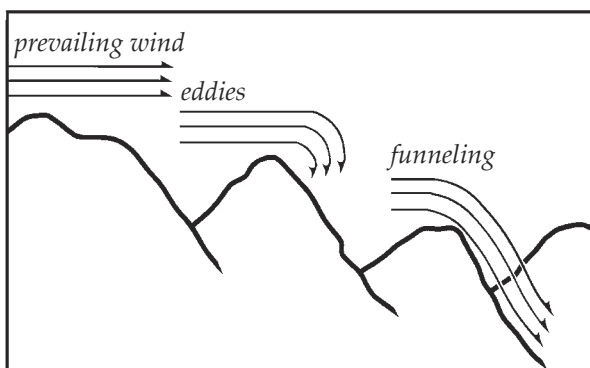
Crown separation is a more critical factor for fuelbreaks than a fixed tree density level. A *minimum* 10-foot spacing between the edges of tree crowns is recommended on level ground. As slope increases, crown spacing should also increase. However, small, isolated groups of trees may be retained for visual diversity. Increase crown spacing around any groups of trees left for aesthetic reasons and to reduce fire intensities and torching potential.



Plan view of fuelbreak showing minimum distance between tree crowns.

In technical terms, a fuelbreak thinning is classified as a heavy “sanitation and improvement cut, from below.” Within fuelbreaks, trees that are suppressed, diseased, deformed, damaged, or of low vigor are removed along with all ladder fuels. Remaining trees are the largest, healthiest, most wind-firm trees from the dominant and co-dominant species of the stand.

Because such a thinning is quite heavy for an initial entry into a stand, prevailing winds, eddy effects, and wind funneling must be carefully evaluated to minimize the possibility of windthrow. It may be necessary to develop the fuelbreak over several years to allow the timber stand to “firm-up” — this especially applies to lodgepole pine and Engelmann spruce stands.



Topography affects wind behavior – an important consideration during fuelbreak construction.

Area-wide forest thinnings are recommended for any subdivisions. Such thinning is not as severe as a fuelbreak thinning, but generally should be completed to fuelbreak specifications along the roads (as outlined on page 6.) In addition, “defensible space thinnings” are highly recommended around all structures (see CSU Coop. Extension Fact sheet 6.302, *Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones*).

## Debris Removal

Limbs and branches left from thinning (slash) can add significant volumes of fuel to the forest floor, especially in lodgepole pine, mixed-conifer, or spruce/fir timber types. These materials can accumulate and serve as ladder fuels, or can become “jackpots,” increasing the difficulty of defending the fuelbreak during a wildfire. **Slash decomposes very slowly in Colorado and proper disposal is essential.** Proper treatment reduces fire hazard, improves access for humans and livestock, encourages establishment of grasses and other vegetation, and improves aesthetics.

Three treatment methods are commonly used. These are lopping-and-scattering, piling and burning, and chipping. Mulching of small trees and slash using equipment similar to Hydro-axes or Timbcos equipped with mulching heads are becoming a popular method of treatment. Size, amount, and location of slash dictates the method used, in addition to cost and the final desired appearance. The method chosen will also depend on how soon an effective fuelbreak is needed prior to construction in new developments.



Lop and scatter: slash should be no deeper than 12" above ground surface.





*Chipping is the most desirable, but also the most expensive method of slash disposal.*



*Piled slash can be burned but only during certain conditions, such as after a snowfall.*

## Fuelbreak Maintenance

Following initial thinning, trees continue to grow (usually at a faster rate). The increased light on the forest floor encourages heavy grass and brush growth where, in many cases, where little grew before. The site disturbance and exposed mineral soil created during fuelbreak development is a perfect seed bed for new trees that, in turn, create new ladder fuels. Thus, in the absence of maintenance, fuelbreak effectiveness will decrease over time.



*Fuelbreak maintenance is essential. Ingrowth, shown above, will minimize the effectiveness of this fuelbreak within a few years.*

Fuelbreak maintenance problems are most often the result of time and neglect. Misplaced records, lack of follow-up and funding, and apathy caused by a lack of fire events are some of the major obstacles. In addition, the responsibility for fuelbreak maintenance projects is often unclear. For example, control of a fuelbreak completed by a developer passes to a homeowner's association, usually with limited funds and authority to maintain fuelbreaks.

**If fuelbreak maintenance is not planned and completed as scheduled, consider carefully whether the fuelbreak should be constructed. An un-maintained fuelbreak may lead to a false sense of security among residents and fire suppression personnel.**

## Conclusion

An image of well-designed communities for Colorado includes:

- Forested subdivisions where the total forest cover is well-managed through carefully planned, designed, and maintained thinnings. This contributes to reduced wildfire hazards and a much healthier forest — one that is more resistant to insects and disease.
- A system of roads and driveways with their associated fuelbreaks that break up the continuity of the forest cover and fuels. These help keep fires small, while also providing safer locations from which to mount fire suppression activities. In addition to allowing fire personnel in, they will allow residents to evacuate if necessary.
- Individual homes that all have defensible space around them, making them much easier to defend and protect from wildfire, while also protecting the surrounding forest from structure fires.

Creation of such communities is entirely feasible if recognition of the fire risks, a spirit of cooperation, an attitude of shared responsibility, and the political will exists.

*Colorado's mountains comprise diverse slopes, fuel types, aspects, and topographic features. This variety makes it impossible to develop general fuelbreak prescriptions for all locations. **The previous recommendations are guidelines only.** A professional forester with fire suppression expertise should be consulted to "customize" fuelbreaks for particular areas.*



## **APPENDIX G – Road and Driveway Specifications for Emergency Access**

### **Roads serving one dwelling unit shall meet the following:**

- A. Roadway shall be a total of 14' in width, including a 10' all-weather travel surface and 2' shoulders (each side). Curves and turn a rounds should have a minimum of a 30' radius at centerline.
- B. Road grade should generally not be over 7 percent. A maximum grade 10 percent to 12 percent grade would be acceptable for short distances not over 150 feet.
- C. If the driveway is less than 50' the above (A and B) do not apply.
- D. If the length of the road exceeds 150', a turnaround shall meet (template 1 or 2) standards.

### **Roads serving more than one dwelling shall meet the following:**

- A. Roadway shall be a total of 20' in width, including a 16' all weather travel surface and 2' shoulders (template 3) to 16 units, or a total width of 14', including a 10' travel surface, with 2' shoulders on either side and pullouts at 150' intervals in accordance with (template 4).
- B. A total roadway width of 24', including an 18' paved surface and 3' shoulders in accordance with (template 3) for roads serving 16 or more dwellings, or one or more non-residential units.
- C. Grades shall be the same as for one dwelling roads/driveway identified above.
- D. If the length of the driveway is less than 50' then A and B above does not apply.
- E. If the length exceeds 150', a turnaround shall be provided in accordance with (template 1 or 2).

### **Driveway approaches and private road intersections with public roads shall meet the following:**

- A. Driveway approaches and private road intersections with public roads must comply with (template 5).



# TEMPLATE 1 – Cul-de-sac

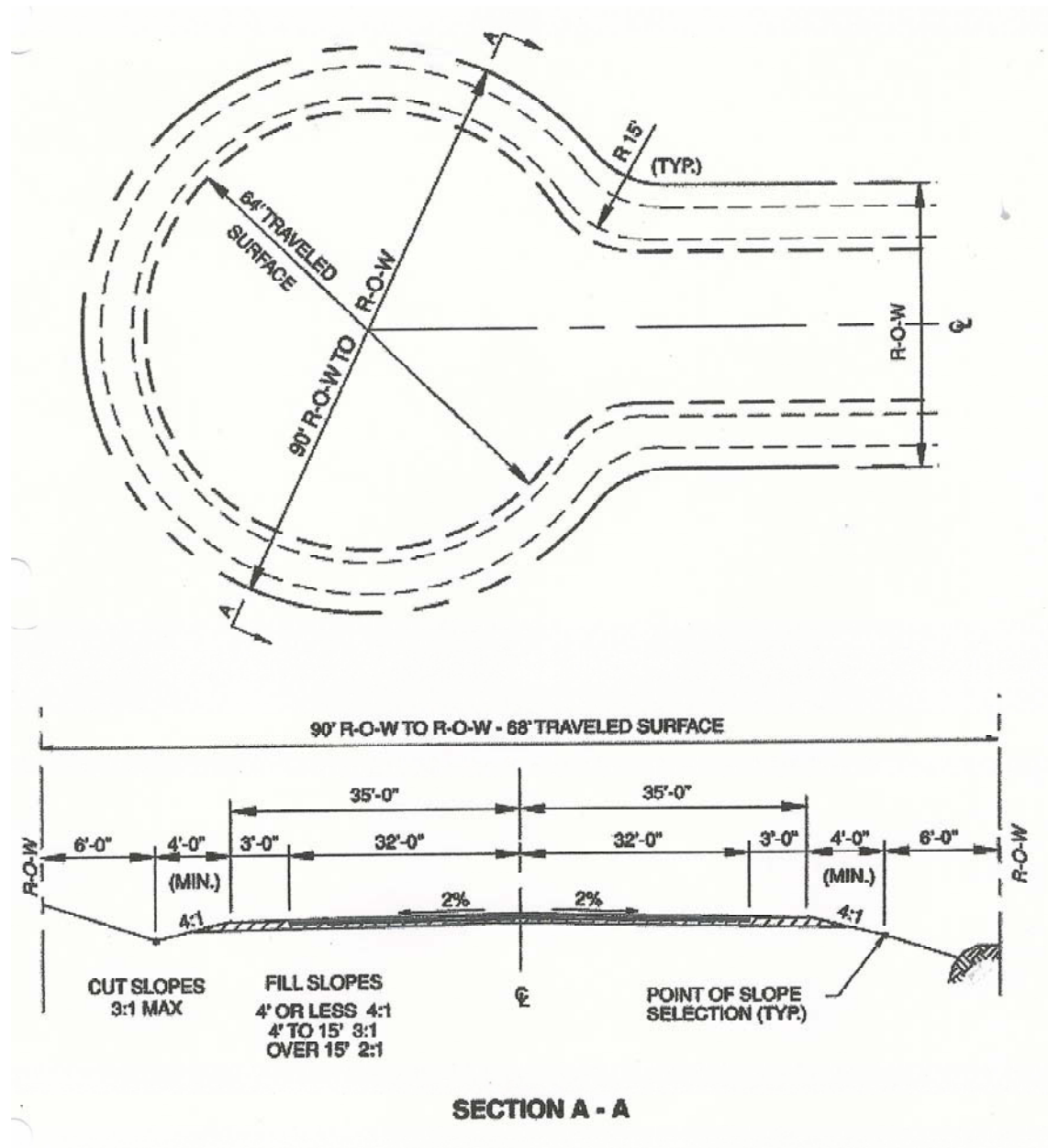
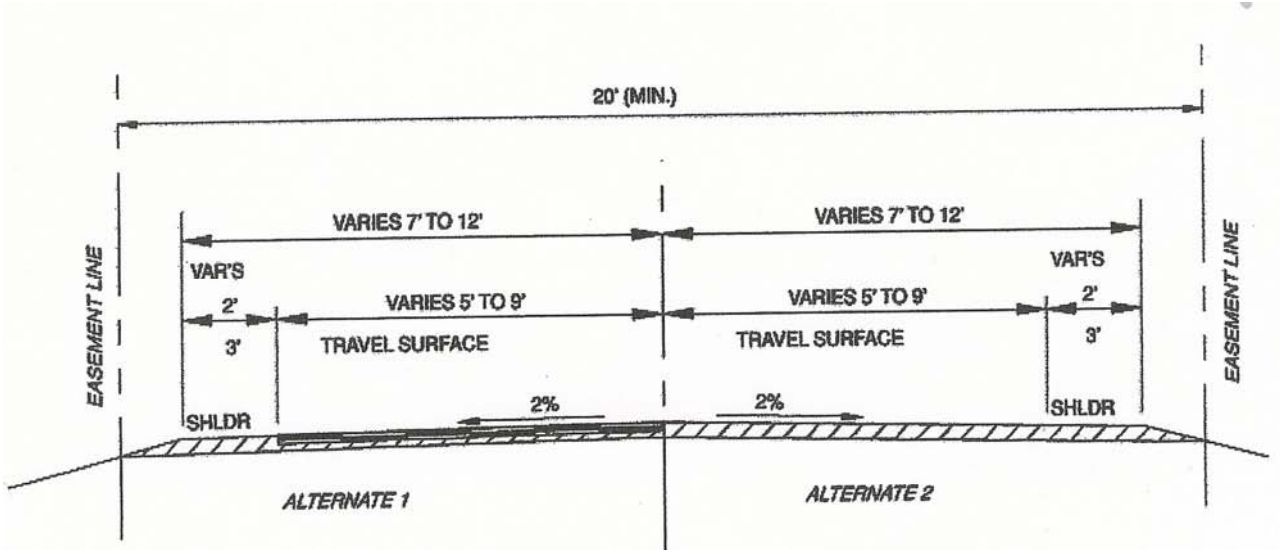


Diagram illustrating the dimensions and components of a T-intersection:

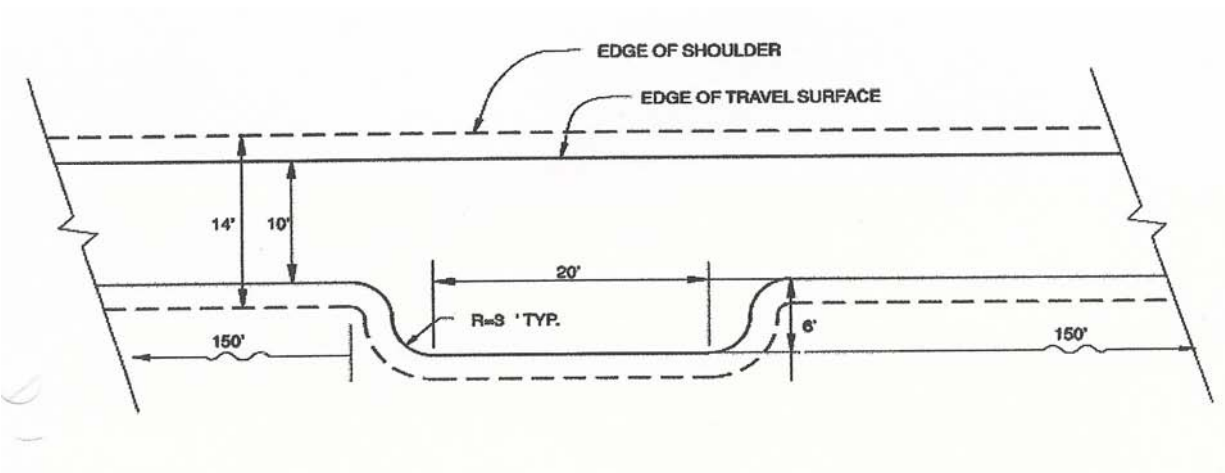
- Top Horizontal Dimension:** 20' (MIN.)
- Top Horizontal Labels:** VARIES, TRAVEL SURFACE
- Top Horizontal Spacing:** 2' (on each side of the travel surface)
- Left Vertical Dimension:** 20' (MIN.)
- Left Vertical Labels:** VARIES, TRAVEL SURFACE
- Left Vertical Spacing:** 2' (on each side of the travel surface)
- Right Vertical Dimension:** 34'
- Horizontal Dimension from Left:** 34'
- Bottom Right Labels:**
  - TRAVELED SURFACE WIDTH VARIES 10'-18' (TYP.)
  - SHOULDER WIDTH VARIES 2'-3' (TYP.)
- Bottom Horizontal Dimension:** 20' (MIN.)
- Bottom Labels:**
  - EASEMENT LINE
  - EDGE OF SHOULDER
  - EDGE OF TRAVELED SURFACE
- Radius Label:** R15' RADIUS (TYP.)



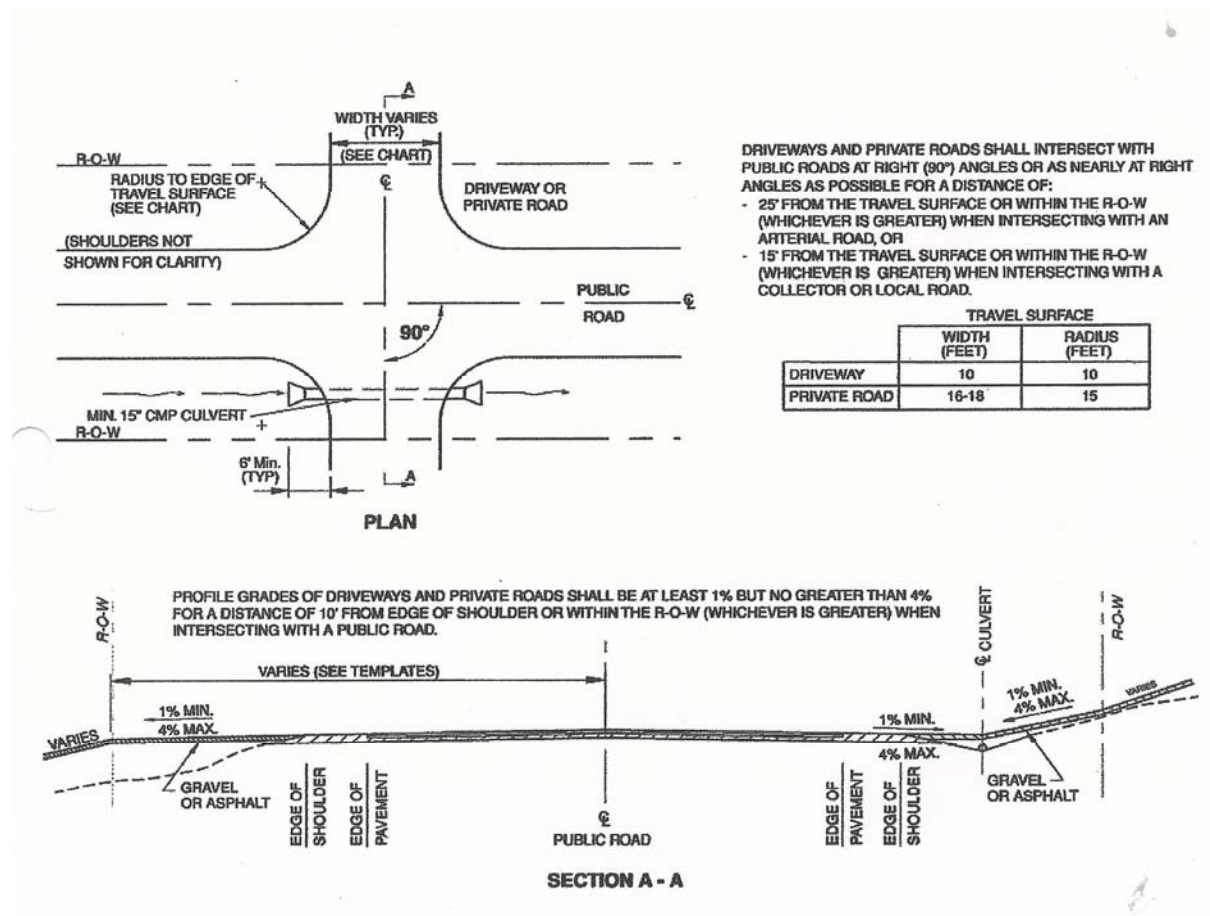
### TEMPLATE 3 – Private Road



### TEMPLATE 4 – Pull Out for Private Road



## TEMPLATE 5 – Driveway Approaches for Roads





## APPENDIX H – Del Norte FPD Triage

### STRUCTURE TRIAGE

**Triage** is the determination of priorities for action during an emergency. This describes a concise decision making process that will be used if/when a wildfire threatens multiple structures simultaneously within the fire protection district. It will be done rapidly and on the move.

**Structure:**

Roof Type?  
Debris on Roof?  
Propane Tank?

Siding?  
Fire Brand Traps?  
Flammable Clutter?

**Defensible Space:**

Is There Any?  
Water Supply?

Adjacent Fuel Type ?  
Access?

**Current & Expected Fire Behavior?**

**Available Firefighting Resources?**

**Firefighter Safety:**

Escape Routes?

Safety Zones?

Quickly determine the status of each threatened structure and make decisions!

Clearly communicate the priorities and firefighter evacuation criteria!

Be ready to live with your decisions, they will be second guessed after the threat is over.

**Your first priority is to live to fight fire another day!!**

# SUBDIVISION FIRE HAZARD RATING

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 SIZE (acres) \_\_\_\_\_ # LOTS or HOMES \_\_\_\_\_  
 RATING \_\_\_\_\_ COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

## A. Home Site Development Area Design

1. Ingress/Egress
  - Two of more primary roads 1\_\_
  - One road 3\_\_
  - One-way in, one-way out 5\_\_
2. Width of primary road
  - 20 feet or more 1\_\_
  - 20 feet or less 3\_\_
3. Accessibility
  - Road grade 5% or less 1\_\_
  - Road grade 5% or more 3\_\_
4. Secondary road terminus:
  - Loop roads, cul-de-sacs with outside turning radius of 45 feet or greater. 1\_\_
  - Cul-de-sac turn-around radius less than 45 feet. 2\_\_
  - Dead-end roads 200 feet or less in length 3\_\_
  - Dead-end roads greater than 300 feet in length. 5\_\_
5. Average lot size:
  - 10 acres or larger 1\_\_
  - Larger than 1 acre, but less than 10 acres. 3\_\_
  - 1 acre or less 5\_\_
6. Street Signs:
  - Present 1\_\_
  - Not Present 5\_\_

## B. Defensibility

1. Fuel Load Between Home Sites:
  - Light 1\_\_
  - Medium 5\_\_
  - Heavy 10\_\_
2. Defensible Space for Individual Homes:
  - 70% or more of sites 1\_\_
  - 30 % or more of sites 3\_\_
  - Less than 30 % of sites 5\_\_

## C. Home Ignition Zone

- Thorough Litter and Debris Clean Up:
- 70% or more of sites 1\_\_
  - 30% to 69% of sites 4\_\_
  - 10% to 29% of sites 7\_\_
  - 0% to 9% of sites 10\_\_

## D. Roofing Materials (prevalent within area)

- Class A rated (metal) 1\_\_
- Class B rated (composition) 3\_\_
- Class C rated (wood) 5\_\_
- Non-rated (pine needles & debris) 10\_\_

## E. Fire Protection - Water Source

- 500 GPM hydrant within 1000 ft. 1\_\_
- Hydrant farther than 1000 ft or draft site. 2\_\_
- Water source 20 minutes or less (round trip) 5\_\_
- Water source farther than 20 minutes, and 45 minutes or less round trip. 7\_\_
- Water source farther than 45 minutes round trip 10\_\_

## F. Existing Building Construction Material (most common within subdivision)

- Noncombustible siding/decks 1\_\_
- Noncombustible siding with combustible decks 5\_\_
- Combustible siding and decks 10\_\_

## G. Utilities (gas and/or electric) (most common within subdivision)

- All underground utilities 1\_\_
- One underground, one above ground 3\_\_
- All above ground 5\_\_

## Total For Area

=====

Rating Scale:      Moderate Hazard      40 - 54  
                          High Hazard      55 - 74  
                          Extreme Hazard      75+



## APPENDIX J – Definition of Terms

**Appropriate Management Response (AMR)** - Specific actions taken in response to a wildland fire to implement protection and fire use objectives identified by appropriate government agency. AMR allows for a full range of strategies to be applied, from an intense full suppression response to wildland fire use. The first response decision to be made is whether to have a suppression oriented response or to allow the fire to burn for predetermined benefits.

**Confinement Response-** The suppression-orientated strategy employed in appropriate management response where a fire perimeter is managed by a combination of direct and indirect actions and use of natural topographic features, fuels, and weather factors. These strategies and tactics could include perimeter control.

**Defensible Space-** Area around a structure where fuels and vegetation are treated, cleared or reduced to slow the spread of wildfire towards the structure. It also reduces the chance of a structure fire moving from the building to surrounding forest. Defensible space provides room for firefighters to do their jobs.

**Disturbance-** A discrete event, either natural or human induced, that causes a change in the existing condition of an ecological system.

**Energy Release Component (ERC)** - An index developed through the National Fire Danger Rating System. ERC then is an indicator of dryness in the fuel, is a fuel loading based rate that predicts how much energy a fire will produce both from its consumption of available fuel and through its residence time. ERC, and 1000 hour time lag fuel moisture has been used in dry climates to track seasonal drying trends.

**Escape Fire Situation Analysis (EFSA)** - If a wildfire has escaped initial attack EFSA is the process the agency administrator or acting uses to determine the best suppression strategy for achieving appropriate suppression that best meets resource objectives.

**Fire Management Plan (FMP)** - A strategic plan that defines a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires. The plan could be supplemented by operational plans, prescribed fire plans, hazardous fuels reduction, and prevention plans.

**Fire Use** - The combination of wildland fire use and prescribed fire application to meet specific resource and landowner objectives.

**Fuel Treatment** - Programmed and contracted to reduce or change fuel loading or type on a site. Can be accomplished by mechanical, chemical or fire use.

**Full Response** - A suppression response action that can include: control lines surrounding the entire perimeter, (hot spot and cold trail may be considered completed line) including any spot fires, protection of interior islands, burn-out of fuels adjacent to control lines and mop-up to a standard adequate to hold under high fire intensity conditions. Full response objectives are based on safe yet aggressive approach to achieve containment of the fire by the beginning of the next burn period. Fire behavior may dictate, at least temporarily, the utilization of natural barriers or indirect strategies. These strategies and tactics would include direct control.

**Haines Index** - Lower atmosphere stability index (LASI) developed by Donald Haines. The index relies on two variables: dryness and stability/instability. On a scale of six, three points are given to dryness and three to the stability or instability of the atmosphere. Both these variables have a pronounced affect on extreme fire behavior. In the scaling, a 6 is extreme, 5 are high, 4 are moderate, while 3 to 1 are low.

**Initial Attack** - An aggressive suppression action consistent with firefighter and public safety and values to be protected.

**Initial Management Area (IMA)** - The size of an IMA may be adjusted based on fire behavior predictions, weather forecasts, site analysis and risk assessment. The IMA becomes fixed as an MMA once a wildland fire is placed under a stage III implementation plan.

**Insurance Services Office (ISO) Rating** - An overall fire services rating developed for use in determining insurance premiums for residential and commercial property. Factors such as fire alarm systems, equipment, training, availability of water (hydrants), etc. are used to develop the rating. The rating is on a scale of class 1 to class 10, with 1 providing the best public protection and 10 providing the lowest public protection. See [www.iso.com](http://www.iso.com) for more details.

**Maximum Management Area (MMA)** - The firm limits of management capability to accommodate the social, political, and resource impacts of a wildland fire. Once an approved Wildland Fire Use plan is established the MMA is fixed and not subject to change. If MMA determination is exceeded, the fire will follow the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) process.

**Mitigation Actions** - Those on-the-ground activities that will serve to increase the defensibility of the Maximum Manageable Area (MMA); check, direct, or delay the spread of fire, and minimize threats to life, property, and resources. Mitigation actions may include mechanical and physical non-fire tasks, specific fire applications, and limited suppression actions. These actions will be used to construct fire lines, reduce excessive fuel concentrations, reduce vertical fuel, and create black lines.

**POL** – Stands for “Products Other than Logs” thinning to harvest poles and posts and firewood.

**Polygon** - A planning sub-unit within a fire planning area that represents similar resource values and landowners objectives, fuel conditions with associated fire behavior, Social/Political concerns and economic considerations. Polygons are categorized as A, B, C, and D areas.

**Preparedness** - Activities that lead to a safe, efficient, and cost-effective fire management program in support of land and owners management objectives through appropriate planning and coordination.

**Prescribed Fire** - Any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist prior to ignition.

**Prescribed Fire Plan** - A plan required for each fire application ignited by management. It must be prepared by qualified personnel and approved by the appropriate agency administrator prior to implementation. Each plan will follow specific direction and must include critical elements and how to mitigate each element.

**Prescription Guidelines** - guidelines used to show upper and lower reaches of a prescription.

**Spread Component (SC)** - An index developed through the National Fire Danger Rating System. The index provides predicted rate of spread of a fire (in chains per hour) from inputted information on the fuel complex and weather information collected from a local Remote Automated Weather System (RAWS) site.

**Suppression Constraints** - A limitation placed on suppression forces to minimize adverse affects to the environment due to fire suppression activities. An example would be restricting the use of heavy equipment in certain areas.

**Suppression Oriented Response** - A range of responses to a wildland fire, which range from full response to confinement of the fire. It may also include periodically checking fire status and fire behavior.

**TSI** – Stands for “Timber Stand Improvement” thinning to stimulate growth and improve residual tree health

**Wildfire** - An unwanted wildland fire.

**Wildland Fire** - Any nonstructural fire, other than prescribed fire, that occurs in the wildland. This term encompasses fires previously called both wildfires and prescribed natural fires.

**Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP)** - A progressively developed assessment and operational management plan that documents the analysis and selection of strategies and describes the appropriate management response for a wildland fire being managed for resource benefit.

**Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA)** - A decision-making process that evaluates alternative management strategies against selected safety, environmental, social, economic, political, and resource management objectives.



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# MASONIC PARK

## Wildfire Assessment

### &

## Mitigation Plan



Forest Stewardship Concepts, Ltd  
5/23/2003

**Introduction:**

Masonic Park is a tight accumulation of over eighty homes and outbuildings. The overall wildfire hazard rating for the development is moderate. There is adequate water supply, with good access overall.

Many houses are close together and the biggest threat to the area is fire propagation from one structure to another. Numerous individual structures have fire hazard ratings of high or extreme. Using the map and the structure ratings, individuals can see how their home rated and focus on what they need to do to improve its wildfire survivability.



Photo 1: Dangerous firewood storage.



## ASSESSMENT

### Structure Wildfire Hazard:

Each home in Masonic Park was rated for its wildfire hazard using the Colorado State Forest Service “Wildland Home Risk Evaluation System”. Hazard factors include items such as; vegetation type, roofing materials, defensible space around the structure, access and water supply. See Appendix A: Homesite & Structure Fire Hazard Rating for a summary of the actual ratings.

The overall layout of the development was also studied to determine the interactions between structures and their environment. Fire hydrants were located and road adequacy determined.

Eighty seven primary structures were evaluated in all. Small outbuildings were included in the primary structure hazard rating. Table 1: Masonic Park individual Structure Wildfire Risk summarizes the fire hazard ratings for the primary structures.

**Table 1:**

**Masonic Park Individual Structure Wildfire Risk**

<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>EXTERME</b>
2 for 2%	40 for 45%	21 for 24%	24 for 28%

Forty seven homes had tree branches over the roof.

Thirty eight homes needed to install or improve the spark arrestor on their chimney.

Thirty four homes had flammable vegetation within five feet of the structure or deck.

Twenty seven homes have firewood or combustibles within three feet of the structure.

Five homes have branches within 15 feet of the chimney.

Defensible space is an area around a structure where dead woody fuels and vegetation are treated, cleared or reduced to slow the spread of wildfire towards the structure. It also reduces the chances of a structure fire moving from the building to surrounding vegetation. Defensible space provides room for firefighters to do their jobs. See Appendix B: Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones for an in-depth discussion of the topic.

Table 2: Masonic Park Defensible Space provides a concise view of the challenges ahead for firefighters when the inevitable wildfire threatens Masonic Park. Firefighters prefer to have a defendable zone of seventy to one hundred feet around each home. This gives them the best chance to safely protect the building.

**Table 2:**

**Masonic Park Defensible Space Zones**

<b>NONE</b>	<b>0-15 FEET</b>	<b>16-30 FEET</b>	<b>&gt; 30 FEET</b>
7 for 8%	16 for 19%	17 for 20%	47 for 54%

Forty seven percent of the structures in Masonic Park will not get a second glance by firefighters during a large wildfire triage process.

Masonic Park has small lots and structures are normally very close. One of the more likely wildfire scenarios for the development is fire spreading from structure to structure much like the old mining town fires of the 1800s. Community vulnerability and survivability is dependent upon many independent actions.

**Fire Control Features:**

Water supply seems to be adequate given the Parks proximity to the Rio Grande River and the dry hydrant at the bridge. There are a few hydrants around that rely on a 10,000 gallon storage tank on the hill west of the Park. This storage facility may be susceptible to the vagaries of drought and electrical supply and should not be seen as a panacea for fire fighting water supply. Hydrant water is not readily available along Lewis Lane.

Road access is good for most of the area. Ford Lane is a tad steep and narrow for easy travel by large fire trucks.

The large, grassy common area in the center of the Park is a good safety zone. It will provide sanctuary for numerous people and fire trucks. Another logical safety zone and staging area lays just south of the entrance to the Park near Hwy 149.

**Fire Behavior:**

Fires coming into Masonic Park from the neighbors will likely be burning downhill from the west or east or be burning along the grassy banks of the Rio Grande River. Given the developments position on the landscape and the surrounding vegetation, wildfires should not hit the community with great vigor.

Fire behavior among the structures in the Park is another matter. Fire intensity among the buildings is expected to be intense depending upon the initial source of the fire. Once several buildings become involved others will rapidly follow.



## **Wildfire Mitigation**

### **Individual Structures:**

The key to wildfire survivability in Masonic Park is the overall reduction of fire hazards for individual homes. If your home is in good condition it is more likely to survive a fire next door and less likely to cause a problem for neighbors if it catches on fire first. Appendix C: Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones provides each homeowner with a list of things to consider to make their home more wildfire safe. Tending to these items will markedly improve conditions within the development.

Simply moving wood piles away from structures and pruning limbs near buildings can make a dramatic difference.

### **Fire Control Features:**

Existing roads, hydrants and safety zones will serve Masonic Park well during a wildfire. Making sure they stay fully functional and that a core group of residents knows how to operate the water system is crucial. Testing the dry hydrant at the bridge and making sure the 10,000 gallon is kept full during wildfire season will assure maximum effectiveness of these important features.



Photo 2: Dry Hydrant near bridge.