

Pole Hill Road Community Wildfire Protection Plan

**Pole Hill Road Community Wildfire Protection Group
(PHRCWPG)**

**Larimer County, Colorado
(West of Pinewood Reservoir, Loveland)**

November 2009

The Pole Hill Road Community Wildfire Protection Group

October 2009

Those responsible for the Pole Hill Road Community Wildfire Protection Group (CWPP) progress in organizing, devising, and writing the plan for the area from the Pinewood Reservoir Dam to west of Quillan Gulch Road, both north and south of Pole Hill Road, aka County Road 18E, include the following:

Belinda Biddle*	Education, coordination, *”Key Contact”
Gib Coalwell	Maps, organization, survey presentations
Bob Ducharme	Spreadsheet, map
Carolyn & Dick Housden	Initial planning, support
Tracey & Kip Korthuis	Emergency preparedness, literature
Donna Moore*	Organization, communication, revisions, *”Key Contact”
Randy Moore	Communication, planning, implementation
Karla & Gary Morton	Communication
Gayle & Mike Talley	Planning
Susie Weiss	Mapping tour
Jim Wiegand	Plan draft writer, planning
Janet Collins	Education, organization, planning

The Biddle, Coalwell, Talley, and Wiegand properties show Fuelbreak Grant work as the first matching-grant project/demo under the direction of Diana Selby of the Colorado State Forest Service.

Paul Bohrer, in August 2007, sent the SNRRA and QGRA boards information about CWPP’s, which became the impetus for the February 8, 2008, residents’ meeting and the plan’s development.

Encouragement and/or Active Interest

Paul & Gayle Bohrer
Tom Collard
Peggy & Mike Flood
Steve Goodroad
Gail Johnson
Earl & Judy Mollohan
Pat & Ken Prior
Gary & Carol Theilgaard
Pixie Vieux & Carl Jett

Many other residents and property owners have attended meetings, completed the surveys, and expressed an interest in the effort to develop an organized community for actively mitigating the danger of a catastrophic wildfire, preventing infestation from the Mountain Pine Beetle, and safely dealing with emergencies in the event of a fire. Numerous residents and property owners are or have been working for years on thinning; removing ladder fuels, mistletoe or beetle-attacked trees; creating the necessary defensible space around their homes, continuing to either do work on their own or hire contractors.

Tony Simons of Larimer County Emergency Services and Diana Selby of the CSFS continue to guide our work and plans. Dick Edwards of the USFS also is aware of the plan and work.

Pole Hill Road Community Wildfire Protection Group Area, Organization, Formation

The Pole Hill Road Community Wildfire Protection Group (PHRCWPG) serves to connect an area about five miles long from west of the Pinewood Reservoir Dam to west of the Quillan Gulch Road/Pole Hill Power Plant intersection. About one hundred homes and some vacant land are in the area along and either side of Pole Hill Road/W. County Road 18E. Two formal road associations, Saddle Notch Ranch Road Association with forty-six properties and Quillan Gulch Road Association with about 20 properties, have the majority of the residents. An informal Pole Hill Road Association has the sole purpose of maintaining West County Road 18E and communicating with all area property owners west of the Pinewood Reservoir Dam. It is this same area that is covered by the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, but independently of any existing association. Approximately twenty properties along and south of 18E contribute to the maintenance of that road, but are not included in the SNRRA or QGRA. Most of this area is west of the Loveland Rural Fire Protection District, so community awareness, education, preparation, and on-going proactive work are especially important. On the north and west, parts of the plan area border United States Forest Service (USFS) land.

As people have moved to the area and begun to recognize the responsibilities that accompany the privilege of living in the forest, many have responded to that responsibility by thinning trees and creating defensible space around their homes. Others have become aware of what wildfires can do to a forest and homes within the path, but have not been able or experienced in working toward prevention, thus the importance of education and community organization. Even those whose property needs less fire mitigation work, have a vested interest in having the forest actively managed to avoid a catastrophic, uncontrollable wildfire. Many possibilities for involvement exist for the area which has a variety of native vegetation that includes Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, Rocky Mountain juniper, cottonwood, aspen, and some Lodgepole pine trees, as well as Mountain mahogany, Alpine currant, chokecherry bushes, assorted pasture grasses, and other plants and wild flowers.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan resulted from a meeting on February 8, 2008, where a group of area residents met with Diana Selby, Colorado State Forest Service, and Tony Simons, Larimer County Emergency Services, who explained the advantages of a plan and the process for writing and implementing a plan. After the initial meeting, a core group formed to establish the concerns, values, and goals that sparked the communication, survey, and development of the written plan. Dick Edwards, United States Forest Service, also is a contact for the PHRCWPG. Their expertise and willing assistance has been essential to the group's success.

This plan provides a guide for organized work to create a healthy forest and environment which should be better able to withstand and deal with forest fires, while protecting the life we value in the mountains.

Thinning and creating fuel breaks enables trees to be stronger. Healthy, stronger trees are better able to fight insects (e.g. Mtn. Pine Beetle) and disease (e.g. Dwarf mistletoe).

In creating this better forest, the plan does not provide for forcing any property owner to cut trees. It does open lines of communication to promote safer environment. The plan itself is a living document which can change to meet the current needs.

*The first priority suggested by Tony Simons of Larimer County Emergency Services is to create a fuel break along the road easements and create a defensible space around each home site.

*The opportunity to obtain grants is important: Felling trees is the easy part. Disposing of slash and the wood left after cutting the trees can be hard work. We may be able to hire help for some parts of our plan and match the help with our own work, keeping track of hours and efforts.

Maps provided by Tony Simons show the area where we live and allow us to identify property owners and related information.

Notes: Please fill out the Pole Hill Community Wildfire Protection Plan Group's Survey/Questionnaire and return it as soon as possible. The surveys are integral to the final plan since we must show that we have contacted property owners within the area that will be part of the plan.

Resources for developing this plan:

www.larimer.org/wildfire

<http://csfs.colostate.edu/>

http://us.share.geocities.com/buckskinheights/buckskin Hgts_CWP.pdf

<http://pcfpd.com/default.aspx>

The last two sites are for plans in place for the Masonville area and the Poudre Canyon Fire Protection District.

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan

TO: Protect the Area's Homes, Lives, Trees, and Wildlife Against Wildfires and Reduce Beetle and Disease Damage!

Values Identified by those who are developing a plan:

1. Homes and home sites
2. Forests
3. Clean air
4. Quiet/solitude
5. Environment—Open Space/Watersheds
6. Neighbors
7. Wildlife
8. Livestock and pets
9. Privacy

Concerns Relating to Protection of Values:

1. Condition of forest
2. Safety in case of fire: escape routes, safe zones, access for fire equipment and emergency help
3. Communication system (phone tree, email, etc.)
4. Assessment of area's current fire-risk
5. Identification of properties
6. Education to help all understand the needs and actions: i.e. defensible space, burn permits, access options, forest health needs, etc.

Advantages of Having an Approved Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

1. Improved wildfire protection for the entire area
2. Aid/guidance from Colorado State Forest Service, Larimer County Emergency Services, and U. S. Forest Service
3. Prioritized USFS work areas near the Plan area
4. Availability of money/grants to facilitate work by individuals or groups on forest mitigation projects
5. Chance to participate in grant match through work or monetary contribution to match
6. Supply of firewood or chips in exchange for work or monetary contribution

Pole Hill Road Community Wildfire Protection Group

Larimer County, Colorado

November 1, 2009

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was developed and completed by the Pole Hill Road Community Wildfire Protection Group (PHRCWPG) in collaboration with:

Larimer County Emergency Services
Colorado State Forest Service
United States Forest Service
Loveland Fire Department/Rural Fire Protection District

Objective: Improve protection of life, property, infrastructure, and other tangible and intangible values by mitigating catastrophic wildfire probability and damage. This report contains our risk assessment, concerns, action plan, and responsibilities for:

1. Reducing hazardous fuels
2. Reducing ignitability of structures
3. Trimming and thinning along roads for safe access by fire fighting personnel and safe evacuation egress
4. Trimming and thinning along private drives for safe access by fire fighting personnel and safe egress
5. Mapping and improving escape routes and reverse 911 communication
6. Improving public education and community awareness of wildfire issues

Who we are:

PHRCWPG is composed of landowners of various forested properties accessed by Pole Hill Road (West County Road 18E), Stone Mountain, Skinner Gulch, Lone Wolf, Saddle Notch, Sawmill, Lone Wolf, Mountain Climb, Lone Elk, Quillan Gulch, and Bitterroot Gulch roads. Access to some homes is W. County Road 18E, itself.

What we are and when we activated:

A citizen group whose lives, property, and values are threatened by wildfire. Public meetings concerning this CWPP were advertised and held on February 8, May 7, 15 and 31st, 2008. Our committee heads met on July 25 to conduct a final critique and re-write of the Plan. That draft allowed us to apply for and obtain grants for a fuel break demonstration and easement clearing.

Where we are:

See map and boundary description of our Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). On the east, we are bordered primarily by the Pinewood Reservoir and community. Bordering on the north and parts of the west is USFS land, as well as private properties. On the south is some state land, along with private land.

How and Why:

Because we are not part of any fire protection district or attached to any home owners association, to realize our objectives, we need to

1. Increase the number of residents who actively work for a safer forested community, by updating our survey of member properties regularly.
2. Provide opportunities for education on pertinent forest care and safety.
3. Encourage residents in their individual efforts for community good.
4. Circulate, finalize and submit this CWPP by November 5, 2009.
5. Write and obtain grants to cooperatively complete our objectives.

Values. During the PHRCWPG meeting held on May 7, 2008, the following values were identified as worthy of protection:

Homes and home sites
Forest environment
Clean air
Quiet/Solitude
Environment-Open Space/Watershed
Neighbors
Wildlife
Livestock/Pets
Privacy

Base Map. Developed by PHRCWPG, the base map (attached) indicates the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), inhabited areas and critical human infrastructure. Where possible, the map identifies other values such as wildlife migration routes, livestock/pets, watershed, and privacy buffers.

Risk Assessment. Narrative analysis of the base map which identifies the highest priority areas for treatment. This risk assessment may also describe other high priority projects already achieved through grants and use of available human and financial resources.

Narrative:

1. Hazardous fuels ignitability. Factors influencing fire spread and containability

Wildfire hazard within and around the WUI is high to extreme. Contributing factors include a continuous fuel ladder, steep slopes, few fire roads or firebreaks and frequent year-round periods of dry weather, accompanied by strong winds. Should a crown fire develop during high winds, control or containment would be difficult, dangerous, and under adverse conditions, not feasible. An immediate call to 911 is vital to immediately begin suppression measures, and then contact community members, beginning with those closest to the ignition, since the area is not covered by a fire protection district. Response will be from Larimer County Emergency Services (LCES), Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), and other fire support as coordinated by LCES. Evacuation, if necessary, will be directed by emergency personnel on site and is not advised without their direction (per LCES).

Historical incidents. Present risk of wildfire occurrence and spread

Historically, the primary cause of fire within and around the WUI has been lightning strikes. However, as dwellings and adjoining recreational uses increase, the likelihood of accidental ignition by people, including private contractors, county contractors and staff, motorists, hikers and guests is also increasing.

Following is table of recent fires in the WUI to which the Loveland Fire Department responded (Source-Chris Shoemaker-Loveland FD):

<u>Year</u>	<u>Occurrences</u>	<u>Type/Cause</u>
1999	1	Grass Fire
2000	1	Grass Fire
2001	6	Grass Fires and Trash Fires
2002	1	Fire (unknown)
2004	1	Structure Fire (unknown)
	1	Fire
2005	4	Grass Fires
	1	Vehicle Fire
	1	Bonfire
2006	1	Grass Fire

Other wildland fires, caused by lightning from 1990 to 1999 and after 2006, as recalled by residents:

<u>Occurrences</u>	<u>Location</u>
1999-2006	
2	Stone Mountain
1	Round Mountain
1	Hell's Canyon
1	Hwy 34 & Waltonia
1	629 Saddle Notch Road (Hill above house)
1	580 Saddle Notch Road (About 2000, lightning struck tree, ignited grass)
1	Bobcat Gulch
In 2008	
2	Skinner Gulch Conservation Easement
1	Sheep Mountain on Saddle Notch side
1	Green Mountain
1	Quillan Gulch/Bitterroot (lightning)
1	Quillan Gulch (fireplace ashes)
1	Stone Mountain (slash pile re-ignition)

Risk of Spread. Any ignition, whether structure or forest, is likely to spread because of fuel availability, wind, slope, poor response time, little firefighting equipment, water and people-power, bad communications, poor access, confusion, panic, etc. The purpose of this plan is to include educational opportunities and information to the community.

2. Ignitability of structures. Homes. There are approximately 90 homes in the WUI, most of wood construction. Some include sheds, barns and garages. Many have wooden porches and decks or have flammable materials stored nearby that are particularly vulnerable to ignition. Ignition risk is increased by steep terrain or gulches that form a flame chimney leading to the structure. Defensible space/access is often inadequate. Educational materials are available in the file, through websites, and at meetings.

Local Preparedness and Firefighting Capability.

The WUI is not yet in a fire district and we have no volunteer fire department. Few individual landowners possess clothing, wildfire suppression tools or training.

According to the Larimer County Budget Office, we pay no taxes for fire protection. Primary responder is Larimer County Emergency Services, equipped with a 300-gallon tank mounted on a pickup. At this time, the annual Sheriff's budget for fighting 5-6 small fires is approximately \$300,000. Calls to 911 are referred to Sheriff and Loveland FD. Response of Loveland Fire Department is optional, depending upon availability of equipment.

Summary. We are presently on our own. Professional help is limited and is at best over 40 minutes away. Any structure in the WUI which ignites is likely to be destroyed while awaiting the fire truck. Any wildfire, even if accessible, is likely to spread significantly and progress to a crown fire before suppression can begin unless defensible space and fire mitigation work has been completed.

3. Roads. Emergency use of roadway and utility infrastructure during wildfire.

Roads are often through heavily forested areas containing highly flammable brush, ladder fuels, and/or through steeply sloped terrain. In the event of wildfire across access roads, travel will be delayed or prevented with elevated risk to life and property. Address markings are often missing and/or made of flammable material. In 2008, work was begun with a fuelbreak project on Pole Hill Road/W. County Road 18E and Skinner Gulch Road. Work is presently underway on defensible space, fire mitigation, and easement clearing, some with a grant and some with landowner work at landowner expense.

4. Driveways and related access to defensible space around homes are inadequate in some instances. Inspections by LCES, CSFS, and others have identified and planned work in most of those cases.

Concerns, Action Plans, and Responsibilities.

1. Reduce Hazardous fuels.

Concerns. Some properties have significant ladder fuels and thick stands of trees with the possibility of a fire moving from downslope, across the road, and into the fuels on the upper side of the road.

Action Plan. Clearing of easements and creating fuelbreaks is the main focus of the original grant applications. On some properties, this work has been a priority and continues, with or without grants, although more slowly.

Funding. Some funding will come from grants available under the CWPP. Having the grants encourages residents to do work more aggressively, as well as have help understanding the importance of managing the forest for fire protection, disease, and insect control, e.g. Mountain Pine Beetles.

Responsibilities. Property owners must seek opportunities to educate themselves on the issues and means of mitigating problems. Education is part of the responsibility of the PHRCWPG.

2. Reduce ignitability of structures, infrastructure (roads/power lines) and environs.

Concern. Without adequate pre-existing defensible space, and likelihood of success, the fire department will not attempt to save a structure.

Action Plan. Improve fire resistance of structure, roof and decks and create adequate defensible space. Store propane, gasoline and firewood away from structure

Funding. Options include funding from grants, possible tax incentives for 40-acre-plus properties, and tax reductions from other programs, personal financing, and in-kind matching work credit.

Responsibilities. Coordination of opportunities for resources depends on “Key Contacts” for the CWPP. Property owners are responsible for the work on their own property, following the guidelines of the CSFS and other sources.

3. Trimming and thinning along road easements.

Concern. An active crown fire can block the road delaying evacuation/access. Power lines/phone lines can fall.

Action plan. Remove and thin trees in road easements. Contact Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association to have trees threatening power lines trimmed and/or removed. Monitor growth of trees and vegetation in these areas to proactively manage the growth on a continued basis.

Responsibility. The property owner has the first responsibility for this, but neighbors and other community members should be aware of issues and communicate with the property owner or the PHRCWPG contacts. PHRCWPG cannot force people to do work, but has a responsibility to provide educational opportunities and possible resources for help.

4. Trimming and thinning along drives

Concern. To protect a home, the fire department needs a wide drive to, and/or around, the home. Vertical clearance of approximately 13' is required. Slope, surface condition and turn around space are factors to improve where possible. The drive conditions must be suitable before fire personnel and equipment will enter. Additional on-site water storage is also desirable.

Action Plan. Contact LCES and request a visit from Tony Simons to inspect access and defensible space. Upgrade as needed. Discuss water availability from pond, cistern, or vehicle-mounted and pre-filled tank. Tony has inspected most of the homesites for homes built after about 1999. He has also begun inspecting homes for those requesting a visit since the February 8, 2008, organizational meeting for developing a CWPP.

Responsibility. Coordinating/scheduling such inspections has been a function of members of the PHRCWPG. Residents/property owners desiring such a visit should make their needs known to Belinda Biddle, Donna Moore, or contact LCES in person.

5. Escape Route Maps and Rules, reverse 911.

Concern. The main and only viable escape route for the area is Pole Hill Road/W. County Road 18E. Many of the interior roads are narrow, with hills, sharp turns, and blind corners, especially in the SNRRA interior and to Lone Wolf properties. According to Tony Simons, LCES, residents should wait for emergency responders to analyze the fire characteristics and notify residents if evacuation is necessary. The responders will then determine the best route or place to go. Having panicked evacuation without direction, or need, can interfere with responders' ability to reach the fire.

Action plan. Establish a plan with neighbors for communication and mutual aid. Develop personal/family plans for meeting places in an emergency. Pre-plan where would people meet, with whom and how members would communicate their location and situation. Decide what belongings should be ready to go or prepare to load vehicles. When leaving, prepare the house and animals for the best defense.

Responsibilities. Residents have their own plans. Community members stay alert, but do not act in a panic. Have address clearly posted with metal signs, mounted on non-flammable posts for quick identification by emergency personnel. Be sure any wireless phones communicate with 911. Take advantage of available emergency procedure information available.

6. Improve Communication.

Concerns. There is no direct radio link to fire and ambulance within our membership. During a fire phone lines may not work. There is little or no cell phone access in the WUI. This compounds all problems cited in this report.

Action Plan. Initiate and test Reverse 911. Determine if cell phones are able to receive and send text messages. Share those cell phone numbers with people in and out of the area. Check for the nearest areas for cell phone coverage, i.e. climbing to or moving to a place where at least some signal is available. Have a portable radio or TV with batteries for news and information.

Responsibility. Individuals must follow the action plan and remember the community responsibility to communicate and work as a unit.

7. Education.

Concern. Variable Community Awareness regarding wildfire and forest health issues.

Action Plan. Arrange meetings concerning on Mountain Pine Beetle infestation and emergency procedures. Implement the CWPP for the area from the Pinewood Reservoir Dam to west of Quillan Gulch Road.

Survey. PHRCWPG developed and distributed a survey, attached, to all property owners in this area to access information on each property, determine needs of the area, identify resources (including water storage and equipment), and access experience and knowledge of residents. Fully two-thirds of the property owners have returned their survey and all properties are included on an updated map with structures shown where present. A spreadsheet with property information is attached. Many residents are, and have been, actively working on fire mitigation and defensible space efforts for at least twenty years.

PHRCWPG will continue to hold general meetings with speakers, copy of the CWPP and educational brochures. The CWPP will be available on CD and, eventually, on a website that is under development for the area and each subdivision.

Responsibility. The responsibility for implementation rests primarily upon those who have given time and energy to develop this plan. Sharing the information, advantages, and opportunities that come with this CWPP is increasing the community interest in and responsibility for creating and maintaining the best possible forest condition to prevent a catastrophic wildfire.

Signatures for CWPP approval:

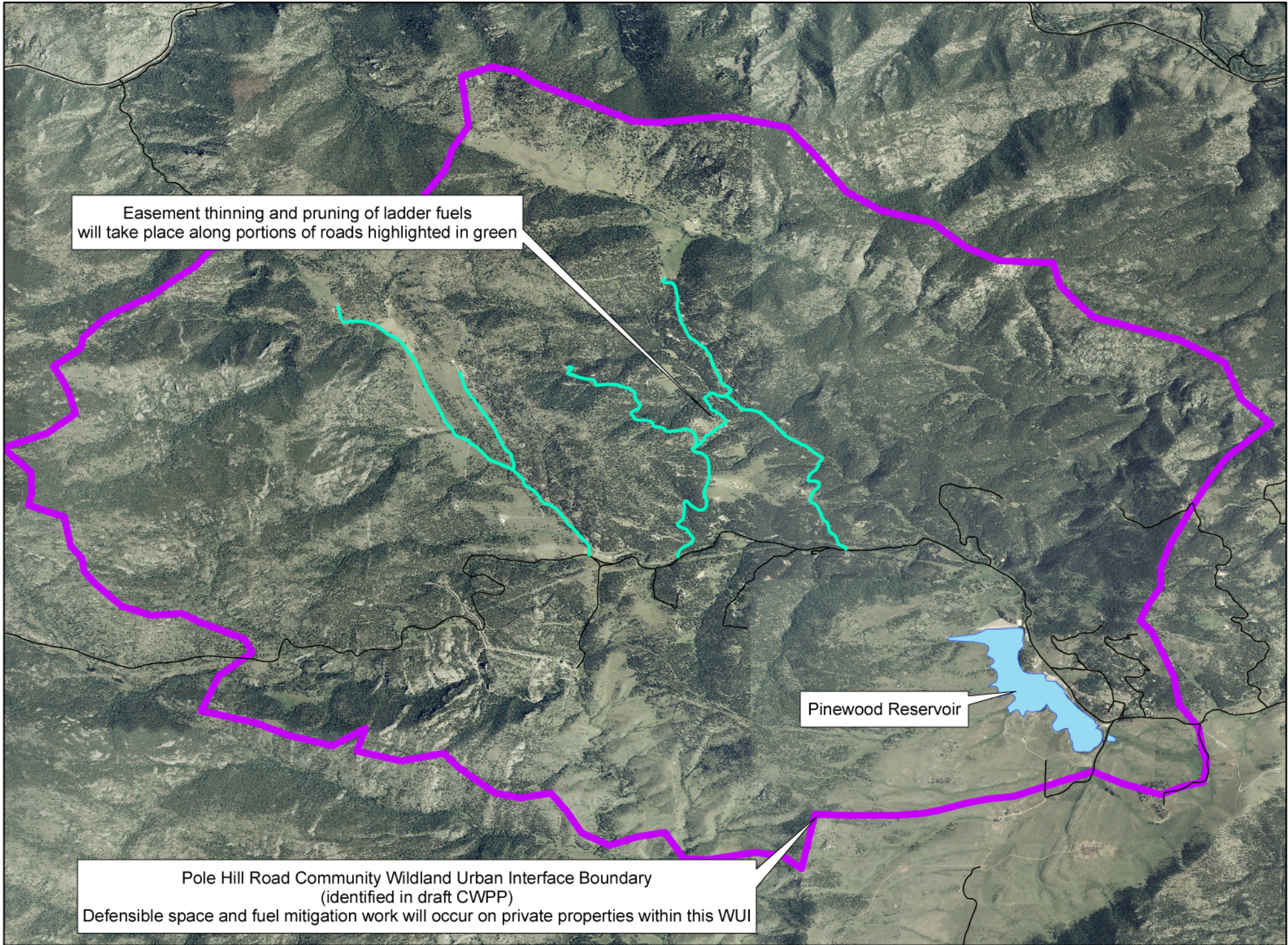
Colorado State Forest Service

Larimer County Emergency Services

United States Forest Service

Key Contact: Donna Moore

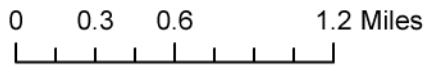
Key Contact: Belinda Biddle



Easement thinning and pruning of ladder fuels will take place along portions of roads highlighted in green

Pinewood Reservoir

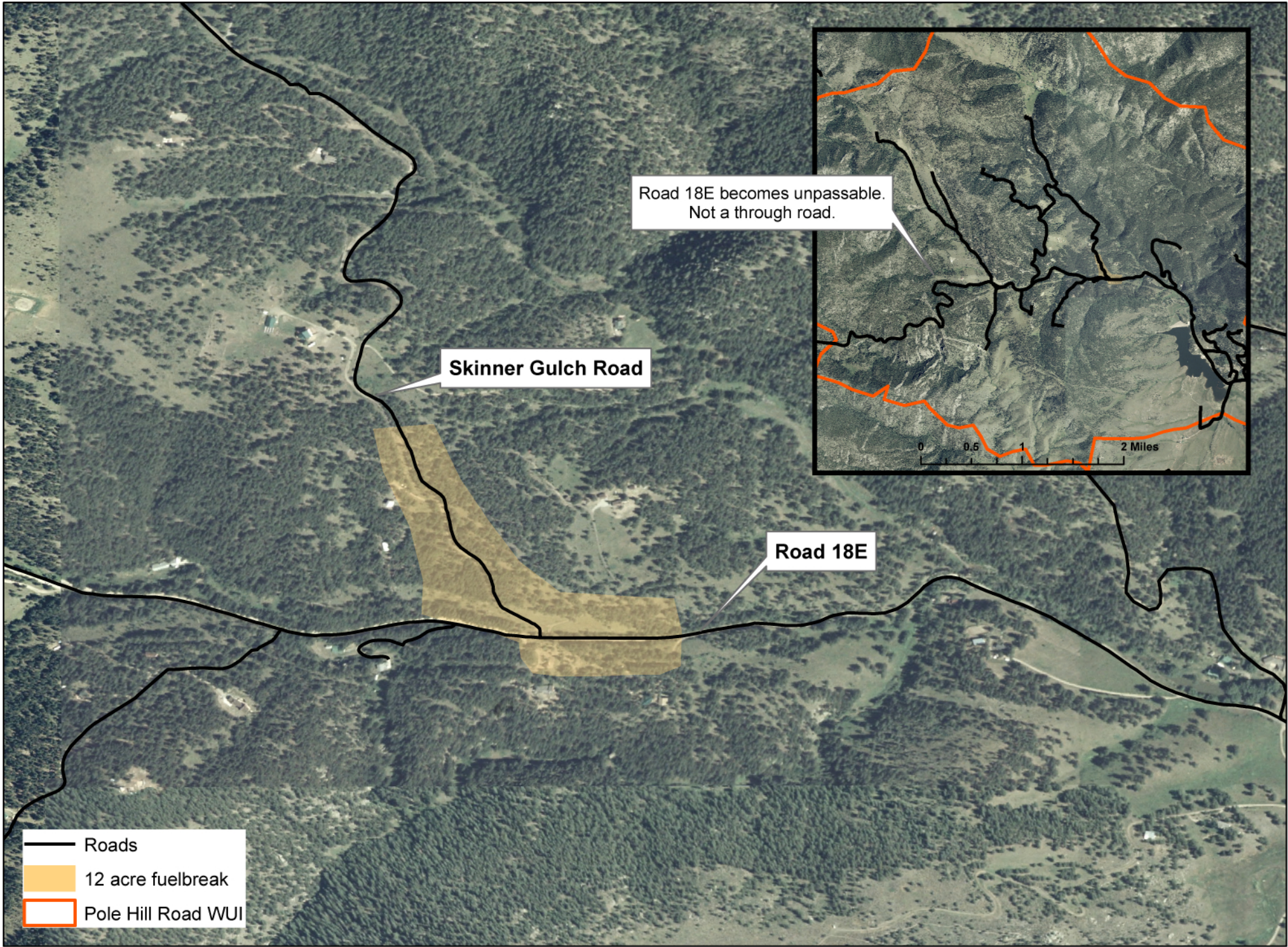
Pole Hill Road Community Wildland Urban Interface Boundary
(identified in draft CWPP)
Defensible space and fuel mitigation work will occur on private properties within this WUI



Pole Hill Road Wildland Urban Interface Zone



Map created 8/2008
by Diana Selby, CSFS



0 360 720 1,440 Feet

Pole Hill Road Community Fuelbreak



Map created 10/2008
by Diana Selby, CSFS

