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NEWS

For Immediate Release

February 28, 2011

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Public Participation Encouraged in Community Wildfire Protection Plan Meetings

MONTROSE, Colo. – Montrose and Ouray county residents who want to provide input on the development of county-wide wildfire protection plans will have the opportunity to do so at a series of public meetings next week.

Forestry, emergency services and fire department officials will meet with area landowners at three separate meetings to discuss the development of county-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). Citizens who attend the meetings will have the opportunity to help identify the values at risk in their communities, define the local wildland-urban interface boundary, prioritize fuels treatment goals and establish wildfire preparedness objectives within identified hazard zones. The meetings will include representatives from the Colorado State Forest Service, county emergency management teams, local fire departments, fire management consulting firms and federal forestry officials.

“These meetings will bring together local communities and government agencies to address fire preparedness and fuels reduction in wildland-urban interface areas,” said Jodi Rist, district forester for the CSFS Montrose District, which serves Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel counties. The CSFS will provide input throughout the process and will ultimately be responsible for signing off on the final plans.

Having the plans in place is valuable to landowners not only because of their protective benefits, but because many state and federal grants designated for forest treatments require communities to have a CWPP approved by the Colorado State Forest Service to compete for funds.

“This is a valuable opportunity for local residents to join their friends and neighbors to help determine the direction and scope of these plans,” said Lilia Colter, West Region Wildfire Council CWPP coordinator, who will be guiding implementation of approved CWPPs.

State legislation passed last year required every Colorado county to identify fire hazard zones in unincorporated areas by the end of 2010. Counties have until this summer to develop CWPPs that establish guidelines for fire mitigation in each hazard zone.

The three meeting locations and respective dates are as follows:

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- 4 p.m., Mar. 8 – Montrose County, East End: Friendship Hall, 1001 N. Second St., Montrose
- 7:30 p.m., Mar. 9 – Ouray County: 4-H Events Center, 22739 Highway 550, Ridgway
- 6 p.m., Mar. 10 – Montrose County, West End: Nucla High School, 225 W. 4th Ave., Nucla

Meeting attendees will have the opportunity to win door prizes; cookies and refreshments also will be provided. For more information about the CWPP meetings, call the West Region Wildfire Council at 970-249-9051, ext. 125.

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