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NEWS

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Public Participation Encouraged in Mesa County Wildfire Planning Meetings

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. – Mesa County residents who want the chance to provide input on the development of a county-wide wildfire protection plan will have the opportunity at two public meetings this week.

Forestry, emergency services and fire department officials will meet with area landowners at meetings in Glade Park on Jan. 26 and Grand Junction on Jan. 27 to discuss the development of a county-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Citizens who attend one of the meetings will have the opportunity to help identify the values at risk in their communities, define the local wildland-urban interface boundary, prioritize goals for treating wildland fuels and establish wildfire preparedness objectives. The meetings will include representatives from the Colorado State Forest Service; county emergency management representatives; local fire departments; fire consultants; and federal land management officials.

“These meetings will give people who live in our wildland-urban interface a chance to provide input to the plan. It’s important that we listen to all the stakeholders,” said Kelly Rogers, district forester for the CSFS Grand Junction District, which serves Mesa, Delta, Pitkin, Garfield and Rio Blanco counties. The CSFS will provide input throughout the process and will ultimately be responsible for signing off on the final plan.

Having the plan in place will be valuable to landowners not only because of its 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.

State legislation passed in 2010 required every Colorado county to identify fire hazard zones in unincorporated areas by the end of that year. Counties are now developing CWPPs that establish guidelines for fire mitigation in each hazard zone.

The Mesa County meetings will take place at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Glade Park Community Center, 101 S 16-1/2 Rd, Glade Park, and 6 p.m. Jan. 27, at the Wingate Elementary cafeteria, 351 South Camp Road, Grand Junction. For more information about the CWPP meeting, contact Victoria Amato at vamato@swca.com or search on Facebook under “Mesa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.”

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