

## **Subject: Elk Meadows Wildfire Preparedness: Mitigation Efforts & Evacuation Route**

### **Background**

As discussed in recent (early 2024) HOA meetings, the risk of wildfire is a growing concern for our community. To address this, the HOA Board established a Wildfire Committee (“the Committee”) to explore resources and prioritize preparation/mitigation actions for the community. Bill Palace volunteered to spearhead the effort with contributions from Joe Maslowski, Andrew Temple, Rob Rutherford, Peter Rowland, Pam East, Danielle Rodriguez, and Scott Layton.

Upon contacting the Ridgway office of the West Region Wildfire Council (WRWC) (reference below) to explore risk assessment/mitigation planning, the Committee discovered:

1. The earliest this could be scheduled is Spring 2025.
2. Ouray County had completed a comprehensive Assessment with Mitigation Priorities for Ouray County (including Elk Meadows) in 2011 (“Ouray County CWPP” referenced below), including Elk Meadows (P. 127) that could serve as preliminary planning for Elk Meadows.

The HOA Board adopted the recommendation of the Committee that the Ouray County CWPP serve as a basis for 2024 action planning.

This email outlines two high priorities cited in the Ouray County CWPP:

1. **Creating defensible space around your property** to reduce fire risk.
2. **Designating an adequate Emergency Evacuation Route** in case of wildfire.

## **2024 Priorities**

### **I. Fire Mitigation Efforts**

To address the growing risk of severe wildfires, we're focusing on wildfire risk reduction. Here's how you can participate:

1. **Review the 2011 Ouray County CWPP for Elk Meadows (referenced below):** This plan outlines recommended actions for creating defensible space around your property.
  - o Risk Assessment (P. 127)
  - o Mitigation Recommendations (Table 39, P. 128-129) and Highest Priorities (Table 61, P. 169-170)
2. **Create a defensible space around your home:**
  - o Review the Defensible Space Guidelines (Appendix A, p. A9 et seq) and utilize HOA-provided resources.
  - o Thin/remove dead brush/trees around your home to mitigate fire risk.
3. **Utilize HOA-provided resources:**

- **Dumpsters:** The HOA will provide dumpsters for brush and fire mitigation debris disposal.
  - **Mobile chipping service:** A chipping unit will be hired starting June 24 to remove and chip debris placed by all Elk Meadow roadsides in late June.
4. **Obtain Professional help if needed:** Contact details for local landscaping businesses to help with fire mitigation are provided below if you need/prefer assistance. Costs associated with these services are the responsibility of the owners.

**Jeff Bearden**

**1F Tree Services LLC**

Phone: (970) 316-1423

Email: **TBD**

**Fire Guard, fire mitigation and land services**

Phone: (970) 708-7257

Email: **TBD**

**Matthew Beyer**

**Silver Creek Property Care**

Phone: 970-305-8611

Email: [silvercreekpropertycare@gmail.com](mailto:silvercreekpropertycare@gmail.com)

**II. Emergency Evacuation Route**

The Committee met with local ranchers to explore evacuation route options in case County Roads 5A and 5 are inaccessible during an emergency. Here's what we found:

- Ranchers need to balance the interests of the Ridgway Fire Department and Park Estates in evacuation planning.
- **The Zig Zag Route:** At this point, a 5-mile route on the east side of the community is the only viable option cited by the ranchers. However, it requires a high-clearance, four-wheel-drive vehicle. The last mile is difficult: a rough narrow road, with steep descent, tight Z-switchbacks, and sharp drop-offs.
- A map and current gate codes are attached.
- **Continuing Efforts:** The Committee is working to improve Zig Zag Route signage and explore other potential evacuation routes.

**Next Steps for You:**

1. **Create a defensible space:** Review the plan and utilize HOA resources to mitigate fire risks around your property.
2. **Familiarize yourself with the evacuation route:** Locate the access point and review the attached map with gate codes.
3. **Attend the July 10 Annual HOA Meeting:** Wildfire Committee members will be available to answer questions at the July 10 meeting.

4. **Contact the Committee or HOA Board:** Pending the July 10 meeting, please feel free to reach out directly to Joe Maslowski, Andrew Temple, Bill Palace or the HOA Board for clarifications (contacts below).

We encourage everyone to take proactive steps to prepare for wildfires. Nothing less than the safety and security of our beautiful community is at stake.

Warmest Regards,  
The Elk Meadows HOA Board

**References:**

- Ouray County CWPP
  - <https://www.cowildfire.org/ouray-county>
    - Elk Meadows Risk Assessment (P. 127)
    - Elk Meadows Mitigation Recommendations (Table 39, P. 128-129) and Highest Priorities (Table 61, P. 169-170)
    - Defensible Space Guidelines (Appendix A, A9)
- West Region Wildfire Council (WRWC)
  - [www.COwildfire.org](http://www.COwildfire.org)
- Map of Zig Zag Route with current gate codes (attached)
- Committee and HOA Board Contacts

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