

**Walker Community
Firewise/USA®
Action Plan**



**Developed by
Walker Community Action Alliance**

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Walker Community Firewise/USA® Action Plan

1) Introduction

The community of Walker/Potato Patch proposes to join Firewise Communities/USA® program in an effort to engage in an initiative to use effective management to preserve the wildland living aesthetics of the area. The residents/property owners are committed to ensuring maximum protection from wildland fire. Following a community assessment, the residents/property owners demonstrated commitment and a wildfire safety action plan was written.

The Firewise Board of the Walker Community Action Alliance (WCAA) respectfully submits this Firewise Plan 2011 as the final step toward recognition as a Firewise Community/USA®. The following groups and individuals are acknowledged for their hard work and support as they assisted in making the community safer and our residents better educated. These efforts have resulted in the ground work required for improved condition of fire risk and community member safety.

On October 22, 2010, residents of Walker met with Gary Roysdon. Mr. Roysdon is an assessor and current Chair of Prescott Area Wildland Urban Interface Commission (PAWUIC). Residents in attendance were:

Loren Bykerk
Mona Feige
Richard Feige
Mark Keegan
Greg Kozlowski
Bud Mellor

This plan was developed from the information in the assessment. It will be implemented in a collaborative manner; it will be updated and modified as needed.

The residents of Walker/Potato Patch wish to thank the following persons who participated/consulted during these initial steps of becoming a Firewise/USA® community.

Gary Roysdon, Chairman of PAWUIC. He has served as our assessor and has been available to address our questions and direct our efforts throughout the initial process.

Russ Shumate, Arizona State Forestry Division. He has served as our qualified advisor.

John (Bud) Mellor, retired fire chief of Walker Fire Protection Association (WFPA). WFPA is the volunteer fire service organization for the area. He has been an advocate for a Firewise initiative since his tenure as chief began. He has been available to assist us throughout the process as this project comes to fruition.

Lee Ann Beery, Arizona State Forestry Division, Payson Field Office. She has been available to assist with the endeavor and continues to advise us with pertinent information regarding the program.

Aaron Hulburd, Prescott National Forest (PNF). He has been available to assist us with information as we endeavor to coordinate our efforts with PNF.

Bob Celaya, Arizona State Forestry Division. He has been available to assist with information regarding the impact of Firewise principals on the community and regarding grant money available to assist our residents/property owners with Firewise compliant mitigation.

Carolyn Hildebrand, Yavapai County Assessors office. She provided information with property owner addresses and a GIS map to color parcels and track progress with Firewise compliant properties.

1.1) Purpose

Walker is located in a forested area, wildfire environment. The residents/property owners acknowledge wildfires will happen—exclusion is not a choice. The community assessment addressed the wildfire-related characteristics of Walker, examining the community as a complex and integrated entity. The result of the assessment is that wildfire behavior will be dominated by the residential characteristics of this area.

The assessment results indicated reducing the volume of live vegetation and forest ground litter will affect the intensity of the wildfire as it enters the home ignition zone. The purpose of this plan is to motivate our local residents and property owners in implementing these Firewise principles as they pertain to our community and the property owner's unique situations and needs.

The residents/property owners of Walker/Potato Patch community acknowledge it is possible to change the path of a wildfire by clearing a home ignition zone. This initiative and the plan developed identify actions that can result in avoiding loss of property, valuable assets, and possibly life. Education of the residents/property owners regarding mitigation is an essential part of the plan.

Funding the program and implementing the property mitigation initiative in a cost effective manner is crucial. Timeliness of the mitigation efforts is essential. The intent is to augment the

property owner and the WCAA funds for this initiative by obtaining grants from appropriate government and private organizations when possible.

In the event of a wildfire, residents and visitors must be able to evacuate safely in an established, organized manner. Advanced knowledge of the evacuation process is essential for organized transition from the community. Establishing an evacuation plan and educating the residents/property owners will also be addressed as part of the action plan.

1.2) Mission Statement

Walker Community Action Alliance (WCAA) is a non-profit organization formed Summer 2010. Eligibility for membership in WCAA includes property ownership and payment of annual dues. The residents/property owners are motivated to protect the investment they have made in this rural area. The individual members of WCAA have demonstrated additional commitment through voluntary membership in the organization. The mission statement of WCAA includes provision for moving toward Firewise/USA® status. The focus of WCAA is to create awareness and provide education to the citizens of the community with regard to this issue, as well as other matters pertinent to this rural, forested community. Pursuit of 501c3 status is in process.

The Firewise/USA® initiative is an important step to making Walker and Potato Patch better communities. The following mission statement was implemented to correlate with the overall objectives of WCAA:

To show our love of these forested areas, the residents/property owners endeavor to be good stewards of our properties. WCAA resolves to educate and facilitate the residents/property owners with regard to Firewise property mitigation for protection while maintaining the aesthetics of the forested community.

1.3) Walker Firewise Board

There is a current Firewise Board in place consisting of:

Gary Roysdon-Prescott Area Wildland Urban Interface.

Russ Shumate - Arizona State Forestry Division.

WCAA members- Loren Bykerk, Mona Feige, Richard Feige, Carla Keegan, Greg Kozlowski, Bud Mellor, Robert Neberman, Linda Sandy

1.3.1)

The WCAA Board will be serving as a sponsor of the initiative. Coordination with the local volunteer fire association, WFPA will be encouraged. The board members of WCAA were elected and put in place on October 23, 2010. The board consists of :

Elizabeth (Betsy) Bykerk-President

Jeff Morhous-Vice President

Loren Bykerk-Treasurer

Vacant-Secretary

Directors

Victoria Morhous
Kristi McFarlan
Robert Neberman
Carla Keegan

1.3.2)

To ensure that the recommendations presented in this plan can be implemented, the Walker Firewise Board and WCAA Board will identify and recommend appropriate changes in local, county, state, and federal laws and regulations.

To enable optimal collaboration with WFPA, all appropriate reports and updates will be made available on the WCAA web site.

2) Description of Walker, Location and Wildland Fire Characteristics That Could Threaten the Area

Walker/Potato Patch community is located in Yavapai County, Arizona; a rural area outside Prescott, Arizona. The latitude is 34 27 22.37N, longitude 112 22 42.30W. For the purposes of this proposal, the community includes all properties accessible south from milepost five on Walker Road extending to the Hassayampa Lake Dam, and not past coordinates 34 25.912N, 112 23.189W on Big Bug Road, and not past coordinates 34 29.636N, 112 21.905W on Bannie Mine Road. The community is a group of private residences and properties, some of which border on National Forest Service Land. The total acreage of the area is 2154. There are 577 developed parcels.

The residences are intermingled within the forested terrain. (Appendix I) Numerous parcels within the community are undeveloped. Many property owners are absent and/or part-time occupants of the community. The mean parcel size is roughly .75 acres. There are 22 parcels of nine acres or more, seven parcels of 19 or more acres, and one parcel of over 130 acres. The majority of these larger parcels are undeveloped. The focus of this Firewise initiative will be the developed parcels, though consideration must be given to undeveloped properties juxtaposing with those that have residences.

The area is rich in ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, manzanita, Gambel oak, and assorted other ground fuels. Soil composition includes gravelly clay loam or gravelly loam over schist or granite. Area wildlife includes, but is not limited to; mule deer, javelina, squirrel, mountain lion, lynx, raccoon, various bird species, coyotes, and wild turkey.

The community has three primary routes for ingress, egress. Two of these routes have a high probability of being impassable during winter-weather conditions. During heavy rains, these two alternate routes may also be impassable. The typical road width within the community is less than 20 feet. Many of the homes are located on single-access roads with only one way in and one way out. The road surfaces are primarily non-surfaced with greater than 5% grade.

Fire service access is greater than 300 feet without turnaround available. Local, first responder fire service is by an unmanned, fully volunteer department. Current ISO rating is 8B/10. Additional outside resources may be ordered under the current IGA with Arizona State Forestry Division, and informal mutual aid agreements with the United States Forest Service and other local fire departments.

3) Community Assessment

Mr. Roysdon completed the assessment using the Wildland Fire Risk and Hazard Severity Assessment Form. This form scores risk with regard to means of access, vegetation (Fuel Models), topography, building/roofing materials of current residences, available fire protection, and placement of utilities. The total points scored on the hazard assessment were 114, indicating extreme hazard. The Community Hazard Severity Form was completed based on a site visit, discussions with Firewise Board members, examination of available maps and records, and previous first hand knowledge of the community.

Assessment Summary

General Information about the area obtained through the assessment:

- Walker has terrain that includes draws, chimneys, chutes, and saddles. The slope is 31-40% within 300 feet of most structures.
- Fire activity within the past 15 years has been sporadic throughout the community and contained to limited acreage.
- Construction of the typical residence in Walker includes combustible materials for siding and decks.
- The typical home has less than 30 feet clearance with regard to the home ignition zone. (Appendix II)
- Water source availability is limited; there is no public water system and no fire hydrants.
- The vegetation is heavy with dense timber with a brushy understory (NFDRS Fuels Models K, G, and B).
- Propane and electrical service is aboveground.
- Seasonal bouts of low moisture and wind are present.
- Fire weather is typically high to extreme during early spring until midsummer with low fuel moisture, low humidity, and a predominantly southwesterly wind flow.
- Fire weather normally decreases somewhat during the late summer and early fall depending upon the amount of rainfall associated with summer thunderstorms.
- The estimated number of Firewise property within the Walker/Potato Patch community is 17 acres.

4) Firewise Plan

With consideration of risks and needs, the Walker Firewise board proposes an action plan. This plan was developed with consideration to the unique aspects of the community of Walker/Potato Patch.

4.1) Risk Assessment Plan

A committee will develop a program to provide fire risk assessments for individual homes and properties. At the request of individual land owners, specific property assessments will be made available. (Appendix III) Such assessments will include checklists of risk criteria, and rating of individual homes and property. Through electronic communication and WCAA web site updates, all interested property owners will be advised of risks present throughout the community. Potential support, financial or in-kind, will be solicited from various sources to encourage full participation by all the landowners in Walker/Potato Patch community.

A record keeping and tracking system to maintain records of property owner requests and those properties that have been assessed will be implemented. (Appendix IV) The records will reflect those properties that have had some work done and those that currently have defensible space.

Cooperation and involvement of public agencies and owners of utility easements will be solicited. Some adjoining and intermingled land is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. In addition, public and private utilities have numerous easements through the area. These agencies and organizations will be included in developing and maintaining fire-risk reduction programs appropriate for the land they manage.

Analysis of existing and needed resources available for fire suppression in the Walker/Potato Patch area will be complete. Data on locations of fire suppression resources will be provided to the county for inclusion in their GIS data base. Data will include water holding tanks, stand pipes, and fire breaks. In consultation with local fire authorities, the locations and types of additional fire suppression resources will be identified.

4.2) Fuel Reduction Plan

The intent of the program is to create a sustainable balance that will allow residents to live safely while maintaining environmental harmony in this forested setting. A primary objective of this fire plan is to reduce the fuel load and potential fuel pathways in and around each individual property in Walker/Potato Patch. Education to residents/property owners with regard to the implications of the choices they are making with fuel load management and construction/landscaping materials is essential. They must be educated with regard to how these choices directly relate to the ignitability of their home ignition zones during a wildfire. Although fuel reduction and construction/landscaping materials are primarily the responsibility of the individual property owner, Walker Firewise board recognizes that there are numerous resources available to assist property owners in reducing the risk of wildfire to their property.

WCAA will continue to organize materials and activities to assist residents/property owners in the endeavor of reducing the fuel load on all properties in community. WCAA will assemble and distribute to property owners information about fuel reduction services and resources. Such information may include, but not be limited to; chipper/dumpster service notices, tree cutting services, slash removal information. Non-traditional resources may include, but not be limited

to; grazing by goats, labor share pools, and the potential for assistance by service groups such as Scout Troops.

Labor share efforts may be performed by groups of individuals using cooperative efforts. A labor pool of interested property owners will be established. Names of individuals interested in forming a work pool will be published on the WCAA web site.

In the past, the community has investigated interest in a periodic chipper and dumpster service in the Walker/Potato Patch. The residents/property owners have expressed intent to use these services. There are plans to pursue this practice in the future as funds permit.

WCAA will develop materials and activities to influence current and future landscaping and building materials choices to enable the creation of appropriate defensible space around all residences and structures. Utilizing materials available from Firewise/USA®, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, U.S. Forest Service, APS, and other appropriate sources; WCAA will assemble information for residents, contractors, and new land owners on appropriate landscaping and construction materials to reduce the risks of wildfire to property in the area. These materials will be available to the residents/property owners through posting on the WCAA web site. It will also be available to other outside parties including Yavapai County officials, U.S Forest Service, and other appropriate groups to develop ordinances, regulations, and agreements that will follow the recommendations in the information presented.

The initial objective is to increase the number of properties that have defensible space by 10 percent in the next 5 years.

4.3) Evacuation Plan

The evacuation plan for the Walker/Potato Patch community has been developed and is under the jurisdiction of the Yavapai County Sheriffs Office. The intent is to cooperate with civil authorities in any way requested to assist in emergency notification. The plan is documented in the Wild Fire Evacuation Process, (Incident Command Orientation Handbook). WCAA will analyze the GIS database to determine neighborhood-specific needs for safe, efficient evacuation and provide this information to the appropriate agency. The Walker Firewise board in conjunction with WCAA will develop clear and concise educational materials for residents and visitors to prepare for and use during an evacuation.

4.4) Resident Education Plan

The residents/property owners must increase the understanding of the concept that when adequately prepared, a house can likely withstand a wildfire without the intervention of the fire service. Further, a house and its surrounding community can be Firewise, aesthetically appealing, and compatible with the area's ecosystem. Long term success of this fire plan depends almost entirely on the knowledge and understanding of the property owners of the community.

Educating the community members about the risks of wildland fire and how each individual can play a positive role in reducing those risks will be the primary focus.

After determining the community perceptions, level of knowledge, and motivation to act and support the Firewise plan; educating the community will advance. Education may include, but not be limited to; community presentations, distribution of printed material, web site articles, and linked information on the WCAA web site.

Many community residents have been actively involved in pursuing fuel reduction activities. WCAA has cooperated with Walker Fire Protection Association (WFPA) and PAWUIC on defensible space programs. The intent is to continue and promote this cooperation.

Using the web site to post articles and outlines of presentations, WCAA has notified community property owners of the fire danger and fuel reduction activities. The web site can be accessed by all residents of the community, whether or not they are active members of WCAA. The WCAA web site will continue to include a monthly Firewise tip on the home page. The tip will rotate with a seasonally appropriate message.

WCAA intends to post signs throughout the community promoting Firewise concepts. Property that has been mitigated and determined Firewise will be designated with a unique sign. These signs will be posted in attempt to make the residents cognizant of the dangers of wildfire and the benefits of fuel reduction.

The result of these activities is an abundance of information that has been provided to community residents and property owners. There is an on-going need for information to keep the motivation high, especially as new residents/property owners move into the community. To provide this motivation, WCAA will develop a series of multi-tiered education programs to include:

i. Establish and continue an annual Firewise Day

The initial Firewise Day event is scheduled for December 4, 2010. A presentation will be given by Gary Roysdon of PAWUIC, the topic "Pursuing the Firewise Initiative in Walker/Potato Patch." Written literature will be provided regarding the Firewise concept and landscaping/construction information.

The next Firewise Day event will be planned for Spring 2011.

ii. Offer workshops, presentations may include:

- Participation in the Governor's Annual Forest Health and Safety Conference (usually held in March)
- Twice yearly community information distribution at the WFPA gatherings scheduled Memorial Day and Independence Day is planned
- Distribution of written materials will continue at each of the

WCAA regular membership meetings

- Support the Arizona Wildfire Academy
- Provide assessment training for property owners to learn to assess defensible space needs

iii. Facilitate consulting services

- List of tree cutting and brush removal services
- List of tree spraying services
- PAWUIC defensible space and Firewise construction programs
- Promotion of the Prescott Area Wildland/Urban Interface Commission (PAWUIC) regional alert web site
- List of nurseries with Firewise landscaping information

iv. Offer neighborhood-based programs

- Promote neighborhood support and cooperation for fuel reduction activities
- Promote labor pools within the community
- Coordinate fuel reduction activities within Walker/Potato Patch
- Promote Firewise landscaping and construction.

To support the educational program, educational materials will be developed and/or distributed to property owners and visitors to the Walker/Potato Patch. Through web site posting and distribution of educational materials, WCAA will continue to promote the initiative of property owners being Firewise. In addition, Firewise information will be provided for inclusion in the new homeowner information kit distributed to all new property owners in the community.

5) Community Accomplishments

After reviewing the contents of the assessment and its recommendations, the Walker Firewise Board in cooperation with the Walker Community Action Alliance determined it wishes to continue seeking Firewise Communities/USA® recognition.

5.1) Accomplishments To Date

Once the community agreed to pursue national Firewise Communities/USA® recognition status, it integrated the established standards into a plan of action. Steps taken to date include:

- Sponsor a local Firewise board, task force, committee, commission or department that maintains the Firewise Community program and status.

This board has been active during initial investigation of the initiate, throughout the assessment process, and as this action plan was developed.
- Involve a wildland urban interface specialist and create a plan to identify agreed-upon, achievable local solutions.

Gary Roysdon of PAWUIC continues to assist our endeavor. Russ Shumate of State Lands has been available to consult as needed.
- Invest a minimum of \$2.00 annually per capita in its local Firewise activities. (Work done by municipal employees or volunteers, using municipal or other equipment, can be included, as can state/federal grants dedicated to that purpose.)

The residents of Walker/Potato Patch community logged 673 hours, 534 miles, and \$2245.00 spent on Firewise mitigation efforts between June 1, 2010 and October 31, 2010. These logs reflect the work of 20 property owners. Grant applications are in process for money form Title III and Western Bark Beetle initiatives.
Mitigation by Arizona Wildland Fire Crew is scheduled for January 2011. This work is expected to involve nine property owners with a projected 17 acres being mitigated. Efforts are being coordinated through PAWUIC.
- Observe a Firewise Communities/USA® Day each year that is dedicated to a local Firewise project.

An event was sponsored by WCAA and presented on September 4, 2010. The program introduced the Firewise concept and was given by Bud Mellor and Mona Feige. Written information was distributed. The entire community of Walker was invited. The invitation was distributed electronically and posted on the WCAA web site. The program summary was posted on the WCAA web site for review by homeowners not able to attend.
A presentation is scheduled for December 4, 2010. It will be given by Gary Roysdon of PAWUIC at the WCAA membership meeting. All community members will be encouraged to attend. Printed information regarding the Firewise/USA® program and information regarding Firewise landscaping and construction will be distributed at that time.
- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA®. This report documents continuing participation in the program.

The initial application has been completed and filed on November 15, 2010.

5.2) Proposed Accomplishments for 2011

The Walker Firewise board has set an objective of completing mitigation on an additional 20 acres, representing a additional 3 % of total developed properties of the designated area by December 31, 2011.

A periodic dumpster and chipper service schedule will be implemented.

6) Additional Considerations

The Firewise Board of WCAA acknowledges this initiative must be a collaborative effort with involvement by each individual resident/property owner. Properties must be mitigated and each property owner must support the efforts of his/her neighbor.

6.1) Resources Required

WCAA has applied matching grant county funds, Title III money. A portion of the grant money for will be used to support periodic chipper/dumpster services and other Firewise activities. Along with this grant, WCAA will maintain records of matching member funds and in-kind labor as well as donations.

In addition, WCAA will explore the development of purchase/lease agreements or contracts with local vendors to support our activities.

WCAA will continue to identify fire suppression needs within the community and work with the appropriate agency to meet those needs.

6.2) Signage

WCAA will encourage the use of a consistent house numbering system and encourage all property owners to mark their property with visible, well-defined, address identification. In addition WCAA will encourage/provide necessary assistance with a system to assist Yavapai County in keeping their GIS database current. Annual review is planned.

6.3) Water Resources

Once known, WCAA will provide the GIS location of all available, privately owned water storage tanks, water stand pipes, and water sources of water available for fire suppression in the Walker/Potato Patch community to the Yavapai County GIS data base.

6.4) Interagency Collaboration

To ensure that the recommendations presented in this plan can be implemented, the Walker Firewise Board will identify and recommend appropriate changes in local, county, state, and federal laws and regulations.

To enable optimal collaboration with WFPA, all appropriate reports and updates will be made available on the WCAA web site.

Appendix I
GIS Map

Photo of GIS map, yellow reflects properties presently mitigated.



Appendix II

Photos

Photos of typical residences, varied degrees of mitigation.



Awaiting mitigation, scheduled for January 2011



Aesthetically appealing Firewise landscape



Mitigated property



Example of property that has had no mitigation and is at extreme risk.

Appendix III
Assessment Worksheet

Appendix IV (A)
Mitigation Assistance Request

Name (Property Owner/Resident) _____ Date _____

—

Property Address/Directions _____

—

Initials Date of Request _____ Date Complete _____

Type of Request

_____ _____ Mitigation Work Crew _____
 ___ All Labor
 ___ Chipper Service
 ___ Materials Removal
 ___ Removal of Rounds
 ___ Cut Rounds to firewood length and stack on property

Comments: _____

_____ _____ Hauling Service Only _____
 ___ Haul materials stacked on property
 ___ Community chipper/dumpster event
 ___ Designated site out of area

Comments: _____

_____ _____ Tree Removal _____
 Tree Removal Only
 ___ Cut and stack rounds
 ___ Remove rounds
 ___ Stack slash
 ___ Remove and haul slash

Comments: _____

_____ _____ Labor Pool Participation _____
 ___ All Labor
 ___ Chipper Service
 ___ Materials Removal
 ___ Removal of Rounds
 ___ Cut Rounds to firewood length and stack on property

Appendix IV (B)
Sample Work Inquiry Response

Dear [REDACTED]:

Thank you for your interest in mitigating your property and showing support of the local Firewise/USA® initiative. We join you in your concern to limit the fuel for wildland fire. PAWUIC, Prescott Area Wildland Urban Interface Commission, has a reputable history of fire fuels mitigation in order to reduce wild fire risk.

Gary Roysdon, Chairman of PAWUIC, has agreed to help us in our initial attempts to facilitate fire fuels mitigation. It is important to note the crews he can access will provide work to assist with mitigation of hazards, the service cannot be classified as landscaping. He will need to complete an assessment before work can commence. The labor force he can access is an Arizona State Forestry Division Fire Crew. These are trained fire fighters available for fire fuels mitigation when they are not fighting wildland fires.

The cost for the service is \$3000.00/day. This cost is all inclusive without additional fees or pay requirements. Depending on the condition of the property RE: downed fuels/terrain and the thinning required, the crew can mitigate 1-3 acres a day. Grant money is available to assist with the cost of this service. PAWUIC will provide one-half the cost.

Mr. Roysdon will be available to assist you through property assessment on [REDACTED]. The assessment will include which trees you want to remain, his recommendation to assist in making your property more Firewise, and an estimated cost to you as the property owner.

The Firewise initiative is an important step to making Walker and Potato Patch better communities. To show our love of these forested areas, we should all endeavor to be good stewards of our properties. You are commended for taking this step toward that goal.

Walker Community Action Alliance
Firewise Committee

