

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN
For COMMUNITIES in the
DEER SPRINGS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Prepared By:

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council

In Cooperation With

Deer Springs Fire Protection District

California Department Of Forestry and Fire Protection

County Of San Diego Land Use and Environment Group

**California Bureau of Land Management
South Coast Fire Management Zone**

San Diego Fire Safe Council

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PREFACE

“The idea for community-based forest planning and prioritization is neither novel nor new. However, the incentive for communities to engage in comprehensive forest planning and prioritization was given new and unprecedented impetus with the enactment of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) in 2003.

This landmark legislation includes the first meaningful statutory incentives for the US Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to give consideration to the priorities of local communities as they develop and implement forest management and hazardous fuel reduction projects.

In order for a community to take full advantage of this new opportunity, it must first prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Local wildfire protection plans can take a variety of forms, based on the needs of the people involved in their development. Community Wildfire Protection Plans may address issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, or structure protection—or all of the above.

The process of developing a CWPP can help a community clarify and refine its priorities for the protection of life, property, and critical infrastructure in the wildland–urban interface. It also can lead community members through valuable discussions regarding management options and implications for the surrounding watershed.

The language in the HFRA provides maximum flexibility for communities to determine the substance and detail of their plans and the procedures they use to develop them.”

From: “Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities” Sponsored by the Communities Committee, National Association of Counties, National Association of State Foresters and the Western Governors’ Association.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Deer Springs Fire Protection District (the District) serves an area of approximately 47 square miles in the unincorporated area of northern San Diego County. Fire protection and emergency medical services are provided, under contract, by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF). There has not been a significant vegetation fire within the district in several decades leading to a substantial threat of property loss due to wildfire.

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was developed by The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council (DSFSC) with guidance and support from the Deer Springs Fire Protection District, the County of San Diego, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The role of DSFSC in preparing this document is in keeping with its mission statement: “The mission of the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council is to preserve the lives of neighbors and our natural and manmade resources by mobilizing all residents to make their homes and neighborhoods fire safe.”

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan is a dynamic document the purpose of which is to aid in clarifying and refining a community’s priorities for the protection of life, property, and critical infrastructure from wildfire in the wildland-urban interface. It can also serve as a vehicle to enable valuable discussion among community members regarding pre-fire management options and their implications for the surrounding watershed.

2. COLLABORATION

Within the District, meetings and conversations with governmental, private and public groups are ongoing or are in the planning stage. Groups and agencies currently involved in the development of the Deer Springs Fire District CWPP are included in the following table, which includes their name, organization, and roles and responsibilities are indicated in the following table:

ORGANIZATION	PARTICIPANTS	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES
Deer Springs Fire Safe Council	Craig Cook Tom Francl Robert Frey Steve Kerrin	Primary development of CWPP and decision-making, community risk assessment, development of community protection priorities, and establishment of fuels treatment project areas and methods.
Deer Springs Fire Protection District	Frank Asaro, Pres. Rich Bolton, Chief	Provides local information and expertise including community risk assessment, development of community protection priorities, and establishment of fuels treatment project areas and methods.
County of San Diego, Land Use and Environment Group	Bob Copper Ray Fernandez	Primary development of CWPP and decision-making, community risk and value assessment, development of community protection priorities, and establishment of fuels treatment project areas and methods.
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, San Diego Unit	Charles Maner, Chief Thom Porter	Facilitation of planning process and approval of CWPP process and minimum standards. Provides input and expertise on forestry, fire and fuels, and FireWise concepts.
California Bureau of Land Management South Coast Fire Management Zone	Clayton Howe	Provides local information on presence of BLM land in the District
San Diego Fire Safe Council	Robin Kinmont	Facilitation of planning process and approval of CWPP process and minimum standards. Provides input and expertise on forestry, fire and fuels, and FireWise concepts.

3. COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Deer Springs Fire Protection District is located in the unincorporated area of northern San Diego County. It lies north of Escondido, west of Valley Center and east of San Marcos and Vista. It is roughly bounded on the north by the San Luis Rey River valley. The entire District is considered a wildland-urban interface area.

The District encompasses 47 square miles and is divided by Interstate 15 which is crossed by three overpasses and four underpasses allowing travel between east and west sides of the District. Emergency response within the District is often complicated by this division and the many ridges and canyons which make up the District topography.

The District provides fire protection and paramedic service for approximately 13,000 residents. It is estimated by the District that 30 percent of this population is aged 65 or older and 20 percent are aged 14 or younger. Residential population is concentrated in the Hidden Meadows, Jesmond Dene, North Broadway, Champagne Village and Castle Creek areas. These communities consist of predominantly single-family residences many of which lie on the border between native vegetation and the developed community. The District includes the Welk Resort

and Time Share facilities, which house a large number of weekly and temporary visitors. The Welk complex is also the location of Champagne Village, a large mobile home park occupied by retirees. The remaining residents of the District live in homes located in less densely populated areas, the so-called intermix zone. The northern section of the District is comprised of thousands of acres under agricultural use.

The most prominent topographic features of the District are Moosa Canyon and The Merriam Mountains. Moosa Canyon is approximately six miles long, one mile wide, and approximately 500-600 feet deep with slopes ranging from approximately 20 degrees to more than 45 degrees. The canyon covers approximately 2,500 acres. The Merriam Mountain Range is a coastal range running north and south approximately 6 miles in length with elevations to 2,100 feet. The mountain consists of several large canyons, draws, peaks, and valleys. It sits immediately west of Interstate 15. There are no currently identified federally managed lands within the district.

The District also includes a 14-mile north-south stretch of Interstate 15, which is bordered primarily by wildland vegetation. This is one of two major north-south freeways connecting San Diego with Riverside/San Bernardino and the Los Angeles Areas. Traffic volume is heavy at most times of the day. Fires with origins along the shoulders of the Interstate are frequently posing a direct threat to the District and surrounding communities.

4. FACTORS AFFECTING LOCAL FIRE POTENTIAL

The fire history map for San Diego County shows a history of major fires (typically more than 300 acres) throughout the County. CDF's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) rates nearly the entire County as having a "Very High Probability of Burning". The Deer Springs Fire Protection District has not experienced a major vegetation fire in more than thirty years and, thus, lies high on the probability scale. Two significant factors contribute to this threat.

4.1 Fuels

Analysis of fuel type and conditions prevalent in San Diego County indicate that more than two-thirds of the fuels in the county are ranked in the high to very high range with regard to combustibility. The vegetation throughout the district is a combination of coastal sage scrub (California sagebrush, California buckwheat, and laurel sumac) and chaparral (chamise, scrub oak, and manzanita). The last major fire in this area is believed to have occurred over 30 years ago and there has been no significant vegetation management to date. Consequently, fuel loading in many vegetated areas is an important concern for the risk and damaging effect of wildfire. The California Department of Forestry has prepared extreme fire behavior scenarios involving Moosa Canyon and the Merriam Mountain Range. These scenarios demonstrate the potential, within the District, for an extremely fast-moving fire that would be highly destructive and virtually impossible to control.

4.2 Weather

Typical summer weather conditions classify the District as a “high fire danger” area. Fall and winter Santa Ana events, with the potential for extreme fire behavior, place it in the “extreme fire danger” category during these periods. It is not uncommon for the National Weather Service (NWS) to declare more than one “Red Flag” episode each year when high temperatures, low humidity and high winds combine to create a critical fire hazard. Red Flag conditions are not limited to Santa Ana conditions and may occur when wind velocity, humidity and temperature exist in a relationship which will support extreme fire behavior.

5. ASSETS AT RISK

Assets at risk refer to anything having the potential to be damaged or destroyed directly or indirectly by wildfire. There are several types of assets at risk within the District.

5.1 Waterways

Moosa Canyon is a significant drainage toward the Pacific Ocean. Destruction of the watershed in the canyon would result in soil erosion and runoff from winter rains with subsequent damage to the Moosa Creek ecosystem.

5.2 Structures

Due to the nature of the District and the placement of homes and other structures near vegetation, the District will always have the potential for significant loss of structures due to wildfire.

5.3 Wildlife

The dense vegetation within the District provides habitat for many species of wildlife. This habitat would be damaged or destroyed as the result of wildfire.

5.4 Infrastructure

The District is home to several facilities that provide services to meet the daily living needs of San Diego County residents.

5.4.1 Water Supply

The San Diego Aqueduct runs along the eastern boundary of the District. Access vaults at the Oat Mountain and Red Mountain tunnels could be damaged in a wildfire. While it is unlikely that long-term interruption of water flow would occur, short-term outage could be experienced. A second aqueduct lies west of Interstate 15. Additionally, a water filtration plant for the City of Oceanside lies west of Interstate 15 and south of Gopher Canyon Road.

5.4.2 Power Distribution

One major and one minor power transmission line runs through the District in a north-south direction over some of the densest vegetation in the District. Interruption of service and additional emergency conditions due to downed power lines could occur.

5.4.3 Communications Facilities

Several cell phone sites are situated throughout the District many in densely vegetated areas and high points. The summit of Sierra Rojo, near the east end of Moosa Canyon, hosts a microwave repeater site for both telephone service and the north loop of the San Diego County Regional Communications System. Damage to the latter could result in disruption of telephone serviced and impairment of communications for emergency services.

6. CREATION OF COMMUNITY BASE MAPS

The latest mapping technology combined with local expertise, satellite imagery and GPS ground surveys yield detailed custom maps that graphically present a variety of data about the District. Maps of this type provide a visual aid that can assist community members in more easily understanding the geographic and vegetation complexities of the District.

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council supported by the County of San Diego, Department of Planning and Land Use has developed a series of maps depicting the site and situation of the Deer Springs Fire Protection District community (Appendix B). A narrative of the community and adjacent landscapes of interest was also prepared. The maps include the following:

- District Boundary Map of the District
- Topographic Map of District
- Wildland-urban Interface Map
- Detail maps of population concentrations
- Assets at Risk
- Fire History Map
- CDF Fuel Models (types of vegetation and location)
- Fire Threat Map (based on fire frequency and fire behavior potential)

7. LOCAL PREPAREDNESS AND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITY

Initial response to all fire, medical and associated emergencies within a 47 square mile area, including the 14-mile stretch of Interstate 15, is the responsibility of The Deer Springs Fire Protection District. The District currently provides full-time staffing for two engines and one Advanced Life Support (ALS or Paramedic) ambulance at two fire stations. A third station is

nearly ready for construction and is due to be completed in the latter part of 2006. The following full-time staffing and resources are available within the District:

- 3 Type 1 Fire Engines (one reserve) with a fourth planned for late 2006
- 1 Type 3 Wildland Engine
- 1 Paramedic ALS (Advanced Life Support) ambulance operated under contract with Mercy Medical Transportation Inc.
- 5 Firefighters (3 more to be added with completion of Station 3)
- 1 Firefighter-Paramedic on Paramedic Engine 1012
- 1 Fire Marshal
- 1 Chief (part time)

Firefighter-trainees and Reserve Firefighter personnel are utilized as available.

The pending additions to staffing and facilities are the result of residents of the District recognizing the need for increased fire protection and overwhelmingly approving a ballot measure to increase property taxes to fund the expansion.

The District has contracted with CDF to manage and operate these services. Because the District was formed following the implementation of Proposition 13, the District is funded through special District assessments, County fees, and tax allocations and supplemented by State and Federal grants.

8. COMMUNITY HAZARD REDUCTION PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE STRUCTURE IGNITABILITY

The majority of lands within the District are privately owned, with the exception of the inactive Bonsall landfill (San Diego County Department of Public Works) and a small parcel of BLM land on the western District boundary. Thus, it will be necessary to work directly with private property owners to effect a reduction in fuel load on their properties and to reduce the threat of structure ignitability. This will be accomplished by encouraging property owners to maintain the mandatory defensible space immediately around structures, to manage native vegetation outside the defensible space, and to learn ways to make existing structures more Fire-resistant.

8.1 Proposed Project: Deer Springs Communities Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Program

As noted previously and demonstrated on the Wildland-urban interface map (figure 3), the extensive native vegetation within the Deer Springs Fire Protection District represents a critical hazard for wildfire. Consequently, the highest priority for this CWPP is to develop a program to

mitigate this hazard using a variety of mutually supportive strategies. It will identify and prioritize the areas within the District that pose the greatest threat for the loss of structures from a potential wildfire. These areas will be designated for action by the Council as Phases, Phase I being the first of several to be addressed by the program.

In addition to its ongoing efforts outlined in this document, the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council proposes to develop a program of education, hazard identification, and hazard mitigation on a resident-to-resident community level. The Council is aware that the magnitude of this program will require funding from outside the District and it will explore all avenues of funding such as competitive grants from governmental agencies and direct grants and contributions from business and industry. Phase I is envisioned to occur over a period of 12 to 18 months during 2006 and in to 2007. Funding for subsequent Phases with emphasis on different areas of the District will be actively pursued and will benefit from experience gained in Phase I.

8.2 Phase I: Selection of Primary Project Area for Fuel Reduction and Treatment of Structural Ignitability

It is recognized that efforts to reduce both fuel loading and structure ignitability are necessary throughout the District. The limited availability of funds for this effort requires prioritization of areas based on the consideration of several factors. Discussions with Deer Springs Fire Chief Bolton and Fire Marshal Magdaleno have resulted in determination of the first three areas to be considered. Selection was based on several factors, which included population density, analysis of the CDF FRAP Fire Threat model, the potential for spot fire propagation into adjacent communities, and the immediate threat to structures. The three areas in order of priority are Moosa Canyon, West Lilac-Keys Canyon, and North Broadway-Jesmond Dene. The case for Moosa Canyon as a starting point is strengthened by a scenario analysis performed by CDF which predicts that during a Santa Ana wind event 9,000 acres could burn, destroying more than 200 homes and killing four people before it is contained.

8.2.1 Phase I Reduction of Fuels

The Deer Springs Fire Safe Council has determined that no fuel reduction projects are pending within the Deer Springs Fire Protection District other than routine enforcement activities of the District Fire Marshal. Since the vast majority of the District is private property, the Council proposes to sponsor and facilitate a community-based effort. In cooperation with local agencies, the Council will assist property owners in reducing the fuel load on their properties within the District. Properties lying within and on the rim of Moosa Canyon will be targeted in Phase I. Establishing a solid 100 foot defensible area around structures in concert with encouraging and enabling residents to apply hazard-reducing management techniques for native vegetation beyond the 100 foot distance will reduce the fuel loading in the canyon itself and provide a fuel break at the canyon rim. Reduction of fuels in this targeted area will potentially result in slowing of a fire's progress with attendant reduction in spot fires.

Three main areas of endeavor will be required to realize a satisfactory outcome for the fuel reduction portion of the program. It will be necessary to:

1. Train volunteers who will provide education to the residents of the District about current hazard abatement regulations.
2. Establish a public service program of seminars and workshops in which property owners would receive training in the following areas:
 - a. Identifying native and introduced plants appropriate for a Firewise landscape;
 - b. Planning a Firewise landscape;
 - c. Learning management techniques to achieve Firewise native chaparral;
 - d. Using appropriate and safe techniques for working in the chaparral.
 - e. Reducing “ladder” fuels
3. Provide a chipping service for harvested plant material or assist property owners in obtaining permits for controlled burns of material in accordance with current regulations when such burns are allowed and where chipping is not practical.

8.2.2 Phase I Treatment of Structure Ignitability

DSFSC proposes to assist residents of the District in reducing the ignitability of their homes and outbuildings through a series of educational mailings, seminars, and workshops that would convey methods of treatment to reduce structure ignitability. These offerings would consist of presentations and hands-on workshops provided by the DSFSC, local public safety personnel, and professionals in related fields.

Residents in the Phase I area will initially receive direct mailings of educational materials and schedule for seminars and workshops. While Phase I residents will receive priority, the seminars and workshops will be open to all District residents and will be announced in local publications and/or the DSFSC newsletter.

All owners of residential property must comply with the provisions of California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 4291 parts *a* through *f*. Educating residents on the requirements to comply with the code and the resulting benefits that would accrue from compliance will be the focus of the workshops and seminars.

Specifically, the provisions of PRC 4291 (paraphrased) are:

- a. Remove all flammable vegetation or other combustible growth at least 30 feet around any structure.
- b. Maintain an additional defensible space by removing all brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth located within 100 feet of a structure.
- c. Trim trees for at least 10 feet of clearance around a chimney.
- d. Remove dead growth from any tree overhanging a building.

- e. Maintain the roof of a structure free of leaves, needles or other dead vegetative growth.
- f. Install and maintain spark arrestors on all chimneys.

Examples of additional topics to be covered would include, but not be limited to:

- Proper storage of flammable materials
- Storage of firewood away from structures.
- Pruning vegetation to lessen fire propagation.
- Proper disposal of vegetation trimmings.
- Fire-resistant materials for construction, upgrading and hardscaping

Many older homes within the District were constructed in compliance with building codes that did not contain the fire safety provisions of today’s codes. These homes will receive additional attention so that owners can increase the chances of structural survival in a wildfire by incorporating several treatments ranging from simple do-it-yourself projects to treatments that are more involved and costly. Appropriate treatment will vary from structure to structure and the treatments to be utilized will be left to the discretion of the property owner. Some examples of treatments for older structures that will be presented are:

- Clear all flammable vegetation and material from beneath open decks.
- Enclose undersides of elevated decks with Fire-resistant building materials or wire mesh with openings no greater than ¼”
- Screen all foundation and roof vents with wire mesh with openings no greater than 1/8”
- Enclose open eaves.
- Install “bird-stop” in tile roofs.
- Replace wood-shingled roofs with Fire-resistant roofing.

Additional information will be provided to property owners highlighting wildfire prevention around the home. This would include, for example, such topics as the limitation of certain activities during high fire danger periods, the maintenance of powered field and garden tools in proper operating condition, the careful refueling of such equipment, and such seemingly routine activities as the careful disposal of smoking material and fireplace ashes.

9. DEER SPRINGS FIRE SAFE COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The DSFSC is an extremely active organization consisting of nine elected members of the Board of Directors and more than a dozen members-at-large from communities throughout the District. In cooperation with the County of San Diego, and the Deer Springs Fire Protection District, the Council supports and promotes Firewise activities and constantly seeks avenues to educate local residents about fire safety and prevention. Some accomplishments of the DSFSC in its brief existence are:

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- Conducted continuing education through the use of biannual workshops and seminars, instructional literature, and newspaper articles to highlight proven measures for fire prevention and safety. A key factor to protecting lives and property in the Deer Springs Fire Protection District is maintaining properties with the appropriate defensible space (Fire Defensible Space and You... 2005).
 - Obtained a grant allowing installation of twelve bilingual “Extreme Fire Danger Area” signs posted strategically throughout the District that incorporate “red flags” during designated red flag warning days as proclaimed by National Weather Service.
 - Established routes for evacuation and mailed them to the residents of the District.
 - Established and successfully tested an Emergency Communication System (ECS) also referred to as Reverse 9-1-1, to rapidly provide subscribers in the District with the status of an emergency, of any nature, via telephone.
 - Coordinated a system of strategically placed resident lookouts, with dedicated communications, to help assess the severity of a fire event and communicate this information via the ECS.
 - Continued sponsorship and support of the Deer Springs Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) whose members are trained to assist with basic emergency response skills. They would serve as an important backup resource for the District in case of an emergency or wildfire.
 - Established a program to identify, for upgrade, outdated water standpipes to comply with newer and more demanding water flow requirements.
 - Vigorously campaigned for a ballot measure increasing assessments to property owners in the District in order to provide a third fire station, additional firefighters and paramedics, and a fourth fire engine. The measure passed, additional personnel have been added and plans for a new fire station are awaiting approval.
 - Established an Internet site for timely dissemination of information as well as a repository for links to information related to fire safety.

10. CERTIFICATION OF DOCUMENT – UNINCORPORATED AREA

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan developed for the Deer Springs Fire Protection District by the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council:

- Was collaboratively developed. Interested parties and federal land management agencies managing land in the vicinity of the Deer Springs Fire Protection District have been consulted.
- This plan identifies and prioritized areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment that will protect the Deer Springs Fire Protection District.
- This plan recommends measures to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

The following entities attest that the standards listed above are proposed to be met and mutually agree with the content of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

Deer Springs Fire Protection District:

Name

Title

San Diego County Land Use and Environmental Group:

Name

Title

San Diego Fire Service Coordinator:

Name

Title

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, San Diego Unit:

Name

Title

CERTIFICATION OF DOCUMENT (continued)

Deer Springs Fire Safe Council:

_____	_____
Name	Title

Fire Safe Council of San Diego County:

_____	_____
Name	Title

APPENDIX A

Sources for Information Regarding Fuels Reduction, Building Construction and Community Fire Protection

1. County of San Diego Building Code (2004)
2. County of San Diego Fire Code (2004)
3. County of San Diego Combustible Vegetation and Flammable Material Ordinance (2004)
4. County of San Diego, OES Hazard Mitigation Plan (2004)
5. County of San Diego, Fire, Defensible Space and You... (2005)
6. County of San Diego, Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction Program Overview (2005)
7. <http://frap.cdf.ca.gov> for additional maps, data, and documents
8. <http://www.cafirealliance.org> California Fire Alliance website for additional documents.
9. <http://wildfire.cr.usgs.gov/fireplanning> California Fire Alliance mapping tool for additional planning and documents.

APPENDIX B

Deer Springs Fire Protection District Maps Of Interest

Figure 1. District Boundary Map

Figure 2. District Topographic Map

Figure 3. Wildland-Urban Interface zone designations

Figure 4. Communities/Population Concentration Map

Figure 5. Assets at Risk Map

Figure 6. Fire History 1910 – 2003

Figure 7. Vegetation Classifications

Figure 8. Fire Threat (modeled by CDF FRAP)