



# Organizing Firewise Projects/ Actions

Jo Ann Fites-Kaufman, Ph.D.

Retired US Forest Service, Fire Scientist & Land  
Management Planner

# Organizing Firewise Project Actions

- Firewise Certification is important – ***Action to be more Firesafe is end GOAL***
- Organizing Actions
  - What
  - Where
  - How
  - When
  - ***Not necessarily in that order***
- Continuous Process to reduce fuels – they grow and accumulate

# Organizing Actions

- Defensible Space, Hardened Structures – following programs
- Emphasis here: common evacuation routes
  - Where are they?
  - What kind of fuel?
  - How will it burn?
  - What should it look like?
  - How to get the work done?
    - Private
    - County
    - Public – NID, BLM, USFS, State



# Why are fuels on roads *ultra* important?

- Camp Fire – Sober Lesson
- What's it like to drive when fire is burning around and above?
  - Flames over the road
  - Smokey, hard to see road
  - Embers flying
- Speed of fire vs you
  - **4 to 5 miles in an hour** low winds
  - **1.5 miles in 15 minutes** with high winds (20 miles per hour)
  - Fire can **accelerate suddenly**
- How do fuels make a difference?
  - Less fuels = less flames & heat



# Fire and fuels 101

- How hot is that campfire?



*How much is there?*



*How dry is it?*



Is fire all bad? NO, but not good to drive by hot fire  
Important fuel reduction tool

Our focus today is making communities safer

See my other presentations if you want to learn more about good fire

# Fire in different vegetation

*high fire danger* (hot, dry or windy)

Grass



Shrubs  
& small  
trees



Forests



# What do safe fuels look like?

- Basic CALFIRE requirements
  - *You need it to get out*
  - *They need safety to come in*



# What does it look like? Or not

## *Trees*

Wide spacing, more than 30 feet back



Trees too close  
Especially next to  
road



# What does it look like or not?

## *Shrubs or bushes*



Ladder from ground to tree crowns

# What does it look like or not?

## *Grass*



# Why is Scotch broom so bad?

- It burns very hot very fast!
- It sprouts back and seeds last
- Ways to get rid of for longer
  - Pull
  - Cover with black plastic
  - Spray



# But I want my privacy!



Wood is pretty but burns well, close to a road is ***very dangerous during a fire to you, neighbors evacuating and firefighters!***

Cheap alternative  
--Doughboy pool siding  
available free all the time



# How far to clear back?

- Minimum 10 feet back and 15 feet up does not change fire in peak fire season
- Better is County Hazard Abatement Ordinance
  - 75 feet or more
- Use Defensible Space Guide for how much clearance
  - Immediate ignition zone (0 to 30 feet)
  - Outer area (30-100 feet or more)
  - Larger properties (>100 feet)



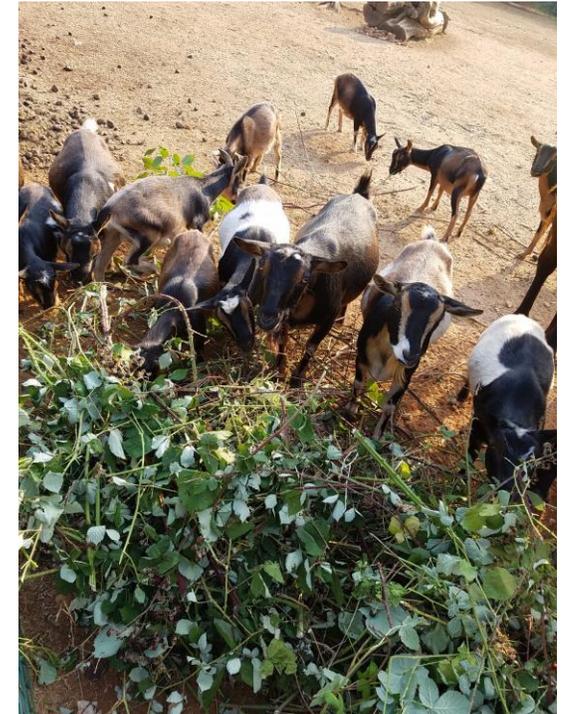
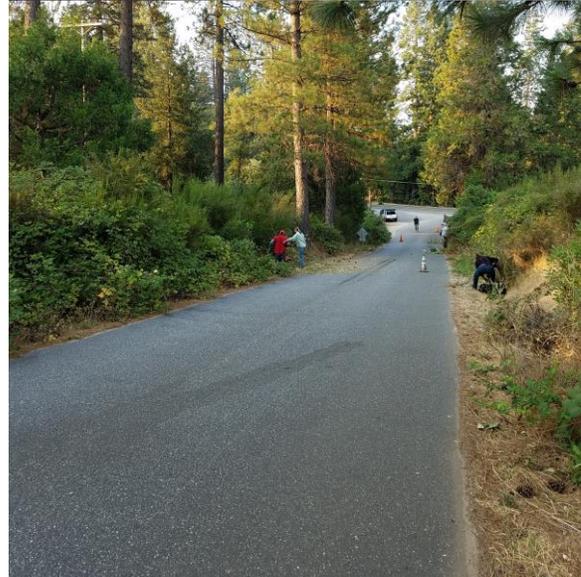
# How to Get Work Done?

- Depends on fuel type and road ownership
- Grass
  - Mow
  - Weedwack
  - Graze



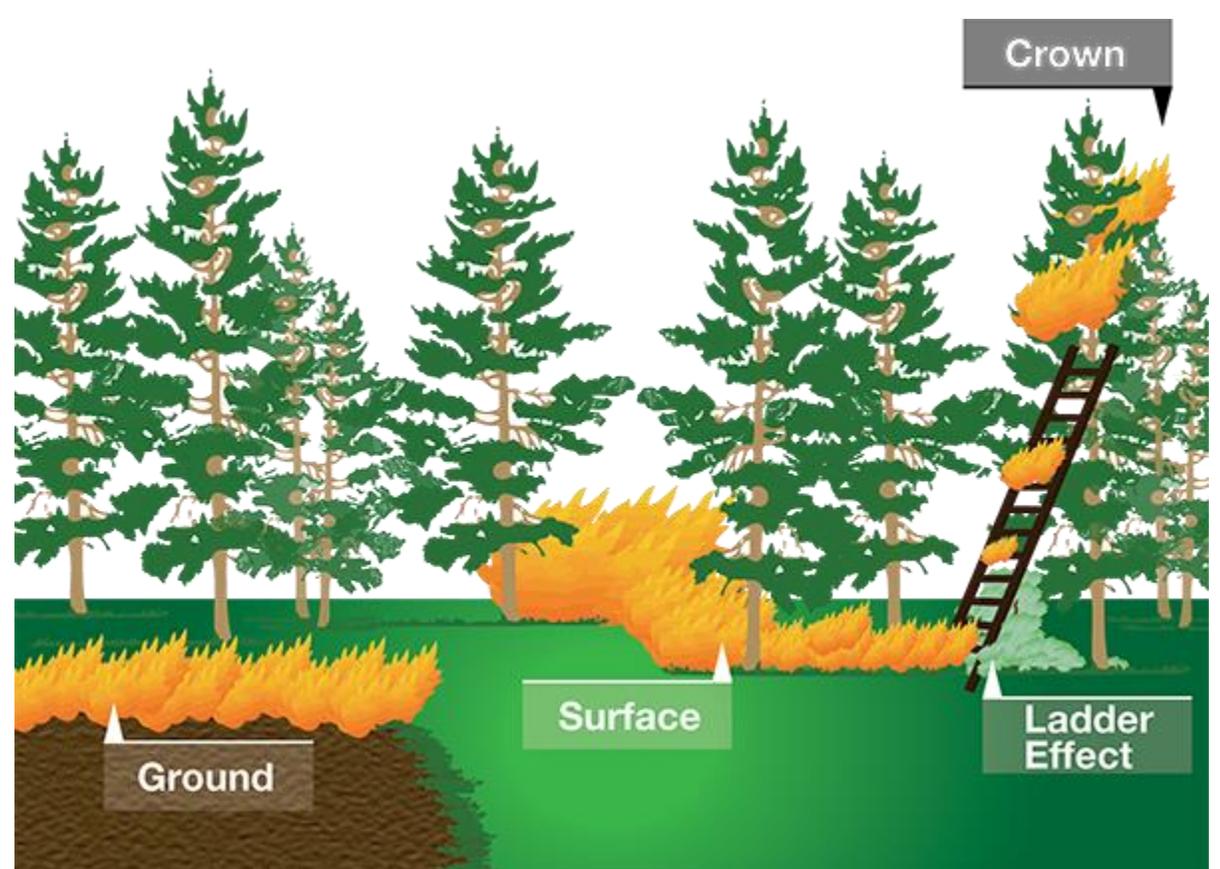
# Shrubs and Vines (i.e. Blackberry)

- Sprouting (regrows)
  - Pull –Scotch broom
  - Graze
  - Spray (if allowed and accepted)
  - Repeat, repeat, repeat!
- Non-sprouting
  - Cut and pile
  - Chip or burn
  - Haul to green waste dump site



# Forest/Trees

- Limb up – not enough
- Thin to wider spacing
  - At least 12 feet between crowns
- Use firewood
- Pile and burn
- Chip if not too much
- Haul to green waste site
- Trade logs for removal
- Sell logs



# How to get the work done?

- Neighborhood work parties
  - If neighbors can't do work, contribute to paying crew
  - Make it short, bring food and drinks, prioritize
  - Quarterly or monthly
  - Start with a few people and talk to those driving by-educate
- Firewise Communities priority for FSC grants/help
  - Americorps Crew
  - CALFIRE or other grants
  - To qualify, demonstrate in-kind actions and money
- EQIP grants from NRCS, larger parcels
- Low income senior/disabled persons help from FSC
- County Roads and Vacant Lots
  - Organize permission from landowners to clear more than 10-15 foot minimum



# Undeveloped Public Lands

- Federal
  - Bureau of Land Management (BLM),
  - Tahoe National Forest (USFS),
- State – State Parks
- Local – NID, County, City
- Contact them
  - Let them know you are a Firewise Community
  - You are concerned about fuels and are clearing
  - They often prioritize public lands in Wildland Urban Interface



# Pieces of the Puzzle



# Organizing Actions – WHEN?

- Before and After Certification – Don't wait!
  - Record volunteer hours
  - Record type of work and amount of fuels removed or chipped or burned
  - Required for certification application
- Continuously
  - Defensible Space – before fire season (Now-May)
  - Community Projects – several times a year
    - Set dates community can plan around
    - Be ready for requests from FSC for projects

