

West Region Wildfire Council

Meeting Minutes

10/20/16

Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
Austin	Tom	Log Hill Fire
Bair	Betsy	Senator Gardner
Barth	Chris	BLM
Bennett	John	Telluride Fire
Borders	Shannen	BLM
Chavez	Thad	USFS
Edwards	Gloria	Southern Rockies Fire Science Network
Falk	Lilia	WRWC
Gomez	Jamie	WRWC
Greer	Kari	
Lewis	Brandon	BLM
Robinson	Corey	USFS
Rogers	John	Log Hill Fire
Tori	Sheets	Plaindealer
Shelby	Austin	CSFS
Stark	Rusty	BLM
Tarantino	Mike	WRWC
Tisdel	Ben	Ouray County
Yeager	Brian	BLM

Introductions

Lilia Falk facilitated the meeting and initiated a round of introductions. She than introduced Gloria Edwards of Southern Rockies Fire Science Network who sponsored the meetings speakers. Edwards than introduced fire photographer Kari Greer and Chris Barth of the BLM Southwest Fire District.

Presentation: “Capturing Fire. A Photo Essay” presented by fire photographer Kari Greer and Chris Barth of the BLM Southwest Fire District

To view some of Kari’s work, you can visit: www.Kariphotos.com

Kari Greer started her presentation by rolling through artistic pictures of blazing surface fires, torching trees, and ember showers. She went on to explain that the general public understands a wildfire as a giant pyro-cumulus plume in the distance but few realize exactly what is happening on the ground. She is hoping that through her photographs more people understand exactly what a fire is doing, exactly what crews are doing to suppress it, and how to become more Firewise.

Kari than explained what her job was and how she became a fire photography. She explained how she was hired for her first seasonal position with the USFS on a trail crew and quickly realized that her job description had changed to the

primary role of fighting fire. Because she always had a passion for photography and was falling in love with fire she decided to resign from the federal system and try to become a private contractor doing fire photography.

Kari then rolled through slides with photographs of tired faces covered in soot. She wanted the audience to understand who was inside the fire perimeter, closed off to the public, and what they were doing to suppress the fire. She showed photos of hand crews digging line, sawyers falling trees, a variety of incendiary devices used to “fight fire with fire”, rappellers on a helitack crew, and an air show dropping water and retardant from a variety of ships.

Once the audience understood what a fire is and how crews fight it her focus shifted to the effects of fire mitigation. To describe this she chose three recent assignments that she had worked: the Carlton Complex in Washington, the Wallow Fire in Arizona, and the Waldo Canyon Fire in Colorado.

As Kari showed slides of a brush fire picking up steam and barreling towards a ranch within the Carlton Complex she pointed out actions that the landowner had taken before the fire started. Fuels around the ranch were light and thin and combustible material was stacked away from the structure. The ranch had a good defensible space and the fire behavior allowed for engines to make a stand. This ranch was saved on the same day that the Carlton Complex made a dramatic run of 8 air miles directly towards the town of Pateros, WA.

Kari’s pictures then shifted to a home inside the Wallow Fire. The fire intensity was extreme crowning through mature pine forests. Due to this extreme behavior crews were forced to let the main flame front pass before any work could safely begin. The engine that Kari was attached to, arrived at a structure with heavy background fuels and needle litter covering the roof. Although the first view of the structure showed an incombustible stone façade, as the crew circled the house they noticed that wood siding was tucked right into heavy fuels. Fire was burning in the attic and the home was lost. As the home was being engulfed by flame and the engine crew left for another task Kari snapped photos of two homes across the street. These homes were built just a few hundred feet from the forest edge and both survived the flame front without any damage. Kari then focused on another home within the Wallow Fire. These homeowners proactively managed a defensible space around their structure by thinning pine and promoting Aspen. Although when fire crews arrived there was a large pile of firewood stored underneath the deck “a jackpot for embers” as Kari stated, the overall defensible space was solid. Crews quickly un-pilled the large stack of firewood and lit a blackline around the home. The structure was a mitigation success.

Kari ended her presentation by focusing on the Waldo Canyon Fire in Colorado Springs. This fire similar to other devastating wildfires that Kari talked about made one tremendous push of extreme fire behavior. Hundreds of homes were lost. A majority of these structures were lost through conflagration, where burning homes were catching neighboring homes on fire.

The West Region Wildfire Council would like to thank Southern Rockies Fire Science Network and the BLM Southwest District for co-sponsoring the event.