



2020

ANNUAL REPORT

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR... The year of 2020 was a challenging and difficult one in many ways. While the world coped with a global pandemic, Colorado experienced one of its largest wildfire years in recorded history. Our systems for emergency response and management were tested on multiple fronts, all while we tried to adapt to a variety of changes at the social, political, economic and environmental levels. Through it all, the need for regional-scale, community driven, coordinated and collaborative wildfire preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery has continued to rise in importance. As the massive wildfires of 2020 have demonstrated, the time to act is now. Individual residents, community leaders, community development planners, emergency responders, fire response professionals, wildfire mitigation specialists, natural resource specialists, public educators, elected officials, business owners, forestry contractors, home builders and many others - all of us - play some kind of role and hold some level responsibility in the work of making our homes, communities, forests and watersheds more resilient to wildfire and other changes and disturbances on the horizon. As the staff for this regional organization, we are dedicated to working on this mission and honored to be doing this work alongside so many incredible individuals and organizations that share a common vision for our future. I look forward to building upon our collective successes to help make the kinds of changes and impacts that we all wish to see.

Jamie Lamy

MISSION & STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The West Region Wildfire Council's primary focus is to promote and empower community wildfire adaptation while increasing ecological resiliency to future wildfire. WRWC acts as the regional focal point for coordination and collaboration around strategies and priorities for reducing wildfire risk in WUI communities within Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray and San Miguel Counties in Colorado.



PROGRAMMATIC PILLARS:

- A. Understanding and assessing wildfire risk – at the landscape, community and parcel scale.
- B. Emphasizing education – to elevate understanding of the wildfire issue and the emerging science related to techniques/strategies for mitigating wildfire risk in efforts to further the discourse between community members, wildfire managers and others under the fire adapted communities umbrella.
- C. Empowering measurable wildfire mitigation via:
 - Site Visits
 - Technical field assistance for designing and laying out fuels reduction & defensible space projects
 - WRWC's established Cost-Share Program- partially funding the cost of acres treated on private land.
- D. Increasing the pace and scale of community wildfire adaptation- WRWC is committed to collaboratively and strategically focusing efforts in priority high risk WUI areas to complete measurable wildfire risk reduction activities that result in increased community and ecosystem resiliency

PARTNERSHIPS:

WRWC works proactively, and aggressively, with hundreds of landowners and homeowners as well as regional land managers (BLM and USFS), the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC), 24 regional fire protection districts, county planning departments, as well as our county emergency managers and sheriff's offices; all of whom have an interest in wildfire, forest, habitat and watershed resiliency.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The WRWC Board of Directors is comprised of state, county and local representatives, each committed to furthering the efforts of WRWC.

Damon Lange: Colorado State Forest Service

John Bennett: Telluride Fire Protection District

Jennifer Dinsmore: San Miguel Sheriff's Office

Steve Ellis: CO Div. of Fire Prevention & Control (Retired 1.15.2021)

Scott Morrill: Gunnison County Emergency Mgmt.

James Savage, Federal Liaison: Bureau of Land Management, Southwest District

STAFF

Courtney Haynes: Wildfire Mitigation Forester

Lilia Falk: Director of Finance and HR

Jamie Gomez: Executive Director



From our Board Chair.... While the organization is focused on the tenants of our organizational mission, WRWC is also a significant advocate for developing regional partnerships with all wildfire response agencies to foster relationship building improve communication, and support action through the identified needs of communities. Interest and participation in wildfire mitigation continues to grow across the Western United States as residential building into our forests increases and the devastating impacts of wildfire are recognized. The work WRWC does is critical to changing outcomes when wildfire impacts our communities and they are a significant catalyst for the success of all the participating partners. Moving forward the anticipated challenges with increased demands for mitigation in the west region will only be limited by funding availability and capacity. The continued support by the public and organizational partners is essential for our health and well-being in an era of frequent mega fires. – John Bennett, Telluride Fire

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SITE VISIT PROGRAM: WRWC offers free Site Visits for private landowners with homes or properties in the Wildland Urban Interface within our six-county region.

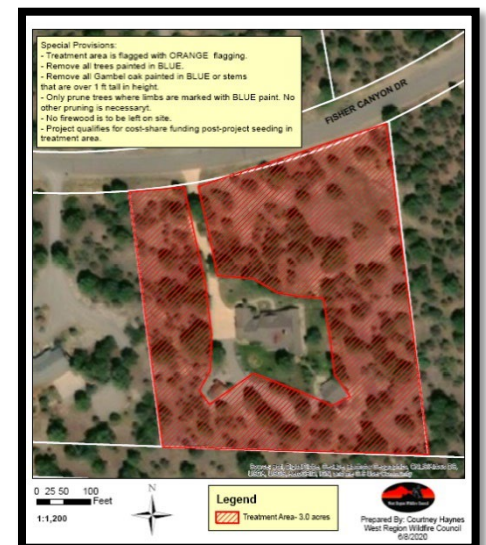
WRWC Wildfire Mitigation Foresters completed 105 Site Visits over the course of 2020. WRWC staff coordinate and schedule Site Visits across the region. During a Site Visit, WRWC meets with the landowner at their home or property for a 60-minute consultation - which involves evaluating and discussing major wildfire risk factors such as home ignition & home hardening, vegetation management & defensible space as well as safety measures including ingress/egress. WRWC staff provide the landowner with site-specific recommendations on how they can reduce their wildfire risk. WUI residents request site visits via www.COwildfire.org/Site-visit



COST-SHARE PROGRAM: WRWC offers a cost-share program that reimburses participants up to 75% of the cost for their completed vegetation management project.

WRWC facilitates projects on private land, while offering a reimbursement-based program to help offset the cost to private landowners. The program specifically focuses on implementing defensible space, extended defensible space and larger community-scale hazardous fuels reduction projects in high risk WUI communities across our six-county region.

WRWC staff oversee the entire process – which involves designing and laying out the mitigation projects, developing a project scope of work based upon relevant local, state and national standards and BMPs, and showcasing the projects to solicit competitive bids from professional contractors. The homeowner selects and hires the contractor to complete the mitigation work. Once work is completed and a final compliance inspection done, WRWC reimburses the landowner based on a previously executed award agreement. Learn more online at: www.COwildfire.org/cost-share



PROJECT SHOWCASES FOR CONTRACTORS: WRWC schedules and facilitates project showcase trips to solicit competitive contractor bids on behalf of homeowners participating in our Cost-Share program.

Often 6-10 projects in a similar geographic area are 'shown' together. WRWC staff compile and organize project bids for the homeowners who ultimately make the final decision on which contractor to hire. WRWC hosted seven (7) contractor showcase trips in 2020.



YUCCA DRIVE: Project Highlight: The Yucca Drive Community Fuelbreak & Forest Resiliency Project is planned on approximately 100 acres along the escarpment of a land feature known as the Log Hill Mesa in Ouray County. WRWC has partnered with the Colorado West Land Trust (CWLT) to fund and implement a fuelbreak and forest management activities on a conserved parcel of land. The forest management work will establish a fuelbreak that will benefit hundreds of residents and homes on the mesa and will also improve the overall forest health and stand conditions on the parcel. The primary fuels in the project area include ponderosa pine, juniper, pinyon pine, and gambel oak.

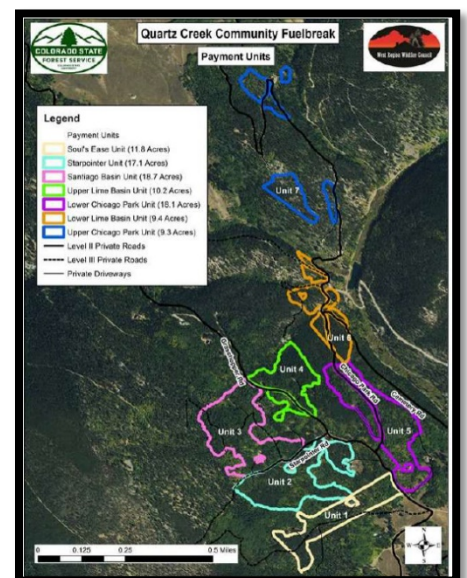
A collaborative approach was taken in planning this project. WRWC, CWLT and the landowners asked several other natural resource professionals to collectively serve as members of an "identification team" to review and provide feedback on the scope of the project. Given the special nature of the property as a conserved parcel, it was imperative to ensure the fuels reduction and forest management align with other conservation goals on the property. The Identification Team met on site in 2020 to review the scope of work and provide input and guidance. Moving forward, this project will be field-marked and bid out to vegetation management contractors in mid-2021.



QUARTZ CREEK COMMUNITY: Project Highlight

Since 2018, the WRWC and the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) have been working with landowners in the Quartz Creek Community in Gunnison County to plan and implement a fuelbreak to mitigate hazardous fuels, primarily lodgepole pine, in the area through the creation of defensible space and roadside thinning. This project will complement other fuels reduction actions taken in the area, namely 'West Mountain Fuels Reduction Project' that was completed adjacent to the community by the GMUG National Forest's Gunnison Ranger District.

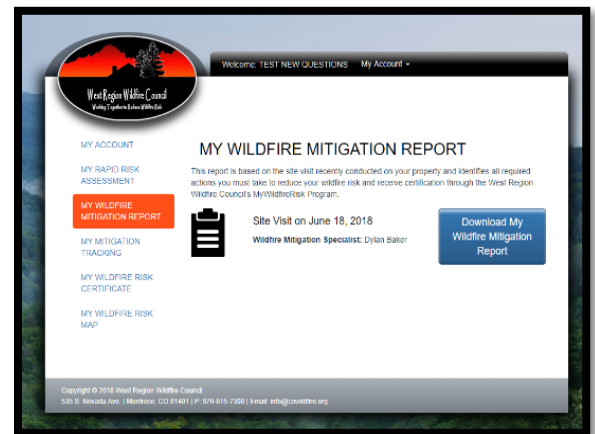
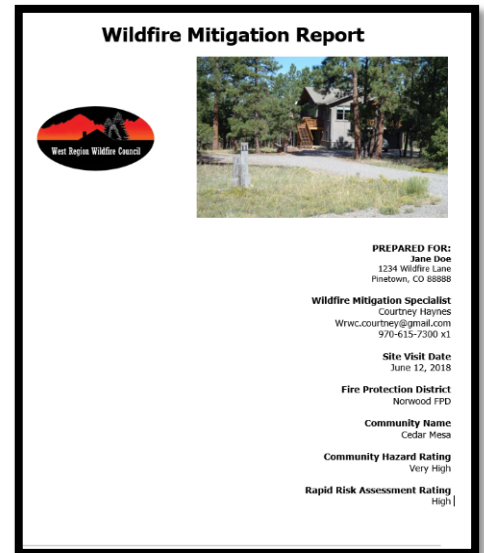
In 2020, sixteen landowners within the Quartz Creek community signed participating agreements to allow WRWC and CSFS to delineate the fuelbreak project boundary on their property and field mark trees on their property for removal. After the completion of the fieldwork, a Request for Proposals/Scope of Work was developed for the project. WRWC and CSFS plan to invite forestry contractors to view and bid on the project which will result in the treatment of 90.4 acres. WRWC intends to go into contract with the selected contract by mid-2021.



MyWildfireRisk: WRWC has been working to develop a suite of mobile and mapping technologies that will increase the pace and scale of wildfire mitigation and home hardening action in our region.

MyWildfireRisk is an engagement platform that leverages technology and mitigation expertise to guide homeowners through understanding their wildfire risk and implementing mitigation measures that reduce their risk.

The program features a MyWildfireRisk homeowner report which is automatically generated following a homeowner site visit with a mitigation specialist. This report details specific recommendations. A homeowner online portal allows homeowners to report their mitigation action progress and ultimately, the program is intended to provide a date-in-time certification to standard of a home. Other examples in Colorado provide for this kind of program to be supported and recognized by insurance and real estate companies. In 2020 WRWC Staff completed 115 MyWildfireRisk Assessments in the Community of Trout Lake in San Miguel County.



SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH- WiRē TEAM: WRWC continued their partnership with social science researchers from the Rocky Mountain Research Station in Fort Collins and the University of Colorado Boulder's Institute of Behavioral Science, The US Geological Survey. Collectively this partnership, called WiRē (Wildfire Research), examines wildfire risk, homeowner perception of risk, and how certain behaviors or experiences influence homeowners to participate in wildfire mitigation activities. Specifically, the WiRē Team and WRWC partnered together on a paired homeowner



survey effort, several outreach mailings with a research component as well as several community meetings. The research conducted within the West Region by the WiRē Team has generated a better understanding of our communities, their perceived barriers and need for completing wildfire mitigation work. Several Journal Articles, Data Reports and summaries were published based on findings from the research conducted through our partnership.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS & PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT: In 2020 WRWC worked with county, Fire Protection District and Wildfire Research Team partners to mail over 2000 direct mailers to WUI residents within the region. These mailers provided information about wildfire risk, were a part of a research project in partnership with the Wildfire Research Team and resulted in 3 virtual Community Wildfire Preparedness meetings.





GREEN MEADOWS FIRE: DEFENSIBLE SPACE

PUT TO THE TEST: The Green Meadows fire (~60 acres) burned through the Telluride Pines Community in 2020 and tested a defensible space project previously completed via WRWC's Cost-Share Program. WRWC hosted a lessons learned event to discuss the effectiveness of the treatment area as well as vulnerabilities of the structure to ignition. The engine crew providing structure protection during the fire attended the lessons learned event and provided valuable feedback.



LAND USE AND BUILDING CODES: OURAY COUNTY

Over the last several years, WRWC staff advised the Ouray County Land Use Planning Commission through a process which ultimately resulted in an overhaul and eventual adoption of significant changes to the County Land Use and Building Code as related to wildfire. Adopted in late 2019, the new code requires new construction within the county to meet very specific standards that address structure vulnerability to wildfire. In addition, regulations were adopted that address the requirement of retrofits for existing construction. The County also took steps to address wildfire mitigation and forethought when Planned Unit Developments are approved. In 2020 WRWC staff worked with Ouray County to complete required Site Visits on 16 homes in the County that were in the permitting/ building process and fell under the newly adopted requirements of the land use code.

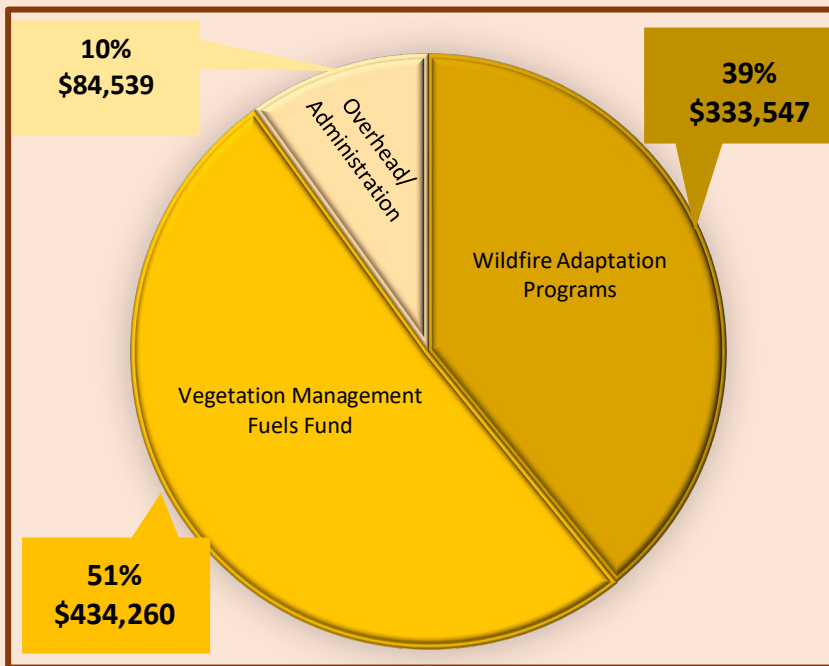


2021 National Wildfire Mitigation Award

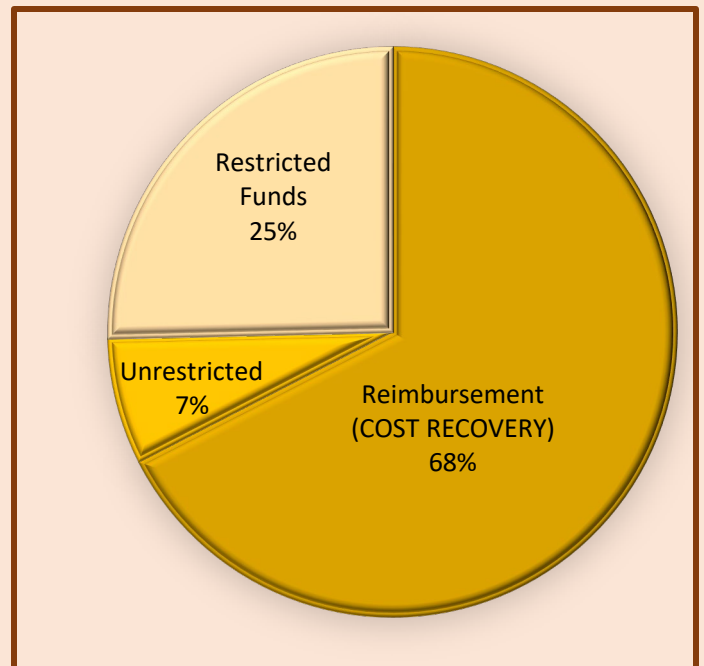
In February of 2021, Courtney Haynes was named as one of three winners of the national Wildfire Mitigation Awards. The award is cosponsored by the National Fire Protection Association, the National Association of State Foresters, the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the US Forest Service. Courtney's accomplishments related to community and homeowner education as well as her considerable efforts to plan and implement fuels reduction projects at the regional scale were recognized with the nation's top honor and we could not be prouder of Courtney!



2020 Program Budget



2020 Revenue by Source



PIÑON PALS

Anonymous
Burt Stern
Barbara McCullar
Tom & Rita Bakos
Kevin Kennedy
Janett Pritchett



2020 DONORS



THANK YOU!

FIR FRIENDS

Robert Plemons
Kevin McNeill
Anonymous
Max Jenkins
Lisa Foxwell & Paul Finley
Anonymous

2019 MAJOR FUNDING SUPPORTERS



BLM Community Assistance Program



Delta County Title III



Montrose County Title III



Gunnison County Title III



Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, Gunnison National Forest



Rocky Mountain Research Station- Wildfire Research Team (WiRe)



Ouray County General Fund



Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation State Fire Assistance (SFA)- *Federal pass through* Community Assistance Funds Adjacent to National Forest Lands (CAFA)- *Federal pass through*



San Miguel County Title III San Miguel County Sheriff's Office



University of Colorado NSF Pass-through