

Many thanks to everyone who joined us Sunday afternoon for this 95033 area Firewise leaders gathering. A special thanks to our wonderful hostess, Kathleen Newman, who treated us to wonderfully cool A/C, along with delicious food and drink.

Below is a recap of some notes captured during the meeting, along with attachments to share some resources we discussed. If you have input you'd like to share, please fill out this survey:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfnB6_Or4Jrc756ajJdXX0-xKIFmNqNGbeL511qj8409Hr0Ag/viewform?usp=sf_link

Notes:

1. 95033 area spans two counties. We have a lot in common. We are familiar with power outages, chain saws and chippers. Many of us live on private roads and have private water sources. Most of us are under CALFIRE's jurisdiction. Many of us have been non-renewed by home insurance companies.
2. We share a common purpose to help educate and encourage our communities to reduce wildfire risk and promote safety during both wildfire and other events like snow storms, earthquakes.
3. For newly forming Firewise communities, and communities with new leadership, there are lots of great mentors available. Please see the survey above if you are interested in mentors.
4. Lynn brought a big paper map that showed Firewise USA recognized communities in Santa Cruz County, with hand-colored in Santa Clara county 95033 communities, plus all the new in-progress communities in our 95033 area.
5. A link to the online viewer of Santa Cruz county Firewise recognized communities is here:
<https://sccgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/basic/index.html?appid=2f4184e0622f48009be27031318be8e0>. Perhaps in the future we can get OR3 support to map Santa Clara County 95033 communities in this tool (Lynn's action).
6. We spent about 30 minutes doing round robin introductions around the room, with everyone introducing themselves and a bit of background about the community they represented. Lots of great information shared.
7. Josh Hespeler from Hutchinson Road shared some details about the great infrastructure his Firewise steering committee has put in place over the last 3-4 years. Many of these pieces have helped facilitate more connection and collaboration within the community.

Highlights:

- a. WhatsApp with two channels – one for general inquiries (my dog is lost), another for emergencies (tree down, road blocked)
- b. Quarterly newsletter (see attached example)
- c. Website
- d. Yearly potluck event with speakers (ex: Sheriff's dept talks about evacuations, CALFIRE talks about home hardening and property access)
- e. Hutchinson road's use of PODS for organizing their community in smaller groups (see attached PODs description).
- f. Annual weed whacking event along Hutchinson Road

8. Steve Stewart from Central Summit Watershed Firewise talked about his large community of roughly 219 homes, which includes Villa Del Monte and homes on the Santa Clara county side of Summit road.
 - a. They have access to a 5013c non-profit organization which can be useful for applying for grant funding.
 - b. They span two counties so use separate county services for HIZ, chipping.
 - c. Summit Watershed has a 12 person Wildfire Mitigation Brigade
 - d. Success story: Steve and a group did a “Demo project” on a piece of property near the center of their community (so it was visible to many residents) which showcased defensible space done right.
 - e. Steve (and others) encouraged us as a group to think bigger, to band together to have a larger voice, and collaborate on CWPPs that would make us look more attractive to grant funders. One idea was to use grants that could create shaded fuel breaks between Firewise communities.
9. Brad and Dana Hartzell shared descriptions from Chemeketa Park’s use of the PODs system (which Dana invented several years ago), and the successes with close knit communication within the larger community. One suggestion was to organize pods by mutual interests or existing relationships instead of proximity. The use of PODs and good evacuation planning was put to the test earlier this year with an arsonist setting fires close to Chemeketa Park and Aldercroft Heights.
10. There was some discussion regarding ways to encourage neighborhood participation. Ideas included: social events with food and alcohol 😊, in person gatherings with demonstrations (like home hardening), walking evacuation routes together, etc.
11. Leah Stern from Aldercroft Heights who attended the WUI conference asked how to evaluate all the new wildfire related products that are being touted by vendors. Do systems like Komodo really work? What about fire retardant wood stains? What about fire retardant gels?
 - a. One source of good research is the IBHS that regularly publishes papers on the results of their testing specific products. <https://ibhs.org/risk-research/wildfire/>
 - b. FireSafe Marin has a good reputation for sharing information on research-backed products. <https://firesafemarin.org/>
12. Reminder: for established Firewise communities recognized before 2024, Firewise USA application renewals are due by Nov 22 this year. If you need help or a reminder of the deliverables, please let us know.

What’s Next? We can all stay connected via the existing wider spread email forum (SouthBay Firewise Partners) which includes Firewise leaders from all of Santa Cruz county and mostly Santa Clara county.

And we can create our own 95033FirewiseLeaders email forum (which might overlap with the larger forum that contains good useful information). See the survey above to cast your vote.

And/or commit to quarterly in person meetings to make progress on sharing best practices, and having a bigger collective voice with our politicians and county agencies.

