

COLORADO MOUNTAIN ESTATES COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN



**Colorado Mountain Estates
Wildfire Protection Group**

April 2007

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Acknowledgements

Many people participated in creating the CME Community Wildfire Protection Plan.
Thank you!

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COLORADO MOUNTAIN ESTATES

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Mountain Estates Wildfire Protection Group in consultation with local fire officials, county, state and federal agencies and other interested parties have collaborated to develop the Colorado Mountain Estates Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CME CWPP). The CME CWPP was created using a modified version of the guidelines of *Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: a Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities*¹ (CWPP Handbook) and the *Neighborhood Wildfire Protection Plan Outline*, provided by Teller County.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) directs federal agencies to collaborate with communities in developing hazardous fuels reduction projects, and in the prioritization of treatment areas as defined by a community's CWPP. The CME CWPP will assist the Colorado Mountain Estates community in the identification of subdivision and surrounding private and public lands at risk from severe wildfire. It identifies strategies for reducing wildfire fuels while improving forest health, supporting the local economy, and improving fire fighting response capabilities.

Community Profile

Location

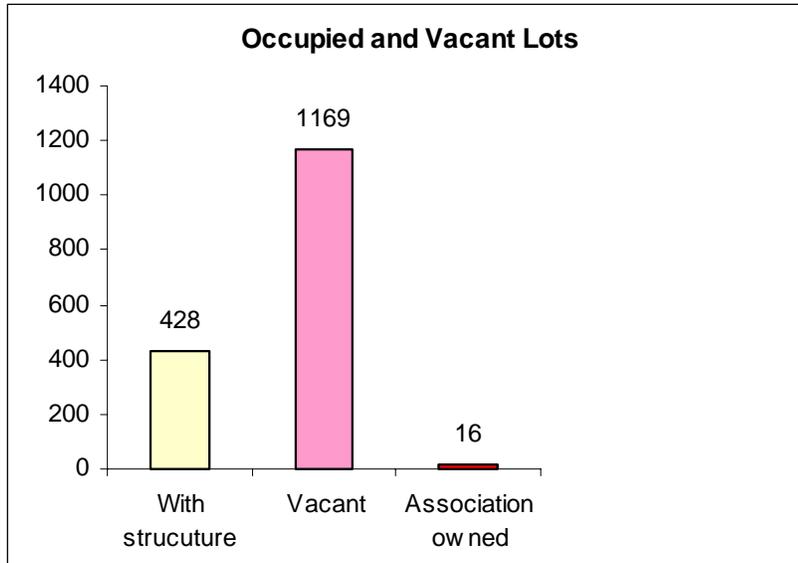
The Colorado Mountain Estates community is located approximately four miles south of Florissant, CO, on Teller County Road 1 and adjacent to the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument on the northwest, bordered by Mueller State Park on the east, Teller County Road 1 to the west and private properties to the south and north east. The north half of the community is in the South Platte River drainage, and the south half is in the Arkansas River drainage.

Community Background

The community encompasses an area of approximately three square miles or 1,960 acres

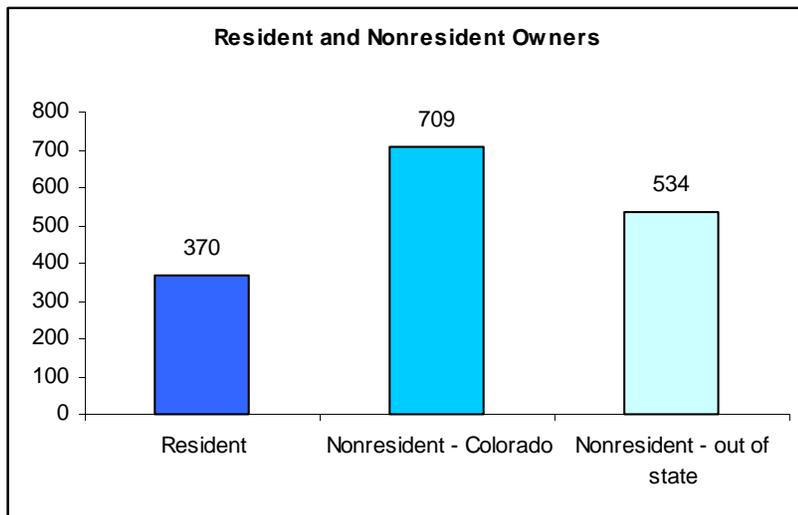
¹ Communities Committee, Society of American Foresters, National Association of Counties, National Association of State Foresters, Society of American Foresters, Western Governor's Conference. *Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities*. 2004.

and was developed primarily for permanent residences, seasonal use cabins and second homes. There are a total of 1613 lots of which 428 had structures on them in 2005, 16 are owned by the Property Owners Association and 1,169 were vacant.² They vary in size from 0.4 to 6.4 acres.



According to the 2006 CME Architectural Committee Chairman, there has been an average of 24 to 30 new homes constructed in the subdivision each year representing a 5% growth annually over 2004 and 2005. This trend continued in 2006.

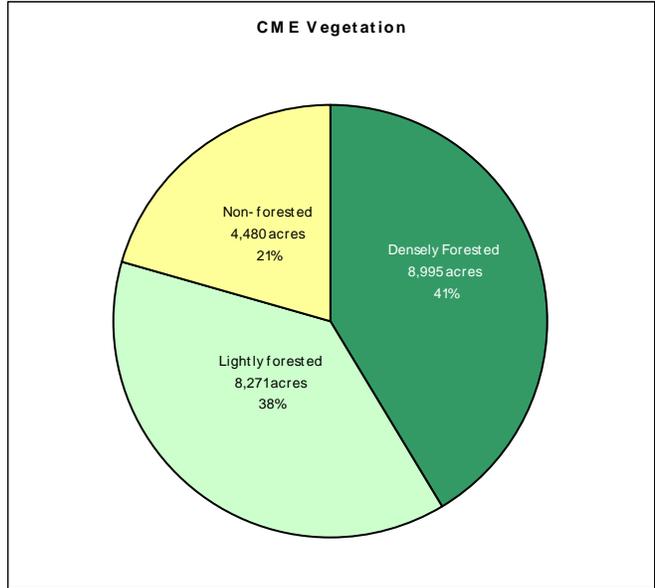
Property owners, with the exception of 88, belong to the Colorado Mountain Estates Property Owners Association. Less than one-fourth of the landowners are resident in the community; and one-third of them reside in other states.



Roads are maintained by Teller County, and presently, there is one egress in and out of the subdivision.

² GIS data provided by Teller County. There is a small discrepancy between this data and the lots noted in the Teller County CWPP.

The majority of the subdivision is forested with ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, spruce and aspen trees, with significant areas of open grasslands. The vegetation of the subdivision is approximately 41% heavy forest, 38% light to moderate forest, and 21% non-forest³. Most residents do not support the wide spread cutting of trees in the area. Some residents are interested in information, education, and financial support for removing and disposing of standing dead or downed timber on their properties.



The drought conditions of recent years have made the overgrown forests more vulnerable to the possibility of wildfire. The subdivision is in the Wildland-Urban-Interface, which poses tremendous risk to life, property, and infrastructure, and is one of the most dangerous and complicated situations firefighters face. The Teller County Community Wildfire Protection Plan has identified approximately 50% of the CME subdivision as a category “1” or “Red Zone” as described by both the USFS and CSFS through May 23, 2005.

CME Wildfire Protection Group

Volunteers from CME formed the Wildfire Protection Group (WPG) in early 2006. We have collaborated with the Florissant Fire Protection District and Coalition for Upper South Platte (CUSP), which provides liaison to Teller County CWPP Commission, technical support and education. Colorado Mountain Estates Property Owners Association unfortunately, is unable to support the CME Wildfire Protection Group because of insurance issues.

³ GIS analysis of orthophotos provided by Teller Count. See appendix A.

II. PREPARING THE CME CWPP

The CME Wildfire Protection Group (CME-WPG) generally followed the step-by-step process outlined in *A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities* (pages 4-8) mentioned above, and the *Neighborhood Wildfire Protection Plan Outline* provided by the Teller County Wildfire Mitigation Commission.

Step One: Meet with Local Property Owners Interested in the Project

The CME-WPG reviewed the Teller County CWPP document, liaised with the county CWPP Commission and GIS staff through CUSP, attended meetings sponsored by the County, and generally acquainted ourselves with other stakeholders.

The *CWPP Handbook* notes the importance of involving a broad range of local stakeholders. In this formative phase of wildfire protection work in CME, we brought together community residents and other federal, state and county parties. The Wildfire Protection Group itself is made up of resident Property Owners who are responsible for planning, education, scheduling activities, implementation and follow-up of planned activities. The WPG will continue to involve state, county and local government expertise, adjacent state and federal land managers as well as adjacent private landowners and community members to provide input during planning and implementation of actions.

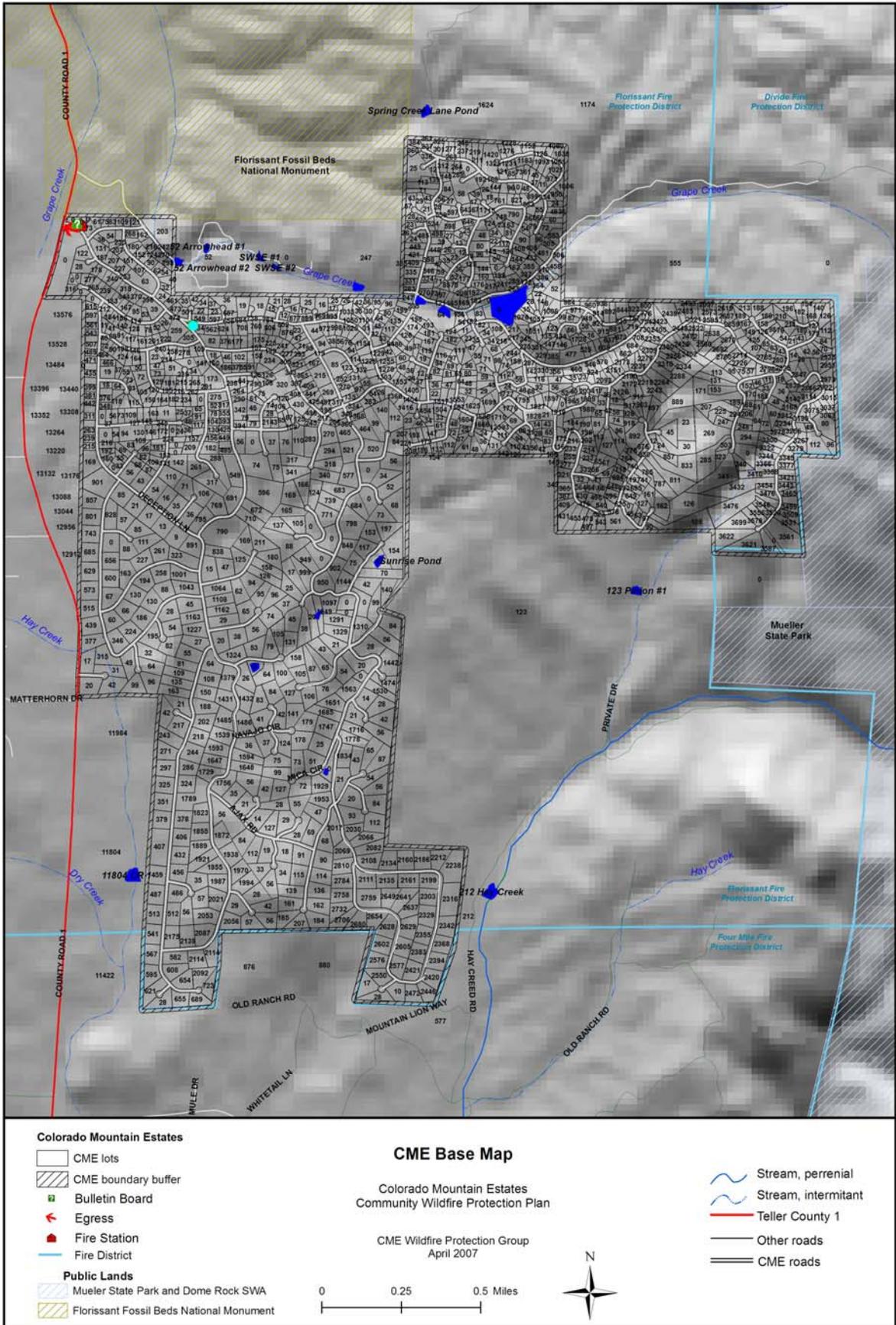
Examples of involving stakeholders include two 2006 community education meetings held at the Florissant Fire Station and sponsored by the WPG. Also, working closely with the All Hazard Emergency Response Committee of the CME Property Owners Association. These are described in more detail later. In addition, we have attended two CUSP sponsored meeting of four community wildfire committees to share information and ideas.

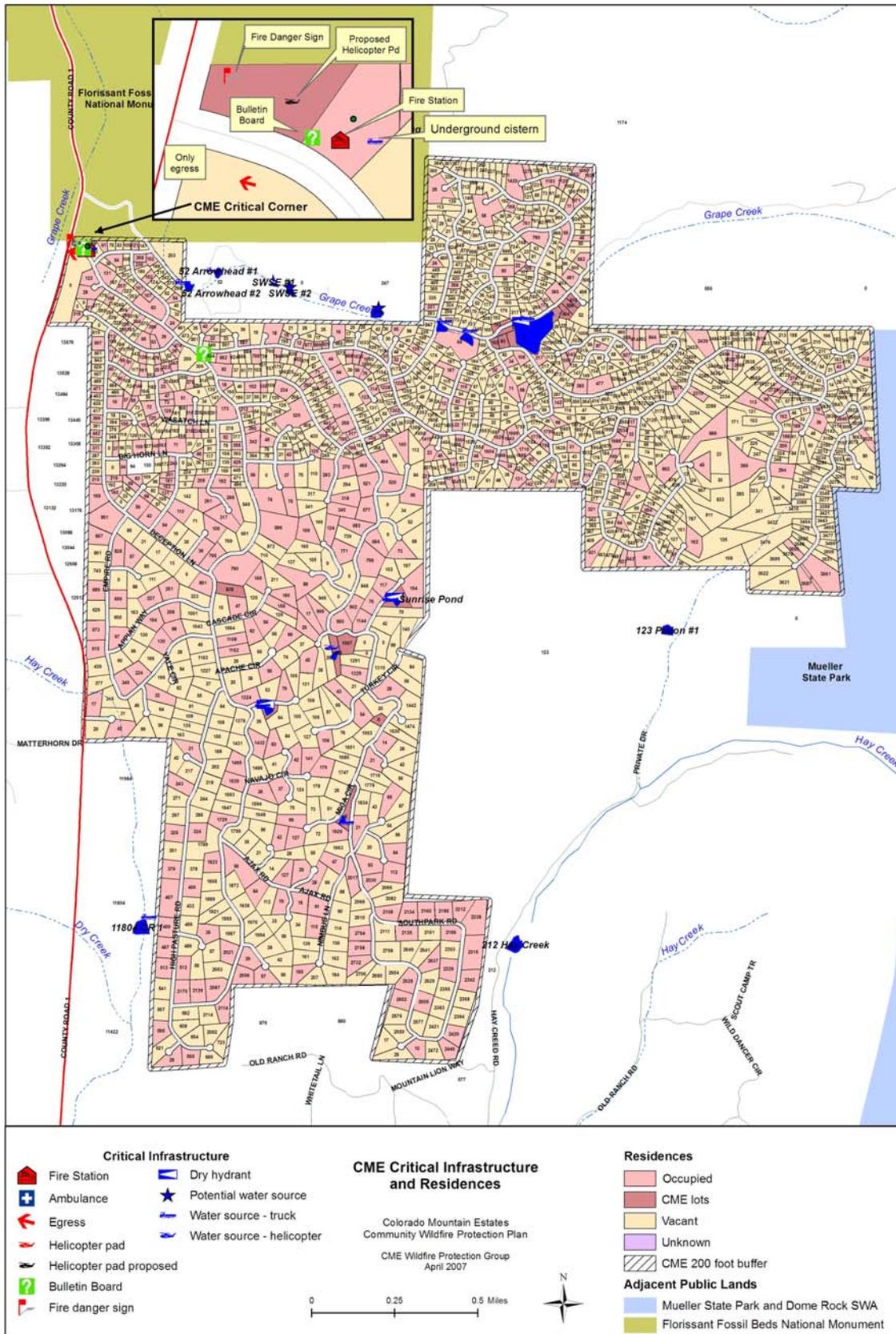
Step Two: Establish a Community Base Map

The base map of the community and adjacent lands provides a visual reference and baseline information that will help assess risks and protection strategies. The CME Wildfire Protection Group created two maps, to provide visual clarity at this scale, using Geographic Information System (GIS) methods, interviews with residents and the Fire Chief, and a survey of CME water features. The Teller County GIS office provided data that they had obtained in the course of doing the County CWPP.

Map 1 – General base map

The general base map shows the extent of the planning area as the CME platted lots plus immediately adjacent public and private lands. There is a 200 foot “buffer” zone around the perimeter of the subdivision to highlight an important interface with other





landowners. Lot boundaries with street numbers, adjacent land boundaries, fire district boundaries, roads, major water features, and key facilities such as the fire station and entrance/exit road are shown.

Map 2 – Areas of Critical Infrastructure and Residences

This map overlays key community infrastructure and homes on the general base map. Lots are categorized as occupied with a structure, vacant, and Property Owner's Association owned.

The fire station, ambulance, proposed helicopter pad, bulletin board and fire danger sign are shown. Water sources accessible by truck and helicopter, along with dry hydrants, one cistern and other potential water sources adjacent to the subdivision are depicted. Telephone and gas lines are buried, and powerlines are on every road, so these are not shown on the map. Safe zones will be added to the map as soon as the CME All Hazard Emergency Response Committee and the Florissant Fire Chief identify them.

The whole community is located within the Wildland Urban Interface, so this is not delineated on the map.

An inset shows details of the “Critical Corner” at the junction of Mountain Estates Road and County Road 1; located at the extreme northwest corner of the subdivision. Mountain Estates Road is the only ingress/egress route for the whole subdivision, and this corner also houses the fire station, ambulance, a large cistern and a helicopter pad. School buses pick up children here as well. It is extremely vulnerable in an emergency.

Step Three: Develop a Community Risk Assessment

Introduction

A well-defined community risk assessment will assist the WPG and residents to prioritize areas of concern and identify strategies and activities to reduce wildfire risk. The WPG has an initial risk assessment completed, and the group will continue to refine this as conditions change and more information becomes available.

A preliminary risk assessment is included in the Teller County CWPP. This was rough analysis done without a detailed on the ground assessment. The subdivision was divided into two sections: north and east, and south and west, based roughly on the dense forest and grasslands, respectively. Factors were rated using a weighted scale from 1 to 104. The results placed CME N&E in the highest category for crown fire hazard and for property loss hazard. It placed CME W&S in the lowest category for crown fire hazard and highest for property loss hazard.

4 See Teller County CWPP Appendix for details on the rating system.

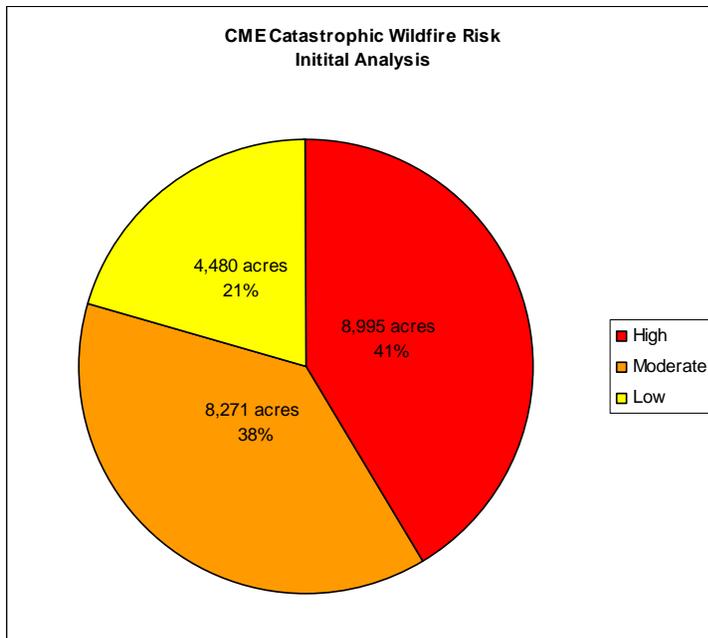
Subdivision Wildfire Hazard Ratings

From Teller County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, May 2005

	Ingress/Egress	Road Width	Accessibility	Road Terminus	Lot size	Street signs	Fuel Density	Defensible Space	Slope	Response Time	Hydrants	Draft Sources	Structure Materials	Utilities	Crown Fire Hazard	Category	Property Loss Hazard	Category	# of lots
CME N&E	3	1	5	2	1	0	10	5	4	1	3	2	3	1	15	IV	27	III	805
CME W&S	3	1	3	1	2	0	3	5	1	1	3	2	3	1	6	IV	25	III	805

Fuels Hazards

Vegetation varies from grassland to medium and heavily forested lands with ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, spruce, aspen, common juniper, Gambel oak, and mountain shrubbery throughout. Non-forested areas of grasslands and rock formations cover approximately 21% of the subdivision, and they tend to pose a lower fuels hazard. However, the forested areas generally are moderate to high fuels hazards, at 38% and 41% respectively⁵.



Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, spruce and oakbrush continue to move toward old age class stands with increasing fallen limbs, higher mortality rates and standing dead or downed timber. While pine beetles have not heavily hit the subdivision, there are scattered beetle occurrences, as well as some mistletoe, which contributes to the ever-increasing wildfire danger.

Ladder fuels, including low hanging branches and common juniper, are a high hazard on many of the properties. The absence of fires in the subdivision has permitted the growth of a dense understory of conifers that add to the ladder fuels and contribute to stress in mature trees due to competition for water and space.

⁵ Calculated in GIS from orthophotos provided by Teller County. See Map 3 details on Page 8.

The terrain and climate of CME contributes to the fuels hazards, as well. The subdivision lies on a ridge between the valley formed 34 million years ago by Lake Florissant and the slopes of Pikes Peak, and rises from 8,400 feet on the southwest corner to 9,400 feet on the far east side towards Pikes Peak. Ridges generally trend southwest/northeast or south/north, with much individual variation. Slopes range from virtually flat on the west to very steep. For example, on the northeast side, the slope is as high as 49%. The east central area is more moderate with slopes in the 15% range, and the west central area is only 6%.⁶

Winters are usually mild with the heaviest snows occurring in the spring. Summers are cool and dry compared to other portions of the country, with afternoon thunderstorms that are typical of Colorado's mountains. The Pikes Peak region ranks second in the nation for lightning strikes, yet receives less than 15" of precipitation annually. NOAA estimates Teller County receives about 5,700 cloud-to-ground lightning strikes each year.⁷

Risk of Wildfire Occurrence

The potential for wildland fire is extensive throughout CME due to its heavily forested acreage, the frequency of lightning and human caused ignition. Historically lightning has been the cause of 48.5% of wildland fires reported between 1980 and 2003 in this portion of the Pike San Isabel National Forest, smoking, campfires, arson and children cause another 25%, with the remainder being other human caused ignitions. Both the US Forest Service and the Colorado State Forest Service have compiled Wildland Urban Interface Hazard Assessments on lands in Teller County that indicates areas of "Red Zone" where present fuels, topography, and high value areas intersect.⁸ The Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership concurs.⁹

There is no evidence of any significant wildfire activity in the CME community in the past 30 or more years, based on the development of the community in the 1970's. However, CME is, to some degree, a microcosm of fire hazards in the Colorado Front Range. In 2002, the Hayman fire – the largest in Colorado's recorded history – started only a few miles northwest of our community. It burned 140,000 acres, destroyed 133 homes and 466 outbuildings, and left parts of four counties extremely vulnerable to massive erosion, mudslides and flash floods. Firefighting and rehabilitation costs were in excess of \$80 million, while indirect economic loss and long-term rehabilitation is estimated to cost \$160 million. While this was an unusual fire event, more than 4,000 other wildfires burned in Colorado that same year.¹⁰ The vegetation and topography of much of the 2002 fire area is similar to that of CME, and we experience the same short and long-term weather conditions. Wildfire is an ever-present danger.

6 Representative samples calculated from GIS contours furnished by Teller County.

7 Teller County WCCP p. 5

8 Ibid p. 6

9 Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Round Table. Living with fire: Protecting Communities and Restoring Forests. 2006 p. 9

10 Ibid. p, 3

Map 3 – Initial Catastrophic Wildfire Risk

Map 3 combines the Fuels Hazard and Wildfire Potential features discussed above. Orthophotos provided by Teller County were used to categorize vegetation cover as dense forest (closed canopy); scattered forest (less than 64 trees per acre) or non-forest (grasslands and ponds.) As an initial assessment, dense forest is considered high risk for catastrophic wildfire, scattered forest at moderate risk, and non-forest is low risk. The risk categories are shown in red, orange and yellow respectively. We decided not to use green for the low risk category as that might imply there is no risk at all. The areas of greatest slope are overlaid with a crosshatch to further indicate increased risk.



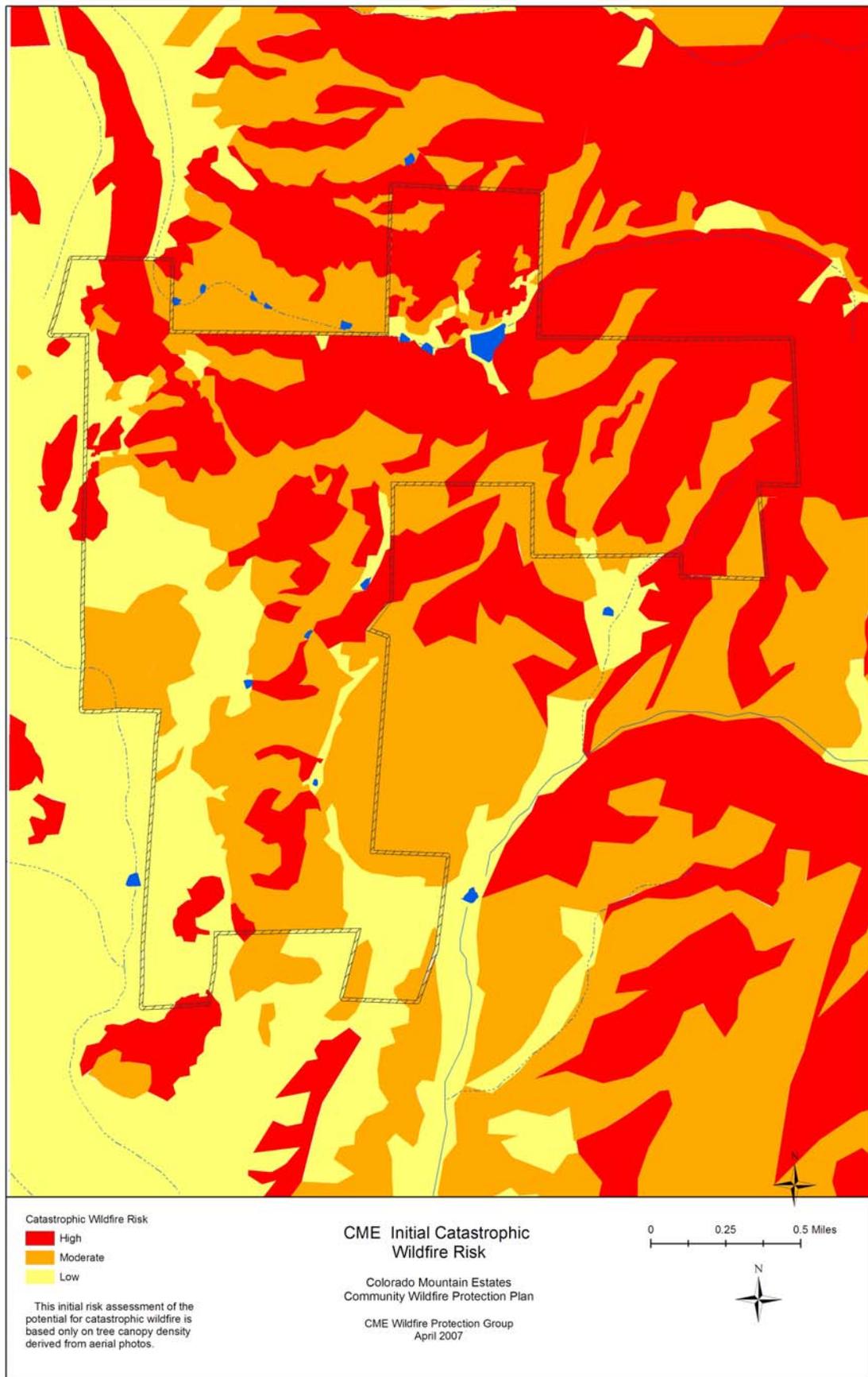
It should be noted that this map is based almost entirely on canopy closure. It does not reveal the conditions under the canopy, which could range from virtually no ladder fuels with few down dead or diseased and dying trees to a very dense understory of many young age trees, low hanging limbs and other flammable conditions.



Closed canopy with more open understory



Closed canopy with very dense understory



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This fuels and wildfire risk map can be refined by an on the ground survey of the dense and moderate forest areas. See Priorities section.

In summary, these variations in vegetation type, density of trees and ladder fuels, slope and aspect affect the degree of fuels hazard at the lot level, and at the subdivision level where the rise in elevation toward the east combined with the generally westerly winds exacerbate the fuels hazard and risk assessment.

Homes, Businesses and Essential Infrastructure at risk

The homes in the community, with some exceptions, are at risk. In addition to the fuels and potential wildfire hazards, the CME assessment conducted by the Florissant Fire District for the Teller County CWPP generally estimated that most homes have flammable siding with non-flammable roofs. They characterized homes with defensible space at 5 on a scale of 1 to 10. However, we believe that many, if not most, homes in the forested areas do not have defensible spaces around the structures. Since less than 4%¹¹ of the homes are located in the non-forested areas on the west side of the subdivision, the other 96% would be especially vulnerable to ignition from fire brands, radiation and convection.

There are a few abandoned structures located in the community. Most of the structures have never been completed and have been vacant for several years. There are propane tanks on the outside of some of these structures. The owners have been notified by the Property Owner's Association and the issue has been turned over to the county building department.

Major infrastructure – the fire station, its 10,000-gallon cistern and helicopter pad - is concentrated at the northwest corner at the intersection of Colorado Mountain Estates Road and Teller County 1 (See inset in Map 2 – Critical Infrastructure). This corner is grassland, and the fire station is constructed of non-flammable materials, so it is at less risk in the event of wildfire.

The community utilities include electric and telephone, and Colorado Natural Gas has just begun installing natural gas underground pipelines in the community. These right-of-ways have not been well maintained in the past. Gas pipelines and telephone lines are buried, but the connections to homes are above ground. Electric lines are not buried, and often are located in the trees and a cross roads making the utility poles vulnerable.

Because of the relatively continuous moderate and heavy forest, especially on the north, a wildfire driven by westerly winds that crowns in the subdivision could race across the whole community, with a great loss of homes. As shown on the chart at the beginning of this section, the Teller County assessment rates the property loss risk at Category III, the highest category.¹²

11 GIS analysis of Teller County data by WPG.

12 Teller County WCCP – Subdivision Wildfire Hazard Ratings chart

Other Community Values at Risk

A wildfire in CME that resulted in destroyed homes and burned trees would have a far-reaching economic impact. In addition to the direct loss of homes, people would be less willing to live in the community. This would affect the employee base for local businesses and government agencies and reduce the county tax revenue.

CME is noted for wildlife, partly due to the uninhabited lots and availability of food and hiding places. Historically, the Greater Pikes Peak elk herd moved across the area. With the advent of roads and homes, the elk primarily move around the subdivision although some sightings of substantial numbers have been reported on the South side of CME. The herd can be seen regularly at the Florissant Fossil Beds and on both sides of Teller County Road 1 and Twin Rocks Rd. There are substantial numbers of deer, and each year there are numerous sightings of black bears with cubs. Residents have reported lynx sightings, which is possible as the Colorado Division of Wildlife has radio collar signals from at least ten animals in Teller County¹³. Bobcat and mountain lion pass through the subdivision. Many small mammals are found in appropriate habitat, and Abert's squirrels are found throughout the ponderosa pine stands, along with fox, coyote, rabbit, and porcupine. The variety of vegetation supports a wide range of birds, including many wild turkeys. Depending on the extent of a potential wildfire, this wildlife would be adversely affected, either by direct mortality or loss of habitat.

No survey has been done to identify historical, cultural, archeological and paleontological sites, but Native American tribes historically passed through or resided in the general area. Several residents have Ute medicine trees on their property, and a formal survey likely would identify more. A fire would adversely affect these cultural resources.

All of these values are important to the life, history and economy of the community, county and state.

Local Preparedness and Firefighting Capability

The Subdivision Wildfire Hazard Ratings highlight factors that affect preparedness and capacity to deal with wildfire. The WPG has elaborated on these factors, many of which are shown on Map 2- Critical Infrastructure and Residences.

Access Issues

There is only one access point in or out of the Colorado Mountain Estates community. This access to and from Teller 1 on the west side of the community, is also the location of the volunteer fire department and the pickup and drop off point for schoolchildren. In the event of a wildfire, one can imagine the chaos of residents trying to get out of the

¹³ Colorado Division of Wildlife. General Locations of Lynx Reintroduced to Southwestern Colorado from February 4, 1999 through February 1, 2005. Pike-San Isabel National Forest map.

community, tanker trucks trying to get in, the local fire truck trying to refill from the underground cistern, an ambulance dispatched into the community to treat someone with smoke inhalation, and a helicopter landing near the road.

Roads

There are 65 miles of roads in the community. Primary roads meet the 24 feet wide requirement, as stated by the Fire Department and are adequate for emergency vehicles, but many other roads are narrower, and there has not been a survey to assess the width and condition of all roads. However, the Teller County assessment notes that roads are generally rough, some with grades of less than 5% and others that are steeper. Many roads are cul de sacs, some with a 45-foot turn around radius and some with less than 45-foot turnaround capacity. The Fire Chief noted that many driveways are too steep for fire trucks or have inadequate turn around space. The Fire Department will not risk their equipment on these driveways. Some of the roads have a thick canopy of trees on both sides that compromise safety for firefighters and residents during a fire. The county has recently begun clearing some trees on North Colorado Mountain Estates Road.

Because some houses have adequate driveway widths or are close enough to the road to provide access and turnaround space for emergency vehicles, and others are too steep or have no turn around space. The WPG recommends that the driveways that are not wide enough or do not have the turn around space be identified during the assessment period.

There are metal road signs on metal stakes throughout the subdivision. House numbers on houses vary greatly, and many are not easily visible, especially at night. The Fire Department uses a large subdivision map to ascertain the location of an emergency call.

Landing areas

The only designated helicopter landing area is at the front entrance adjacent to the fire station on Teller 1. Other than flagging on a nearby fence, there is not a constructed helicopter pad as yet at this location.

Staging and safety areas

A possible staging or safety area does exist directly across the road from the fire station. However, again this area is next to the highly congested community entrance. The All Hazard Emergency Response Committee is working with the Fire Chief to identify other safety zones.

Water sources

Reliable water sources are fairly limited within the community. Grape Creek and Hay Creek are perennial streams, but the flow is very low. The WPG consulted with the Fire Chief and did a visual assessment of water sources. There are six ponds and one larger lake within the community, which totaled approximately 8.6 surface acres. Lake Magnusson, at 5.6 acres is the largest, and the rest are less than 0.6 acres.¹⁴ The acre-foot of these sources are unknown but all were constructed in natural drainages and are

¹⁴ Calculated from orthophotos and lakes data from Teller County.

shallow. With one exception, these are accessible by fire trucks by road; the other is accessible only by helicopter. In addition, there are nine ponds on nearby private lands that may be sources for water. Wrights reservoir of some 122 surface acres is five miles south of CME. In addition to their size, the amount of rainfall greatly affects their usefulness for firefighting.

The Florissant Fire Department has a 10,000 gallon cistern at Station # 2 at the community entrance and a 30,000 gallon capacity at Station # 3 some seventeen miles distant.

There are no known homeowner cisterns, although no survey has been conducted as yet.

Inventory of fire protection resources

The Florissant Volunteer Fire Department has five board members, 16 members, 10 probationary and 37 auxiliary members as of January 2007. At Station # 2, the station in CME, there is an engine with a 500-gallon tank and a rescue/medical first responder vehicle. The ambulance is temporarily housed here until the new facility is completed at Station # 1. Additional equipment at Station # 1 includes two rescue vehicles, an engine with a 900 gallon tank, two brush trucks, a tender with a 2,500 gallon tank, and a mule with trailer. Station # 3 has six 5,000-gallon water tanks and a station will be constructed there in the next two years.¹⁵

The Florissant Volunteer Fire Department has primary responsibility for responding to fire and emergency response. All area fire departments cooperate as needed to handle major community emergencies. The Teller County Sheriff's Department would provide assistance with traffic control. Response time from the Florissant Volunteer Fire Department is 12 - 15 minutes from the time a fire is reported.¹⁶

Emergency Operations

Presently, CME does not have an evacuation plan or neighborhood watch program in order to contact Property Owners in the event of an emergency. There is however, an All Hazard Response Emergency Committee in the process of developing an evacuation program/plan. Additionally the county reverse call back function is not able to contact all Property Owners.

15 Florissant Fire Protection District web site. <http://florissantfire.com/> January 2007

16 Teller County WCCP – Subdivision Wildfire Hazard Ratings chart

Step Four – Establish Community Hazard Reduction Priorities And Recommendations to Reduce Structural Ignitability

The CME Wildfire Protection Group developed four priorities for the first phase of our community efforts.

Priority 1: Property Owner Education

Property education is among our highest priorities. Since the responsibility for preventative fire mitigation on private land rests with the individual property owners and those owners cooperating as community members, this activity is key to a successful plan for CME. Creating an awareness of wildfire issues and providing meaningful information to individual Property Owners provides motivation and inspires action.

Initially we will sponsor community meetings or training sessions twice a year. Two such meetings were held in 2006 to provide basic wildfire education and introduce the concept of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The Florissant Fire Department made its facility available and publicized the events on their signboard. Residents heard presentations from the Fire Chief, Colorado State Forester, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Teller County Office of Emergency Management, Teller County Wildfire Mitigation Commission, CUSP and others. The second meeting featured a video of community wildfire mitigation work in Colorado and a PowerPoint presentation on wildfire behavior. Approximately 50 residents in total attended these meetings.

Similar meetings will be scheduled for 2007. We will increase the advance publicity for these meetings including mailings and the creation of informative handouts that emphasize the community values that would be protected with the CWPP, as well as why and how residents can participate. In addition to the educational experience, these meetings are important venues for obtaining more volunteers for committee work and for landowners to sign up for mitigation activities.

Contacting the non-resident owners poses a special educational challenge. Many of them have not seen their lots recently, if ever, and may have a less vested interest in wildfire mitigation. We will create a mailing to these people that lays out the current conditions in the community and on their lot, perhaps with a photo, describes the risks of wildfire and emphasizes the diminished economic value of their property should a wildfire burn their lot or adjoining land. We will encourage them to participate in the mitigation efforts. The WPG is also exploring the possibility of creating a questionnaire to be sent out with this mailing to facilitate a dialogue with non-resident property owners.

Priority 2: Facilitating general mitigation

Thinning and removal of ladder fuels works! Proper thinning has proven that catastrophic fire-prone forest can be dramatically improved. Documented proof shows that even a dangerous crowning and torching fire that advances into a forest area that has

been properly treated with thinning procedures, may “lay down” to become a manageable ground fire.

So a second priority is to actively promote and facilitate general mitigation by willing landowners. Initially this will focus on removal of dead and diseased trees, trimming lower branches from remaining trees, clearing excess small trees and common juniper, and removing slash. This alone will create less fire prone conditions. Some Property Owners may also thin trees selectively on their land to create a more open canopy and reduce the potential of crown fires. As time passes, we will undertake more extensive thinning activities.

An important rallying point is chipping days. In 2006 we conducted three chipping days in cooperation with CUSP. The WPG recruited landowners through announcements in the Association newsletter, notices on the bulletin boards, sign up at the community meetings, and by staffing a signup table at the mail boxes on several Saturdays. Property Owners were responsible for doing the preliminary trimming and clearing and stacking the slash along the roadside, as well as making a monetary contribution to CUSP for the chipper. The WPG also assisted some Property Owners with woodcutting, trimming and slash stacking by coordinating volunteers willing to do these activities or in exchange for the cut wood. CUSP provided their chipping machine and an operator; a route was planned in advance, and volunteers from CME assisted landowners and CUSP to carry out the actual operation. In July 20 homes were completed on two chipping days, and in October another six homes were served before major snow cut off this activity for the winter. Approximately 15 Property Owners have signed up to have their lots treated in 2007, and we will schedule several days during the summer and fall.

As an alternative to chipping, owners can also take their slash to the Teller County slash site for a nominal \$5 per trailer load.

The WPG will continue to put residents in touch with the Colorado State Forester and provide lists of commercial foresters who can do mitigation work on a contract basis, as well as volunteer activities.

Priority 3: Helping Property Owners create defensible space

Defensible space works! It has been demonstrated many times that if sufficient defensible space is provided surrounding structures, a wildfire could advance through and around structures without causing serious damage to the home. Clearly, defensible space for a ground fire is more feasible than defending against an advancing catastrophic fire, but even in the Hayman Fire there were homes with cleared space completely within the fire perimeter that did not burn.

We will encourage the use of three zones around homes: the 30 foot zone which is cleared of conifers and other flammable materials, the 100 foot zone which is thinned and the understory cleared; and the 100 foot plus zone where removing ladder fuels and selective thinning is completed.

There are many potential avenues to help Property Owners. The Colorado State Forest Service and other organizations provide written guidelines, and residents took this literature at the two community meetings. One of our community meetings could focus on methods.

We have, and will, continue to encourage Property Owners to apply for funds available through the Colorado State Forest Service. For example, several landowners applied for these grants in 2007 and one received a total of \$1,500, to be matched with an equal amount of labor and expenses, which will complete the 3-zone mitigation on their 4.5 acres. This program is designed to assist a group of adjacent neighbors to work together in order to maximize the benefits, and the WPG can facilitate this process.

One of our objectives is to have a series of lots, preferably near the entrance to the subdivision that serve as a demonstration of these mitigation techniques. This pilot or demonstration project can be used for practical education, as well as demonstrate that effective and appropriate defensible space enhances the surroundings and produces more natural forest conditions.

In addition to working with current home owners, we will explore working with building contractors who could select non flammable materials such as brick or stucco and do selective thinning and clearing while constructing a home to create a defensible space. Since there are many new homes being built currently, this would be a practical approach and could be used by the contractor/realtor as one of the favorable amenities of the home.

Potentially we can use the services of a group of trained volunteers to do a very detailed risk assessment of structures and land for willing landowners as offered in 2006 by the Red Cross. This level of assessment would involve extensive organization and recruitment of willing homeowners, and would be undertaken only when we feel we have the resources to make it a successful effort.

Priority 4: Work with adjacent public and private landowners

Our fourth priority recognizes that CME cannot stand in isolation from adjacent lands, most of which have similar wildfire risks. Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, which borders the subdivision on the north, is creating a thinned 100-yard buffer zone on their boundary. This on going work includes thinning trees and burning the accumulated trees. The buffer that borders CME was completed in late 2006.



Controlled burn of slash at the Fossil Beds.

Buffer zones also work: large zones that are primarily non-forested can slow the advance

of a catastrophic fire. The only sizable grassland area is located in the southern portion of CME. Residential areas on the west side of Teller County 1 are also largely non-forested which provides additional protection. Within the subdivision there are virtually no other options for large buffer zones, as landowners are highly unlikely to consider complete removal of forest.

In addition to mitigation on their own properties, private landowners, especially on the south, may be the best option for providing a second emergency access route into CME. The All Hazard Emergency Committee is pursuing this option.

Preferred Treatments

Preferred treatments are implicit in the above priorities. In general mechanical treatment with chain saws and chippers will be used most often to remove dense understory growth, trim low hanging branches, thin trees, removing dead and diseased trees, and opening the canopy by cutting selected larger trees. We do not anticipate any large-scale operations involving large machinery with the possible exception of contractors clearing areas using bulldozers. The question of insecticides for treating potential beetle areas would be left to the forestry experts to decide.

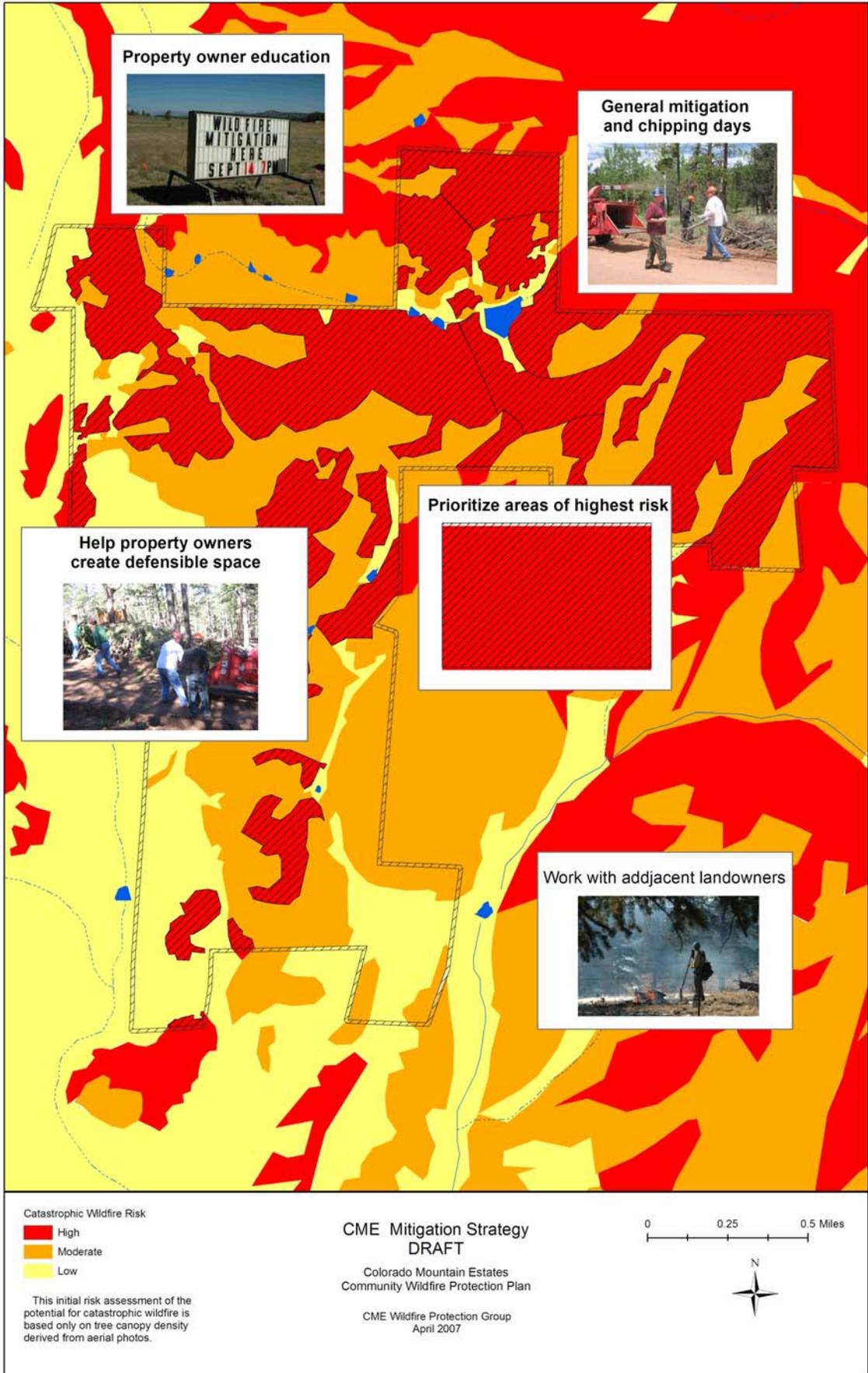
Map 4- CME Mitigation Strategies

Some of these activities can be mapped and are shown on Map 4 CME mitigation Strategies. In addition to various activities, an overlay of strategic geographical areas is applied to the above priorities. As an initial strategy it will be important to focus as much as possible on lots located in the most heavily forested areas. This map also becomes a visual record of progress toward community protection as described below in the monitoring and assessment section.

Step Five: Develop an Action Plan and Assessment Strategy

Organizing for action

The CME WPG has been working for nearly a year, and has identified roles and responsibilities for its operations. These include currently filled positions of committee chair, volunteer coordinator, mapping/GIS coordinator and committee members with technical writing, planning and organizing skills. Secretarial duties are currently rotated, but in the future we will need an assigned secretary and treasurer. We will continue to expand the membership of the WPG so as to divide responsibilities and work load.



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Due to the physical size of the CME subdivision the properties need to be broken down into smaller segments to manage the mitigation efforts. This system has not been established yet, but two options are. 1) Existing data from the County Clerks office breaks down the properties by twelve Tax Filing districts, which are roughly geographical and create logical groupings enabling the assignment of property owners in those segments; or 2) simply divide the subdivision into “neighborhoods” based on proximity – for example all the neighbors from Arrowhead Road north, or all the neighbors along North Mountain Estates Road east of the mail boxes.

Action Plan for 2007

	<i>May-July</i>	<i>August-October</i>	<i>November-December</i>
Complete CME CWPP and submit to Teller County CWPP Commission Schedule spring education meeting Schedule chipping days. Create and mail out an informative brochure to all property owners Sign up property owners for mitigation and chipping.	Do on the ground survey to assess understory fuels. Mailing to Property Owners Hold community education event Recruit volunteers to help needy landowners with fuels removal. Hold one or more chipping days	Do on the ground survey to assess understory fuels. Recruit volunteers to help needy landowners with fuels removal. Hold community education event Hold one or more chipping days	Hold community education event Evaluate year’s work and plan for 2008

Identify funding needs

To implement mitigation on any significant scale, many community residents will need supplemental funding. Mitigation work that involves commercial foresters is very expensive, and many owners do not have the financial resources for this. Volunteer work has its limitations, as the amount of work that can be done strictly by volunteers is limited relative to the size of the problem. In addition, improvements to community infrastructure such as completing the helicopter pad, building cisterns, obtaining a second access road, designing safe zones, to mention a few, are also expensive and dependent on sources outside the scope of the WPG

We are confident that the priority actions described above will primarily protect the community itself, and thus CME could be eligible for 50% matching grants under the Healthy Forests Act. Much exploration will be needed to identify an appropriate legal

entity and sources of supplementary funding through the Fire District, County or other sources.

In addition to these major funding needs, the CME Wildfire Protection Group itself needs money for ongoing expenses of mailings, office supplies, a post office box and potentially incorporation expenses. Since the CME Property Owners Association is unable to sponsor the WPG, due to insurance restrictions, we have few options for funds. We are exploring a request for donations when we mail to property owners and working with CUSP to identify other sources.

Monitoring and Assessment

Several activities are already planned to refine the data and maps.

- New homes need to be added to the database and map. This will be done either by a neighborhood drive-by survey or by accessing records at the County Clerk's office.
- An on the ground drive-by assessment of the understory of high and moderate risk fuels areas will give a better perspective on the overall wildfire risk. A survey form and procedures are ready for implementation in 2007 as soon as the ground is free of snow. We anticipate that some of the moderate risk areas, which are generally scattered forest, may move into the high-risk category. It is highly unlikely that any of the high risk areas will move to moderate risk except where a land owner has done extensive mitigation since the aerial photos, the basis for the initial risk assessment, were taken several years ago. However, as mitigation across the community proceeds, one would expect the high-risk areas to decrease in size and iterations of Map 3 – Catastrophic Risk will be kept to visually display this progress.
- Records of community activities and infrastructure changes will be kept and those that can be mapped will be added to iterations of the appropriate maps.

This CME CWPP will be reviewed annually and planning sessions and committee work will continue to evaluate and refine the strategy and activities.

Step Six: Finalize the CME Community Wildfire Protection Plan

After final approval from the entire CME Wildfire Protection Group, this document will be given to Chief Harold Peterson and Colorado Forest Service Assistant District Forester David Root for their review. We will incorporate any recommendation that they have to improve or clarify the plan and then obtain their signatures.

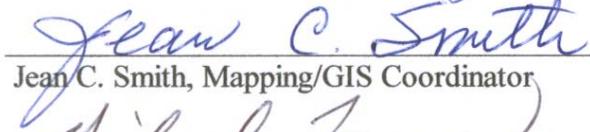
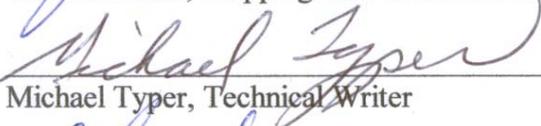
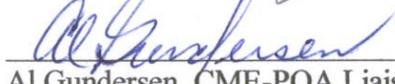
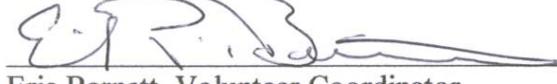
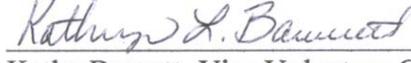
The signed plan will be submitted to the Teller County CWPP Commission for them to review and incorporate in the county- wide plan.

III. SUMMARY

The Colorado Mountain Estates CWPP is intended to be a living document, capable of progressing with the ever-changing community. The CME Wildfire Protection Group therefore, has created this CWPP as ground zero for a crucial evolution of our communities attitude, knowledge and activity toward reducing the risk of wildfire and maintaining the gains made in this arena, over many years to come.

IV. DECLARATION OF AGREEMENT

The following signatures are those of the Colorado Mountain Estates Wildfire Protection Group and attest to our agreement and collaboration on the contents of this document.

Signature	Date
 Michelle Schneeberger, Chairman	4/28/2007
 Jean C. Smith, Mapping/GIS Coordinator	April 28 2007
 Michael Typer, Technical Writer	4/28/07
 Al Gundersen, CME-POA Liaison	4/28/2007
 Eric Barnett, Volunteer Coordinator	5/2/2007
 Kathy Barnett, Vice Volunteer Coordinator	5/2/2007

The HFRA requires the signatures of local officials indicating their approval and support of the Colorado Mountain Estates CWPP.

Signature

Date

Harold Peterson

5-8-2007

Harold Peterson, Chief, Florissant Fire Protection District

David H Root

May 5, 2007

Dave Root, Assistant District Forester, Colorado State Forest Service

Curt Grina

Curt Grina, Chairman, Teller County Wildfire Protection Plan Commission

Sheryl Decker

6-1-07

Sheryl Decker, Administrator, Teller County