

Firewise Introduction: Firewise is a community-based volunteer program that emphasizes involving homeowners in local solutions for wildland fire protection. Communities develop an action plan that guides fire risk reduction activities while engaging and encouraging their neighbors to become active participants in building a safer place to live ([Firewise USA](#)). Firewise empowers neighbors to work with protection agencies to reduce wildfire risk through a collaborative approach of creating fire-adapted communities. Firewise encompasses actions that involve wildfire education, planning, on-site implementation of mitigation measures, and communication with those involved in protection from the risk of wildfire. Firewise focuses on communities and homeowners taking responsibility in creating and maintaining defensible space; ensuring adequate access; addressing signage; and building or retrofitting structures designed with non-combustible building materials. It is co-sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, the US Department of the Interior, and the National Association of State Foresters. **(From the 2017 Wallowa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan [under revision]).**

Wallowa County Firewise Communities: The Lostine Canyon Firewise Community was the first certified Firewise Community in Northeastern Oregon. Three additional Firewise Communities have since been organized: The Hurricane Creek Community, the Ski Run Road Community and the South Lake Wallowa Community. Each community has a committee that advises and provides guidance for maintaining certification and informs residents of fire preparedness opportunities. The overall coordinator for Wallowa County Firewise Communities is Jenny Reinhardt who is employed by Wallowa resources.

Lostine Canyon Firewise Community (LCFC): Encompassing the HLOA boundaries, plus homes and property to the north bordering Granger and Fir Roads, the LCFC was spearheaded by Mike Eng in 2018 with support from volunteer local residents. The current Coordinators of the LCFC include HLOA members Ron Polk and Gary Willis. HLOA resident Jeremiah Marsh serves as the liaison from the LCFC to the HLOA Board of Directors, and he helps HLOA residents understand the services provided by Firewise (below).

“Neighbors helping Neighbors”. The Sturgill and Goat Mountain 2 fires in September 2020 came within 2 miles of the HLOA, prompting a “Level 2” alert (ready to leave at short notice). The LCFC was crawling with fire suppression/fighting teams from many Oregon districts. The word quickly got out that the LCFC was unusually well prepared for fire risk and that little more needed to be done to enhance protection for most homes. A Wallowa Resources video highlighting our preparations is available online. ([Neighbors Helping Neighbors - Firewise Film](#)).

Why participate in Firewise? See Firewise Introduction (above). You will also learn how to operate the “Fire truck” stationed in the LCFC. You will learn how the “Chipper Program” will be implemented by ODF in the LCFC. You will have input into planning and implementation of activities promoted and organized by Firewise, such as updates on use of the Chipper, participation on the HAWK program from Wallowa Resources, co-funding opportunities for fire preparedness programs such as thinning of dense tree stands, removal of deadfall, etc.

For more information: Contact Ron Polk, Gary Willis or Jeremiah Marsh