

Park Creates Fuel Break Along Neighbor's Backyards Carl Sandburg Home NHS, North Carolina National Fire Plan – Fuels Reduction

In 2005, Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site used National Fire Plan funds to implement a woodland fuel break project. The project occurred along the park's southern boundary which borders a subdivision of over five hundred homes. The park boundary lies within forty feet of some park neighbor's backdoors. A century of fire exclusion as well as dense ericaceous (*Of, or relating to, the heath family of plants, which are mostly shrubby and often evergreen plants that thrive on open, barren soil that is usually acidic and poorly drained – i.e. azalea and rhododendron*) understory and hilly terrain make this wildland-urban interface area a priority as identified in the park's fire management plan. The fuel break project will help lend protection to the subdivision as well as the park.



*Fire crew clears fuels through rhododendron thicket.
Photo by Irene Van Hoff*

In anticipation of adjacent property owners' concern for safety and privacy, the park developed a strategy for clear and positive communications and embarked upon a thoughtful mission to enhance community awareness.

The park held a fire management plan scoping meeting for the public in June 2004. An invitation was extended to the community by way of news media and a special mailing to residences bordering the park. The meeting was well attended by residents, local fire officials and fire management personnel from the NC Division of Forest Resources. Prior to initiating fuels reduction activities, the park hand-delivered letters to the home of each boundary neighbor inviting them to meet with the park superintendent for an information sharing session. A second notice was later delivered containing more details on work dates and a description of the work to be performed. Delivery in this manner promoted good rapport between residents and park staff responsible for coordinating the project.

In April 2005, the boundary was brightly re-marked to allow property line discrepancies to be addressed prior to beginning brush clearing activities. As the work proceeded, designated staff remained on the worksite to ensure safety and meet with neighbors as a contract fire crew worked along the park boundary behind their homes. Property owners were welcomed to approach the fuel break area to observe and ask questions. Concerns were addressed in a timely fashion and the park superintendent remained available to respond to more difficult issues.

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