



Cohoe: Alaska's 2nd Firewise Community CWPPs on the Kenai Peninsula

Key Message

In the spring of 2006, Cohoe completed their first Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The community of Cohoe applied for "Firewise Communities/USA" designation in the fall of 2006 and was recognized on July 14th, 2007. Cohoe became Alaska's 2nd community to be nationally recognized and receive the "Firewise Communities/USA" designation.

Issue

After organizing a community day and planning other activities to reduce the likelihood of a catastrophic wildfire, the community became Alaska's 2nd community to be a nationally recognized and receive the "Firewise Communities/USA" designation. During the summer of 2007, Cohoe collectively volunteered fifteen hours each week to keep the gate open at the local slash disposal site. Members also provided a site for disposal of stumps. In addition to celebration and Firewise presentations at the July 14th recognition day, on September 8th, 2007, the committee plans another slash hauling day to assist neighbors who are unable to pile and haul away their slash.



Current Situation

The 10.25 million acres of the Kenai Peninsula Borough in Southcentral Alaska is at risk for catastrophic wildfire due to hazardous fuel accumulations created by the spruce bark beetle epidemic.

Alaska's Kenai Peninsula Borough is continuing to experience a regional spruce bark-beetle epidemic that has caused greater than 90% mortality in many spruce stands in Southcentral Alaska. Approximately one million acres of spruce forest have been affected, resulting in hazardous fuel accumulations throughout the 10.25 million acre borough. This puts much of the Borough at risk for large, intense fires.

The risk of catastrophic wildfire is at a historic high. Where most of the borough population of 51,200 residents are located, the threat of wildfire is of most concern. Kenai Peninsula Borough has approximately 26,000 residential structures, which have a tax-assessed value of \$1.7 billion. With industrial and commercial structures added to residential values, the cumulative tax assessed value in the borough is \$2.7 billion. Eighty-nine percent of the borough private property valuation is located in 15 community census areas with either an extreme or high wildfire risk rating.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough has completed eight CWPPs, including all peninsula communities rated extreme risk for wildfire. The Chugach National Forest has completed two additional CWPPs for communities in the vicinity of the National Forest.

Looking Ahead

In 2008, Kenai Peninsula Borough is planning the accomplishment of 7 additional CWPPs, covering the communities of Funny River, Ridgeway, Soldotna, Sterling, Seldovia, Seldovia Village, Halibut Cove, Bear Cove, Nanwalek & Port Graham. While all Kenai Peninsula communities at “Extreme Risk” of stand-replacing wildfire are currently operating under completed CWPPs, this next set of plans will cover remaining communities in the high or moderate risk categories.

More Information

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