

## ARTICLE FOR CLEAR CREEK COUNTY PAPER

### **Georgetown Plans for Wildfire; Not “if”, But “When”**

Georgetown area residents are being asked to review and comment on a Community Wildfire Protection Implementation Plan (CWPIP) just completed by a team of area residents. This plan evaluates current wildfire hazards and risks to the area and sets priority mitigation actions to be pursued by the team and the community. The plan also serves as an educational document for homeowners to look at their own properties and develop defensive space actions which will help alleviate damage from wildfire.

It was presented to the a Georgetown Open house Monday October 6<sup>th</sup> and is posted on the city website for access [www.town.georgetown.co.us](http://www.town.georgetown.co.us). Comments should be sent to the team’s facilitator, John Chapman, who has been facilitating plans in clear Creek County over the past three years. The email for comments is: [john@conservationco.org](mailto:john@conservationco.org). Comments are due by October 31<sup>st</sup>. If you cannot send via email you can deliver your comments to Georgetown Town Administrator Tom Hale or one of the team members: Lee Behrens, Ed Hoover, or Lynette Kelsey.

Community Wildland fire Protection plans were called for by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003. It was recognized that fire departments and agency fire teams in the rapidly growing communities of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) could not protect all properties, but that there are reasonable and effective actions communities and home owners can take to mitigate and greatly reduce the effects of wildland fires.

Clear Creek County completed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, but State Forest Service minimum standards state that, “Communities represented in a large-scale plan that wish to receive credit for having an approved CWPP must: Identify and prioritize fuels treatments; develop an implementation plan specific to that community; treatments must be supported by stakeholders, including representatives from the community such as a homeowners’ association, Firewise Committee, Board of Selectmen...” The Georgetown citizens’ team completed the CWPIP to meet the state requirement.

As the team points out, “This is an important planning effort for the future management of the Georgetown area forests and homes. It is a plan for our area, to be carried into the future to help provide protection to life, our valuable homes, businesses and historical sites, and the forests we enjoy.”

CWPIPs deal with: 1) community definition and mapping; 2) fire history and expected fire behavior 3) assessment of risk to properties and other values (historic and recreational sites, sensitive species, etc.); 4) establishment of community hazardous fuel reduction priorities and other mitigation options; 5) development of an action plan to carry out priorities; and 6) education of community home owners on actions they can take to protect their lives and homes.

Once approved by area government, the Clear Creek Fire Authority, Clear Creek County, and reviewed by the State Forest Service the plan will open the door for the community to carry out projects and to use plan detailed statements to apply for grant funding to accomplish projects such as roadside clearing and community fuel breaks, and individual property fuel mitigation projects.

The plan and attachments discuss that creation of defensible space around home sites is key to wildfire mitigation. Actions detailed in plans and brochures on the subject call for spacing tree crowns, clearing dead and down materials in an area within 50-60 feet of the home and making sure a lot of shrubs and materials are not directly against the structure. Years of research by the US Forest Service has shown that such reasonable measures and using fire resistant building materials (especially roofs) will offer a high level of protection to the structure as a fire passes through, even a crown fire. It has been demonstrated that embers, not the flame front, are the primary cause of structural loss in major fires.