

Forest Stewardship Education Newsletter: July 2021 Home Hardening Against Wildfire



Greetings from UC ANR

We have a lot to celebrate! The Forest Stewardship Education Program received notice from Cal Fire that we will continue to be funded through June 30, 2024. What this means is we will be able to continue hosting workshops throughout the state; provide additional educational and outreach opportunities for past workshop participants; and give you all more time to have your initial site visits (though sooner is better!).

Susie Kocher, Ryan Tompkins, Mike Jones and myself are also moving forward with developing interviews that identify the barriers you face as small, private forest landowners, and how these barriers might be addressed. Thanks to those that volunteered to be interviewed, we will be reaching out to you very soon. If you would like to be included in the interviews, and have not previously contacted me, we would love to have you!

Cheers,
Kim Ingram, kcingram@ucanr.edu

Hardening Homes Against Wildfire

Of the over 200 workshop participants who have taken the pre-workshop assessment survey, 58% have a residence on, or within a mile, of their forestland. Unfortunately, several workshop participants have recently lost their homes and forests to the wildfires currently burning in Shasta and Siskiyou Counties.

"Our hearts go out to participants who have recently lost their homes to wildfire. With the worsening wildfire season, we are all vulnerable to loss from destructive wildfires. Forest management is one important way to reduce wildfire risk, but it should be combined with home hardening and defensible space around your home to maximize the chance for your home to survive a wildfire." -Susie Kocher, Forest and Natural Resources Advisor

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, along with UC ANR and other partners, recently published a guide with specific recommendations on how to reduce the vulnerability of one's home to wildfire. Defensible space and home construction components are reviewed in terms of vulnerability, as well as practices that can improve a component's ability to withstand wildfire. According to the Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide, this "coupled approach" of considering exterior construction materials and surrounding vegetation and other near-home combustible materials, provides an effective way to reduce the ignitability of homes during wildfires.

According to Susie Kocher, co-author of the Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide, homeowners are encouraged to switch out wooden roofs, siding and decks with non-combustible materials or to at least insert non-combustible materials on existing roof, siding and deck components to reduce the potential of a small ignition burning down the home. Upgrades to vents, fences, gutters, skylights and garages are also recommended and the guide includes suggestions for these.

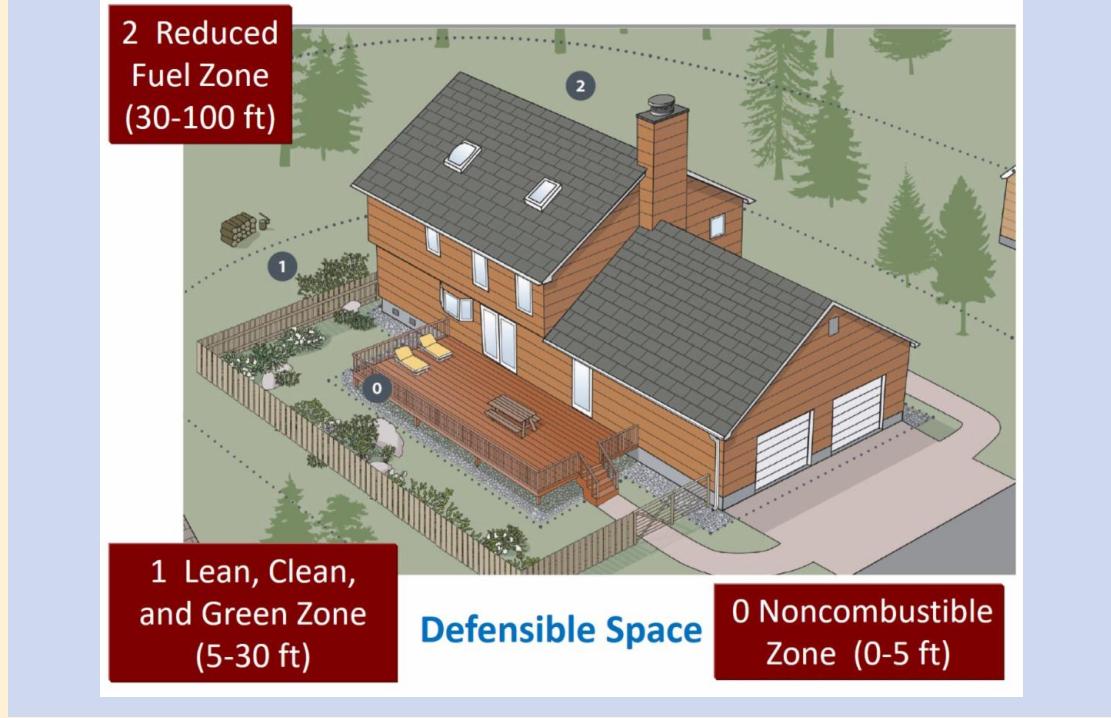
Landowners are encouraged to prioritize certain defensible space actions when home hardening including:

- eliminating vegetated areas under decks, especially those that overhang slopes;
- thinning vegetation between densely positioned homes; and
- creating a near-home noncombustible zone within five feet of the home (move that wood pile!).

Homeowners need to consider the majority of home losses to wildfires occur through direct contact with embers (coming in through attic vents for example) or through indirect contact with embers (igniting the wood pile next to the house which then enables flames to make direct contact with the house).

"The good news is that there are things we can do to reduce the chances of homes burning during wildfires. Many homeowners think that fires come as a wall of flame and there is no way for homes to withstand that. Though that does happen, the majority of homes burn because embers are carried way ahead of the flaming front. Reducing the vulnerability of the home to embers is key to reducing wildfire risk to homes." -Susie Kocher, Forest and Natural Resources Advisor

Click [here](#) to download the complete Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide



Be Prepared for Fire Season!

California forests are fire adapted systems. Researchers estimate that historically 4-12% of the overall landscape burned every year. Depending on the location, wildfires occurred in those areas on average every 8-35 years. Between the 1970's and 2010's, the annual average area burned increased by ~500,000 acres. In the pre-workshop assessment, 95% of our workshop participants said they wanted their wooded land to stay wooded and 93% indicate wildfire as the greatest threat to their forest. Taking all this into consideration, it is more important than ever for forest landowners to take steps in preparing their homes and property to be more fire resistant.

UCCE has many resources available to assist you. Check them out!

[Landscaping Tips to Help Defend Your Home from Wildfire](#)

[Fire Resistant Landscaping](#)

[Recovering from Wildfire: A Guide for California's Forest Landowners](#)

Visit UCCE's 'Fire in California' webpage for more information

The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) conducts research into severe weather and the effects it has on homes and businesses. They also provide guidance to homeowners, businesses and policy makers to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, build community resilience, and prepare for emergencies.

The videos below are of



From our pre-workshop assessment survey, 30 of our participants have conducted

research done at IBHS to look into the effects of wind-driven embers and vent testing. According to the Wildfire Home Retrofit Guide, in wildfire events, 60-90% of home loss occurs because of embers.



grazing on their properties. We also field many questions on the use of grazing as a fuels management activity. As we consider home hardening, we should also take into account hardening structures related to ranching and grazing activities, such as barns and water storage.

UC ANR range and livestock advisor Dan Macon gives advice for prepping your ranch to be prepared for wildfire in his [Foothills Ranching blog](#). This includes protection of barns and other outbuildings, protection of forage, having an adequate water supply, and identifying an escape route. Of course having a plan to protect and/or evacuate livestock is tops on the list!

For those interested in grazing for fuels management, visit [Match.Graze](#) Match.Graze is a free online platform managed by UCCE Sonoma that connects livestock producers and landowners throughout the state of California.



Upcoming workshops

- August 4th - September 29th: Online and in-person field day (August 28th) in Tuolumne County
- Coming soon! Fall 2021: Online and in-person field day(date TBD) in Siskiyou County

For more information and to register for these workshops, please visit:
<http://ucanr.edu/forestryworskhopregistration>





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