

FBM Firewise Meeting
January 23, 2023, 3:00 p.m.
Gene Albaugh Room (Madelyn Helling Library - Rood Center)

Attendees: Jeff and Gale Peach, Larry Gruver, Ann Westling, Mike Forga (sp?), Arnold Forman, Lourdes Vose, Bob Hanna, John Schultz, Barry Angel, Ted Beedy, Susan Sanders, Rick Cameron, Ellie Anderson, Brad Miller, Mo Graber

Action Items in **red**

1. **Brief History** - What happened to the last 2 years!
 - Jeff reviewed our mission statement, neighborhood leader approach, recapped our origins and past accomplishments before covid:
 - Mission: *Educate and energize the Banner Mountain Area residents into action to make our community more fire safe.*
2. **Firewise Community** - Border map adjustment - FWC Name Change
 - Jeff discussed his meeting a year or so ago with Pat Leach, Firesafe Council; NFPA mandate to downsize. Jeff described the rationale for where the new lines were drawn – had to eliminate residences in Pioneer Park, Deer Creek basin, and added area down Red Dog towards the Greenhorn Creek (“Skeeter Hollow”).
 - Also changed the name to Banner Mountain Firewise Community to distinguish it from Friends of Banner Mountain, which is more loosely defined and includes members not living on Banner Mt.
3. **Hazard/Risk Assessment** - Due October 2023
 - Firewise USA requires update to risk assessment every 5 years (due in October). This directs the focus of the Action Plan, which was updated last year.
 - Ann and Jeff met with Pat Leach to discuss the Hazard/Risk Assessment to guide the action plan. Action plan was updated last year, need to update this year.
 - Stating list of main hazards and risks on Banner Mt:
 - BLM – Little Creek Project - Yuba Watershed Institute
 - Basic Homeowner Defensible Space 4291 – 38 (hardening for 100-ft of defensible space)
 - Evacuation Routes
 - Vacant Parcels
 - Ann pointed out this is a starting point of a list of hazards and risks; we are looking for input from everyone here to add to and refine it
 - **Communication** – Mike - how do we learn where the fires are? - Jeff said that Susan Rogers made a one-page handout describing all communication modes – it’s on their webpage.

There was supposed to be a dry run-drill. The Nevada City firehorn was a good example of a robust alert system. Mike suggested we do a drill like that (testing the alert system and letting everyone know what it sounds like) once a year.

- **Short Wave Radios** - Bob said they now have 17 short wave radios available for 60+ homes. ARES – Mark Triloo – willing to train groups on how to use short wave radio.
- **Hazard Risk Assessment** – Barry noted that this would be an opportunity to re-focus the energies of this group since the assessment is due this year. Barry said he could reach out to his neighbors to assess their ideas about risk.
- **Existing Hazards/Risk drafts?** – have a draft from 2008, and templates available. Other hazard analysis available, Pat will provide some of those. Pat mentioned that CA Insurance Commissioner is pushing insurance companies to give a discount, prompting them to be a little tougher that they are in reducing fire hazards.
- **Evacuation Routes?** Ann pointed out that the highest hazard is in the fall with wind blowing the same direction as evac routes. She noted that Gracie and Red Dog lead into Nev City bottlenecks; Banner is narrow; but Idaho Maryland has a greater distance between road and houses/improvements. Idaho Maryland might be a preferred route, but need to do an evaluation of options for route in coordination with CalFire and OES.
- **Workshop** to ask for input on fire risk/hazards? Use Union, KVMR, KNCO, social media (Next Door), road signs

4. Cal Fire Grant

- Wildfire Prevention Grants Program – \$5million cap for projects, \$750,000 cap for equipment. FireSafe Council will assist as the “face” of the contract. Mo and Jeff met with Jamie Jones, director, willing to lead if we need to come up with projects. March 15 is deadline this year.
- Mo offered to lead the proposal with a brief for our priorities. Need to show that volunteers are available to do communication planning to implement projects.
- Potential priorities:
 - Shaded fuel break
 - Roadside ladder fuel reduction
 - Chipping/green waste
 - Masticator Service Rental Contract
 - Education outreach
- Projects must be in alignment with FSCNC/CalFire strategic plans. Green house gasses must be minimized. Plans for securing California Environmental Quality Act/National Environmental Policy Act (CEQA/NEPA) compliance must be included.
- Ted noted that based on his successful effort in getting a \$2.6 million grant it is a 6-month effort for the proposal, need a Registered Professional Forester, GIS maps, etc.

- **Mo will find out what assessments have already been prepared for the Banner Mt area.**

5. BLM Gracie Area Project (Yuba Watershed Institute)

- Ann described two BLM concurrent projects – BLM has done a programmatic Environmental Assessment (pEA). Criteria for project must be met to be able to use this pEA for NEPA environmental clearance.
- Little Deer Creek project - Yuba Watershed Institute came up with project area “Little Deer Creek Project” - include 900 acres of BLM land, and 60 acres of private land. Proposing light treatment. Emphasized fuel reduction within 100 ft to property lines, roads, ditches, power plants, etc.
- Gracie Road veg reduction. BLM property is along Gracie Road and fuel reduction would be good for that evacuation route. Would be hand piling vegetation, thinning from below. Masticator to remove shrubs. May remove trees up to 20 inches along the Cascade Canal and near the Gun Club where they can get access via roads. Looking for public involvement – got the grant from Sierra Nevada Conservancy. Project development and assessment, then implementation funding. Public involvement – we could help with that for neighbors. Need to have Record of Decision signed. Ready to go project with just minor work with BLM.
- If we can get grant money in time for 2024 implementation it could start then. Not sure if CalFIRE would fund clearing on federal land? Ted said it is allowed.
- Sierra Nevada Conservancy – since they funded the planning, they could be a source of funding from implementation.
- Watershed Institute Assessment - Ann can supply the assessment they did. Ted requested a copy – **Ann will send to him.**

6. The Path Forward?

- Neighborhood Captains - Do we have a current list of neighborhood captain? Have a map depicting where contacts were made. Any Community Service Credit Project for high schools?
- Communicate with your street/neighborhood – social media? Mo is on multiple Facebook groups. Ann pointed out that face-to-face is the most effective communication. Free chipping program in spring would be an opportunity for outreach.
- Education, flyers, general outreach, chipping programs.
- New Leadership – need bylaws, term limits?
- Meetings on a regular basis
- Steering committee - a group to help set agendas and make decisions. **Mo, Arnold, Rick, Bob, Ann, Jeff, Gale.**

Topics to Cover at Next Meeting

- Ann suggested we develop a description of what is involved as being a neighborhood leader. Send out the map and Mo's write up. Call to action for neighborhood leaders.
- Send out a notice that we are resurrecting the FireWise meeting. Purpose is to get more neighborhood leaders, go over the approach to connect with neighbors. Workshop for the Hazard Risk assessment.
- **Next Steering Committee Meeting – Monday Feb 6 – 3:00 at Bob Hanna's** (11171 Banner Mine Way). Will plan for a meeting in early March meeting – main goal is to expand recruitment/outreach plan.