

**THE WOODS HOMEOWNERS
ASSOCIATION**

WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

Developed by The Woods Homeowners Association Firewise Committee
in cooperation with:

Firewise Communities/USA

West Virginia Division of Forestry's Firewise West Virginia Program

The West Virginia Department of Natural Resources

The Hedgesville Volunteer Fire Department

Potomac Valley Properties, Inc.

Approved by WHOA Board of Directors
April 8, 2017

BACKGROUND

The Woods Community is located in the mountainous, forested area of western Berkeley County, West Virginia. It is adjacent to the 22,000 acre Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area, which is mostly hardwood forest. Because of its location, the local terrain, and forest characteristics, it is prudent for The Woods Community to adopt and implement the precautions in this Wildfire Protection Plan.

The Woods Homeowners Association (WHOA) Wildfire Protection Plan has been developed based upon the findings and recommendations resulting from the hazard assessment of The Woods community conducted in 2005 by M. Rodger Ozburn, Wildland Fire Specialist with the West Virginia Division of Forestry (WVDOF). His findings were published in 2 reports: Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Report for the Woods Resort, dated February 15, 2005, and Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Report (Supplemental) for the Woods Resort, dated June 10, 2005. Rodger Ozburn, Firewise Coordinator for the WVDOF, presented the result of the survey at the June 2005 annual meeting of The Woods Homeowners Association. The development of this plan also follows the guidelines described on the National Firewise Organization web site (<http://www.firewise.org/usa/about.htm>), and in the publication: Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities (Communities Committee, Society of American Foresters, National Association of Counties, National Association of State Foresters) See: <http://www.safuet.org/policyandpress/cwpphandbook.pdf>

This Wildfire Protection Plan is a working document. It will be updated, as required, to keep it relevant, and as additional Firewise precautions and activities are defined. The Firewise Committee was established in January 14, 2006.

1. ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Firewise Committee was established in 2006 as a standing committee of The Woods Homeowners Association. A member of the WHOA Board of Directors will serve as the Firewise Committee Chairman. The Firewise Committee membership should be comprised of at least 1 homeowners from each of the three voting districts in the community, and one representative of Potomac Valley Properties, Inc. (PVP). If available and able to participate, a representative of the WV Division of Forestry will serve as a consultant to the committee.

A. The responsibilities of The Firewise Committee are:

- Prepare and implement this Wildfire Protection Plan and review it at least once a year to keep it current and relevant.
- Plan at least one Firewise event in the community each year.
- Plan at least one chipping day or cleanup day each year.
- Communicate Firewise "Best Practices" to the residents, and respond to homeowners Firewise questions and concerns.
- Seek input from the residents for Firewise improvements, and activities.
- Hold Firewise Committee meetings at least *quarterly*, with additional meetings as required.
- Report Firewise activities and issues to the WHOA Board of Directors at scheduled Board meetings.
- Report Firewise Committee activities to the annual meeting of The Woods Homeowners Association.
- Appoint liaisons from the Committee to other WHOA committees and collaborating

organizations, including The Woods Community Foundation, the Hedgesville Volunteer Fire Dept., the Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area, the West Virginia Division of Forestry, and the neighboring community of Sleepy Hollow.

- Coordinate the Firewise Activities of The Woods, PVP, The Woods Community Foundation and all collaborating agencies.
- Take the actions, and file the documentation, necessary to maintain the status of The Woods as a “Firewise Community” as designated by Firewise Communities USA. This includes accumulating the required data and submitting the renewal form for the "Firewise Community" standing before the end of each calendar year. (see: <http://www.firewise.org/communities/usa-recognition-program.aspx>)
- Evaluate the feasibility of implementing the following recommendations made by The WVDOF in The Community Assessment Report:
 - Establish a central chipping facility;
 - Provide permanent firebreaks in critical areas in cooperation with The Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area;
 - Create firefighting tool caches;
 - Post fire safety guidelines in rental units;
 - Provide WHOA & PVP vehicles and staff with firefighting tools;
 - Ensure that fire hydrants are tested according to schedule;
 - Provide wildland firefighter training to WHOA and PVP; employees in cooperation with the WVOF;
 - Conduct a consolidated tree removal/pruning program; and,
 - Develop "Firewise" maps of the Community showing:
 - Inhabited areas
 - Wooded areas
 - Roads
 - Evacuations
 - Fire Hydrants
 - Ponds
 - Power lines
 - Terrain contours
 - Fire breaks
 - Water system facilities
 - Access points to Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area
 - Alternate routes for dead ends
 - Work with the WHOA Architectural Advisory Committee to propose amendments to the Community's Architectural Guidelines defining recommended Firewise principles for new construction, renovation, landscaping, and lot maintenance.

B. The responsibilities of the WHOA Board of Directors are:

- Review and approve the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (completed April 8, 2017)
- Review and approve any revisions to the Wildfire Protection Plan
- Continue funding for the Gypsy moth spraying program.
- Promote fire safety in the community through homeowner communications and by supporting and guiding the efforts of the Firewise committee.

- Provide advice and support to the nonprofit corporation: The Woods Community Foundation, Inc.

C. Responsibilities of Woods homeowners.

The responsibilities of homeowners fall into three categories:

1. Obligations imposed under the *Declaration of Conditions, Covenants, Restrictions, and Easements, dated April 19, 1976, Article XX, as amended*, including, but not limited to, avoiding any uncontained outdoor fires.
2. Obligations imposed by the Lot Maintenance Guidelines adopted by the Board of Directors on January 14, 2017, wherein the Board has determined that the existence of the fuel sources set forth below within 30 feet of a structure, driveway, or road pose an unreasonable and unacceptable fire risk to The Woods community and therefore constitute nuisance conditions within the meaning of Section 6 of the *Amended Declaration*. Where these conditions exist on a private lot, the lot owners and occupants will be subject to the WHOA covenant enforcement procedures in effect at the time of the violation. Accordingly, the following conditions must be eliminated:
 - a) Three or more dead trees on the ground in contact with each other, and two or more limbs greater than 6 inches in diameter lying on the ground in contact with each other.
 - b) Large piles of branches under 6 inches in diameter (except those temporarily accumulated in connection with a chipping campaign and within 45 days of a scheduled chipping).
 - c) Grass or weeds over 8 inches tall (broom sedge, stilt grass, heavy weeds, etc.)
 - d) Groups of 2 or more conifers/evergreen trees, exceeding four feet in height that touch at the top and have limbs lower than six feet.
 - e) Heavy leaf litter, or pine needles, which can provide tinder for a fire started by a discarded cigarette or other incendiary.
3. Recommendations for additional fire risk reduction actions based on Firewise principles and strategies:
 - a) Assuring that driveways are 16 feet wide with 16 feet of overhead clearance from trees and electric lines to allow fire department equipment and other emergency vehicles to get close enough to a structure on the property to perform necessary functions.
 - b) Installing an effective¹ “911” address sign.
 - c) Removing dead trees on the property that could fall onto a dwelling, driveway, road, or power line.
 - d) Removing any accumulation of material that can provide a continuous path of fuel to feed a fire from the road to a structure.
 - e) Removing large accumulations of fallen trees and/or limbs that could fuel a large intense fire (aka, “jackpot fuel”) anywhere on the property.
 - f) Trimming tree limbs at a height of 6 feet or below, and any limbs or branches that touch or overhang the roof of a structure.
 - g) Removing or relocating brush piles, lumber, leaf litter, pine needles within 3 feet of a dwelling.
 - h) With the exception of small stacks of wood (less than a quarter of a cord, or 32 cubic feet: 4’x4’x2’) next to a house, including on a deck or porch, piling or stacking all firewood at least 30 feet from any structure. Removing dead, damaged or diseased trees from their properties, as necessary, to eliminate hazardous and nuisance conditions thereon.
 - i) Providing effective² 911 address signs

² An “effective” 911 sign is one that meets the following criteria;

- j) Assuring high fire hazard conditions, if available, provide firefighting tools, and a hose ready to go.

2. COLLABORATION

The Firewise Committee with the support of the WHOA Board of Directors, will develop and maintain relationships with the following organizations and work with them to revise and implement the Wildfire Protection Plan:

- The Hedgesville Volunteer Fire Department
- The Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area
*[NOTE: For properties abutting The Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area, the property owner must request a personal inspection and written approval from the Manager SCWMA (see below) prior to the removal of any fuels on adjacent State land, which may present a fire or safety hazard to their property. Contact:
Mr. Larry Hines, Manager Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area
1910 Sleepy Creek Road Hedgesville, WV, 25427
Phone: (304)-754-3855 E-mail: elkbranch@gmail.com
To report evidence of a fire in the SCWMA, call 911, and then DNR District 2 Headquarters at (304)-822-3551.*
- The neighboring community of Sleepy Hollow
- The West Virginia Division of Forestry
- Berkeley County
- Potomac Valley Properties, Inc.
- The Woods Community Foundation

3. TREATMENT OF STRUCTURAL IGNITABILITY

The following precautions are recommended by the WV Division of Forestry for homeowners, and builders:

- Where feasible, remove ladder fuels (vines, contiguous evergreens, low branches, small trees) in the 30 ft. zone from the dwelling.
- Use masonry foundations in new structures or additions.
- Provide spark arrestors for all wood or coal burning stove chimneys.
- Use UL class A shingles, metal, or ceramic tiles for new or re-roofing.
- Enclose all openings, in gables, eaves, and beneath structures, with metal screening. Large openings should have vinyl lattice or a non-- flammable boards applied over the screen to improve the visual and structural characteristics.
- Remove all fuels within 3 feet of flammable structures, including pine needles, leaves, bark mulch, flammable plants.
- Use masonry or composite cement siding.
- Remove all tree limbs within 10 feet of a dwelling roof.
- Provide a metal or masonry fire break between a wood fence structure and a building.

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- White reflective numbers, no less than 3" high, placed vertically on a reflective background (preferably green), on both sides of post (except at the end of cul-de-sacs where only the inbound side is so marked);
 - A post adjacent to the road, preferably on the left side of the driveway, if practicable;
 - Numbers set at a height beginning at 3 feet above the ground; and,
 - The post placed far enough from the road to be clear of vehicles, including snow plows, emergency response vehicles, and other heavy equipment; generally from 5 to 15 feet.

- Store firewood and other flammable materials at least 30 feet from a dwelling.
- Maintain the roof and gutters free of leaves, pine needles, and other flammable materials, especially during high fire hazard conditions.
- Use double glazed windows for all new structures or renovations.

4. **COMPLETED PROJECTS**

- A community wide wildfire risk assessment from aerial surveys.
- A wildfire risk assessment of 90% of the individual lots, including all of those in the heavily wooded sections, performed by Hedgesville High School students, supported by the Eagle Promise Foundation.
- Installed "Smokey the Bear" fire hazard warning signs at the major entrances to the community.
- Added loudspeakers to the community's security patrol vehicles to inform residents of emergencies.
- Installed dry hydrants at two ponds to facilitate filling Fire Department tankers.
- Established a procedure, in concert with the fire department for testing all community fire hydrants annually.
- Equipped WHOA security vehicles with firefighting tools.
- Added a Firewise section to the WHOA web site.
- Added an amendment to the Community 's regulations restricting outside fires
- Clean up 2 large windfall (jackpots) caused by recent storms
- Perform or update fire risk assessments for all properties bordering the Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area.
- Develop and conduct wildfire training program for WHOA and PVP employees
- Added glossary of terms to the Wildfire protection Plan.

5. **ACTION PLAN**

For 2016 to 2020

- Hold a Firewise Day (chipping day) event at least annually.
- Continue developing the relationship with The Woods Community Foundation, Inc. for the purpose of accumulating assets which may be used in mitigating wildfire hazards.
- Establish a network including other WHOA Standing Committees (Communication, Security, Architectural Advisory Committee) for a community effort for a 911 signage campaign.
- Continue working with WV Division of Forestry on efforts on mutual interest and benefit to the WHOA community.
- Establish a communication system to alert homeowners of emergencies, consistent with the current Berkeley County efforts.
- Work with property owners on the border of SCWMA, the manager of the Sleepy Creek Wildlife Management Area, and The Woods Community Foundation to reduce fire risk along The Woods/SCWMA interface.
- Establish a prioritized evacuation plan in conjunction with appropriate Berkeley County Departments and Agencies.
- Plan a presentation by the WVDOP at the annual homeowners meeting.
- Perform or update fire risk assessments for all properties bordering the Sleepy Creek

Wildlife Management Area.

- Develop and conduct a wildfire training program for WHOA and PVP employees.

WPP Glossary

Combustible building materials: Materials which will continue to burn when the ignition source is removed, e.g. wood shingles, wood clapboards, T111 siding, wood lattice, wood deck flooring.

Combustibles: Plants, dry leaves, grass, bark mulch, firewood, and any other substance, which is capable of ignition and burning.

Conifers: Evergreen, cone-bearing trees such as pine, spruce, hemlock, cedar, which are flammable year round.

Crown fire: A fire that spreads from treetop to treetop, ahead of the ground fire, and accelerated by any wind, or upslope.

Defensible space: A buffer zone around a dwelling and along the access to it, which is clear of any flammable materials, which could propagate a fire from the adjacent woodland to the home or driveway.

Direct flame impingement: The ignition of a fence, structure or dwelling from direct contact with a flame front.

Draped fuels: Needles, leaves, twigs, and branches that have fallen from above and have lodged on lower branches or brush.

Fire prone plants: Any dead trees, plants, grass, ground fuels, resinous plants which could be ignited by a flying ember or discarded cigarette.

Fire risk levels:

Green: Low – fuels do not ignite readily from small firebrands, although a more intense heat source, such as lightning may start fires in duff or punky wood. Fires in open grasslands may burn freely a few hours after rain, but woods fire spread slowly by creeping or smoldering, and burn in irregular fingers. There is little danger of spotting.

Blue: Moderate – Fires can start from most accidental causes, but with the exception of lightning fires in some areas, the number of starts is generally low. Fires in open grasslands will burn briskly and spread rapidly on windy days. Timber fires spread slowly to moderately fast. The average fire is of moderate intensity, although heavy concentrations of fuel, especially draped fuel, may burn hot. Short distance spotting may occur, but is not persistent. Fires are not likely to become serious and control is relatively easy.

Yellow: High – All fine dead fuels ignite readily and fires start easily from most causes. Unattended brush and campfires are likely to escape. Fires spread rapidly and short-distance spotting is common. High-intensity burning may develop on slopes or in concentrations of fine fuels. Fires may become serious and their control difficult unless they are attacked successfully while small. Outdoor burning should be restricted to early morning and late evening hours.

Orange: Very High – Fires start easily from all causes and immediately after ignition, spread rapidly and increase quickly in intensity. Spot fires are a constant danger. Fires burning in light fuels may quickly develop high intensity characteristics such as long-distance spotting and fire whirlwinds when they burn in heavier fuels. Outdoor burning is not recommended.

Red: Extreme – Fires start quickly, spread furiously, and burn intensely. All fires are potentially serious. Development into high intensity burning will usually be faster and occur from smaller fires than in the very high fire danger class. Direct attack is rarely possible and may be dangerous except immediately after ignition. Fires that develop headway in heavy slash or in conifer stands may be unmanageable while the extreme burning condition lasts. Under these conditions the only effective and safe control action is on the flanks until the weather changes or the fuel supply lessens. **NO OUTDOOR BURNING SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN AREAS WITH EXTREME FIRE RISK.**

Firebrands: Pieces of burning wood, including embers, which are small enough that they can be carried by the wind, or a fire updraft.

Firewise plants: Plants, which have low flammability and are more difficult to ignite. Includes most deciduous trees.

Flammable materials: capable of being set on fire and of burning quickly, e.g. dry wood, leaves, pine needles, grass, conifers and other resinous plants.

Flammable vegetation: dead trees, grass, brush; conifers and other resinous plants.

Fuel break: An area in which there is no fuel, e.g. bare ground, crushed stone, flagstone, paving (which are free of leaves, etc.), a green, manicured, irrigated lawn; or a continuously wet area.

Fuel connection: A continuous path of flammable materials, which can burn up to the point of igniting a structure. Example: a wood fence ending at a dwelling.

Fuel traps: Areas where fuels can accumulate, which could then be ignited by flying embers. Examples: valleys in roofs, roofs with low pitch, vents in eaves with holes greater than 1/8 inch in diameter, open space under porches, decks, or stairs, gutters, openings in foundations.

Ground fuels: leaves, grass, weeds, shrubs, branches, pine needles, bark mulch, vines, and brush.

Home ignition zone: The area around the dwelling within which a fire could possibly ignite the structure.

Jackpot fuel: A large accumulation of downed or dead trees and other accumulated Fuels, which, if ignited, could generate a large fire whose updraft could carry embers to other areas of the community, and cause far ranging spot fires.

Ladder fuel: Dead or alive branches, vines, bushes, tall grasses, and draped fuels, which allow a ground fire to rise into the tree canopy.

Resinous plants: highly flammable plants such as pines, spruces, junipers, cedars. Yews.

Slash: Debris left after logging, pruning, thinning or brush cutting; includes logs, chips, bark, branches, stumps, and broken understory trees or brush.

Spark arrester: A chimney spark arrester is a metal screen, with holes of 1/2 inch or less, usually incorporated into a chimney cap. The screen prevents sparks from escaping the chimney and igniting the roof or other flammable materials on the roof or in the vicinity. The cap also prevents water, debris, animals, and insects from entering the chimney.

Spotting: Behavior of a fire producing sparks or embers that are carried by the wind and start new fires beyond the zone of direct ignition by the main fire.

Tree canopy: The upper level of tree branches and foliage, which can fuel a crown fire.

Wildfire: A sweeping and destructive conflagration especially in a wilderness, rural area, or wildland/urban interface.

Wildfire hazard rating / risk assessment: A quantitative method, provided by the WV Division of Forestry, for assessing the total site wildfire hazard rating for an individual's property. It consists of a list of potential hazards, their severity, and the method for calculating the total site risk.

Wildfire risk/hazard mitigation: The process of reducing the wildfire hazard rating for an individual property, and for the community. It includes the reduction of fuel sources, clearing the defensible space, improving the fire resistance of any structures, improving vehicle access, eliminating fuel traps, and disrupting fuel connections, etc.

Wildland/Urban interface: The area where houses meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland vegetation. The WUI is thus a focal area for human-environment conflicts, such as the destruction of homes by wildfires, habitat fragmentation, introduction of exotic species, and biodiversity decline.