



## COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)

*Originally Approved September 2008*  
**Updated & Approved April 2021**

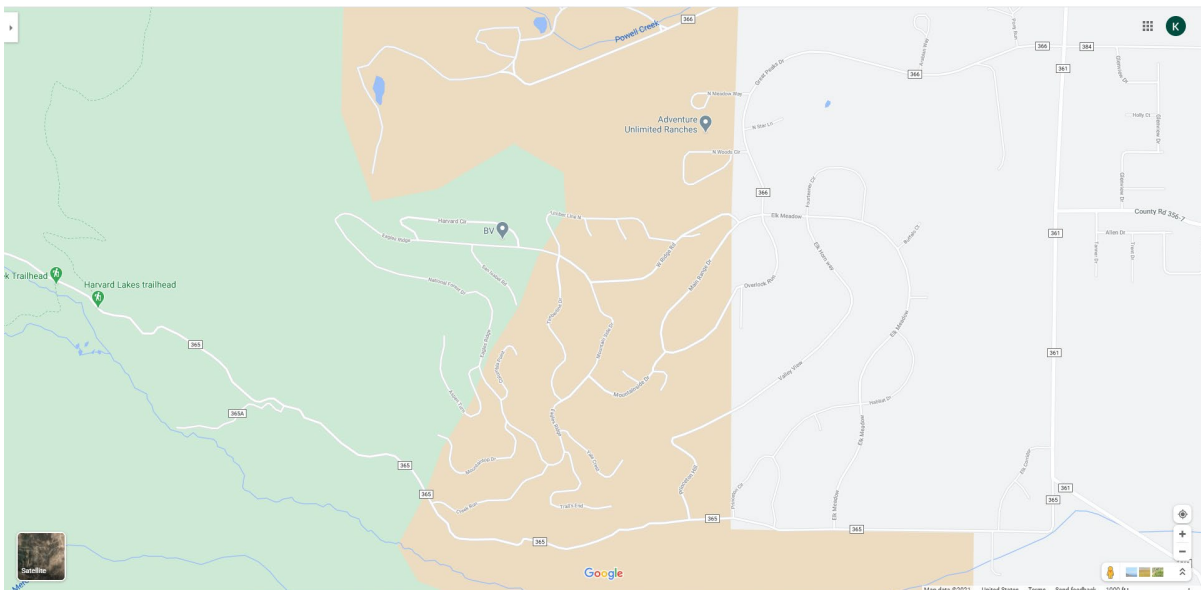
### A. GAME TRAIL'S WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE DEFINITION

The WUI is any area where structures and other human developments meet or intermingle with wildland vegetative fuels. Game Trail Association (GTA) is a Homeowners Association (HOA) managed mountain community northwest of Buena Vista, Colorado in the foothills below Mt. Yale and Mt. Columbia. The elevation ranges within Game Trail from 8300 feet to 9300 feet.

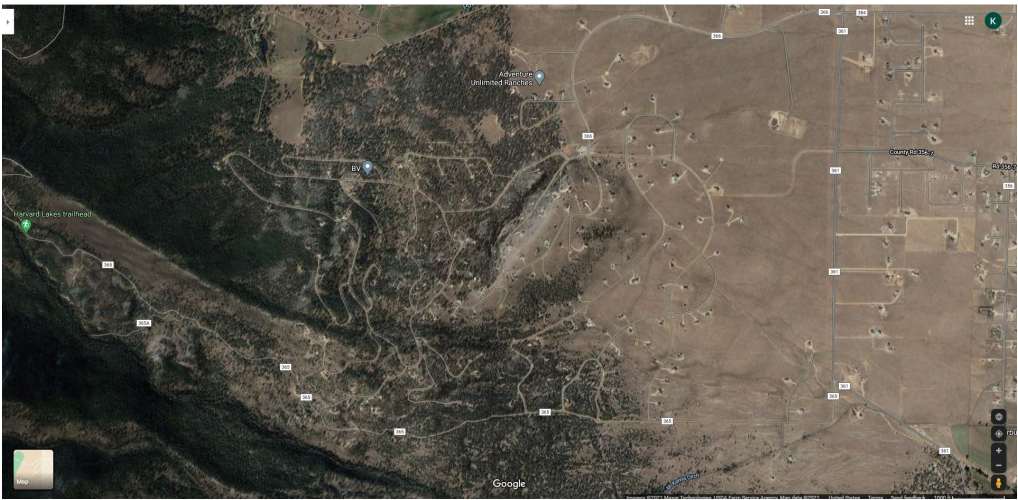
The community consists of 1,880 acres of 440 individually owned lots of which two-thirds have been developed (approximately 294 homes). There are approximately 1,077 acres of non-forested land. Of these unforested acres, 400 have been set aside as an Elk Conservation Easement that is part of the Central Colorado Conservancy, Elk Bench Corridor #1 (formerly the Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas in partnership with the Palmer Foundation). The remaining 803 acres are forested with Pinon, Ponderosa, Lodgepole, Aspen, Mountain Mahogany Bushes, Common Juniper and various other vegetation.

Game Trail may be accessed by heading north on Highway 24 from Buena Vista and turning west on County Road (CR) 384.

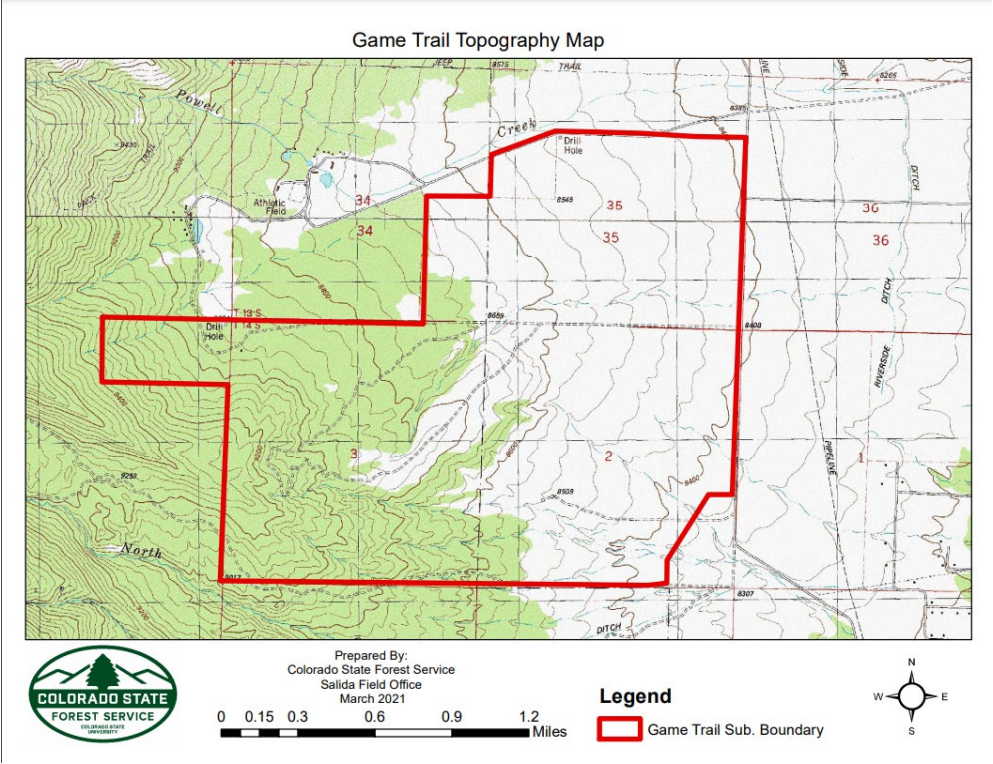
[Road Map:](#)



Satellite Map:



Topographical Map:



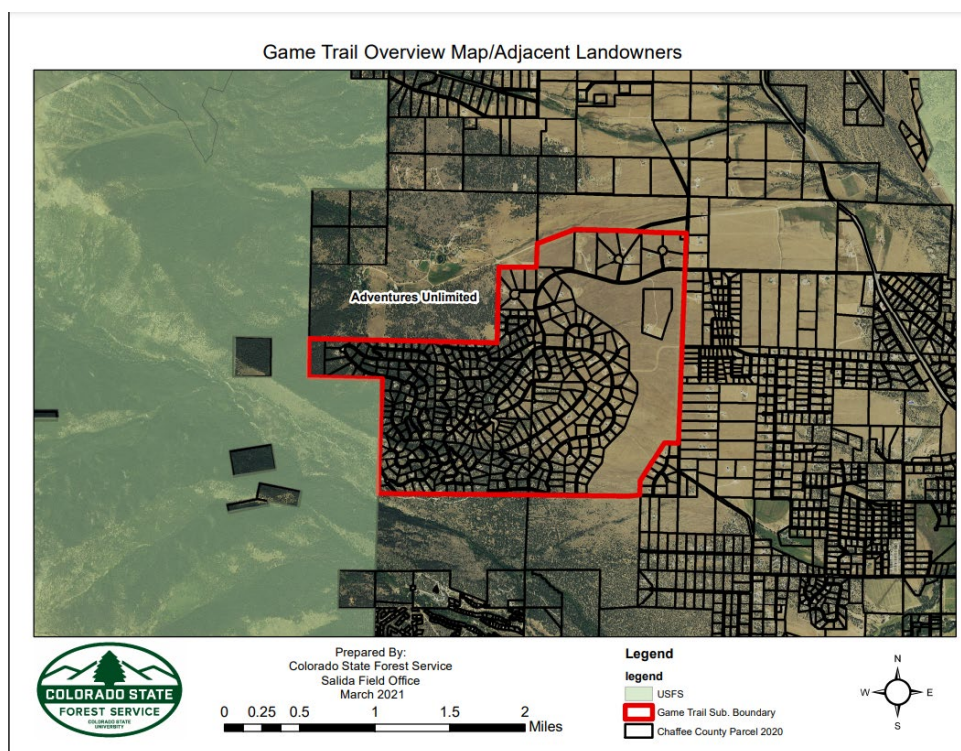
## B. GAME TRAIL'S ADJACENT LANDOWNERS

**North:** Adventure Unlimited Ranches, a 1,100-acre, mostly forested, outdoor education not-for-profit camp and ranch.

**South:** CR 365 that turns into National Forest Service (NS) 365 at the San Isabel National Forest boundary. South of CR365 are 345+280 acres of undeveloped, forested property owned by Oven/Bowers. CR 365 / NS 365, heading west, leads to several popular trailheads including the North Cottonwood Creek trailhead that is the primary access to Mt. Columbia and Mt. Harvard and the Harvard Lakes and Kroenke Lake trailheads.

**East:** CR 361 with large residential plots on its east side.

**West:** San Isabel National Forest; a portion of the Colorado Trail runs through this area and intersects with NS 365 for easy access.





## C. GAME TRAIL'S RISK ANALYSIS

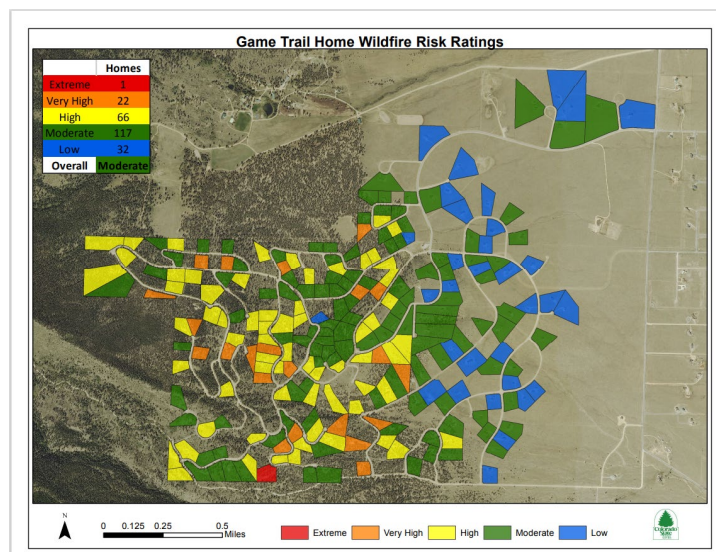
### Terrain and Fuel Hazards:

1. In March 2021, the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) conducted a Firewise USA® Community Assessment. The report rated Game Trail as a "High Fire Hazard" in regard to neighborhood risk/hazard assessment. It noted moderately dangerous fire conditions in regard to the fire intensity scale, and it indicated a "high pace" anticipated rate of spread for a potential wildfire.

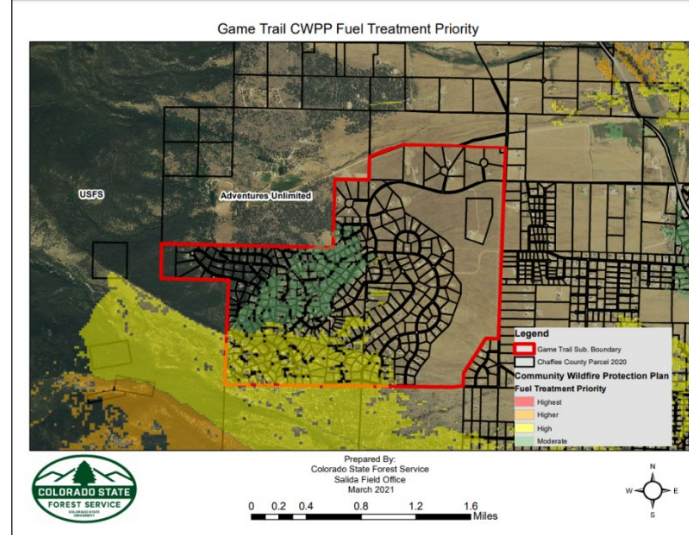
The report concluded that the overall "vegetation density and fuel loading throughout Game Trail is cause for concern from a wildfire risk perspective. Ladder fuels are prevalent in most of the forest types seen in Game trail. Additionally, in many parts of the community a continuous canopy exists that could spread a high severity crown fire."

The report recommended:

- a. Creating and maintaining defensible space around all of the homes in the community is a top priority. This includes treatment of fine fuels as well as the thinning of dense tree stands to introduce more canopy spacing between individual trees and surrounding homes.
  - b. That homeowners of older homes be made aware of the risks inherent in their structures, and plans should be made, when possible, to replace materials and / or to correct deficiencies with fire-resistant construction materials and methods.
  - c. For structures surrounded by forests, debris accumulation on roofs and in gutters, next to foundations and underneath decks is an issue that will require constant vigilance.
  - d. In areas where only grass surrounds a structure, it is important that landowners mow regularly to reduce the height and amount of grass and other easily ignited forms of vegetation.
  - e. It is strongly recommended that vegetation be removed alongside of all roads to the maximum extent possible, especially in forested areas.
  - f. Where present, propane tanks should be parallel (on same slope) and more than 30 feet away from structures. It is also recommended that all flammable vegetation growing within 10 feet of propane tanks be removed and replaced with nonflammable ground cover, such as gravel or rocks.
  - g. It is recommended that residents construct evacuation plans for their particular location, mapping suitable safety zones based on the potential fire approach directions.
2. Furthermore, in 2016, the CSFS conducted a parcel-based Wildfire Fire Risk Assessment and rated 1 home as extreme, 22 as very high, 66 as high, 117 as moderate, and 32 as low. Game Trail overall was rated moderate.



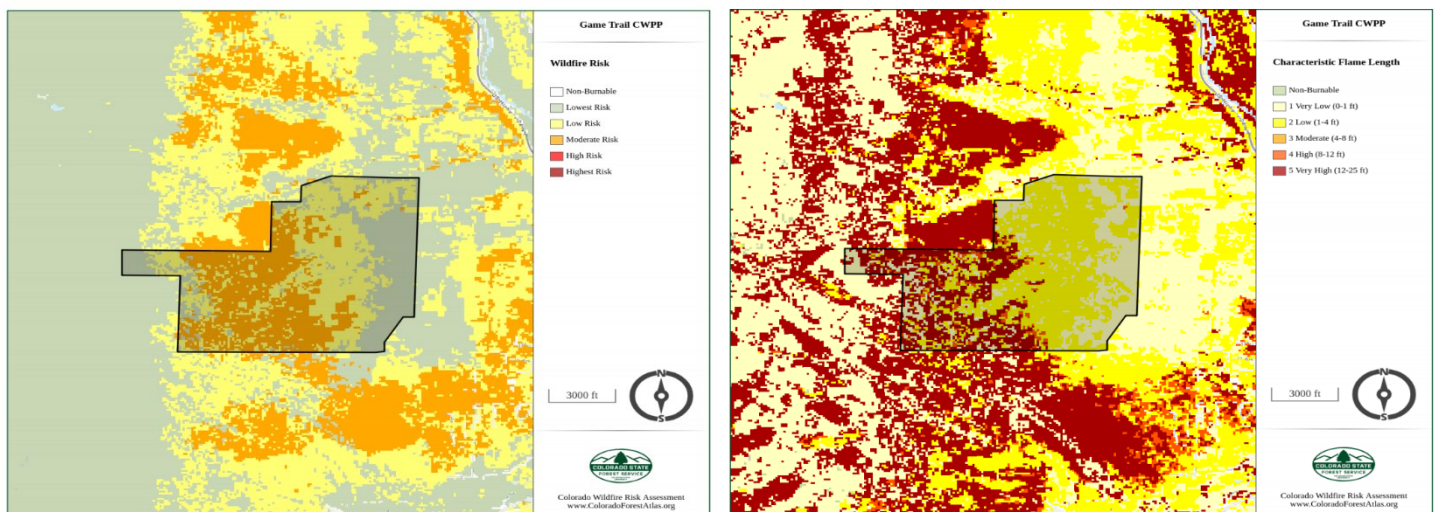
3. In 2020, the *Chaffee County Next Generation Community Wildfire Protection Plan* rated Game Trail as a moderate risk. Below is an illustration of Game Trail's designation within the Chaffee County CWPP priority treatment map.



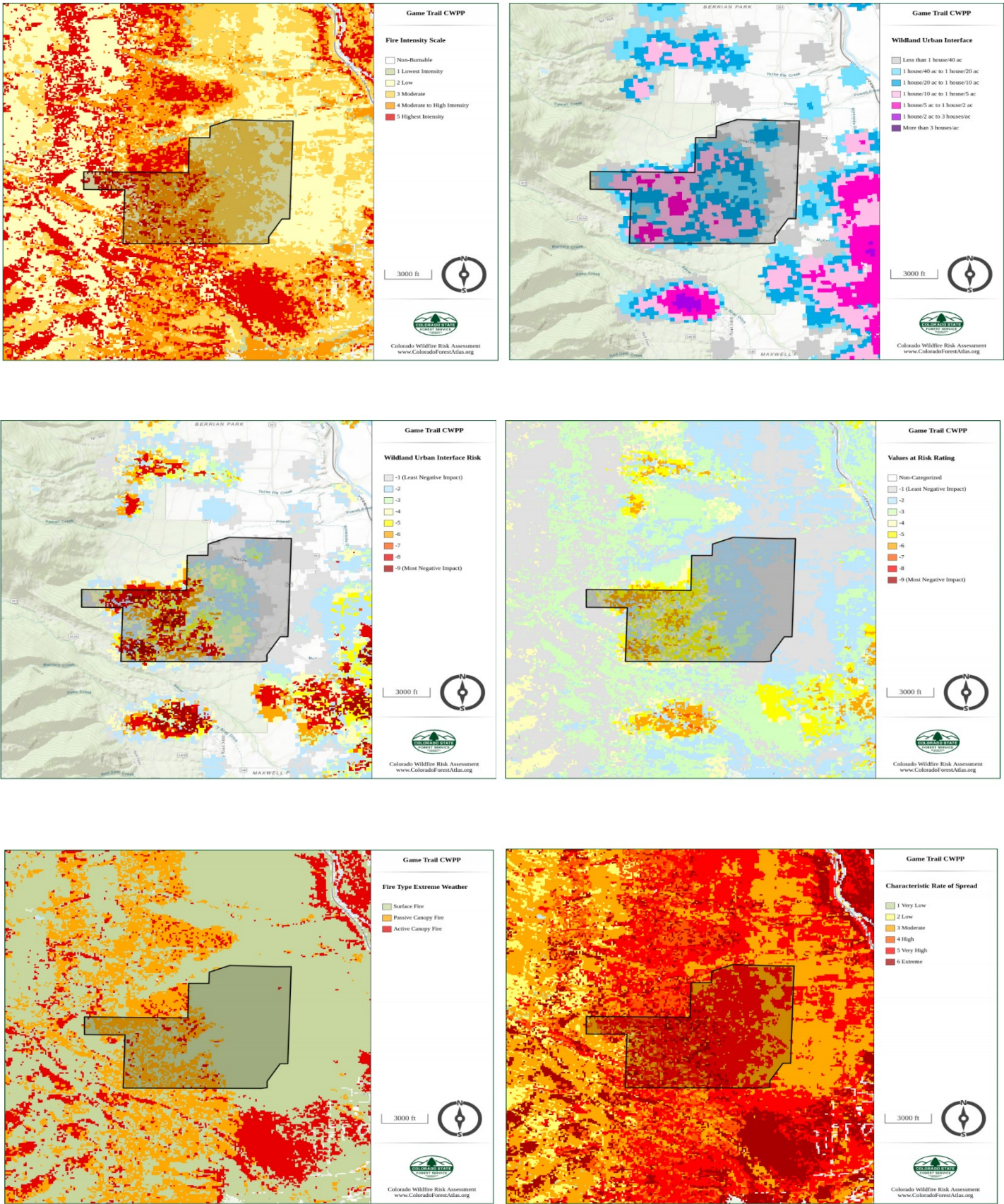
4. The Colorado State Forest Service – Salida Office provided the following map-based descriptions of Game Trail's wildfire risk. Information is from the *CSFS's 2017 Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary Report*. The Colorado WRA provides a consistent, comparable set of scientific results to be used as a foundation for wildfire mitigation and prevention planning in Colorado.

Results of the assessment can be used to help prioritize areas in the state where mitigation treatments, community interaction and education, or tactical analyses might be necessary to reduce risk from wildfires. The Colorado WRA products included in this report are designed to provide the information needed to support the following key priorities:

- Identify areas that are most prone to wildfire;
- Plan and prioritize hazardous fuel treatment programs;
- Allow agencies to work together to better define priorities and improve emergency response, particularly across jurisdictional boundaries;
- Increase communication with local residents and the public to address community priorities and needs.







**Terrain and Fuel Hazards (continued):**

5. Game Trail has two access / egress routes – CR 365 and Great Peaks Drive. Egress from some of the higher-elevation roads (Mountain Top, Aspen Turn, Creek Run) and others may be realistically limited to one route. Yale Crest, Columbia Point, San Isabel, and Trails End Roads are dead-end that have only one access / egress route to main roads. This creates increased risk for these neighborhoods from both firefighting and egress aspects.
6. Some lots in Game Trail are on steep slopes. This can create an obstacle for accessing areas needing treatment and removing slash.
7. Game Trail's lower-elevation grasslands are not immune to fire, especially wind-driving wildfire.
8. Game Trail has experienced various threats to tree health over the years including Mountain Pine Beetle, IPS Beetle, Spruce Budworm, Dwarf Mistletoe, drought, etc. Each requires its own kind of mitigation and on-going maintenance.
9. Over the years, some areas within Game Trail have become more densely forested, requiring some thinning.
10. Game Trail has two forested open space areas. In 2008, some thinning and slash removal was performed; however, both require additional work.
  - a. Westside 20-Acre Open Space: This area is bordered by San Isabel National Forest to the west and Adventure Unlimited Ranches to the north. It is steep and consists of predominately Lodgepole Pine as well as Ponderosa, Douglas Fir and a few Aspen trees. The area is densely treed, causing competition, stress, vulnerability to disease and insects, and overall poor health. There are many standing dead and downed trees and forest floor debris. Because this area could serve as a critical wildfire buffer, Game Trail is presently pursuing a grant in partnership with Adventure Unlimited Ranches to mitigate this area. If that grant fails, Game Trail is applying for the Chaffee Treats wildfire mitigation program to hopefully address this area. Additional goals are to improve forest health and wildlife habitat.
  - b. West Ridge / Main Range Open Space: At the intersection of West Ridge and Main Range, near Game Trail's Mail Center, is a small open space with easier access. Several years ago, Ponderosa saplings were planted. They now need thinning as do the Mountain Mahogany shrubs that have grown in this area.

**Residents:**

1. Approximately 50 percent of Game Trail residents are part-time, and presently there are 7 short-term rental properties. Due to the intermittent nature of occupancy for these homes, creating and maintaining optimal defensible space can be a challenge.
2. Game Trail is also home to many retirees, some of whom are physically unable to keep up with trimming, thinning and slash removal.

**Community Values and Infrastructure:**

1. Game Trail's vision statement is "To preserve this extraordinary, private environment of nature for all the years to come." Improving forest health goes hand-in-hand with reducing catastrophic wildfire risk. Therefore, the Game Trail HOA Board of Directors have set improving forest health as one of its highest priorities.

2. In total, GTA has 294 homes on 440 lots (at this time of this writing). All structures are at risk to wildfire due to proximity to densely forested areas.
3. Game Trail has a centralized water system consisting of four domestic wells and one livestock well, 12 water storage tanks, and 18 miles of water pipelines. Additionally, Game Trail is adjacent to North Cottonwood Creek, the water supply of the Town of Buena Vista.

#### **Adjacent to Game Trail:**

1. There is a popular recreation area west and south of Game Trail that offers horse and hiking trails, fishing and overnight camping with fire pits. This area also includes several popular trailheads including the North Cottonwood Creek trailhead that is the primary access to Mt. Columbia and Mt. Harvard and the Harvard Lakes, Kroenke Lake, and Silver Creek trailheads. In addition, a portion of the Colorado Trail runs through this area and intersects with NS 365 for easy access. To protect Game Trail from an accidental, human-caused wildfire, when campfires are banned by the United States Forest Service (USFS) on federal land, Game Trail volunteers have patrolled the camping areas. If a violation of the fire ban is spotted, the volunteers have contacted authorities.
2. In the recent past, there have been two large wildfires in the Game Trail vicinity, the Decker fire (2019) south of Salida and the Weston Pass fire (2018) near Fairplay. Game Trail residents know that a wildfire is always possible, but intend, through proper preparedness, to avoid a catastrophic event.

#### **Section C. Resources & References**

- ✓ [Game Trail 2021 Firewise USA® Community Assessment](#)
- ✓ [CSFS 2016 Game Trail Wildfire Risk Rating](#)
- ✓ [Chaffee County 2020 Next Generation Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#)
- ✓ [2017 Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Update](#)



### C. GAME TRAIL'S WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

1. To assist owners in the clean-up of slash on their land, there is a neighborhood slash pit located in the Game Trail meadow. Every winter, the slash piles in the pit are burned by Game Trail volunteers with required permits and under 24/7 observation until the fire is extinguished.
2. Game Trail has a central water system with storage capacity of 140,000 gallons for fire-fighting purposes and fire hydrants. This includes four domestic wells, one livestock well, and 12 water storage tanks.
3. Signage of Game Trail's roads is excellent, and the roads themselves are wide with easy access for all emergency equipment. This 18-mile road system also serves as a fire-break.
4. So that first responders can quickly identify property addresses, Game Trail has a Rule and Regulation recommending that owners have a green, reflective residence identification sign that meets the Chaffee County Fire Protection District's specifications.
5. Game Trail encourages owners to register for Chaffee County's reverse 911 program called Everbridge. In the case of emergencies, including evacuation orders, residents should follow the direction of authorities from the Chaffee County Office of Emergency Management, disseminated through the Everbridge program. Everbridge registration reminders are advertised on the Forestry Committee page of the Game Trail website as well as the Game Trail newsletter.
6. Game Trail also has a robust email distribution list of Game Trail owners that is used to send fire restriction alerts, controlled burn notices, and so on. The email system also can be used to supplement Chaffee County emergency notifications.
7. Game Trail has an active Forestry Committee. It maintains a page on the Game Trail website with updates on the latest forestry practices, articles from Colorado State University (CSU), etc. Upon request, committee members meet with residents to offer advice on building defensible space and tree health. The Forestry Committee is not an enforcement group; however, it does provide assistance and support to residents in reducing fire risk.
8. The Game Trail Forestry Committee suggests that residents be equipped with shovels, rakes, and chainsaws to help suppress a small fire and weed eaters to keep their grasses cut short around each structure.
9. Game Trail's HOA has included a Forestry Committee since the early 1990's. Throughout the years, the committee's volunteers have organized educational and actionable events for Game Trail residents focused on forest health and wildfire mitigation. Some examples include:
  - a. Spearheading the development of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan representing community interests. As this CWPP draft was developed, input was solicited from the Game Trail Forestry Committee, the Game Trail Board of Directors and Committee Chairpersons, over 500 Game Trail owners, local Colorado State Forest Service leaders, the Chaffee County Fire Protection District Chief, and County Commissioners.
  - b. Developing the original Game Trail CWPP in 2008.
  - c. Participating in the CSFS Firewise Risk Assessment.
  - d. Providing a neighborhood slash pile within Game Trail for residents to take their slash April through October. The pile is burned every winter under proper supervision with require permits.
  - e. Ensuring there is an HOA rule that prohibits outdoor open fires within Game Trail. This includes no fire pits or charcoal bar-b-ques.
  - f. Working with the USFS on a forest thinning / firewood project in the San Isabel National Forest bordering Aspen Turn. This project created a small fire break and improved forest health.
  - g. Acquiring grants to pay for a chipper to migrate throughout the neighborhood to process slash brought to the roadside.
  - h. Grid walking all Game Trail lots to identify and remove trees infested with Mountain Pine Beetle. This occurred about 12 years ago at the height of the beetle epidemic.
  - i. Educating residents on Dwarf Mistletoe by developing a brochure, assessing lots, helping to remove, and encouraging spraying when appropriate

- j. Annual or bi-annual presentations from CSFS personnel including Damon Lange and JT Shaver on damaging insects and/or wildfire mitigation. Sometimes these presentations have been classroom experiences, and often they are field experiences within Game Trail.
- k. Offering educational resources from the USFS on the Forestry Committee page of Game Trail website. Topics include educational brochures on damaging insects as well as building defensible space.
- l. Using Game Trail's email system and newsletters to educate residents on local resources for fire mitigation and forest health. Newsletters are published twice a year.
- m. Advertising Chaffee County Fire District's trailer program.
- n. Applying for both the Chaffee Chips program and the Chaffee Treats program. We hope to hear in 2021 if Game Trail has been selected to participate in each of these programs.
- o. Encouraging Game Trail residents to request a property assessment by CSFS staff regarding insect impacts and building defensible space. If CSFS staff is not available, Forestry Committee members will provide this service.

#### **Section D. Resources and References**

- ✓ [Game Trail Fire Hydrant List and Locations](#)
- ✓ [Game Trail R&R 19-02 Allowable Use and Restrictions for Signs](#)
- ✓ [Chaffee County Reverse 911 Program "Everbridge"](#)
- ✓ [Game Trail Forestry Committee Web Page](#)

**D. GAME TRAIL'S RECOMMENDED METHODS TO REDUCE STRUCTURAL IGNITABILITY**

Game Trail owners are encouraged to create wildfire defensible space as defined by the CSFS in its guide "Protecting Your Home from Wildfire: Creating Wildfire-Defensible Zones." New owners are made aware of this guide through the "Living in Game Trail Pamphlet" mailed to them upon closing on their property. All residents are reminded of the pamphlet twice each year through the HOA newsletter. The guide is also posted on the Forestry Committee page of the Game Trail website.

Owners are encouraged to seek advice for developing and executing a wildfire mitigation plan either by contacting the CSFS Salida office for an on-site consultation or a Forestry Committee member.

Game Trail prohibits outdoor open flame fires, including fire pits and charcoal grills. Also, shake roofs are not allowed.

For more information on reducing structure ignitability, refer to the Game Trail 2021 Firewise USA® Assessment.

For more information on reducing structure ignitability refer to the 2021 Firewise Assessment.

**Section E. Resources and References**

- ✓ [CSFS Protecting Your Home from Wildfire: Creating Wildfire Defensible Zones:](#)
- ✓ [Living in Game Trail Pamphlet:](#)
- ✓ [Game Trail Forestry Committee Web Page:](#)
- ✓ [Game Trail ACC Policies](#) page 10 (roof materials) page 20 (outside fires)
- ✓ [Game Trail Outside Burning Rule and Regulation](#)
- ✓ [Game Trail 2021 Firewise USA® Community Assessment](#)



## E. GAME TRAIL'S IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**NOTE: This plan has been written to correlate with the Chaffee County Next Generation Community Wildfire Protection Plan goals and objectives. Where appropriate, language has been modified to be Game Trail-specific.**

**NOTE: Activities within each goal and objective are listed in priority order.**

### Goal 1: Fire-Resilient Forests and Productive Habitat

Accelerate treatment and stewardship activity in priority areas to decrease the risk wildfire poses to the community while also (as practicable) enhancing tree and watershed health and wildlife habitat.

#### Goal 1, Objective A: Treating Together

Treat Game Trail common spaces, cutting the risk wildfire poses to these community assets. Near-term milestones for this key objective are:

##### 1. Create a fuel break in the Westside 20-Acre Open Space

In partnership with Adventure Unlimited Ranches, apply for the CSFS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program Established by SB 17-050 to create a fire break in Game Trail's Westside 20-Acre Open Space (0.5 miles) and along the northern border between Game Trail and Adventure Unlimited (1.3 miles). Contracted loggers and volunteers would be used to mitigate these areas. The Colorado Fire Camp will be hired to burn the slash. Grant proposals were due December 2020 with decisions expected in February 2021. Work would occur 2021-2024. If the CSFS grant is unsuccessful, Game Trail has also applied for Envision Chaffee County's Chaffee Treats program for this project.

##### 2. Thin West Ridge / Main Range Open Space

Game Trail has applied for Envision Chaffee County's Chaffee Treats program to thin the Ponderosa Pine in this 3-acre area. Hand crews would be used and slash taken to Game Trail's slash pit for winter burning. If the Chaffee Treats program is unsuccessful, Game Trail's Forestry Committee will gather volunteers for this project.

### Goal 2: Fire-Adapted Communities

Build community engagement, understanding, preparedness, public support and realistic expectations for forest and fire management. This includes personal preparedness, citizen action to decrease the risk wildfire poses to private lands and structures, and continuing to build upon strong local support for accelerated treatment—or "social license to treat."

#### Goal 2, Objective A: Chaffee Treats, Chaffee Chips and CCFPD Slash Trailers

1. **Chaffee Treats:** Game Trail has applied for Envision Chaffee County's Chaffee Treats program. This initiative works with lot owners to implement their fire mitigation plans and build defensible space. In December 2020, 126 Game Trail owners, representing 137 lots and 364 total acres were included in Game Trail's application. The preferred treatment type is hand crews. In some cases, slash may be chipped or hauled to Game Trail's slash pit for winter burning. In some cases, homeowners may keep usable fuel for home heating or contractors may keep it. Chaffee Chips coordinator, Ben Brack, will be selecting which Game Trail lots to include in the program's March 2021 grant proposal. If awarded, work will begin on these lots in late 2021 or 2022.
2. **Chaffee Chips:** Chaffee Chips is a county-wide program that empowers the community to act to create defensible space. The program may include chipping, cutting, and trailers to haul slash. Envision Chaffee County works with HOA's to organize these community-based slash pick-up days.

Game Trail recently learned it has been selected for the 2021 schedule. The event will occur in the fall of 2021.

3. **Chaffee County Fire Protection District Slash Trailers:** The Game Trail Forestry Committee regularly advertises the Chaffee Fire Protection District's (CFPD) slash trailer rental program.

## **Goal 2, Objective B: Collaborative Communications**

### **Update the Forestry Committee Webpage and Living in Game Trail Pamphlet to include information about:**

- a. Game Trail's and Chaffee County's Community Wildfire Protection Plans
- b. Firewise USA's information and neighborhood activities
- c. CSFS's guide for developing defensive zones
- d. R&R's Prohibiting open-flame fires and recommending green, reflective residence identification signs
- e. Envision Chaffee County's Chaffee Chips and Chaffee Treats programs
- f. CFPD's mitigation trailer program
- g. Chaffee County's Everbridge, reverse 911 program
- h. Emergency evacuation planning, including developing a "go kit."
- i. Game Trail's fire hydrant network and locations

## **Goal 2, Objective C: Firewise USA**

**Firewise USA:** Apply for, become and maintain status as a Firewise USA Community. The "Firewise USA® recognition program provides a collaborative framework to help neighbors in a geographic area get organized, find direction, and take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community and to reduce wildfire risks at the local level."

In addition to helping the Forestry Committee organize around wildfire education and mitigation efforts for the neighborhood, having the Firewise designation may give us an advantage for future grants.

Game Trail is working with Chief Robert Bertram to become a Firewise USA community. Updating Game Trail's CWPP and the CSFS Risk Rating is part of that process. Game Trail hopes to submit its application in the first quarter of 2021.

## **Goal 3, Safe and Effective Wildfire Response**

Enable safe and effective wildfire response, including collaborative preparedness for severe wildfires and evacuation events.

### **Goal 3, Objective A: Emergency Evacuation Notice and Planning**

1. **Everbridge Registrations:** Continue to use the Game Trail newsletter, email system and website to encourage owners to register for Chaffee County's reverse 911 program called Everbridge. In the case of emergencies, including evacuation orders, residents should follow the direction of authorities from the Chaffee County Office of Emergency Management, disseminated through the Everbridge program.
2. **Wildfire Evacuation Planning:** Using CSFS and Firewise resources, develop a Game Trail-specific Wildfire Evacuation Plan. Annually review and distribute this information to residents, and publish the plan on the Forestry Committee webpage.

### **Goal 3, Objective B: First Responder and Emergency Vehicle Access**

1. **Address Identification:** So that first responders can quickly identify property addresses, Game Trail has a Rule and Regulation recommending that owners have a green, reflective residence identification sign that meets the Chaffee County Fire Protection District's specifications. Provide information on the Game Trail website on how to order these signs and regularly remind residents of this recommendation.
2. **Fire Hydrants:** Regularly remind residents who live near Game Trail fire hydrants to keep them accessible, especially clear of snow in the winter months.
3. **Driveways:** Educate residents on, and recommend that they design their driveway in a manner that supports emergency vehicle access.

### **Goal 5, Strategic Funding for Healthy Forests**

Develop collaborative funding to deliver on the goals and objectives outlined above.

#### **Goal 5, Objective A: Grant Work Group**

Develop a Forestry Committee work group to annually research and apply for grants and other funds focused on forest health and wildfire mitigation.

### **Section E. Resources and References**

- ✓ [CSFS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant](#)
- ✓ [CSFS Protecting Your Home from Wildfire: Creating Wildfire Defensible Zones](#)
- ✓ [Chaffee Treats Program](#)
- ✓ [Chaffee Chips Program](#)
- ✓ [Chaffee County Fire Protection District Mitigation Trailer](#)
- ✓ [Firewise USA Program](#)
- ✓ [Game Trail Forestry Committee Web Page](#)
- ✓ [Living in Game Trail Pamphlet](#)
- ✓ [Chaffee County Reverse 911 Program "Everbridge"](#)



# Game Trail Association



This report is a collaborative effort between various entities. The representatives listed comprise the core decision-making team responsible for this report and mutually agree on the plan's contents. They were either involved in the assessment, writing or review of the plan:

*Greg Felt, Chair*

Name  
Chaffee County Board of Commissioners

Date

6/4/2021

*[Signature]*

Name  
Chaffee County Fire Protection District

Date

10/10/21

*[Signature]*

Name  
Colorado State Forest Service

Date

6/8/21

*Dennis E. Witte*

Name  
Game Trail Association, Inc. President

Date

6/6/21

This document is intended to set forth a recommended plan only and does not impose obligations on the signatories. Specifically, executing this document in no way obligates Chaffee County to take any action requiring the commitment of funds in order to accomplish the Summary Recommendations.

Notwithstanding any other provision of the CWPP to the contrary, no term or condition of the CWPP shall be construed or interpreted as a waiver, express or implied, of any of the immunities, right, benefits, protection, or other provisions of the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act § 24-20-101, et seq., C.R.S. (including future amendments) or as an acceptance by Chaffee County or any responsibility or liability with respect to the CWPP.