



NEWS RELEASE

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Baca Grande POA Earns National Recognition for Wildfire Preparedness

ALAMOSA, Colo. – February 13, 2020 – The Baca Grande Property Owners Association has received an official designation as a Firewise USA[®] site after completing the criteria required by the national Firewise USA[®] Recognition Program. The Baca Grande community initially was a pilot Firewise USA[®] site in 2002. It gained recognition on Jan. 30, 2020, under the leadership of the newly formed Baca Firewise Committee, in partnership with Baca Emergency Services.

“The Firewise USA recognition of local efforts to reduce wildfire risks can benefit homeowners when seeking property insurance coverage, as well as protecting their homes and natural surroundings,” said Supervisory Forester Adam Moore of the Colorado State Forest Service’s Alamosa Field Office. He adds that federal and state grant opportunities often give weight to a Firewise USA[®] designation when determining who gets competitive funding.

The CSFS works with the National Fire Protection Association to implement the Firewise USA[®] Recognition Program in Colorado and provides technical assistance and education to landowners and communities to help them take action in preparing their homes against the threat of wildfire. Steps required for a community to receive the national designation include obtaining a wildfire risk assessment, forming a Firewise USA[®] committee, investing in reducing the community’s wildfire risk and creating an action plan based on the wildfire risk assessment. For Baca Grande, the assessment was also an update to its Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Foresters with the CSFS Alamosa Field Office worked with Baca Emergency Services to conduct a wildfire risk assessment and create a CWPP for the community. This plan identifies effective and realistic actions that will reduce the community’s wildfire risk and improve readiness. Examples from the plan include creating defensible space around homes, participating in educational events and community work days, and obtaining and implementing wildfire risk reduction grants.

New Baca Firewise Committee Leads Community Engagement

Baca Grande POA’s board of directors formed a Firewise Committee made up of Baca Grande residents last summer to assist in implementing the action plan. The committee’s mission is to educate, motivate and assist Baca Grande residents to take action to reduce risks and prepare for emergencies. Committee Chair Carolina Brown encourages residents to attend educational meetings and events and create defensible space around their homes. She also encourages residents to report the time or money they spend reducing wildfire risk, since this supports annual Firewise reporting.

“The Alamosa Field Office has worked closely with the Baca Grande community over the last two decades on fuels mitigation efforts, and becoming a Firewise USA[®] site was the next logical step to increase community participation,” Moore said.

The Baca Grande POA and CSFS expressed appreciation of residents for their active part in creating defensible spaces around their homes and getting better prepared for an emergency situation.

Baca Grande residents can communicate their ideas and concerns to the Baca Firewise Committee by email at bacafirewise@gmail.com, or by attending a monthly committee meeting or participating in a community Firewise USA® event.

Other communities or municipalities in the San Luis Valley interested in pursuing the Firewise USA® designation should contact Moore at (719) 587-0915.

The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is a service and outreach agency of the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University and provides staffing for the Division of Forestry within the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. The CSFS provides professional forestry assistance, wildfire mitigation expertise and outreach and education to help landowners and communities achieve their forest management goals. The CSFS Southwest Area serves southwestern Colorado from field offices in Salida, Alamosa, Durango, Gunnison and Montrose. For more information, visit csfs.colostate.edu.