



Elk Stream Ranch

Wildfire Tests A Subdivision on its Way to Becoming a Fire-Adapted Community

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Rebecca Samulski**



Objectives



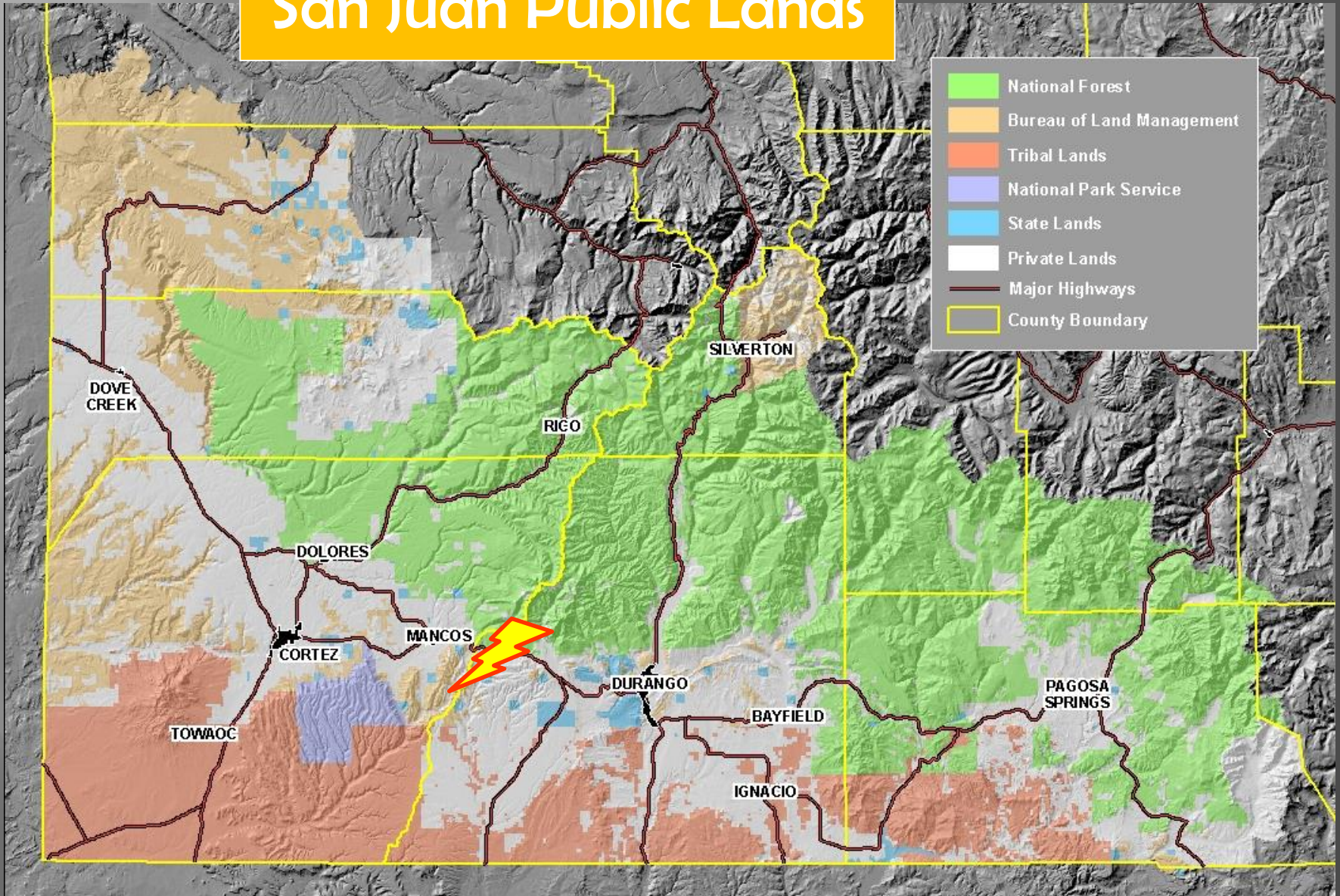
- Every step counts in mitigation
- FAC w/ case example
- Benefits of CWPP collaboration
- Lessons learned



FireWise of Southwest Colorado strives to keep lives, homes, and property from being damaged by wildfire.

We provide education, planning and mitigation support to spark wildfire preparedness in the hearts of our neighbors!

San Juan Public Lands



NEIGHBORHOOD AMBASSADORS



- Encourage neighbors to take action
- Educate neighbors
- Organize a work day
- Write grants for community projects
- Coordinate Community Wildfire Protection Plan efforts
- Track volunteer hours

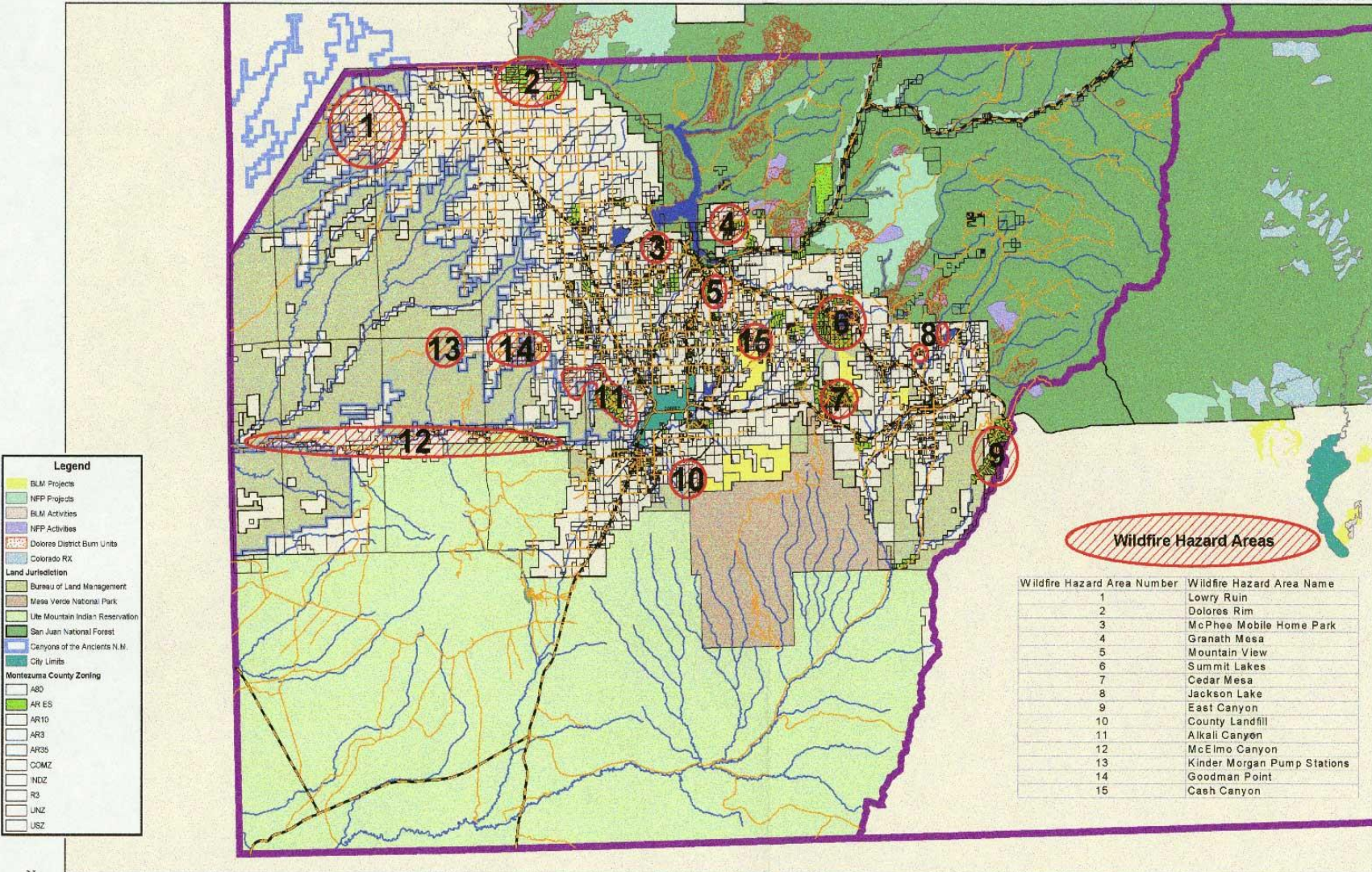
An aerial photograph of a ranch landscape. The foreground and middle ground are covered with scattered green trees and shrubs on a dry, brownish terrain. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains with some rocky outcrops and a valley. The sky is clear and blue.

Elk Stream Ranch

Location: About halfway between Durango and Cortez, just south of Hwy. 160

Number of lots/homes: 35 lots, 14 homes

Surrounding landscape: Steep canyons, surrounded by public lands



Legend

- BLM Projects
- NFP Projects
- BLM Activities
- NFP Activities
- Dolores District Burn Units
- Colorado RX

Land Jurisdiction

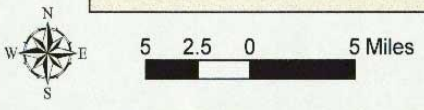
- Bureau of Land Management
- Mesa Verde National Park
- Ute Mountain Indian Reservation
- San Juan National Forest
- Canyons of the Ancients N.M.
- City Limits

Montezuma County Zoning

- A80
- AR ES
- AR10
- AR3
- AR35
- COMZ
- INDZ
- R3
- UNZ
- USZ

Wildfire Hazard Areas

Wildfire Hazard Area Number	Wildfire Hazard Area Name
1	Lowry Ruin
2	Dolores Rim
3	McPhee Mobile Home Park
4	Granath Mesa
5	Mountain View
6	Summit Lakes
7	Cedar Mesa
8	Jackson Lake
9	East Canyon
10	County Landfill
11	Alkali Canyon
12	McElmo Canyon
13	Kinder Morgan Pump Stations
14	Goodman Point
15	Cash Canyon



Preliminary as of September 20, 2001

Map produced for the Community Action Planning process as part of the National Fire Plan - a collaborative effort involving San Juan Public Lands Office, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado State Forest Service, Montezuma County, local fire protection districts and Park Leave Club. Office of Community Services.

Map produced by the Montezuma County Planning & Mapping Department. Partial data are in accordance with County Assessor records as of May, 2001. All other data supplied by the San Juan Public Lands Office, Colorado Department of Transportation and Community Action Planning participants.

AHC
10/24/2012 3:34:52 pm

FIRE HISTORY

ROATCAP (2012-COSJD-G92F)
ACTIVE LOG
Road Cross

Mancos

Knife Edge 2
Knife Edge 1

Little East (2012-COSJD-G9V6)

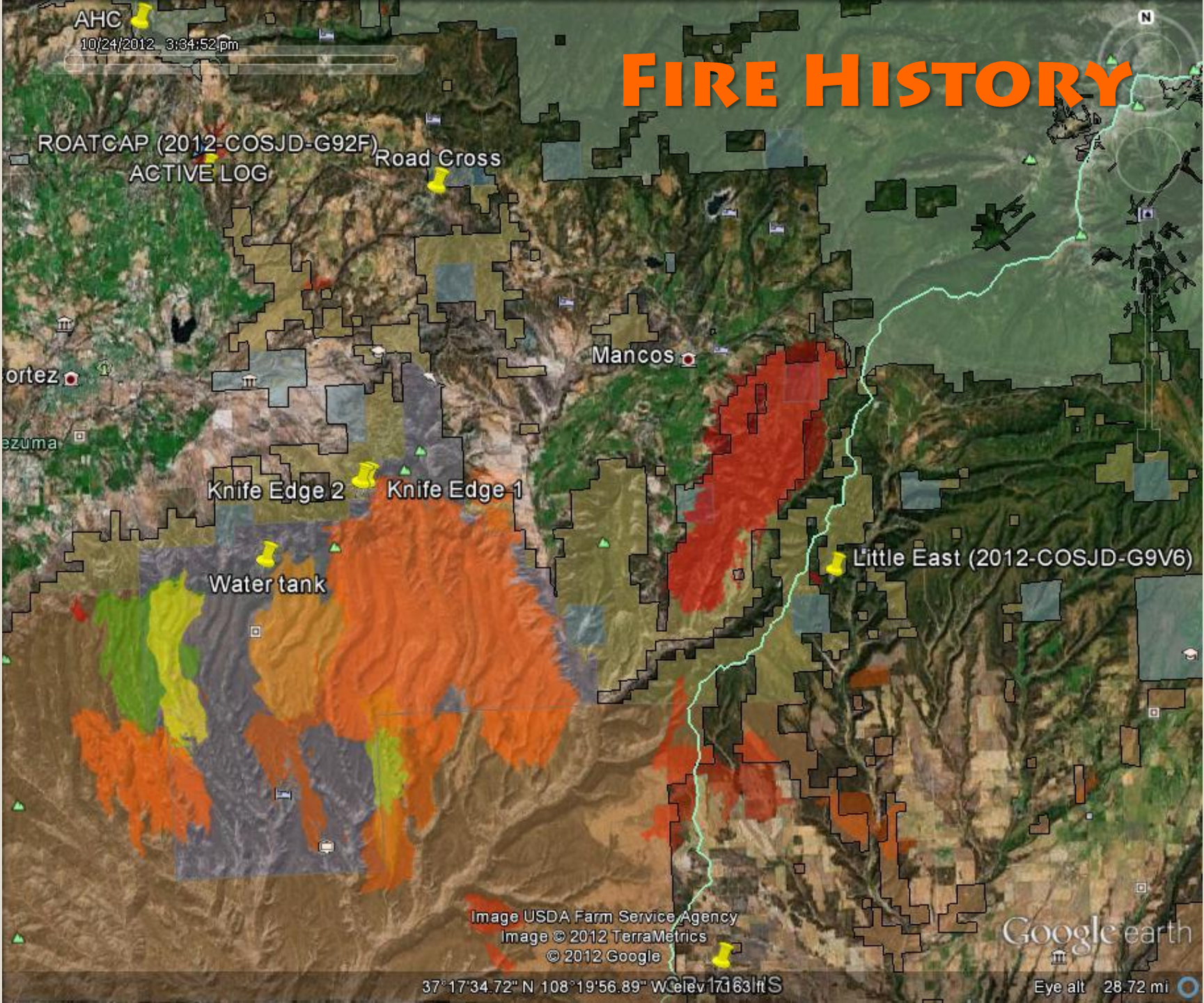
Water tank

Image USDA Farm Service Agency
Image © 2012 TerraMetrics
© 2012 Google

Google earth

37°17'34.72" N 108°19'56.89" W Elev 17163 ft S

Eye alt 28.72 mi





On their way to becoming a FAC

Elk Stream Ranch

Completed CWPP in 2008

- Promote defensible space
- Fire-resistant building materials
- Creation of a 100-150 foot shaded fuel break along both sides of main road
- Collaboration with BLM to get fuels projects completed on adjoining BLM lands
- Evacuation plans
- Emergency contact list for residents

Defensible Space

Built

Environment

Access

Community
Protection

Evacuation



Defensible Space

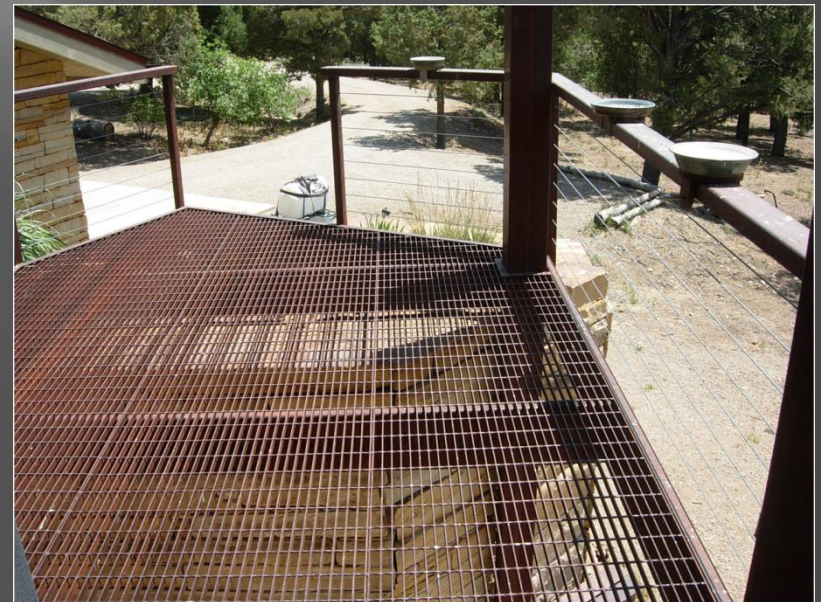
- Clumping of trees
- 3-5' hardscaping around home
- Defensible space at least 100' around home
- Many driveways with turnarounds

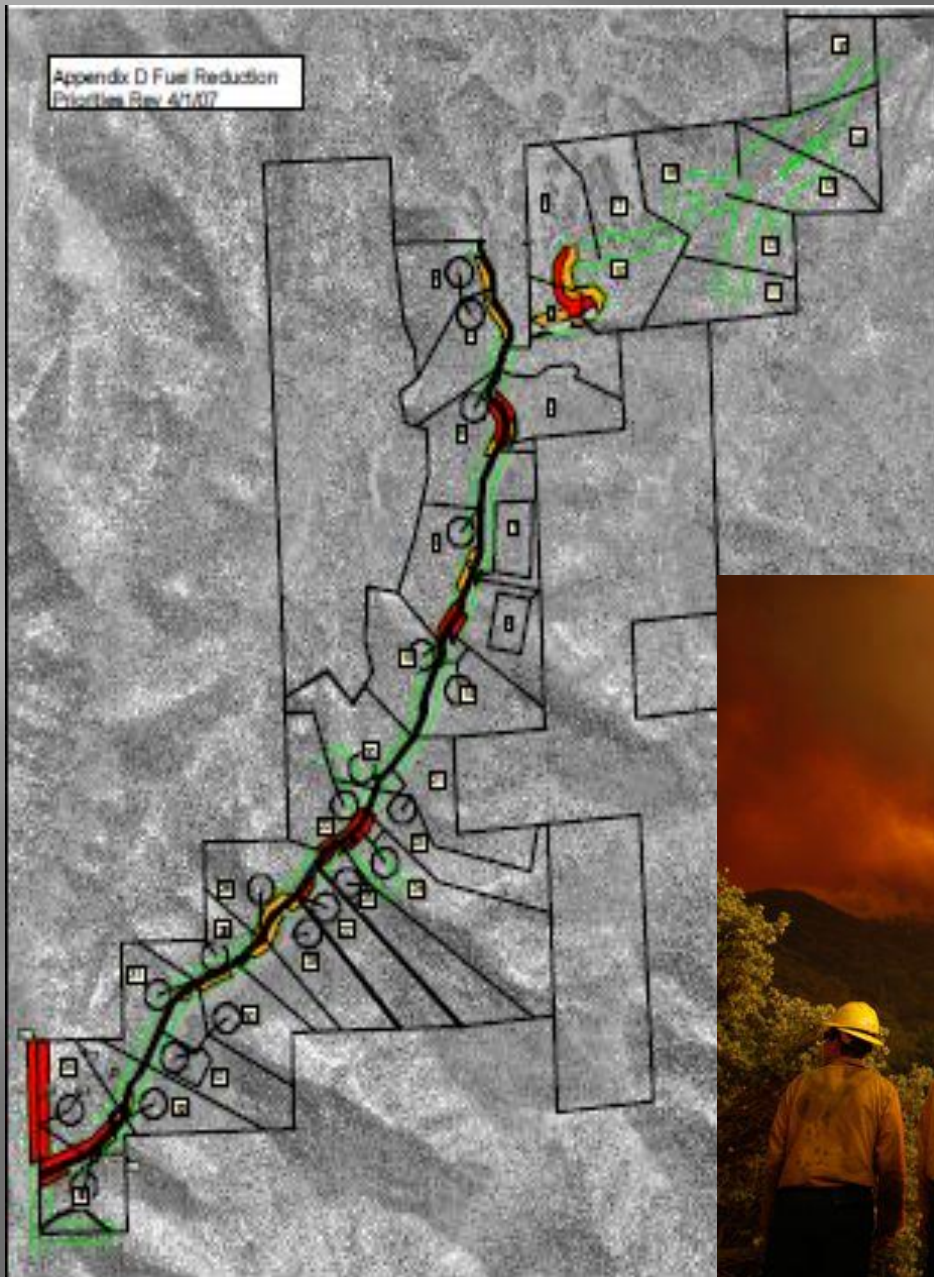


Built Environment



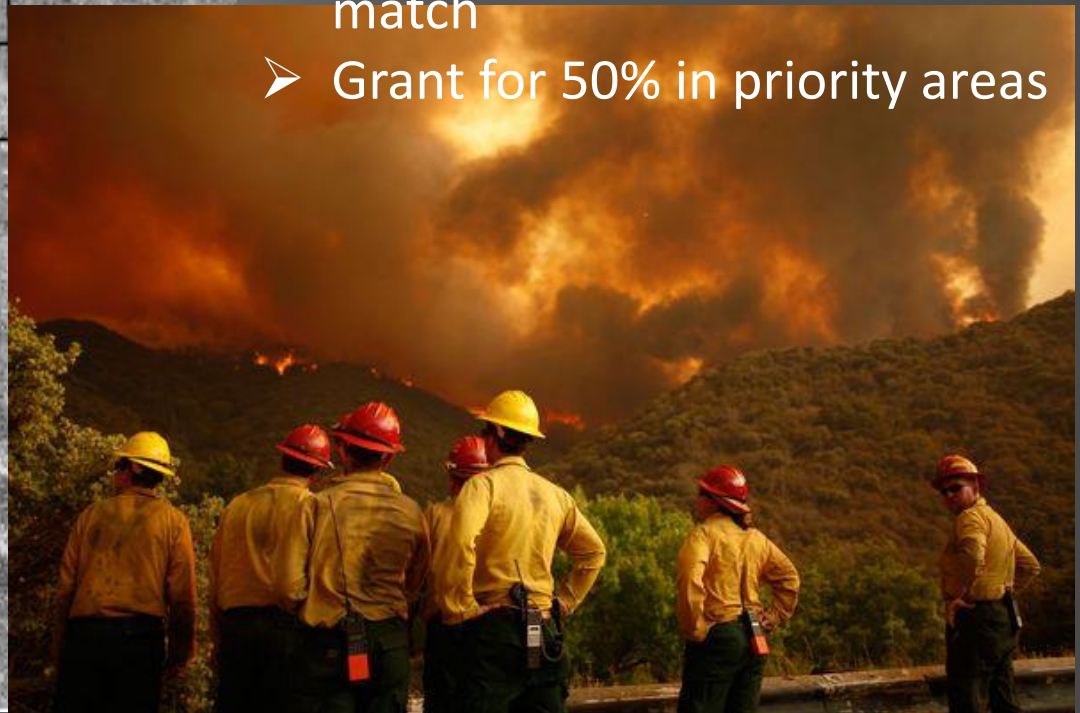
- Stucco or rock siding on most homes
- Metal propanel roofs
- Even steel decks!





Access

- One way in/out gravel road
- 'Lawn Chair Fire'
- 100'-150' shaded fuel break along road planned
- Incentivized homeowner action beyond HOA ROW through 25% match
- Grant for 50% in priority areas



Shaded Fuel Break

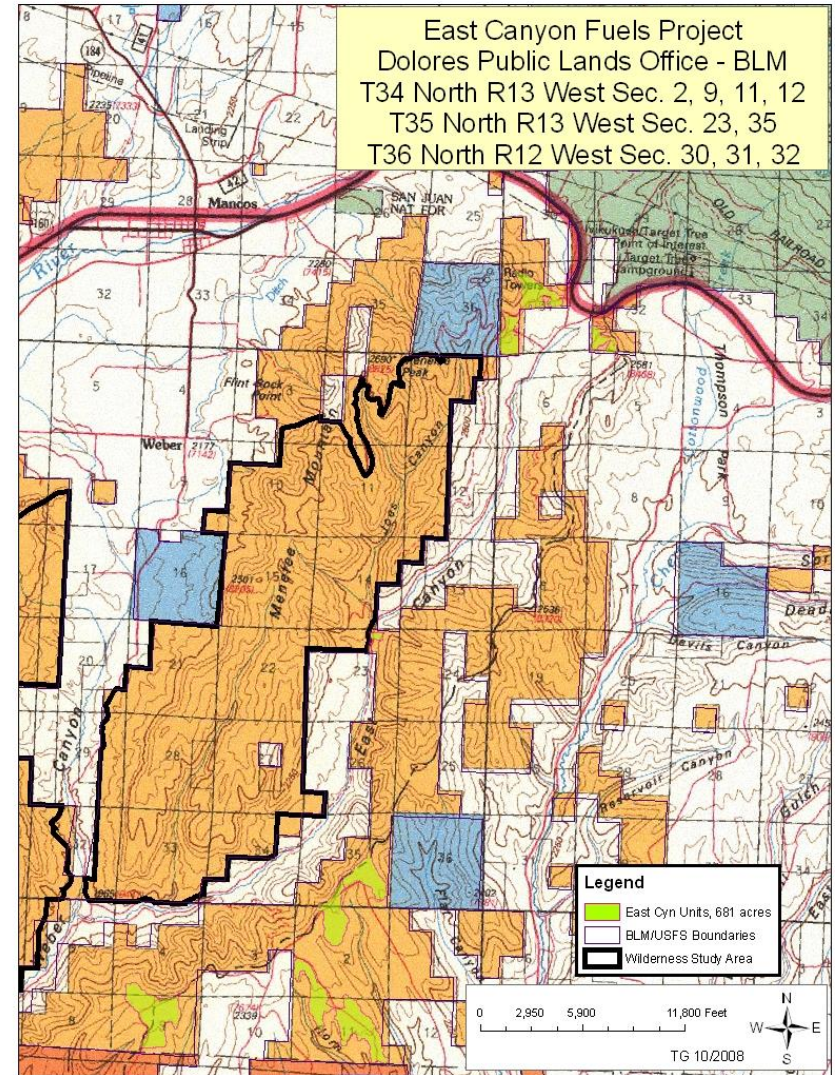


Over two miles of
road treated, 150
feet from centerline
on both sides of road



Community Protection

- Wilderness Study Area to west
- Fuels treatment opportunities identified north and south of the canyon
- High priority projects carried out





- Steep canyons
- Scattered ponderosa pine, piñon-juniper, oak
- Beetle-killed piñon-juniper (drought)



BLM Treatments



Goats help with maintenance



Fire Info

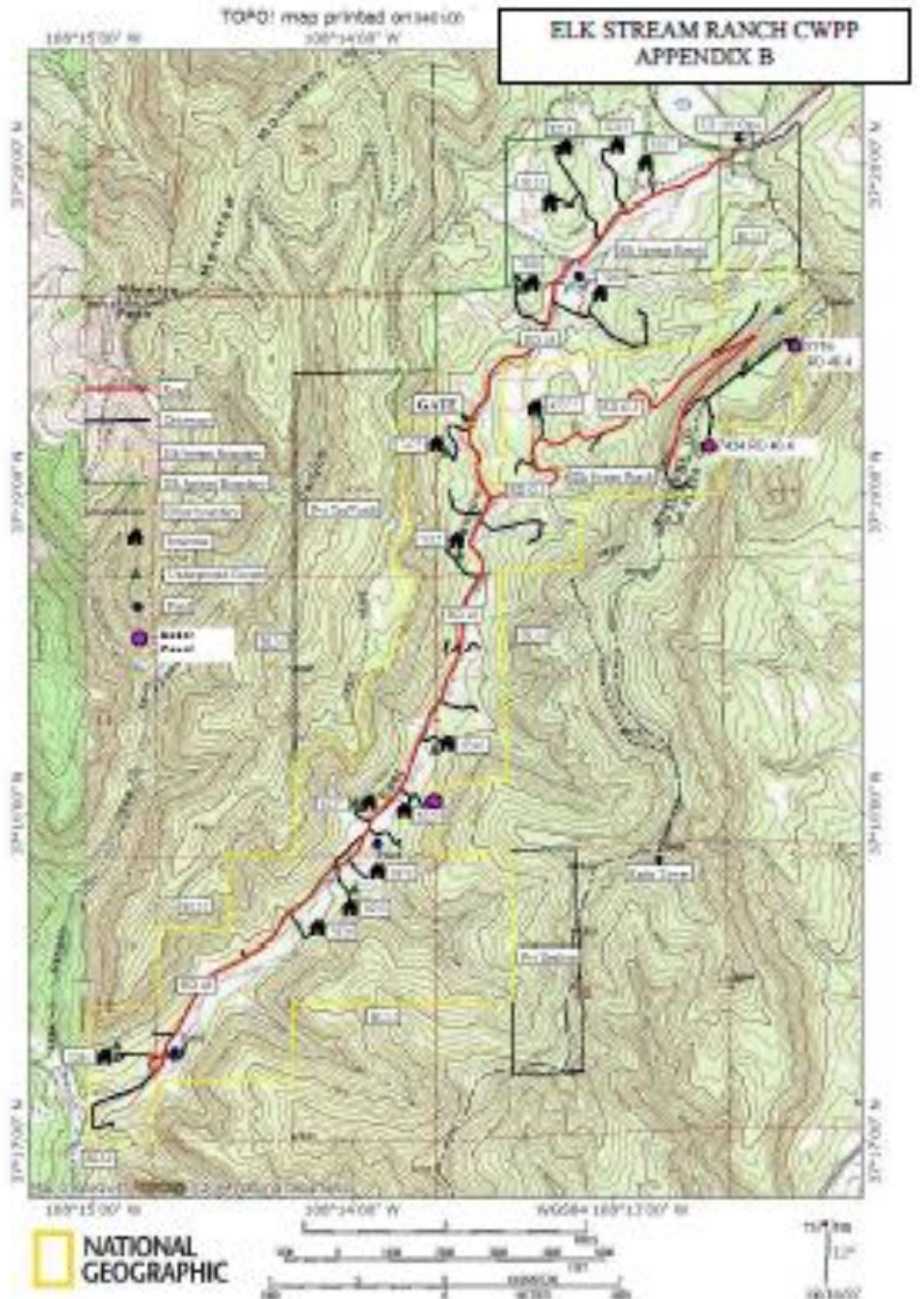
Property Owner Map

Property Owner List

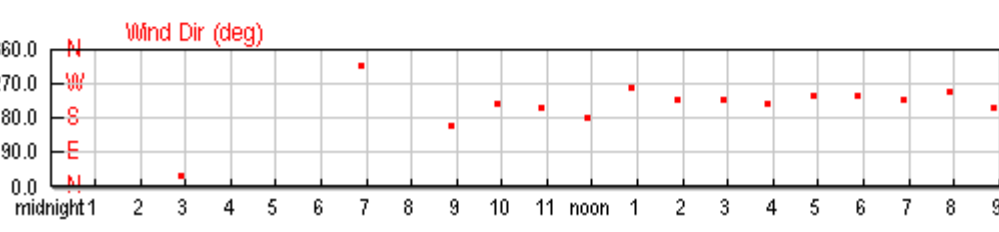
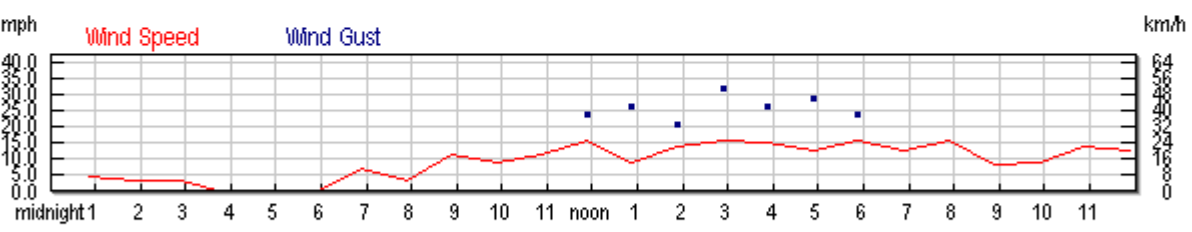
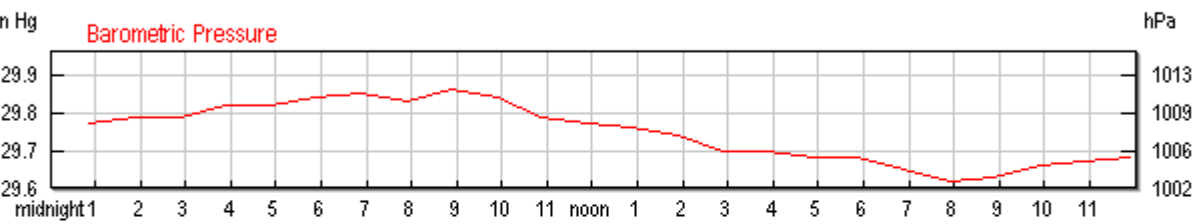
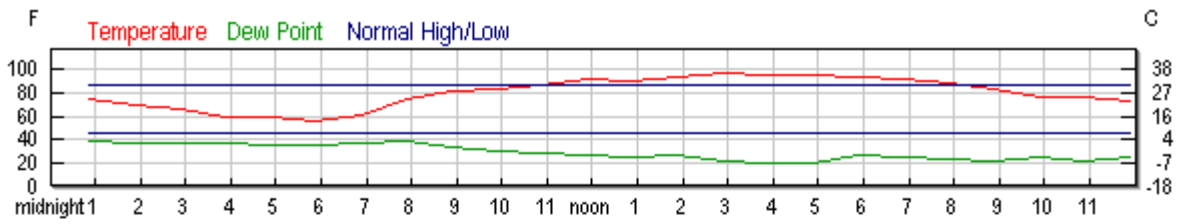
Fire Info Tube

Colorado Wildfire Academy

2006



Weather on June 22, 2012



“Well, that moment we’ve all been anticipating has happened! We’ve got a rocking and rolling fire in Weber Canyon, about 5 miles south of Mancos. It’s a crown fire about 30 acres in size and growing rapidly. 10 structures are currently threatened. They have one Type 3 helicopter, an air attack, and 2 Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) working the fire.....

Sorry....I don’t even know the name of the fire yet! Stay tuned.”

Email from Pam Wilson – June 22, 2012

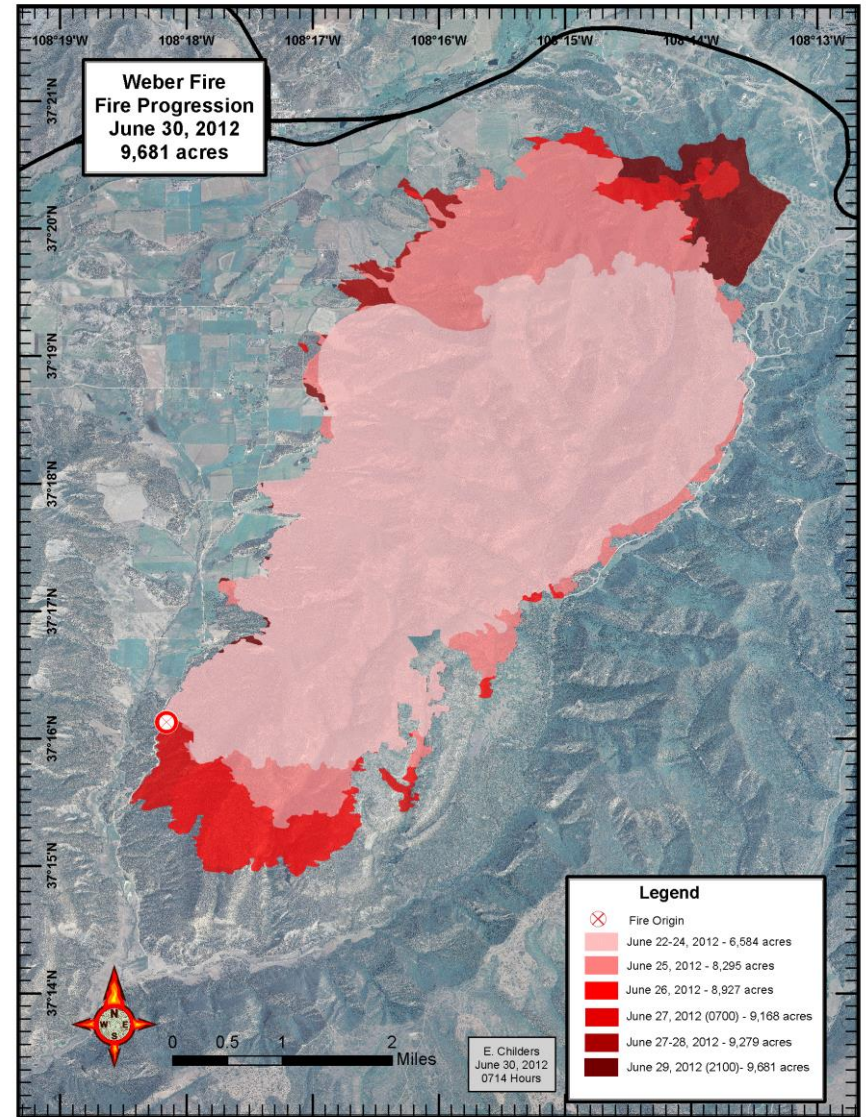
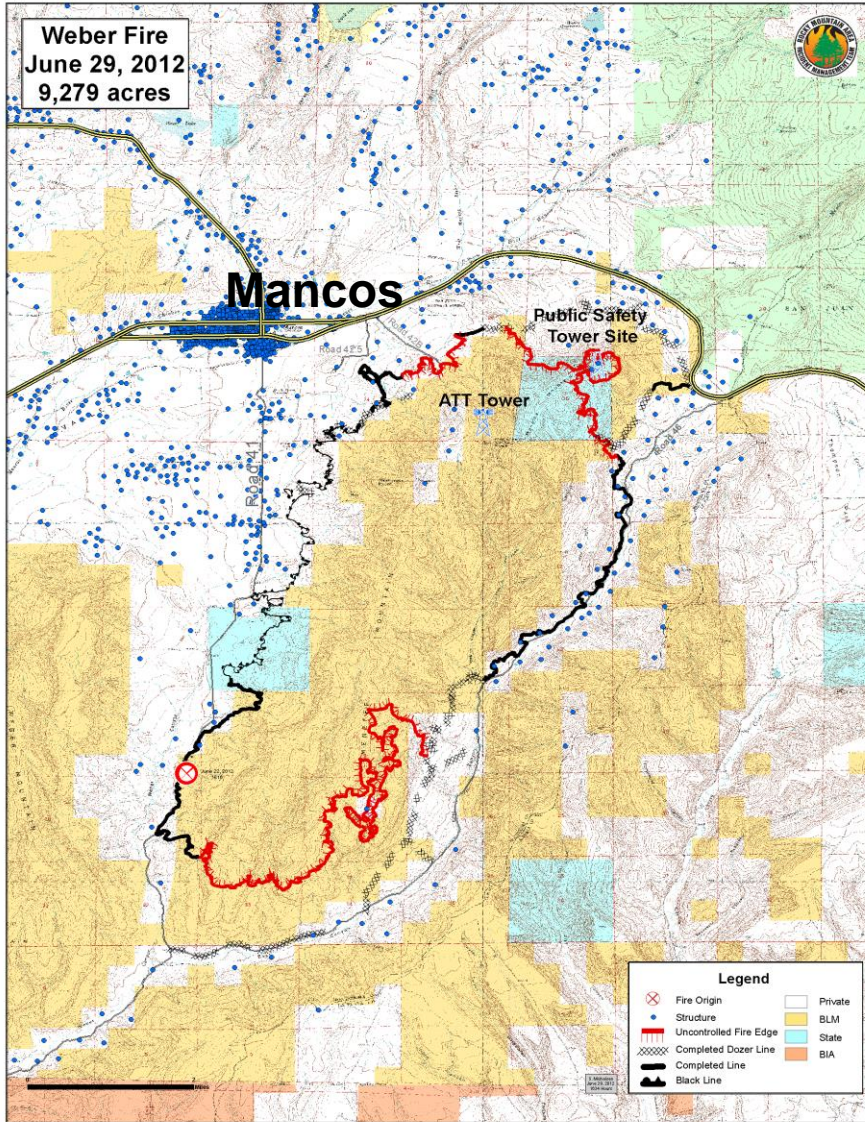
“We ALL had been collectively thinking about THIS fire for a long time. I have told many people that there have been a lot of dedicated folks who have been fighting this fire in their mind, on paper, and on the ground for a decade or more, and your email captures that essence.” *Note from Philip Walters.*

Weber Fire
June 22 – July 6





Weber Fire enters East Canyon



DAY 1-
4:00
PM





DAY 2 - 10:00 AM

110 Mandatory
Evacuations

352 Pre-Evacuations

“Watch out for the Elk
crossing the road
down here.”

“We need to find an
alternate route for this
rancher herding his
cattle.”

DAY 2 -- EVENING



The south side of the town of Mancos was on pre-evacuation notice.

DAY 2 - 1 1:00 PM



DAY 3



Lessons Learned in East Canyon



LESSON: Evacuations can happen on very short notice. Be prepared.

We had less than 15 minutes.



LESSON: Firewise construction and defensible space protect homes and encourage firefighters to defend them.



Good defensible space permits fire crews to stay at the structure and keep the fire from the front door.

LESSON: Fuel Treatments Work!



LESSON: It's important to create a shaded fuel break along your driveway as well as the main road.



LESSON: Eliminate ALL ladder fuel; trim those branches high!



LESSON: Pine needles and mechanical-thinning slash on the ground burn hot and act as ladder fuel.



Before: ponderosa stand thinned and limbed, but with thick carpet of needles and slash.

After the fire: the pines are burned on the trunks and needles are scorched.



LESSON: Mechanical removal of brush, without trimming and limbing remaining trees is not enough. Defensible space requires regular maintenance to be effective.



LESSON: Mulch remains a hazard for a few years. While mastication is a cost-efficient technique to change the fire behavior, the smoldering wood chunks may require more babysitting by firefighters.



LESSON: Wildfire is a landscape-scale event that must be addressed at the community-scale.



If your neighbor does not create a defensible space, you may get burned.



LESSON: Wildfire can burn hot enough to cause thermal spalling of rock.

LESSON: Floods will follow fire and should be considered in creating a fire-adapted community. Understand that you cannot stop a flood anymore than you can stop a fire. You must adjust your home and life to fit in your place in nature.



... and weeds follow floods!

Since the Fire

Engaging in a joint
CWPP with Elk
Springs Ranch

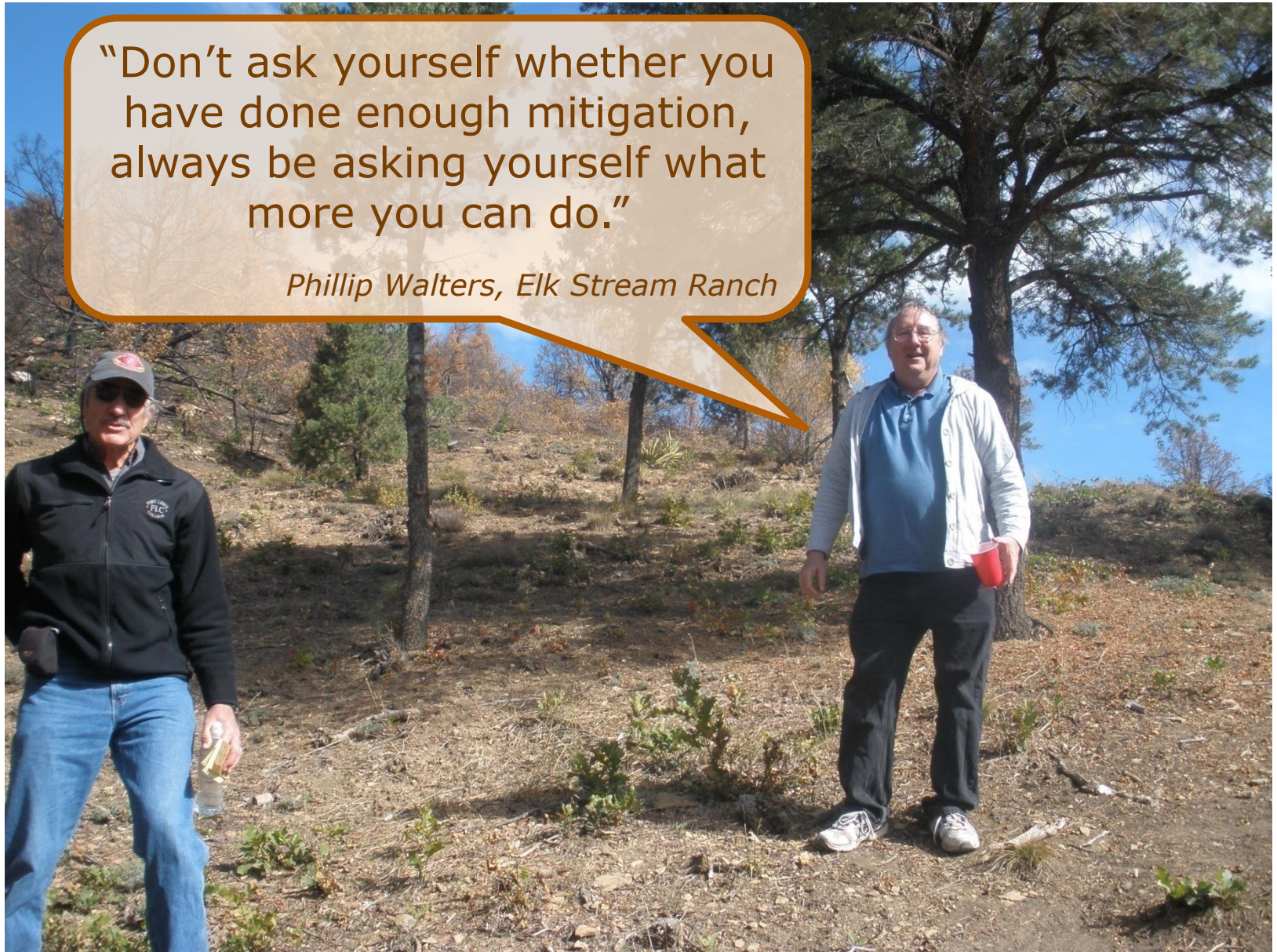
New FAC priorities

Looking for safe areas
on the east ridge

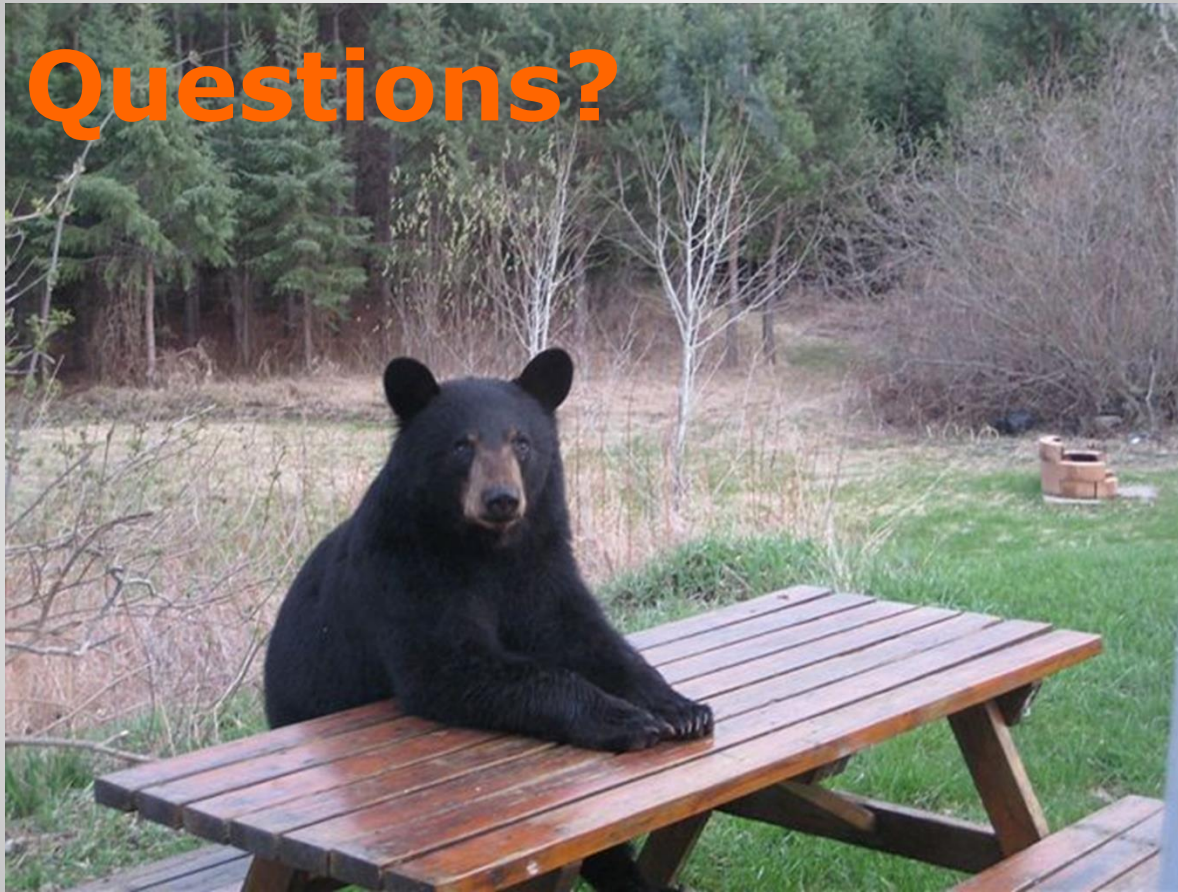


“Don’t ask yourself whether you have done enough mitigation, always be asking yourself what more you can do.”

Phillip Walters, Elk Stream Ranch



Questions?



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