

Lake County CWPP

2010 Community Meetings Summary

As part of the 2010 Lake County CWPP – Mitigation Action Plan update process, public meetings were held to inform Lake County property owners, local government, fire responders and other stakeholders of the plan and to gather feedback.

Public meetings were held from 6:30 – 8:00pm and included the following:

- Monday, August 16th, Two Harbors (Fire Hall)
- Tuesday, August 17th, Fall Lake (Town Hall)
- Wednesday, August 18th, Finland (Fire Hall)

Public meetings were publicized using meeting flyers, direct outreach to stakeholders, and press releases submitted to all of the local papers and radio/TV stations.

Meeting presenters included:

- Bonnie Hundrieser, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
- BJ Kohlstedt, Lake County - Emergency Management
- Barb Manahan-Thompson, Superior National Forest – Fire Prevention
- Pegg Julson, Minnesota DNR – Firewise Communities Specialist

Attendance varied at each of the meetings. In Two Harbors there were 4 in attendance (Forest Service / TH firefighters), the Fall Lake meeting had 38 homestead/seasonal residents in attendance, while Finland had 9 year-round residents in attendance. Overall everyone attending the meetings was supportive of the plan ideas and appreciated the public outreach effort.

A presentation was provided on the mitigation projects under consideration in the “3-E” categories of Education / Engineering / Enforcement and was followed by discussion for public input on the project ideas. Following are summaries of the main mitigation action projects that generated discussion and the public questions, comments, or concerns on those project ideas.

FEMA Sprinkler Grant Program

ARDC discussed the current FEMA sprinkler grant program being administered in Lake County, and addressed the possibility of trying to have the grant amended to expand the opportunity to new homestead residents as well as non-homestead or commercial property owners all in high-risk wildfire areas. Interest in this possibility was highest at the Fall Lake meeting. There are no guarantees that the grant can be amended but ARDC will explore the possibility with FEMA and the State of MN during the winter of 2010.

Some Lake County homeowners with sprinkler systems wanted to know if a specific plan would be created for fire responders to refill propane tanks for the sprinkler systems in the event of an evacuation. Attendees were reminded that operation of an external wildfire sprinkler systems is the sole responsibility of the homeowner and should only be considered as a secondary tool for protecting a home against wildfire. Creating a

defensible space around the home through Firewise practices is the priority recommended action. However, the idea will be communicated to others to explore any merit in pursuing possible actions.

Firewise

BJ Kohlstedt covered the Firewise Assessments that have been offered to all Lake County residents under her existing MN DNR grant, and that she has about 30 more available that can be covered under the grant. She pointed out that the FW assessment effort is most cost effective when many assessments are done in one area instead of spread out.

While the importance of doing Firewise assessments and creating defensible space was discussed at each meeting, the topic of creating formally established Firewise Communities was not addressed in-depth. Pegg Julson covered that FW grants are available to communities based on a 50/50 cost share. Communities interested in such grants should contact her to discuss.

NOAA Emergency Radio Program

BJ Kohlstedt explained that she submitted a grant for \$57,000.00 1,500 NOAA weather radios and the grant award will be decided upon in October. Attendees at each meeting thought it would be a very valuable communication tool to distribute to property owners in the remote rural areas of Lake County, including resort/outfitters to supply to people recreating in the back country.

Metal Roof Grant Program

People had a positive response about this upcoming opportunity; however it did not elicit many questions from attendees.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction Treatments

USFS Grant - Barb Thompson shared about the Forest Service grant program with ARRA funds to remove hazardous fuels on private property in Fall Lake Township. The cost per acre for this work averages about \$900/acre. The program has been well received. People seemed interested in seeing this opportunity continue.

Chipper Program - Barb Thompson said she would look into coordinating a Chipper Day in Fall Lake Township using Title 3 Secure Rural School money. At the TH meeting, Rob Fasteland (DNR/THFD) said he would work with Tom Gelineau (TH Public Works) to develop a chipping proposal for the debris on the Fairgrounds Road.

People liked the idea of a chipper program, but wanted to know how the program would accommodate landowners with large volumes of material. Could a grant be coordinated between Lake County and the Forest Service? Could the program coordinate vendors to do the work on-site and leave or haul away the waste? If a chipper were to service an area, the houses would need to be in close proximity to be cost effective.

Burn Barrels

The idea of a developing of a burn barrel amnesty program, (residents could turn in their burn barrels in exchange for a coupon to the landfill) was mentioned. It did not get a strong response. Some people at the Fall Lake meeting said they need better cardboard recycling. A facility on Hwy. 21 does accept it, but the City of Ely will not accept cardboard from Lake County residents. It was also discussed that the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) has excellent education/outreach materials on burn barrels to work with.

Dry Hydrants & Water Storage Tanks

All meeting attendees were supportive of the action to install more dry hydrants and water storage tanks in order to improve fire responders' capacity to fight wildfire in remote areas. The topic did not elicit many questions – all thought it was a good idea.

Public Communication / Outreach

Attendees were asked how they thought Lake County could effectively do outreach / education to residents. People were in favor of use the Lake County Emergency Management Website for updates, articles, etc.

People also suggested working with lake associations' newsletters to share project updates and articles.

Regarding emergency notifications, people asked about Email notification. BJ Kohlstedt covered an existing opportunity using the Nixel free call back system for emergency announcements via cell phone

GIS Mapping / Data

Firewise and Sprinkler Program data might be helpful to provide to fire departments for emergency response in wildfires. Fire personnel in attendance at meetings agreed the information would be valuable to become familiar with before a wildfire event occurs.

Other:

Fall Lake Fire Dept. said that there is a communication issue with Fire Dispatch that needs to be addressed.

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