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TREE FARM BULLETIN

Defensible Space

By Joseph Stehling, Committee Secretary

The National Interagency Fire Center's (NIFC) Predictive Services <https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/outlooks/outlooks.htm> issued its Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook for the period March through June 2017. The report stated that above normal significant wildland fire potential is expected across the eastern portion of the Southwest Area for May and June. A generally drier and warmer than normal pattern will allow above normal fire potential to gradually spread north and west into New Mexico through April into May and June. For 2017 to date New Mexico has experienced 13 human caused fires consuming 13,600 acres. Most of these fires were small in extent. As reported in the *Albuquerque Journal*, 08 March, 2017, in Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas, over 1700 Square Miles, over a million acres, has burned thus far this year.

Per the NIFC, 2016 saw more than 67,000 wildfires burn over 5.5 million acres nationwide. Of these, 1239 fires consumed 212,500 acres in New Mexico.

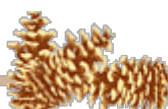
New Mexico State Forestry lists 300 New Mexico communities being at risk from wildfires.

With that in mind and notwithstanding that some models are forecasting a possible La Nina, I thought it would be beneficial to provide information on how to help protect your home from a wildfire.

The Firewise community has developed the concept of Defensible Space to protect your property from a wildland fire. The basic concept is to thin dense stands of trees and remove ladder fuel which consists of dead and downed ground debris, small understory, and the lower branches of trees. Ladder fuel is combustible material that will allow a relatively controllable ground fire to be carried up into a difficult to control crown fire.

What is defensible space?

Zone 1: Encircles the structure and all its attachments (wooden decks, fences) for 30 feet on all sides. If the structure is on a slope zone 1 can extend up to 75 feet from the structure. No flammable vegetation within 30 feet of any structure. Lawns should be cut short and well-watered. Trees and shrubs up to 15 feet from the structure thinned with crowns of trees a



minimum of 30 feet apart. This may be difficult to do on a small property so do the best you can to keep crowns from touching. If a tree is close to a structure trim the branches to be at least six feet from the roofline. That tree is considered part of the structure in determining the extent of Zone 1. Lower branches of trees should be removed to a height of 10 feet above the ground. This is to inhibit a low-level ground fire from progressing up into the crown of the trees creating the most dangerous of fires – a crown fire. Rake and remove pine needles, leaves, and all flammable debris at least out to five feet from the structure. Clean gutters of all debris. Fence in soffit and attic vents and openings under decks with 1/8" wire mesh. This is to prevent fire embers from entering the structure and accumulating under a deck and starting the structure on fire. Embers, or firebrands, can fly over one mile from a major fire with proper wind conditions. If you leave for any lengthy period or there is a fire in your area, remove all flammable material from decks and porches – furniture, welcome mats, brooms. Firewood should be stacked a minimum of 30 feet from the structure and not against trees. Once snow falls, firewood may be stacked on the deck for winter use. Do not store your left-over building materials or other flammable material under your deck.

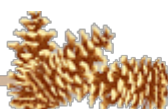
Zone 2: 30 to 100 feet from structure depending on aspect and slope of the terrain. Trees thinned so crowns are no closer than 10 feet. Crowns can get closer as you get farther from a structure. A grouping of trees may be left in place with the crown measurement being taken from the outermost branches of the group to the next tree or group of trees. All ground debris and small understory must be removed from in and around the clump and lower tree limbs removed up to a height of six to 10 feet.

Zone 3: Remaining area to property boundary. Remove downed trees and debris. Thin to promote forest health by removing understory of small conifers. A rule of thumb is one should be able to drive a pickup between the trees or groups of trees. Again, clumps of trees may be left if they are not too closely spaced so competition for moisture will inhibit growth. Snags, a pile of brush here and there, and a couple of downed large diameter trees may be left for wildlife habitat if they are not against live trees and do not provide ladder fuel.

The efforts of property owners who do not have structures should be directed at cleaning up deadfall and ground debris and work at thinning and removing low hanging branches. Thinning should concentrate first on dead and diseased trees, although a couple of large diameter dead trees should be left per acre to serve as snags for wildlife habitat. The objective of thinning is to prevent a crown fire from progressing and to reduce competition for moisture in the soil.

Remember, all this work will not only reduce the potential for a wildfire, but will provide for healthy trees that can ward off pests such as the bark beetle or spruce bud worm. Your forest health and the watershed will greatly benefit from thinning.

More information on Firewise can be found at www.firewise.org



The following is a link to an interactive map that shows current wildfire activity:

<http://www.nfpa.org/public-education/by-topic/wildfire-and-seasonal-fires/wildland-fires/where-are-the-wildfires-burning>

In a future bulletin, I will provide information of identifying the hazards in the Home Ignition Zone, the area up to 100 feet from a structure.

1) WHEN WAS YOUR LAST TREE FARM INSPECTION?

When was the last time your property was inspected by a Tree Farm Inspector? If it has been longer than five years you are overdue. A Tree Farm inspection should be conducted every five years. If it has been longer than five years, you are no longer a “Certified” Tree Farmer and you need to be inspected. As we work towards getting our tree farmers some form of agricultural or “Tree Farm” tax status, it is imperative that we make sure the inspections and management plans for our certified tree farmers are current, concise and correct, with addendums where needed. If you have not had your tree farm inspected in the last 5 years, please call your inspector and set up a date and a time for an inspection. All you need to do is call your Tree Farm Inspector at one of the numbers below and have the coffee pot on when your inspector gets there.

Chama District 575-588-7831
Socorro District 575-835-9359
Capitan District 575-354-2231

Cimarron District 575-376-2204
Las Vegas District 505-425-7472
Bernalillo District 505-867-2334

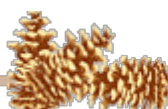
2) BUY, SELL OR TRADE

Are you looking for forestry related equipment to buy (i.e. chipper, splitter, chainsaw, etc.)? Or, do you own forestry related equipment you would like to sell or trade? Forestry related equipment only, please, no homes or land. We would like to help you make the connection with other New Mexico Tree Farmers. Provide us with a description of the equipment, price, photo and contact information and we will post it in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. If you would like us to help you make the connection, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

FOR SALE

VERMEER MODEL 935C GASOLINE CHIPPER

- 4 cylinder Wisconsin engine model W41770
- Accepts up to 9 to 10-inch diameter logs
- Only has 206 total hours on meter
- Automatic feed with an automatic pause feature if the machine starts to bog down



- This is a great chipper for a home owner or small business with a small crew. It can easily keep up with two people feeding it all day
- Was \$15,000 new, now asking \$6,000
- Serial #: 1VRD10153S1001486
- Manual Control #: EN-OM-0058-AP92

Call Joe Stehling (575) 377-0546



3) COMMUNITY CORNER

If your community is having a forestry related public event let us know the details and we would be delighted to promote your event in the New Mexico Tree Farm Bulletin. Give us the event details, Who, What, Where and When with contact information and we will include in our monthly bulletin. If you would like us to help you promote your event, please provide information to Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

4) NEW WEBSITE

Our new website is at <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/new-mexico> . Current feature includes: contact information, resources, newsletters, bulletins, news, minutes/agenda and our calendar of events. Take a few minutes and check out our new website (provided to us by the American Tree Farm System).

5) E-MAIL INSTEAD OF SNAIL MAIL

Would you prefer to receive your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail instead of snail mail? If so, contact Doug Boykin at doug.boykin@state.nm.us and provide him with your contact information. By receiving your Tree Farm Bulletin by e-mail our operating costs are reduced. Thank you for considering this option.

6) COMMITTEE MEETING

All Tree Farmers are invited and encouraged to attend our 2nd New Mexico Tree Farm Committee Meeting of the year (three held annually). Please join us at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, August 9, 2017 (location to be announced). Come out and hear what other tree farmers have been up to and share your tree farm accomplishments with the group. We look forward to visiting with you. If you have any questions, please contact Arnie Friedt at arnie.friedt@state.nm.us

