



Firewise Success at Holiday Island, Arkansas

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is a national collaborative effort to bring a broad cross-section of stakeholders together to address wildland fire management challenges. The Strategy directs wildland fire planning activities and has three primary goals: restore and maintain landscapes, develop Fire-Adapted Communities, and improve wildfire response.

Activity	Impact
Population at risk	2800 people
\$ spent on mitigation and education efforts in 2015	\$7,763
\$ spent on fire prevention since 2003	>\$100,919
Estimated # participants at annual Firewise events	900
% homes with completed risk assessments	>85

Holiday Island, Ark. in Carroll County, is still going strong after 13 years of working to reduce fire risk with the Firewise program.

The planned community on Table Rock Lake in North West Arkansas, is surrounded by the beautiful Ozark Mountains, which means lush vegetation, large hardwoods and cedars and rich thick undergrowth. This coupled with up to 950 foot elevations makes the area a prime risk for wildfires.

While not every year is dry, drought conditions in the area coupled with brush from ice storms and other natural incidents abound. In 2003, Holiday Island determined they were a community at risk and decided to make some changes. "I'd like to say we've seen a world of difference," said Chief Bob Clave, "but we haven't had any large fires." He joked he'd only had to call the Carroll County Fire Rangers once in the last few years.

That very statement, not having to call for the Arkansas Forestry Commission help on large wildfires is a win. It means that their Firewise plan is working.

Early on, Holiday Island used Risk

Assessments of the community to determine where the greatest fire danger in the community was. They went door to door doing risk assessments on homes in the community. Because education is such an important part of Firewise, board members shared risk assessment information with residents and encouraged individual property clean up. The board members could then concentrate on public areas and assisting residents unable to do their own mitigation. Youth groups were encouraged to participate and to help with chipper day. Even the Holiday Island Fire Station was risk assessed and determined to be at risk due to southern slopes and ladder fuels and dense underbrush around the station. This was part of the early mitigation.

Holiday Island believed so strongly in the Firewise program, and the difference it could make in the community, it purchased a dedicated chipper to assist residents in removing brush and debris. Early in the program "Chipper Day" was a community day, or several days when the volunteers fed the chipper brush from around the community. Now, this the road department operates the chipper about 30 hours a month and

Success stories highlight regional wildland fire accomplishments that support implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy in the Southeast. The stories demonstrate how the Southeast is improving its "fire resiliency" through technology, education and outreach, forest management, collaboration, and more. Success stories also serve as a model for other communities to follow.

it removes several truckloads of fuel each day. Residents trim trees, brush and other vegetation and put it out at the road to be chipped. Chips are given back to residents or used by the sewer department to help with waste removal.

Ongoing Education and Mitigation projects to keep the community safe include the annual community meeting and other local events. At these events, the fire department passes out Firewise literature, like the pamphlet “How to Have a Firewise Home,” and reminds residents of fire danger, how they can make their homes safer and buy precious time for the fire department to arrive. Applying Firewise techniques to landscapes can slow a fire, and even turn it away from a home, saving lives, property and making fire fighter’s jobs safer.

Additionally, the fire department identifies key properties that need mitigation to reduce fire risk, contacts land owners and helps with reducing fuel on those properties. This year they spent nine days clearing road ways to make it safer for vehicles by increasing visual distance. This also reduced fuels so fire trucks can travel those streets.

Chief Clave credits volunteers with the success of the Firewise program. “From the beginning we had a lot of help from volunteers or this wouldn’t have happened,” he said, indicating the chipper truck and Don Holley, one of the many volunteers over the last 13 years who worked to make the community safer. Holley helped with chipping and many other aspects of the Firewise program over the years.

The Firewise program is a nationwide initiative that recognizes communities for taking action to protect people and properties from the risk of fire in the wildland/urban interface. Communities tailor education and clean-up to fit their needs with cooperative assistance from state forestry agencies and local fire staff. State forestry agencies support the Firewise Communities/USA recognition effort which works through the National Association of State Foresters (NASF). Arkansas leads the nation with the most recognized Firewise communities in the state.

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All three images display Holiday Island, Arkansas residents participating in a workday to mitigate wildfire fuels. Credit: Shelia Doughty, Arkansas Firewise.

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