

**Applications for Matching Funds
with the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)
Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) Grant Program**

OVERVIEW: The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) has provided grant funds to the Forest Gate Homeowners Association Firewise Committee to reimburse individual Lot owners up to 50% of the cost incurred for wildfire mitigation projects. *Projects must be pre-approved by the Colorado State Forest Service to be eligible for reimbursement.* The Forest Gate HOA Board and Firewise Committee are not in the approval process but are responsible for tracking projects and disbursing funds from the CSFS. Lot owners must coordinate directly with our CSFS Regional Forester, David Poletti at David.poletti@colostate.edu, who is the project approval authority. Please cc the Firewise Committee at mal76johnson@gmail.com on all correspondence so they can track projects and help ensure final reimbursement.

We encourage homeowners to begin coordinating with David Poletti from the onset. He will, at no cost, walk your property and provide an assessment and recommendations on fire mitigation and health of the forest projects. He is a great impartial subject matter expert on fire mitigation along with mistletoe and beetle infestations. He also understands most of us moved to the Black Forest to enjoy a forest setting and can help develop realistic project objectives.

The [CSFS Home Ignition Guide](#) is an excellent resource to understand the goals and mitigation actions necessary in fire mitigation on your property. This will help you describe your project in sufficient detail that you, the forestry service and any potential contractors understand what you want to accomplish. This guide is available at:

https://csfs.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/2021_CSFS_HIZGuide_Web.pdf

KEY ELEMENTS OF A PROJECT REQUEST: *This is the information you need to include in your formal project proposal to the regional CO State Forester.*

Administrative Information: Provide your name, street address, Lot #, and highlight you are requesting project approval under the *Forest Gate HOA 2021 FRWRM Grant Program*.

Description of General Objectives: Describe the overall objective(s) of your project. *The following are some potential key objectives you can cite. Focus on those you specifically want to accomplish rather than trying to do everything all at once.*

1. **Reduce risk of wildfire** through vegetation management, thinning and pruning to reduce fuel loads and excessive competition among trees.
 - a. Creation or maintenance of defensible space around homes and structures
 - b. Fuels reduction designed to reduce potential fire intensity.
 - c. Removal/disposal of slash, which may include chipping, grinding or removal.

2. **Improve the forest & protect the watershed** by managing forest for diversity in tree age and size classes and density.
 - a. Preserving older and larger trees to restore ecosystem.
 - b. Thinning to reduce fuel loads and excessive competition among trees.
 - c. Restoring ecosystem function including through the reduction of non- native and/or invasive species populations such as mistletoe or pine/spruce beetle infestations.

DEFENSIBLE SPACES AND SPECIFIC ACTIONS OF THE PROJECT: *Successful project submissions identify the defensible zones the project focuses on and the specific mitigation treatments to be accomplished. You do not need to do all zones in a single project. The quality of mitigation trumps quantity.*

Your request for approval should include pre project photos of the area and the number of acres to be treated. Contractor estimates and/or equipment rental costs should be identified. If you plan on doing some of the work, describe that work and how many hours estimated. The CSFS will provide a labor tracking sheet so you can get credit for your sweat equity. *Major mitigation actions from the CSFS Home Ignition Guide are highlighted below as a quick reference to consider in your initial planning.*

1. **Defensive Zone 1 (0 – 5’ from the home):** This zone is designed to prevent flames from coming in direct contact with the structure. Some treatment examples:
 - a. Remove tree branches hanging over the roof and remove all fuels within 10’ of chimneys.
 - b. Rake and dispose of pine needles, dead leaves, mulch, and other organic material within 5 feet of all decks and structures.
 - c. Do not plant directly under windows or next to foundation vents
 - d. If you do keep any trees in this zone, consider them part of the structure and extend the distance of the entire defensible space accordingly.

2. **Defensive Zone 2 (5-30’ from the home):** This zone is designed to give an approaching fire less fuel and reduce its intensity as it gets nearer to structures. Some treatment examples:
 - a. Mow grasses to a height of 4” or less.
 - b. Less than 140 trees/acre is considered the best density for a healthy forest.
 - c. Remove enough trees to create at least 10 feet of space between crowns (outermost branch of one tree to nearest branch on the next).
 - d. Small groups of 2-3 trees may be left in some areas. 30’ should be maintained between tree groups to ensure fire doesn’t jump from one group to another.
 - e. Prune tree branches to a height of 6-10 feet.
 - f. Remove ladder fuels under trees. This is any vegetation that can bring fire from the ground up into taller fuels.
 - g. Slash will either be removed or chipped & broadcast to avoid a depth > 4”

3. **Defensive Zone 3 (30 -100’ from the home):** This zone focuses on mitigation that keeps fire on the ground and improving forest health. Some treatment examples:
 - a. Preserve older & larger trees to retore the surrounding ecosystem.
 - b. Mitigation emphasizes canopy openings and ladder fuel reduction, but also forest restoration with more clumps of 5-8 trees and openings in the canopy.
 - c. Tree crown spacing of 6-10 feet is suggested.
 - d. Less than 140 trees/acre is considered the best density for a healthy forest.
 - e. Remove ladder fuels under trees.
 - f. Pruning minimally infected mistletoe trees is an option for consideration, recognizing it may not be a long-term solution.
 - g. Removal of mistletoe trees as necessary will also help achieve desired crown separation.
 - h. Slash will either be removed or chipped & broadcast to avoid a depth > 4”

4. **Beyond the Defensive Zones (>100' from home):** The primary goal is the retention of vigorous trees and the removal of low vigor trees. Some treatment examples:
 - a. Preserve older and larger trees to restore the ecosystem.
 - b. Trees thinned to <140 trees/acre creates a healthier forest. ecosystem.
 - c. Co-dominant trees should be removed as needed to create openings in the canopy.
 - d. Ladder fuels will be pruned.
 - e. Pruning minimally infected mistletoe trees is an option for consideration, recognizing it may not be a long-term solution.
 - f. Removal of mistletoe trees as necessary will also help achieve desired crown separation.
 - g. Slash will either be removed or chipped & broadcast to avoid a depth > 4"

THE FINAL STEP FOR REIMBURSEMENT: *Although this last step may appear onerous, Forest Gate Homeowners have found it not that difficult.* Email our regional forestry representative the following facts:

1. Your summary of positive or negative impacts of the project.
2. Digital "before and after" photos and the location on your Lot of treated areas. This step may alleviate the need for a physical site walk by the CSFS representative.
3. Documentation that funds have been matched at a minimum ratio of 1:1.
 - a. Your part of the matching funds contributions may include supplies, equipment, or volunteer time/sweat equity (based on hourly value of \$29.50/hour per individual). Use the CSFS provided labor tracking sheet if you are asking credit for your sweat equity.
 - b. Provide receipts for any contractor mitigation work and/or rental of equipment used in the mitigation project.
4. The CSFS will combine several completed neighborhood projects and write a consolidated check to the Forest Gate HOA. Upon verification by the Firewise Committee, the HOA treasurer will write a check to the appropriate Lot owners. The HOA is simply a pass through account and does not make any money on the transaction.

THE ROLE OF THE FOREST GATE FIREWISE COMMITTEE:

The committee was established in the aftermath of the Black Forest Fire of 2013, which burned over 14,280 acres and destroyed 509 homes. This devastating fire came within ¼ of a mile of the Forest Gate Community northern boundary, forcing us to evacuate. The subsequent sustained efforts of homeowners to address wildfire mitigation has enabled the Forest Gate HOA to be designated a National Firewise Community of Excellence every year since 2013.

The Firewise Committee has traditionally focused on educating homeowners and coordinating our voluntary and collaborative wildland fire mitigation efforts in support of our annual national Firewise Community certification efforts. Using volunteers, and at no cost to homeowners, seeking external grant funding was a new initiative in 2021 and one we intend to continue in the future.