



Public Safety – Civic Engagement Series

Thursday, October 12th, 2023 | 4:00 – 6:00 PM | In-Person

In-Person: Sunriver Homeowners Aquatic & Recreation Center (SHARC) - 57250 Overlook Rd,
Sunriver, OR 97707

AGENDA

- 4:00 – 4:30 **A. Community Meal**
- Catered by Josie K's Deli and Kitchen
- 4:30 – 4:35 **B. Meeting Begins**
- Introductions
 - Moderator: James Lewis, Sunriver Owner's Association
- 4:35 – 4:45 **C. Purpose & Survey Overview**
- Who are We?
 - Newberry Regional Partnership – a team of public and private citizens who have come together to develop a long-range plan for growth in South Deschutes County
 - Project Goal: collaborative organization of community leaders engaged in planning for and dealing with changes associated with growth in the future.
 - Purpose
 - Create a Community Strategic Action Plan
 - Address the effects of growth in Newberry Country (South Deschutes, North Klamath, West Lake Counties)
 - Population growth, changing demographics, effects on community culture and values, use of public services, health care needs, etc.
 - Discussions shared with the broader community.
 - Achieve community consensus on different matters.
 - Serve as facilitators for collaborative, community-led development.
 - Today's Purpose
 - Engaging community discussion on matter of interest and/or concern

- Candid conversations welcome
- Bring forth issues, problems, challenges, successes, opportunities, and ideas for action to address today's topic.
- Survey Overview
 - Total study population: 16,800 in 97739 and 97707 zip codes
 - Sought to collect information on community priority issues and values.
 - Biggest Concerns from Survey:
 - Growth & Change
 - Public Safety – wildfire, homelessness, drug use & crime
 - Increasing traffic
 - Social divisions in the community
 - Quality of public education
 - Lack of local restaurants, shops, and competitive grocery stores
 - Access to healthcare and 24/7 emergency care
 - Important Results
 - 69% of respondents are very or somewhat pleased with fire protection
 - 70% of respondents are very or somewhat concerned with the growing risk of wildfire and other climate impacts
 - 73% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree we can be better prepared for wildfire and other natural disasters

4:45 – 5:05

D. Panelist Presentation

Tom Weller – Engineering Manager, Midstate Electric

- 3% of fires are caused by electrical contact with trees and vegetation.
- Doing innovative projects to help reduce this risk as these fires can be very destructive.
- Midstate does not want to be a part of the statistics of fires.
- Stronger, taller pole lines, distribution lines with covered wire. Above ground are cheapest, costs 10x more to put lines underground.

Kevin Moriarty – Deschutes County Forester

- Manage Natural Resource Department for Deschutes County
- Reduce fire risk on all non-federal lands
- Also works with Project Wildfire to convene stakeholders (non-profit, gov., federal) and create solutions to protect homes and save lives
 - More information on [Project Wildfire HERE](#)
- Kevin also helps with federal, state, and local grants to acquire funding

Rod Bjorvik – Deputy Chief, Sunriver Fire Department

- Operations and training with Sunriver Fire to ensure they are well equipped to deal with fire.
- Rob also works with Central Oregon Wildfire School and other training programs in the region

Patti Gentiluomo – Natural Resources Director, SROA

- Fuels reduction, enforcement program for properties within Sunriver

Heather Miller – Fire Risk Reduction Specialist, State Fire Marshall

- Regional fire risk reduction specialist
- Work with fire departments and wildland agencies
- Education and outreach with partners
- Also Chair of Central Oregon Fire Reduction Cooperative
 - See their [Facebook Page HERE](#)

Nathan Garibay – Emergency Manager, Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office

- Sheriff’s Office has strong desire to be and consider themselves stewards of the community
- Supervises emergency management, they are the organization for the County (regardless of jurisdiction)
- City of Bend has an emergency management program as well
- Support planning, coordination of fire evacuation, mass care operations, sheltering, and they work with partners to accomplish this.

5:05 – 6:00

E. Group Discussion

- Group activity – participants wrote on sticky notes about Challenges, Opportunities, Successes, and Ideas for Action concerning the topic “Threat of Wildfire”
- Participants also asked questions of the panel and took part in large group discussion.

Challenges:

- Spring River is one of the first Fire Wise communities, they have 2.5 miles of roads and 100 neighbors. Intend to clean up lots, reduce the threat of fire, create defensible space.
- Excessive log piles
- Airbnb owners don’t live at their rental property, so they aren’t aware of what’s always going on at their properties.
- Rental properties owners don’t care and lack responsibility and knowledge.
- Need better education for visitors.
 - Tossing cigarettes out windows, parking on dry grass
- Encampment along highways and fire risks
- Cross jurisdictional – private landowners take care of their space but are near to BLM, county lands, federal lands.
- Homeowners insurance – hearing stories of rates going through the roof or being dropped.

- Sunriver Owners Association had liability insurance double. The mitigation work being done did not matter to the insurance company.
- SROA went to insurance broker to find a new policy
- Sunriver can be a difficult place to navigate, especially for visitors, because of traffic circles, neighborhood structure, etc.
- Cost of fuels reduction work continues to increase, everyone is competing for the same contracts.
- Daunting to find all the resources available to people who want to do fuels reduction and fire risk prevention
- Evacuation routes in some neighborhoods in La Pine and Three Rivers

Successes:

- Sunriver Ladder Fuels Reduction Program – [More info HERE](#)
 - Completed through SROA, guide for how to protect your community from catastrophic wildfire.
 - Sunriver has been very progressive in wildfire mitigation, partly as a result of the Aubrey fire in 1990s. By 1995 Sunriver had a ladder fuels reduction plan.
 - Directs what Sunriver will do on SROA commons to reduce risk and maintain forest health.
 - Wildfire doesn't follow property lines. Many overlap and are dependent on others participation.
 - Requirements for Sunriver properties
- The new Fire Risk map created by the State cannot be coupled with insurance rate due to State Law passed last year.
- Collaboration between public safety entities, public health, private partners, non-profits, and more is incredible in Central Oregon, from the perspective of Nate Garibay. Great relationships!
 - Move forward together, make decisions together.
- Engaged, concerned, and participatory community – this benefits all of us
- In safety and risk management field, all the small pieces put together make a strong system, because not one organization can do it all.
- After 2020 Labor Day Fires, ORalert.com ([SIGN UP HERE](#)) consistent language, practice, and templates.
 - [Deschutes.org/emergency](#) – incidents, evacuation zones, will continue to be updated.
- Thinning done in Deschutes National Forest between Sunriver and Highway 97. Good work in areas near roads and high risk areas
- 62 Fire Wise communities in Deschutes County through Project Wildfire.

Opportunities:

- Spring River has road district and they have cleared all the bitter brush alongside roads.
 - May be an option in other South County Communities
 - County has a program for their county maintained roads.

- Fire Wise community can possibly help reduce insurance rate – depending on the insurance company
- State, County, Local all help reduce fire risk and reduce risk that insurance companies base their evaluations on.
- The “Woodchuckers”, a volunteer group from Sunriver Christian Fellowship who will remove old, dead or compromised trees from homeowners properties.
- Homeowner Resource Website as a possible One Stop Shop

Ideas for Action

- Educating visitors, Sunriver Resort TV channel with educational materials, YouTube
- Signs on trails, signs on road, Example, “Don’t be a butt – throw away your cigarettes”
- Take the lead in organizing your neighborhood.
- Punitive responses are not productive because they often create resistance. Start with education about compliance.
- Annual meetings with neighborhoods, HOA meetings
- Visit [Upper Deschutes River Communities](#) for resources.
- Check your property, get an assessment to evaluate what actions can be take to reduce risk.
- Educate our visitors on the risk and how to help us keep fire at bay.
- Easy home improvement safety programs
- Ponderosa pines, sell high moisture sapling/plants that don’t burn to homeowners
- Take the lead in organizing clean up
- Using goats to eat brush and manage ladder fuels.
- My home is surrounded by wood chips, no grass lawn just natural vegetation. Is there any chance of SROA supplying lava gravel at a reasonable cost so I could put down?

General Questions:

- Sunriver Fire can come look at properties, do an inspection, and make recommendations for what the property owner can do to increase fire protection on the property.
- Encampments along the highway
 - o Pose some fire hazards.
 - o Fires in these areas can be responded to quicker because of road access.
 - o Difficult to balance what can legally be done about folks who live on public lands.
 - o Research to be done about the risks.
- What is a Fire Wise community
 - o National program for education on how to make land defensible, home hardening. If you become a Fire Wise site there are several steps, including creation of an Action Plan for the community.
 - o About 62 active Fire Wise communities in Deschutes County, some pending.
 - o Do not need to be a part of an HOA to participate, just need to be an organized community, that means some organization to act on a neighborhood level.
- Key Elements of being a Fire Wise Community

- Develop action plan, must have at least 8 homeowners involved.
- Work with ODF (they manage Fire Wise in Oregon), complete community assessment and submit action plan
- Each year you have a series of requirements to be considered active.
- Homeowners insurance – can our rate be raised, or can we be dropped?
 - Insurance is a private business with the goal of making money and protecting their interests.
 - If people are experiencing nonrenewal or being dropped, they can challenge the company’s decision or talk with [Oregon Department of Financial Regulation](#)
 - Recommend getting clarification or meeting with an insurance broker that can help you shop around for a new policy.
- What can people do to educate themselves and learn more about fire protection?
 - Midstate Electric puts out a publication to every member. Includes articles about preparing for disasters, power outages, etc.
 - Midstate has started 4-5 fires this year from electrical contact with birds
 - To mitigate they have mowed right of ways, trimming trees, stronger poles, fire resistant poles.
 - Stay away from downed power lines!
 - During high-risk fire season, there are breakers that turn off the power.
- How often are Wildfire Risk Level signs maintained by the forest service updated?
 - Looked at every day.
- 90% of Sunriver residents travel through Travel Circles – large part of transportation system. Can be difficult to navigate, how to we protect our road infrastructure?
 - On SROA common land they clear trees and bitter brush 3ft from roadway. Some is intentionally left because of other safety concerns for bikers and pedestrians.
 - Tree limbs trimmed up to 14ft high for vehicles and safety.
 - 150-180 acres/year evaluated to mark trees of concern that may be safety hazards. Age of trees, location, visibility concerns all factor into this.
 - Stump grinding within 3ft to protect snowplow drivers.
 - Bitter brushes are removed at all traffic circles to keep fire risk low when evacuating during natural disaster.
 - 6-year rotating cycle for ladder fuel reduction
 - \$300,000 spent per year on ladder fuel reduction and fire protection in Sunriver
 - Costs continue to increase as they have to compete for the same contractors to do this work.
- Evacuation Procedures
 - Research on what intersections and circles to manage.
 - As new technologies emerge, Sherriff’s office looks for evidence-based practices to improve safety and efficiency of evacuation
- What are the biggest things individuals can do to protect their own property?
 - Start with you own property, assess vulnerabilities on the home. Embers are a major risk for home ignition during wildfire.
 - [UDRC Home Hardening Guide](#)
 - Screens

- Gutters cleaned, roof cleaned
 - Ask the question, how can/will an ember start a fire at our house?
 - First 5ft surrounding the home is non-combustible, cleared & rock landscaping.
 - Each person taking action makes an impact on community safety.
- Resources for home hardening and fuels reduction
 - [Upper Deschutes River Communities Defensible Space Reimbursement Program](#)
 - Reimbursement for \$500, must hire licensed tree service providers or pay to lease tools and do yourself. Keep all invoices and receipts to turn in with the application.
 - Another program for low-income seniors and low-income people with disabilities. With Board Approval, home assessor will evaluate home and give recommendations to reduce fire risk.
 - <https://udrc.org/programs/>
 - Contact local fire department for property assessments, State Fire Marshall will have a local state deputy do a site visit for free.
 - <https://oregondefensiblespace.org/>
 - Sign up for free assessment here
 - COIC and Heart of Oregon Corps – Wildfire Workforce Partnership
 - No cost for folks who cannot do it themselves, low-income or disabled.
 - Work completed by trained young people.
 - Deschutes County Grants
 - <https://www.deschutes.org/forester/page/fall-2023-fuel-reduction-grant-program-and-application>
 - ODF for small forest land, homeowners can apply for
 - <https://www.oregon.gov/odf/programs/sfgp-instructions-for-online-portal-application.pdf>
 - Application: <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/a8f9102a49644bc698797dc73700f23e>
- Is there a one-stop shop for homeowners to find grants and resources?
 - Oregon Living with Fire is creating a page, will be ready next week
 - Oregonlivingwithfire.org
 - Can email coordinator@oregonlivingwithfire.org
 - OLWF covers Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Northern Klamath
 - Federal funding for large landowners (more than 10 acres)
 - Will host a Grant Workshop for homeowners that want to apply for them, also for communities and non-profits.
- How do forest management agencies choose areas to treat?
 - Sunriver Fire spends a lot of time with other agencies to increase capacity and resources. Agencies also receive training for their firefighters by doing this.
 - Community Wildfire Protection Plans – seven within the county, updated every five years, bring partners together to evaluate fuels treatment and plan for the next cycle.

- For people with older homes, are their home hardening actions these owners can take?
 - Address your roof, making sure it's in good shape, asphalt shingles are fire resistant but must be cleaned of flammable materials.
 - Metal roof is an option as well.
 - Siding – well painted wood is decent against fire, but concrete or fiber cement board is a better upgrade.
 - Screens on vents (meant to keep our birds) should be no larger than 1/8th inch.