



STAFF REPORT

To: Summit County Council
From: Janna Young, Member of Leadership Class 25
Date of Meeting: October 9, 2019
Type of Item: Work Session
Subject: Presentation of Leadership Park City Class 25's Service Project

Requested Council Action

None.

Introduction

Leadership Park City, now in its 26th year, is a yearlong program to identify, encourage and train new community leaders. Each year, around 35 individuals are selected for the class and participate in monthly education and training sessions. In addition, each class plans and completes a service project that benefits Summit County in some way. Class projects are proposed and selected by the class in March. These projects have included public art, green building, wind power, trails development, youth leadership, water conservation, voter awareness, community walkability, public transit usage, reduction of plastic bags usage, food sustainability, and many more.

Summary of Leadership Class 25's Service Project

We are living in the era of megafires, forest blazes ten times bigger than ever seen before. Since 1988, fires have broken records in nine states and several have burned over half a million acres each. Scientists say we should brace ourselves for more and more of these fires in the coming years.

Factors, such as drought, climate change and Forest Service policy focused on suppression have led to a buildup of fuels in our nation's forests. As a consequence, when fires ignite, there is a lot more to burn than historically seen. This often results in catastrophic wildfire that threatens lives and destroys communities, wildlife, and watersheds at great cost to local, state and federal economies.

Park City and Summit County, situated in the wildland urban interface and surrounded by national forest full of dead timber caused by drought and bark beetle infestations is particularly at risk for megafire.

There are several steps homeowners can take to make their homes more resilient to wildfire, such as creating defensible space around their home, using resistant landscaping, roofing and siding, home hardening, and others. These measures have proven effective in protecting individual homes and reducing the potential for wildfire to spread to neighborhoods and the community at large.

Park City Leadership Class 25 chose for its class service project, community wildfire preparedness. The project scope involved two primary components: 1) public outreach and education; and 2) a community resource guide. The class also participated in an ancillary sub-project involving collecting soils to be used in a landscape analysis of soil carbon content.

Public Outreach and Education

The public outreach component involved educating homeowners about our community's fire risk and how to make their homes more resilient to wildfire with the goal of directly reaching 2,000 individuals. Included in the messaging was the importance of establishing an evacuation plan, how to create defensible space around the home, removing leaves and debris from under decks and inside gutters, hardening homes by filling in eaves and utilizing fire resistant building materials, and other measures.

The class created firewise signs, designed a t-shirt, and disseminated information at four public events: Fourth of July parade, Silly Market, Summit County's Preparedness Fair, and Park City Municipal's May 15th documentary screening and community discussion on megafires. The class also created a Facebook page, canvassed neighborhoods, and made presentations on KPCW radio, Park City TV, and to local groups, such as Sunrise Rotary, Pinebrook HOA, Summit Community Gardens, and the Newcomers Club, among others.

In total, the class spent over 160 hours on community outreach and education, handed out hundreds of firewise pamphlets, and met the target of directly reaching 2,000 people.

Community Resource Guide

As a tangible outcome of the project, the class developed a resource guide intended to provide Summit County homeowners with local information and tools to make their homes more likely to survive a wildfire, including how to assess their home's fire risk, mitigate hazards, harden home structures and create defensible space.

Included in this guide is a short public service video produced by a member of the class explaining the importance of assessing your home for fire risk and taking measures to mitigate those risks. The class asked for volunteers and conducted six lot assessments of properties across the county with the Summit County Fire Warden. At the end of each assessment, homeowners were provided a report indicating their fire risk level with suggestions of what to address or mitigate in order to make their homes more firewise. The video documents these assessments and the resource guide includes the lot assessment checklist so homeowners can conduct their own assessments.

In addition, the guide has other informational videos, a list of whom to call to perform the fire mitigation work on a home, city and county fire resources, websites that provide specific steps to take to create defensible space around one's home and programs to help homeowners remove fire hazards, such as Park City Fire District and Summit County's chipping services.

Landscape Analysis of Soil Carbon Content

In March when the class was choosing its service project, one proposal offered was for a net zero carbon project, which many members of the class felt tied into the fire preparedness project. As such, the class decided to spend some resources on this effort as well. On Saturday, June 29th, the class collected soil samples and documented vegetation to assist with the development of a landscape analysis map. This map more accurately documents the vegetation and soils throughout our County than other maps that existed before. It shows which areas have higher carbon content in their soils and thus, are able to hold more water, making them more resistant to fire. This information can help in decision-making around water security, development, and proactive measures that can be taken to meet net zero carbon goals, improve snow pack, and protect wildlife habitat, among other things.

Current Status

The class has completed all public outreach events that were planned, resulting in over 160 volunteer hours and around 2,000 contacts. The class has also shared the public service video on YouTube. The class is in the process of finalizing the resource guide and intends to publish and make it available on the County Fire Warden's website and Park City Emergency Management's website this fall. The landscape analysis map is also completed.

Conclusion

The goal of Leadership Class 25's service project was to increase awareness throughout our community about our wildfire risk and encourage homeowners to prepare and harden their homes against wildfire, culminating in a resource guide that will be available to the public and updated over time.

Since the spring, when Leadership Class 25 began its outreach and education efforts, we have seen increased awareness of the wildfire risk across our community and homeowners taking proactive actions to harden their homes and make them more resilient to wildfire.

For example, both Park City Fire District and Summit County have reported record use of their chipper services as homeowners are trimming back brush and tree limbs to create defensible space around their homes. Both entities have received an increased volume of calls and requests for fire preparedness and prevention assistance as well. Park City Emergency Management has also sent out a comprehensive mailer to homeowners with information regarding home hardening and other fire preparedness measures.

As a result, Class 25 feels its service project has been effective and has had a positive impact on Park City and Summit County residents. We plan to continue the conversation and working with our neighbors to create a more fire resilient community.

Class 25 would like to credit the many partners that contributed to this project and to the Community Resource Guide: Summit County Fire Warden, Park City Fire District, Park City Fire District Fire Marshal, Park City Fire Marshal, Summit County and Park City Emergency Management, Leadership Park City alumni who volunteered their homes to be assessed by the County Fire Warden and included in the Class's Public Service Announcement, and countless others who assisted with this project.

Attachment

"Be Prepared for Wildfire" Community Resource Guide