



RUBY RANCH

Bringing Our Community Together via Communication

Ruby Ranch Fuel Break Newsletter



On May 3, Colorado voters owning property (or residing) on Ruby Ranch will be asked to pass a three-year increase of 20 mils on the assessed value of each Ruby Ranch property to raise \$400,000. The proposed tax is needed to cut a fuel break in the Eagle's Nest Wilderness. It is a small fraction of the value of the home you are trying to protect, at about \$3,000 yearly for three years for the average home on the Ranch. Ruby Ranch homes are now selling for about \$600/square foot, or \$3 million in total for the average home.

Your cost could be even less. We are applying to Summit County for a matching grant (\$200,000 to match \$200,000 from Ruby Ranch owners.) We have received several matching grants from the County in the past, but none for this much money. The County is very concerned with the issue of affordable housing for local workers and that could negatively impact our ability to secure a matching grant.

We are also asking the Federal government for financial help from the recently enacted Infrastructure bill. Senator Bennett, who heads the Senate Forestry Committee, supports our request.

We remain hopeful that some amount of grant and federal money will be received given the universal recognition of the importance of this break, including letters of endorsement from the County Commissioners, a major local conservationist group and Summit Fire and EMS. Key excerpts from those letters are included below.

Net, we don't know what the final cost will be to our Ruby Ranch owners, but it may be less than the \$400,000 we propose to raise via this special, three-year property tax. Please vote for this tax increase. It is a modest amount needed to protect one of the biggest investments you own. Aside from financial matters, think of the emotional impact of losing your Ruby Ranch home to a wildfire. This is your chance to take a major step to prevent that from happening.

What the Experts Say about the Ruby Ranch Fuel Break

The Willow Brook Metro Board (WBMD) has retained the services of two, high level, retired employees of the US Forest Service to manage this project on behalf of the WBMD and to assist us in working with the USFS as we and they draft an Operating Plan defining precisely how the proposed Fuel Break will be completed. We asked these experts to tell us how much benefit we would get from this fuel break, recognizing that much depends on the “conditions at the time” when a wildfire ignites.

The Eagle’s Nest fuel load is judged to be extremely high. Based on pictures of the break’s fuel load, the experts believe a wildfire would sweep across the 200-foot strip in less than one minute if no break were cut. Bear in mind that the project area directly abuts our western boundary. On the other hand, cutting a break should allow precious time in which to fight the fire and perhaps an area into which slurry could be dropped from aircraft. In other words, the break could be the difference between an out-of-control conflagration and a manageable situation.

The experts believe that our fuel load is worse than the one associated with the recent Waldo Canyon Fire, given the amount of blowdown and the placement of our trees. For reference, the Waldo Canyon Fire burned approximately 18,200 acres and 346 buildings. The estimated insured losses of that fire were approximately \$454 million.



Eagle's Nest Blowdown



Waldo Canyon Fire

What the US Forest Service (Dillon District Ranger) says about the Ruby Ranch Fuel Break

There is a *need* to decrease the fuel load in the WRNF due to the extremely high mortality rate within lodgepole pine timber stands left by the MPB epidemic that spread through Colorado in the late 1990s until 2010. In the Eagles Nest Wilderness, at the boundary of the Ruby Ranch Subdivision, most of these trees have since fallen over or are dead standing, which has resulted in a high accumulation of fuel. Therefore, to reduce the risks and consequences of a wildfire escaping the wilderness boundary and to create a safe place for firefighters to protect adjacent public and private infrastructure, there is a need to decrease fuels in the wilderness area.

Decision

I have decided to implement the hazardous fuels reduction activities on approximately 33 acres of NFS lands within the Eagles Nest Wilderness (refer to **Selected Alternative Map**).

What the Summit County Commissioners say about the Ruby Ranch Fuel Break

Thank you for your invitation to comment on the Ruby Ranch Fuels Reduction Proposal within the Eagle's Nest Wilderness Area of the White River National Forest (WRNF). Based on our review of the information in the notice we would like to express our support of the proposed fuels reduction effort adjacent to the Ruby Ranch Subdivision near Silverthorne, CO.

The unprecedented 2020 fire season has made the need for this type of effort more apparent than ever. The proposed project will provide a valuable fuels break within the Wildland-Urban Interface and a safer staging area for wildland firefighters near the homes at Ruby Ranch. As exemplified during the 2018 Buffalo Mountain Fire, these types of fuel breaks can serve as an invaluable line of defense for local communities adjacent to fire dependent ecosystems. The high level of lodgepole pine mortality following the Mountain Pine Beetle (MPB) infestation coupled with the natural tendency for lodgepole pine stands to undergo stand replacing crown fires puts this area at high risk of catastrophic wildfire.

What Summit Fire and EMS say about the Ruby Ranch Fuel Break

Summit Fire & EMS supports the proposal by the property owners in Ruby Ranch to reduce potential wildfire fuel in the Eagle's Nest Wilderness Area immediately adjacent to their property.

Over the past several years, the Ruby Ranch homeowners have invested substantial amounts of money and made concerted efforts to improve the likelihood of their homes withstanding a wildfire. Among their accomplishments, they have installed and linked their own fire-hydrant and water-storage system, conducted numerous fuels-reduction efforts on the private property surrounding their homes and worked with the Summit County Wildfire Council and representatives of Summit Fire & EMS to establish further priorities in wildfire defense. As a result of these efforts, the area earned the designation as a FireWise Neighborhood earlier this year. We believe that the proposed project to remove 50 to 90 percent of standing dead and downed trees in the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area immediately adjacent to their properties will further enhance our ability to defend them from a catastrophic wildfire.

What leading Conservationists say about the Ruby Ranch Fuel Break

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Ruby Ranch Fuels Reduction in the Eagles Nest Wilderness. Wilderness Workshop (W) is a non-profit, membership-based organization that is dedicated to protecting and conserving the wilderness and natural landscapes of the White River National Forest. WW is based in Carbondale, Colorado, and engages in research, education, legal advocacy and grassroots organizing to protect the ecological integrity of our public lands. WW was founded in 1967 and has over 700 members who care deeply about sound stewardship of our designated wilderness areas and other wild public lands.

We understand the need to mitigate wildfire risk to communities immediately adjacent to the Eagle's Nest Wilderness. While we generally advocate for the Forest Service to avoid tree removal projects in designated wilderness, we appreciate that the Forest Service is taking a thoughtful approach to this project to minimize impacts to the wilderness as much as possible and achieve consistency with the Minimum Requirements Decision Guide and the Forest Service Wilderness Management Manual.

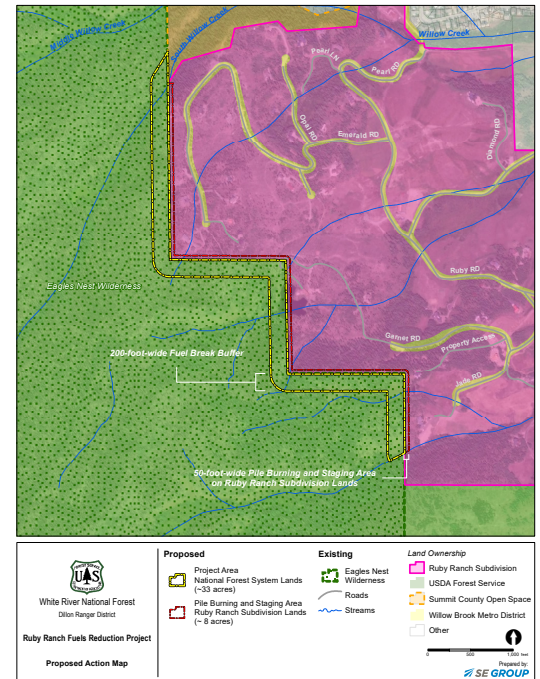
In particular, WW finds the following elements of the proposed project to be appropriate and necessary, **enabling our support** for the project:

- Conducting all work with non-mechanized equipment and hand tools, and not utilizing any mechanized equipment in designated wilderness;
- The small scale and targeted nature of the project, and the proximity of the treatments to structures; and
- The commensurate fuels treatments and installation of fire-fighting infrastructure on the adjacent private land as a precursor to this project conducting work in the wilderness. It's critical that private land treatments are part of any treatments in wilderness to reduce the amount of treatment

Details on the Voting

All persons registered to vote in Colorado who either own property in or reside within Ruby Ranch are eligible to vote in the Willow Brook Metropolitan District election on May 3, 2022. This includes Colorado voters who own property indirectly (for example through a trust or LLC) if they are personally obligated to pay property taxes on that property.

US citizens, age 18+ and residing in the State for 22 days or more are eligible to register. Please contact the District's Designated Election Official, Sue Blair, at sblair@crsofcolorado.com for more information about qualifying as an elector or to request a ballot.



Ruby Ranch Fuel Break Area