



**FIRE'S OUT,  
RAIN'S COMIN',  
NOW WHAT?**

**WHAT'S IN YOUR CWPP?**

## **Paulette Church**

Falls Creek Ranch Neighborhood Wildfire Ambassador, HOA President

## **Clyde Church**

Falls Creek Chainsaw Gang Crew Chief, La Plata County Commissioner

# WHAT IS FALLS CREEK RANCH?



# FALLS CREEK ABOVE ANIMAS RIVER VALLEY



# FALLS CREEK RANCH

- **100 lots – most are 1-acre circles - \$3,300 assessment/year**
- **940 acres with 840 acres of Common Property – permanently set aside**
- **Basket-maker II with pit houses, kivas, burials, etc.**
- **43-Acre reservoir from early days as a potato and hay farm**
- **Three main drainages into the Animas and then San Juan Rivers**
- **Underground electric and internet with central water system**
- **Homeowners' Association with Elected Board of Directors**

# **BEFORE THE VALLEY FIRE - 2002**

- **We are asbestos – our forest doesn't burn**
- **This is “natural” – don't change a thing**
- **Covenants prohibited harvesting trees (dead or alive) and firewood**
- **A few residents did some raking and trimming**
- **No Firewise Committee**
- **Fall and spring clean up days to trim at intersections**

## **VALLEY FIRE – TURNING POINT**

- **2002 Valley Fire went downhill taking 10 homes in the first 10 minutes.**
- **Burned 5 homes in Falls Creek and then homes and barns below us.**
- **Expansion of the 73,000-acre Missionary Ridge Fire.**
- **Debrief in 2003: “What did the green and red flags mean?”**
- **Residents went home and began cutting!**



# FCR 2003+



- In 2011, Falls Creek was approved for early CWPP in La Plata County
- Created a FireWise Committee, began with firewood and beetle trees
- Began writing grants to do the work on the ground

**Shifted in 2015 to use grants to provide support for volunteers  
Regular work sessions – followed by BEER, BRATS, AND BROWNIES!  
Began to write Capacity Building grants to acquire equipment**

# TRAINING CREW CHIEFS ON CHAINSAWS AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT



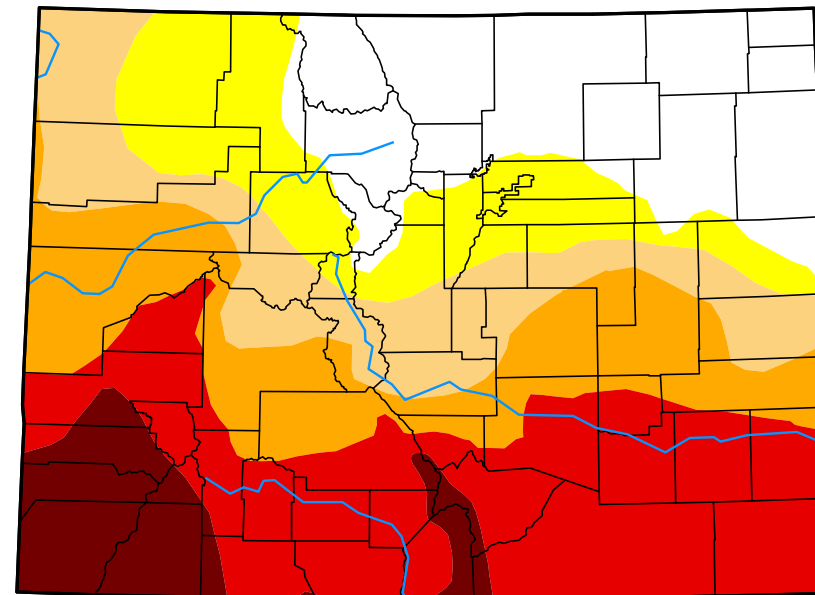


# CLIMATE – WEATHER IMPACT -2018

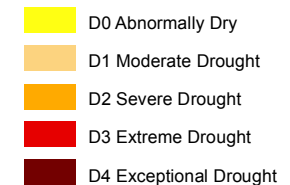
- Very dry winter.
- Not if, but when?
- 1st evacuation drill down two-track exit
- Renewed exit agreements with neighbors
- Became part of Ready, Set, Go of IAFC
- Increased mitigation

U.S. Drought Monitor  
Colorado

May 22, 2018  
(Released Thursday, May. 24, 2018)  
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



*Intensity:*



*The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.*

*Author:*

Eric Luebehusen  
U.S. Department of Agriculture



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>



**May 5, 2018  
Wildfire Preparedness Day  
Community Meeting**



**JUNE 1, 2018**

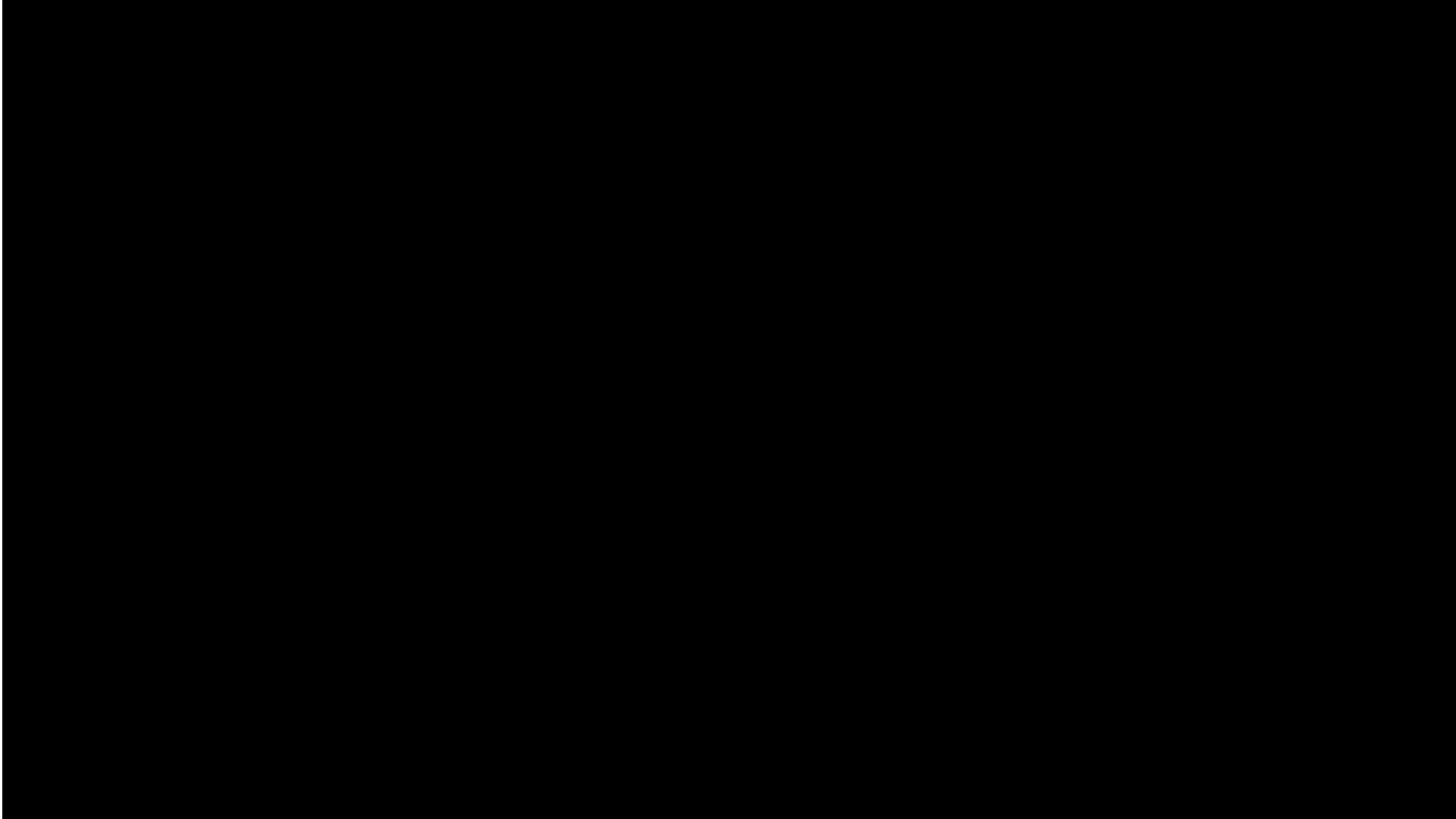
**416 FIRE  
IGNITES  
NORTH OF  
FALLS CREEK**

**MID JUNE  
SINGING IN THE RAIN –  
FALLS CREEK STYLE**





# THE 416 OUTCOMES





# BURN AREA ABOVE FALLS CREEK



# SEVERE STUMP BURNOUT





# DRONE VIEW OF 416 FIRE SCAR



# **WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?**

**The NRCS reports indicate the  
100-year flood flow projection pre-fire for Dyke  
Canyon is 176 cubic ft/second  
100-year flood projection post-fire for Dyke Canyon is  
1,060 cfs!  
That's about 500,000 gallons/ minute.**



**CWPP DOES NOT ADDRESS POST FIRE  
RECOVERY...**

**OOPS!**



## **SPREAD IT OUT AND SOAK IT UP**

50 ACRES BURNED FCR

54,000 TOTAL ACRES

NO BUILDINGS LOST!



**DYKE CANYON  
RUNOFF OVER FALLS  
CREEK MAIN INTO  
MEADOW**

# POST-WILDFIRE RECOVERY TEAM

- **Clyde: heavy equipment coming:  
Do something**
- **24 residents volunteered form  
Recovery Committee to research  
options, best practices, and find  
funding**
- **This new drainage did minor mud  
damage below us**





**FCR CULVERTS  
PLUGGED –  
ROADS  
FLOODED**

**DEBRIS FLOW –  
TAKES OUT LA  
PLATA ELECTRIC  
ASSOCIATION  
JUNCTION BOX**





# **PHASE 1 GOAL: PROTECT ROADS & UTILITIES**

- **Heavy equipment arrives**
- **Removed plugged culverts and replaced with water crossings and warning signs**
- **Two resident geo-tech engineers on committee gave input: Contacted local firms for advice on using historical ditches -- no returned calls**
- **Neighbors constantly threatened to sue FCR if any flows caused damage to their property**

# SWIFT FLOWS OVER ROADS FROM MEADOWS



# **FLOWS OVER ROADS INTO MEADOWS**



# REQUEST FOR DONATIONS

- **First request for donations during Phase 1**  
-- had \$2,200 donated by FCR residents
- **High Meadows contributed \$5,000**
- **High number of volunteer hours drained our aging population**
- **FireWise of SW Colorado offered up to \$6,000 for professional sawyers to do contour logging on the steep burned areas**

# **THANKS FOR RADIOS!**

- **Had created a community focused on fires & recovery**
- **Previous year two resident families gave four professional digital radios to FCR Firewise committee and added two more for recovery.**
- **We could cover the ranch and they have been used extensively during mitigation, floods and recovery.**

# **COST OF FCR PHASE I**

<b>Initial Heavy Equipment Work</b>	<b>= \$ 33,600</b>
<b>FCR Resident Donations</b>	<b>- \$ 2,200</b>
<b>Contribution from High Meadows</b>	<b>- \$ 5,000</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Net cost to FCR Budget</b>	<b>= \$ 26,400</b>



## **USDA'S NATIONAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION SERVICES (NRCS)**

- Each property that was believed to be at risk of loss life and property – Everyone afraid of what was coming**
- Each threatened lot owner received a detailed plan with suggested materials**
- We contacted USDA's NRCS staff after BAER report and asked for assistance with expert advice and funding.**
- They brought out Damage Survey Teams and Reports for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Recovery.**

# **NRCS REPORT SUMMARY**

- **21 Properties in FCR received (NRCS) Assessment reports & recommendations**
- **Flows: THREAT TO LIVES AND/OR PROPERTY**

<b>Estimated total cost to homeowners</b>	<b>= \$</b>	<b>810,950</b>
<b>75% Reimbursable by NRCS</b>	<b>= \$</b>	<b>608,216</b>
<b>25% Guaranteed by Sponsor (LPC)</b>	<b>= \$</b>	<b>202,677</b>
<b>Value of property threatened</b>	<b>= \$</b>	<b>12,216,500</b>



# **RESEARCHED SEEDS & METHODS**

- **Resident Master Gardner spent hours calling and researching grass seed mixes & mulching**
- **Colorado State Forest Service advised us**
- **A former CDOT landscape engineer and FCR resident knew suppliers**
- **Sourced Granite Seed, wattles, stakes: Denver**
- **800 certified weed-free straw bales from Basin Co-Op, Durango, trucked in from San Luis Valley**

## **NEW CALL FOR DONATIONS TO FCR**

- **Received contributions from 30 FCR donors**
  - **Used to purchase seeds, straw wattles, stakes, bales of certified weed-free straw, hourly workers**
  - **Total cost Phase 2 = \$ 18,423**
  - **Paid by FCR Donors = \$ 14,200**
  - **Paid by FireWise of SW CO = \$ 4,403**
- 
- Net cost to FCR Budget = \$ 0**



**PHASE 2  
GOAL:**

**SLOW DOWN  
EROSION AND  
FLOWS FROM  
CANYONS &  
HILLS**

# CONTOUR FELLING



# RESTORATION ON HILLSIDES



# RESTORATION ON HILLSIDES





**MUD FLOW FROM  
MEADOW OVER  
DRIVEWAY**

# RESTORATION EROSION CONTROL IN MEADOWS





# RESTORATION SEEDING IN MEADOWS



# SCOUTS TO THE RESCUE



# **FORT LEWIS COLLEGE ATHLETES VOLUNTEER!**

- **Women's softball and men's soccer teams - 27 athletes**
- **Hauled 3 donated pallets of sandbags from La Plata County Sheriff inmates for a CR 203 resident below Falls Creek**
- **Used a pallet of sandbags for flood control**
- **Hauled straw bales up steep slopes**
- **Set wattles and staked them**
- **Seeded and spread straw to mulch it**

# FORT LEWIS COLLEGE SOCCER TEAM





# FCR RECOVERY VOLUNTEER HOURS

Estimated total of

**1,500 hours**

Value = \$16,936

# NOW WHAT?

- **La Plata County Commissioners, Director of Emergency Management toured FCR and listened**
- **We asked LPC to sponsor the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program, guarantee the 25% in-kind/cash match**
- **County asked Gov. to declare La Plata County a disaster area to access FEMA grants.**
- **County stepped up but it took more than a year**
- **If residents did the safety work or hired a contractor, they could not be reimbursed.**

# **PHASE 3: WE LEARN FROM FLOWS**

**Developed a plan for Phase 3:**

- 1. Enlarge and fortify the holding ponds and diversion at Dyke Canyon and FCMain.**
- 2. Create a large holding pond with small berms in meadows to hold water longer.**
- 3. Recovery work can't compromise water lines, roads, and FCR properties and those below us.**
- 4. Engineering firm moves funds from SJNF and County to FCR to install large box culvert.**

# LAST CULVERT SECTION INSTALLED







# **RECHARGED OUR WATER TABLE**

- **We absorbed approximately 30 CF/Second in our two main meadows and raised the water table in our wells by 32 feet**
- **Each meadow retained as much water as our lake reservoir**

# **WORK ON YOUR CWPP FOR POST FIRE RECOVERY**

- **Form groups of 3 to 5 people from similar properties**

## **Answer these questions:**

- **What are your geographic risks, include watershed risks?**
- **What are your man-made risks?**
- **How will you organize the work - who is your leader?**
- **What's your volunteer base?**
- **Who are your potential partners?**
- **What's Phase 1 for you?**
- **How will you fund the work?**



# REPORT YOUR PROGRESS

- **Short description of setting**
- **Biggest concern(s)**
- **Key partners**
- **Your Step 1**

# THANKS FOR TEACHING US ALL

- **Paulette Church – [rotarypaulette@gmail.com](mailto:rotarypaulette@gmail.com)**
- **970-946-4856**
- **Falls Creek Ranch Neighborhood Wildfire Ambassador, HOA President**
  
- **Clyde Church – [church970@icloud.com](mailto:church970@icloud.com)**
- **970-946-4855**
- **Falls Creek Chainsaw Gang Crew Chief, La Plata County Commissioner**