



**Fourmile Canyon  
Fire Findings  
July 2012**

Providing scientific  
knowledge and  
technology to sustain  
our nation's forests,  
rangelands, and  
grasslands

For additional information,  
contact:

G. Sam Foster

RMRS Director

970-498-1353

[gfooster@fs.fed.us](mailto:gfooster@fs.fed.us)



USDA is an equal opportunity  
provider and employer

# Wildfires in the Colorado Front Range Fact Sheet

## Wildfires will happen in Colorado.

- Wildfire plays a necessary role in Colorado's ecosystems. However, the interruption of historic fire cycles has led to the dangerous buildup of fuels in some wildland areas.
- During wildland fire events, public and firefighter safety is the highest priority. While property losses experienced during the Fourmile Canyon Fire were tragic, there was no loss of life thanks to an efficient, coordinated emergency response.
- There are no guarantees when it comes to protecting homes from wildfires, but when homeowners create defensible space and communities establish fuel treatments, chances increase that structures will survive.

## We have a shared responsibility to reduce wildfire risk.

- Wildland firefighters count on landowners in fire-prone areas to clear brush, trees and other flammable materials from around homes and maintain this cleared space in order to make their properties accessible and safe for firefighters to defend.
- Dry grasses, needle litter and brush fueled the surface fire that was largely responsible for home destruction in the Fourmile Canyon fire. This serves as a reminder that creating defensible space near homes is more than a one-time effort to thin dense stands of trees and other large fuels — it also requires regular maintenance like keeping tall grasses mowed, pruning shrubs and clearing debris from roofs and gutters to remain effective.
- The US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and state and county land management agencies will continue to work with private landowners to address wildfire risk across ownership boundaries.

## Actions taken by individuals and agencies can make a difference.

- Homeowners have the opportunity to significantly reduce the potential for wildland-urban interface disasters by creating and maintaining a *home ignition zone* (HIZ). An HIZ is based on the design, material and maintenance of the home in relation to its immediate surroundings within 100 feet. To learn more about defensible space specific to Colorado ecosystems go to the Colorado State Forest Service website at [cfs.colostate.edu/pages/wf-protection.html](http://cfs.colostate.edu/pages/wf-protection.html). To learn more about HIZs go to [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).
- Fuel treatments can affect fire behavior by diminishing the intensity and slowing the spread of wildfires, which can provide an outlet for residents to evacuate safely during a wildfire, and a safe entrance and exit for firefighters.
- Where woody fuel was not removed after a fuels reduction treatment, fire on the ground burned much more intensely. Prescribed fire provides a means to remove excess fuels and is an effective tool when used appropriately.