

# NEVADA APPEAL

Council offers residents fire-protection help

Q&A Tuesday  
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Sharon Arnold is the chairwoman of the Clear Creek-area Nevada Fire Safe Council. The neighborhood chapter was one of Carson City's first Fire Safe Council groups to form and utilize the council's expertise and resources to try and keep wildfire from homes.

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Rick Gunn/Nevada Appeal Clear Creek-area resident Sharon Arnold points to a partially cleared area that will act as a protective fire-break near her home. Arnold has cleared heavy underbrush and replaced quick-burning cheatgrass with less fire- conductive vegetation.

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What is a local chapter of the NFSC?

A group of home or property owners, with preferably contiguous properties, who pay \$5 per year per owner (a couple pays \$10), with a promise to either do an equivalent of the grant monies given the group with in-kind work or pay that amount.

Why contiguous?

One property owner who does not do fuel reduction may cause the destruction of other properties around him.

When was yours set up?

Our chapter was started in July 2002, after I saw an article about the Nevada Fire Safe Council and organized a meeting with our 31 property owners, Elwood Miller (NFSC's executive coordinator) and the Carson City Fire Department. We signed up 18 that evening, and the others signed up very quickly after the fire along Highway 50 in June 2003. We are an active group of 28 property owners - the three properties who are not members do practice fuels reduction.

How does the council help with projects, and what kind do they help with?

The NFSC has funded the removal of fire fuels not only from around our homes, but also on our properties (our community is in a five-acre-minimum parcel area), and given us two fire breaks so far. Our projects for 2005 are two more fire breaks and a bit more

brush removal. We have been funded with grants of more than \$125,000 since 2002.

Our "in-kind" labor-intensive chores have involved raking pine needles, collecting pine cones, cleaning the needles from the gutters, seeding our properties with fire-resistant grasses provided by the grant, cheatgrass removal, limbing trees, and removing dead brush and hauling it all to the dump. These projects are ongoing and need to be done several times a year.

What kind of things can be done to protect neighborhoods from fire?

Thin trees, not only for fire safety, but for healthy forest growth; remove all dead or overgrown brush; limb trees at least 15 feet up; plant only fire-resistant grasses, shrubs and trees; clear a defensible space of at least 25 feet around your home; do not stack firewood on your porch or next to your home; clean gutters of pine needles monthly; replace old wood roofs with class A fiberglass composite; make your driveway accessible to fire trucks and your address visible; install an outside sprinkler system that sprays the home and can be run by a generator when the electricity goes off; make lists of all the things you want to take with you, should you be evacuated, including addresses and phone numbers you will need; and be sure everyone knows a chosen place to meet if the evacuation order comes.

How much can any given neighborhood near a forest be protected?

You are never completely safe when you live near a forested area. Nevada winds are unpredictable, especially during fires. Embers can be blown hundreds of feet, and the path of the flames can change minute by minute. The work we have had done will help slow the fire's progress and give us time to save what we can and possibly minimize the damage. When you live with trees, you can never be completely protected from fire. Be aware of your surroundings and use fire-safe practices.

Do you think much of Carson City is still unprotected?

Very definitely. Not only is the west side still very vulnerable, but areas of heavy sage, buckbrush and piñon pines can become very volatile, creating fast-moving fires. The fires we saw last year proved that no house is completely safe, but fire breaks and the other pre-emptive measures can reduce that threat. We hear people say, "If the fire comes ..." It's not "if," it's "when." Clear Creek Canyon has not burned in more than 60 years. We know we have to do what we can to protect ourselves and our properties.

How is the Nevada Fire Safe Council funded?

Funding for the Nevada Fire Safe Council was come a variety of ways. Our first funding, in 2000, was \$1,000 from the interagency wildland fire protection program - Sierra Front. The primary funding from 2001 to present has come primarily through the National Fire Plan via the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service and Nevada Division of Forestry. In the past two years, we have gained financial support from the Nevada

Insurance Industry and our growing NFSC membership of more than 1,600. The dwindling and potential losses in support through the National Fire Program has caused the NFSC to look toward the state of Nevada to assist in the financial shortfalls.

How would a group of neighbors go about starting a FSC chapter?

Call the NFSC at (775) 322-2413.

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