

HISTORY OF WILDFIRE IN THE TAOS VALLEY

Wildfire has always been a part of living in the Taos Valley.

- Our forests are adapted to living with fire.
- But since late 1800s, fires have been reduced from our watersheds by human activities like grazing and fire suppression.
- Today, wildfires tend to be larger and more intense.



Historic image of an area burned by wildfire in 1842 in the Taos Ski Basin. Photo: Taos Ski Valley Inc. and Mickey Blake.



A smoke column from the Hondo Fire rises over Taos. Photo: Taos News, 1996

With recent changes in climate, rapid population growth, increasing residential development, and overstocked forests, communities are placed at a heightened risk to wildfire.

STAYING SAFE WITH SMOKE AND FIRE

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE...THERE'S FIRE

Since fire is a natural component of our landscape, we must be prepared for the immediate consequences.

As we use more natural and prescribed fires (like the McGaffey fire) to help improve forest health and protect our communities, it is important to know that not all smoke is bad. Fire is a restorative process that - in the right conditions - can help keep our forests healthy and our communities safe.



A smoke column rises from the McGaffey Fire in 2016. Photo: Danny Chavea, US Forest Service.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Learn more about living with fire in Taos County - <https://arcg.is/1548rf>
- Prepare your home - www.firewise.org
- Prepare your family - www.wildlandfirersg.org
- Protect your health from smoke - www.env.nm.gov/air-quality/fire-smoke-links
- Get involved with the Taos County CWPP Core Team - Nathan Sanchez, Taos County, 575-737-6443; nathan.sanchez@taoscounty.org



The Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire Program is funded through the U.S. Forest Service and private foundations. In accordance with Federal law and the U.S.D.A. policy, this institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

PLANNING FOR WILDFIRE IN TAOS COUNTY

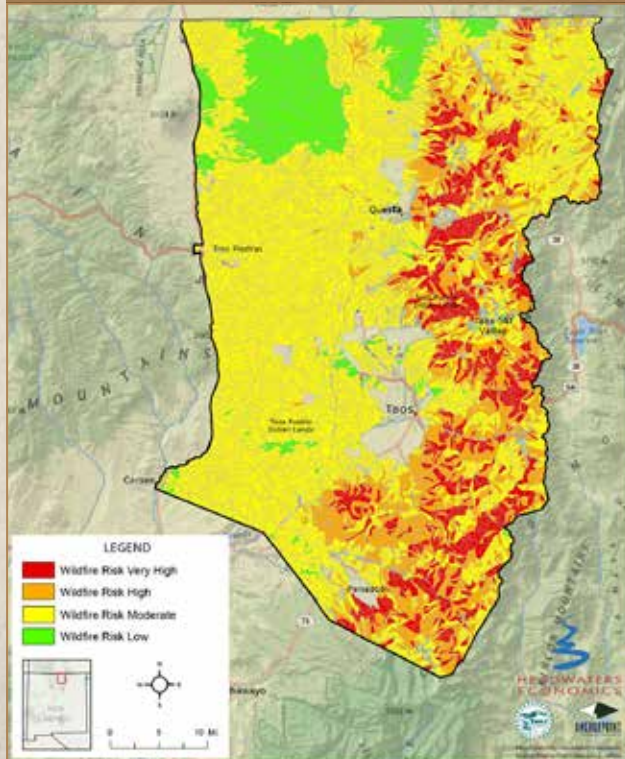


ASSESSING RISK

Taos County's undeveloped wildland-urban interface (WUI) is primed for growth, further increasing wildfire risks.

- In 2016, Taos County and the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire program developed a wildfire risk assessment.
- The risk assessment identifies areas of high to low concern for wildfire within the county.
- The risk assessment can help Taos County plan and prioritize resources, future development, and public education to reduce wildfire risk.

Wildfire Risk within Taos County's Wildland (Unbuilt Environment)



Cover photos: Top: Encebado Fire, U.S. Forest Service, Ignacio Peralta. Below Left: CPAW. Below right: Mark Schuetz

MANAGING FIRE FOR RESILIENT LANDSCAPES

Frequent, low intensity fires can improve forest health and reduce the risk of larger fires.



Partners in Taos County are using prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, and other tools to help reduce hazardous fuels, such as at this site in El Salto. Photo: Mark Schuetz

Forest managers use fire as a tool to help prevent larger fires and keep forests healthy.

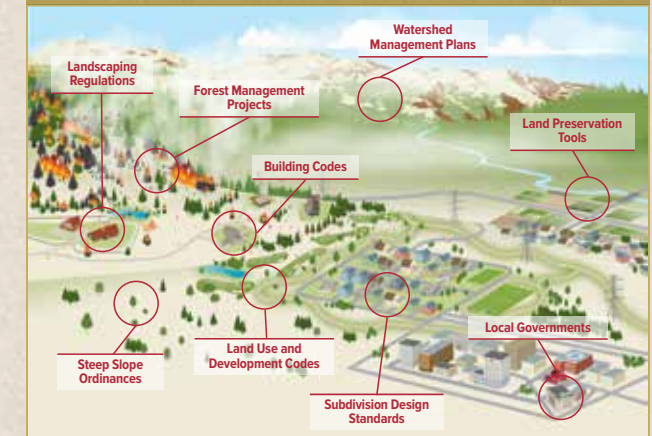
- Prescribed fires are carefully planned, ignited, and managed to reduce fuels in a certain area.
- Naturally-ignited fires, such as the McGaffey Fire in 2016, are sometimes allowed to burn when fuel and weather conditions are safe.

PLANNING TO LIVE WITH FIRE

Effective land use planning is an important tool to reduce wildfire risk by helping:

- manage where and how development can occur in fire-prone lands,
- establish standards for landscaping and defensible space around homes,
- complement larger forest management plans.

Community Tools for Wildfire Planning



NEIGHBORHOOD INNOVATORS

There are several Firewise communities in Taos County, each taking proactive steps to prepare their homes for wildfire and reduce the risk of loss, including:

- reducing vegetation around homes,
- placing firewood and propane tanks away from homes,
- clearing tree limbs, and
- using non-flammable building materials and landscaping.

Public land managers and other partners are collaborating on additional efforts, such as forest thinning, prescribed fires, and forest health treatments.

