

The Grande at Burrs Mill HOA

Firewise Community Plan

Approved by The Firewise Committee October 29, 2014

Joe Bucci and Barbara Potts
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FIREWISE COMMUNITY PLAN
The Grande at Burrs Mill
SOUTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP, BURLINGTON COUNTY
NEW JERSEY

Firewise Communities/USA Enrollment
Prepared: August 2014

The Firewise Communities/USA program is designed to provide an effective management approach for preserving wildland living aesthetics. This wildfire safety action plan is a cooperative effort between The Grande at Burrs Mill and Southampton Township to guide wildfire protection activities from 2014-2019 in selected areas of The Grande at Burrs Mill in Southampton Township and are appropriate to meet stated objectives to reduce the risk from wildfire. This plan is voluntary and, where possible, a guide to increase public safety in The Grande at Burrs Mill.

Nicole Miller	The Grande at Burrs Mill HOA / President
Dan Padden	The Grande at Burrs Mill HOA / Treasurer
John Odrisio	The Grande at Burrs Mill HOA / Secretary
Tom Rathjen	Chief-Hampton Lakes Fire Department
Joe Bucci	The Grande at Burrs Mill Firewise Committee
Barbara Potts	The Grande at Burrs Mill Firewise Committee
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Community Wildfire Protection Goals & Objectives:

- Obtain National Firewise Communities/USA program recognition.
- Promote awareness and increase knowledge among the residents of The Grande at Burrs Mill concerning wildfire and need for forest fire management and wildfire mitigation.
- Implement a wildfire safety action plan.
- Maintain fuel breaks around the perimeter of the community.
- Develop defensible space around high risk homes.
- Develop an Emergency Evacuation Plan in conjunction with the Southampton Township Emergency Management Coordinator and Volunteer Fire Department personnel.

Community Description:

The Grande at Burrs Mill is a community located within Southampton Township, Burlington County, New Jersey. The Grande at Burrs Mill was initially developed in 2005 and now has 55 homes, approximately 181 residents, with the entire tract area of 283.857 + or - acres. It is significant to note that The Grande at Burrs Mill is located within a classic Wildland/Urban Interface area that is part of the Pine lands National Reserve. This creates a risk of wildfire that could threaten the homes and residents of this community.

It is well documented that the Pine Barrens are highly flammable. The New Jersey Pine Barrens are 1.1 million acres in size and occupy 22% of New Jersey. Since 1924 major fires (those comprising more than 100 acres in size) generally occur between April and June because of low relative humidity, higher temperatures and gusty winds. Although fire frequency since 1950 has been reduced, it has contributed to the accumulation of standing fuel materials and the risk of more catastrophic fire incidents. On the average, there are approximately 15-20 small fires in Southampton Township each season which primarily occur at the interface of backyards.

Home Ignition Zone (Defined as the home and its immediate surroundings up to 200 feet)

Homes become vulnerable to wildfire based on the interrelationship with everything, especially the vegetation in its surroundings. To prevent a home ignition, a homeowner must eliminate the wildfire's potential to spread with his/her home. This can be accomplished by interrupting the natural path a fire takes by removing flammable items such as dead vegetation from the area immediately around the structure and reducing the volume of live vegetation. Both tasks will affect the intensity of the wildfire as it enters the Home Ignition Zone.

Forest Description

The current forest area surrounding The Grande at Burrs Mill is comprised primarily of pine

trees (4-8 inches in diameter) and approximately 35-40 feet high. There are also oak trees interspersed with the pines that are approximately the same height and thickness, along with mixed lowland pines along with hardwood swamp in areas. A variety of understory shrubs are also present underneath these trees. In most sections of the forest these shrubs are dense and provide a significant ladder fuel. In general, the forest is healthy; however, there has been a periodic infestation of gypsy moth, which has caused mortality in the oaks. More recently, there has been an increase in the incidence of pine mortality as a result of southern pine beetle infestations.

Wildland / Urban Interface Community Hazard Assessment

(WUI- the line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels)

One of the most important elements of an effective Firewise Community Plan is the implementation of a Wildland / Urban Interface Community Hazard Assessment. This is an assessment of fire risk to homes and structures within the community when such structures are located immediately adjacent to forested areas and homes with trees and shrubs that may be of a flammable variety that pose a more significant threat during a fire incident. A preliminary hazard assessment of the general area was conducted in 2014 by the Forest Fire Service, which was based on fuels and past fire history. A more detailed evaluation of the risks to structures will be conducted of the perimeter and most threatened areas of The Grand at Burrs Mill by fire professionals from the New Jersey Fire Service, assisted by trained volunteers, during 2014. Information collected using the fire assessment form will be uploaded into a database that will determine the risk and threat levels targeted areas.

Available Fire Protection / Creation of a Possible Water Source

- A primary goal of the GBM is to work with local fire officials to discuss the possibilities of installing a well on a HOA owned common area with the capabilities to replenish the water supply of their fire fighting equipment. Submit the plan to the HOA so that they may obtain bids for this project.

Fuel Break Implementation Plan

A goal of The Grande at Burrs Mill Community Plan is to reduce the density, distribution, and arrangement of vegetation to prevent the spread and intensity of wildfire in the firebreaks immediately adjacent to homes and structures in the targeted areas.

Recommendations:

- Remove dead trees and logs from targeted areas (identifying, assessing, and selecting areas to be treated will be an ongoing process throughout implementation of this plan).
- Treat understory shrubs by moving/and or cutting to minimize the presence of ladder fuels.

Plans:

- Develop a request to the Pine Lands Commission for permission to create a perimeter fuel break.
- Create and implement perimeter fuel breaks on HOA owned open space surrounding the community.
- Meet with Brendan T Byrne State Forest Superintendent to discuss fuel break development on adjacent property.
- Create a map illustrating fuel break areas.
- Identify trees (dead, diseased, fallen) on private property that are deemed as being threat to spreading any potential fire that may occur in The Grande at Burrs Mill
- Cut and remove all shrubs in the fuel break areas that are immediately adjacent to homes/structures in targeted areas in the community.

Follow-up Maintenance:

- Future Maintenance should consist of reducing understory shrub growth at regular intervals. Treatments such as mowing or prescribed burning (if applicable and feasible) should be applied every 2 to 3 years. The goal is to prevent the existing vegetation from developing at a density and height that will contribute to wildfire intensity and spread. Repeated treatments over time should help reduce the density of vegetation and gradually change the species composition to more desirable lower growing shrubs.

Firewise Awareness Activities

The success of the Firewise Community Plan requires the involvement and support of the residents in The Grand at Burrs Mill. Efforts must be made to make the community aware of the program and the work that is being done to ensure the safety of their homes.

Firewise Activities: Completed/Planned

Members of The Grande at Burrs Mill HOA, and interested residents met with state and regional officials from the New Jersey Fire Service to obtain information about the state and national Firewise programs. In response to that meeting, a Firewise Committee was established and volunteered to assist in developing an action plan for a Firewise Community Plan. Following is a brief summary of the activities completed and planned.

COMPLETED

2014:

- The Grande at Burrs Mill HOA and Firewise Committee met with local and state representatives from the NJ Forest Fire Service in November 2013 to obtain information about Firewise programs.
- Formation of Firewise Committee and selection of Committee Chair.
- Firewise web page added to The Grande at Burrs Mill website that contains awareness materials and links to Firewise-related websites.

- Firewise Committee members met with the local fire warden to address the fire threat in forest areas adjacent to homes in the community.
- A Firewise email account was established that would allow residents to send questions and communicate with the Firewise Committee.
- Door to door delivery of the “Do You Have What It Takes” folder explaining Firewise / USA activities and introducing members of the Firewise Committee to residents.

PLANNED: 2014-2019

- A Fire Hazard Assessment will be conducted of targeted perimeter areas of The Grande at Burrs Mill and high-risk homes/structures within the community. This will be done by fire professionals, accompanied and assisted by members of Firewise Committee, and possibly HLFD Explorers. All volunteers assisting the fire professionals will receive instructions on how to conduct a fire hazard assessment.
- On completion of assessments all of the home create a color coded map depicting the risk and hazard levels.
- A documented Firewise Community Plan will be finalized by members of the Firewise Committee and distributed to all committee members and ST EM Coordinator for comment and suggestions. This plan will be distributed to state and local fire wardens and Southampton Township for their input. Sources used in creating the plan included “A Guide to Developing a Firewise Community Plan” and another community plan from New Jersey.
- Create a map depicting the location of the GBM in the township of Southampton as well as in the Pine Lands area.
- Firewise Committee will meet with the Southampton Township Emergency Management Coordinator to review the responsibilities of his department and the local volunteer fire departments.
- Required paperwork completed and submitted to obtain Firewise/USA Community Recognition for The Grande at Burrs Mill.
- The Grande at Burrs Mill to receive certificate and signage designating community as part of the National Firewise Communities/USA program.
- Completed Firewise Plan will be added to The Grande at Burrs Mill’s website.
- Brochures/Pamphlets available from www.firewise.org, www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/fire will be obtained and distributed to residents.
- Firewise Committee to meet with Brendan T. Byrne State Forest Superintendent to discuss areas around The Grande at Burrs Mill that are located in the Natural Lands section.
- Clean up and removal of dead wood and vegetation to reduce wildfire risk.
- Investigate the possibility of converting the existing HOA owned Irrigation wells as a water source for replenishing fire equipment.
- Work with the HOA to identify hazardous trees that contribute to wildfire risk.
- A Firewise Community Day will be held to increase participation and awareness among The Grande at Burrs Mill residents.

- Develop a perimeter fuel break in high-risk areas at The Grande at Burrs Mill. Work with property owners to secure access and permission to complete this task.
- Recognition of The Grande at Burrs Mill as a Firewise Community/USA by Southampton Township by Resolution.
- Continued education of the Firewise committee for the purpose of keeping informed on the latest means of fire prevention for our community and outreach to other neighboring communities.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

In the event of a wildfire that requires the evacuation of affected residents, an evacuation plan, developed in conjunction with the Southampton Township Emergency Management Coordinator and local volunteer Fire Department Personnel, will be implemented.

The process involving the declaration of an emergency evacuation in the event of a forest fire, storm, or other serious incident begins with the notification of the Southampton Township Coordinator by the appropriate agency. The EM Coordinator then works with the Burlington County OEM Coordinator and local fire officials to evaluate the seriousness of the event and to determine if an emergency evacuation is required. Residents will be notified via a Reverse 911 system from Southampton Township and/or The Grande at Burrs Mill with information about the evacuation as well as directions to a safe location until the emergency event is over.

To assist residents in preparing for an emergency evacuation event, The Grande at Burrs Mill will develop a pamphlet entitled "Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation Instructions". This pamphlet will be then attached to the Community website. It will also be available upon request to any HOA resident.

Community Wildfire Assessment Map

This map will be included in the Grande at Burrs Mill Community Plan when it becomes available from the New Jersey Fire Service. The map is based on the Fire Hazard Assessment that will be conducted.

Firewise Awareness Resources

Following is a list of online resources that are useful in learning about Firewise Programs.

WEB SITES

www.firewise.org

www.fireplantselector.org

www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/fire

www.Ready.gov/wildfires

www.ReadyForWildfires.org