



KENAI

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Gabriel and Council Members

THROUGH: Paul Ostrander, City Manager

FROM: Tony Prior, Fire Chief

DATE: May 10, 2022

SUBJECT: **Resolution 2022-34 Adopting the Updated 2022 Kenai Peninsula Borough Community Wildfire Protection Plan.**

The City of Kenai participated as one of the 17 communities to develop a single Borough-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). I was one of the Core Team Members who participated in putting together the plan over a two-year period. The plan combined the 17 individual plans into one all-encompassing plan that addresses the landscapes across the peninsula.

The CWPP project was driven by a dedicated core team made of local, state, federal agencies as well as non-government agencies and residents. The team was tasked with decision making, data sharing, experience and communication with the communities. The core team conducted five meetings in addition to regular emails or conference calls. The project was broadly promoted throughout the borough, including public venues, comprehensive meetings with individual fire departments, tribal entities, and critical infrastructure utilities and transportation agencies. The core team participated in a six-week review period to comment on the working draft. We finished with what we feel is a very comprehensive plan that will guide us with mitigation efforts and future planning to make our City and other communities on the Peninsula prepared for the potential of future fire events resulting in communities that are Firewise.

The following information is specific for the City of Kenai and was composed of a previous CWPP in 2006, as well as needs from the changing dynamics of our landscape today, post beetle kill. These items are based on Wildland Firefighting concerns and recommendations are as follows.

Some of the areas of concern include the following:

- Kenai River Delta (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Treed gullies (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Hilly terrain (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- ROW - north end of city (along Spur Road) (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Historic portion of town (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Areas behind Sears Elementary and Mtn View Elementary (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Auk Subdivision (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Beaver Creek Drainage (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).

- State land north of Spur Highway (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006)

Recommended mitigation efforts include:

- Support individual property owners making properties Firewise:
 - o Targeted and coordinated public outreach campaign focused on defensible space, structure hardening etc. Utilize community events. Repeat messaging.
 - o Initiate a community program for hazardous fuel reduction- chipper days, subdivision cleanup etc.
 - o Develop home assessment program using an NFPA 1144 methodology or similar.
 - o Consider monetary reimbursement to support landowners with costs associated with clearing property.
- Make escape route a priority for North Kenai. Consider paving.
- Create fire breaks using mechanized approaches:
 - o Create 300-foot fuel break around Kenai refinery. Remove beetle killed trees.
 - o Identify and implement (in conjunction with oil and gas operators) strategic fuels treatments around oil and gas infrastructure and Right of Ways throughout Kenai Gas Field areas.
 - o Create fuel breaks along edges of existing subdivisions.
- Remove hazardous fuels along Beaver Creek Road
- Clear dead and dying trees out of creek gullies.
- Provide incentives (tax break, insurance reduction) to homeowners for implementing Firewise techniques (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Establish new slash disposal site (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Identify contractors who can carry out tree removal (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Pursue adoption of the International WUI Code (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Educate land developers, realtors etc., on Firewise techniques (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Provide fire prevention education at the Kenai Visitors Center (targeting tourists) (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Improve public notifications of emergency situations (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Educate residents on evacuation district procedures (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Address concerns related to smoke on highway as part of education campaign (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).

Fire Department Concerns:

- Equipment needs- tanker and wildland engine with a CAFS unit (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Increase water supply to air retardant base (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Expand number of firefighting water storage or drafting sites (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Recruit and train more personnel (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Build a substation in Beaver Creek Area (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).
- Provide National Incident Management training (NIMS) (Kenai Area CWPP, 2006).

We have already begun efforts that will help individual homeowners to begin their work of Firewise and enable them to remove slash from their property. This slash, if not removed from around homes, has the greatest potential to contribute to a fast spreading wildfire with potential loss of homes and subdivisions. The opening of the slash disposal site adjacent to the soccer fields will begin this process for homeowners.



We have also identified the gully between N and S Spruce Street and N and S Forest that borders multiple subdivision as one of the first gullies that we will begin mitigation efforts to remove beetle kill trees.

We anticipate an agreement between the City and the Alaska Division of Forestry that will support our efforts in the areas listed above through financial reimbursement along with assistance in contract development for tree removal. We hope to have further legislation for your approval very soon on this and our goal is to provide opportunities for homeowners while moving the City forward in a way that protects our infrastructure and protects personal property of businesses and individuals. In conclusion, all of these efforts result in the safety of everyone who lives, works, and plays in the City of Kenai and on the Kenai Peninsula and we are asking your support by adopting the updated 2022 KPB CWPP as a plan that directly affects the City of Kenai.

