

WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE FIRE PROTECTION PLAN

Valley County Idaho
Title 10 Chapter 7

TRIPOD VIEW

A proposed subdivision in Parts of NE Sec. 13 T10N, R2E B.M. BY:

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Purpose

Valley County's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) acknowledges that wildfire hazard areas exist throughout the county. Therefore, wildfire mitigation actions are prudent to enable safe habitation in these fire environments. The existence of said plans will assist Valley County Planning and Zoning Commission and the structural fire districts plus the wildland fire agencies in satisfying the current subdivision regulation, subsection 10-3-2-6D7 of Valley County's Code of Ordinances (Ord. 10-07, 8-26-2010).

The Wildland Urban Interface (hereafter referred to as WUI) consists of *the area where developed lands interact with undeveloped lands and include the infrastructure and natural resources communities rely on for existence*. The character of the WUI ranges from urban areas adjoining wildlands to isolated ranches or cabins. Since 1993, the number of structures in the WUI has doubled and soon will triple. As the number of structures in the WUI continues to increase, concerns over public safety and the protection of improvements increase. The highest human-caused ignition sources in WUI are miscellaneous and debris burning.

Executive Summary

The proposed subdivision consists of a parcel of land (approximately 50 plus acres in size) that is planned to be divided into twelve (12) various sized Lots that will eventually add more structures to the Valley County WUI. This *Fire Protection Plan* will assist in providing recommendations to minimize the wildfire risk to the property and proposed individual Lots.

The property that is planned for this proposed subdivision is approximately 55% forested with the rest either sagebrush or grass dominate ground cover. It lies within Valley County's Geographic Hazard Assessment Wildland Urban Interface **high** level condition for overall wildfire risk. There is *NO* structural fire protection district designated within the High Valley area,

General treatments to be completed to mitigate the wildfire hazard and provide protection for future homes are outlined in **Section B *Wildfire Risk Mitigation*** portion of this document and include the following:

1. The shaded fuel break along Haven Ranch Road must be completed before the final plat is granted or the work to be accomplished financially guaranteed.
2. Maintain the current grazing regime throughout the proposed subdivision area. An individual Lot owner will be responsible for installing a fence to keep cattle from grazing.

3. Individual Lot owners will be responsible for constructing their driveway and site for a residence or RV. The private driveway must meet Valley County standards and provide a shaded fuel break to meet the same specifications set for Haven Ranch Road. The future homesite must have Defensible Space Zones installed upon construction of the pad site (see attached Defensible Space Zones in Appendix).

Section A *Wildfire Risk Assessment:*

1. Site Description:

Tripod View proposed subdivision lies within parts of NE Sec. 13, T10N, R2E, B.M. and is owned by Steven and Jonna Emerson.

The development lies in High Valley, an area about seven (7) air miles northeast of Ola and consists of about 50 acres. Year around access is provided only from Ola via the High Valley Road, a county gravel surface road then onto Dry Buck Road, a native surface county road. There is a Class II stream that flows through the eastern portion of Lots 1 and 2. This stream flows underneath Haven Ranch Road at the entrance of the development. There is also an intermittent Class II stream that flows through parts of Lots 3 and 4 which only flows during spring snow melt. Both streams are tributaries of Little Squaw Creek. The proposed subdivision consists of twelve (12) buildable lots ranging from 1.69 to 5.21 acres in size.

2. Existing Vegetative and Fuel Hazard Conditions:

Approximately 27 acres have a 100% canopy conifer tree cover consisting of Ponderosa pine (95%) and Douglas-fir (5%) with a few Grand Fir. The understory vegetation consists of Aspen, Huckleberry, snowberry, Serviceberry, and willows along with various forbs and grasses. The remaining acreage consists of sagebrush and grass with a few scattered Ponderosa pine.

The overall existing timber stand is an uneven-aged (multi-storied) stand with three basic age groups:

1. **The seedling/sapling age group:** Trees range from one foot to 25 feet tall, have diameters up to six inches D.B.H., and ages from one to 25 years. This age group is a low to medium component of the overall timber stand.

2. **The pole size age group:** Trees range in size from six to 10 inches D.B.H. and ages from 30 to 50 years. This age group is a medium component of the overall timber stand often found growing in overcrowded clumps with sapling age trees that may have up to 500 trees per acre or as individual suppressed trees growing underneath a larger tree.
3. **Overstory:** This age group was harvested as part of the larger ownership within the past 15 years, the last entry leaving good quality trees. Trees range from 10 to 25 plus inches D.B.H., heights range from 80 to over 100 feet tall, and ages range from 55 to over 100 years.

Proposed Lots 9-12 are 100% forested; Lots 6-8 range from 30 to 60% forested and the rest sagebrush; Lots 1-5 range from 10-15% forested the rest primarily sagebrush. The sagebrush cover is dense and with strong wind a fire could have flame lengths 5 to 10 feet tall.



Figure 1: Overcrowded clump of young trees typical of the Lots that are heavily forested.



Figure 2: Lots that are dominated by sagebrush with few trees.

4. Fire History

Fire history records from all jurisdiction agencies show a very low occurrence from lightning or humans caused ignitions in the past. As more structures are built the probability of human-caused ignitions will increase.

5. Existing Roads and bridges

Haven Ranch Road is an existing native surface road along the south boundary that currently serves as access for four privately owned parcels that were split off the original ranch. This road and two short spurs will be reconstructed to Valley County private road standards to provide access to all the proposed Lots. There is also an existing road north of the proposed development that serves as the main access to the main timber stand of Mr. Emerson's property.

6. Location of existing building structures and estimate of property density

Currently there are no existing structures within the proposed subdivision area. There are several structures on the adjacent privately owned property along the south boundary. **Tripod View** subdivision is planned to provide a density of one single family unit per about 3.75 acres.

7. Infrastructure that may affect wildfire risk

The timber stand consists of overcrowded clumps of young trees. The main ranch property was commercially thinned about 10-15 years ago leaving good quality fire resilient tree species. The overstory is well spaced to minimize the risk of a crown fire. There are numerous small slash piles that were not burned scattered throughout the development that were left after the harvest entry. Approximately 40% of the ground cover (eastern third of the proposed subdivision) consists of dense sagebrush where a ground fire supported by a strong wind could exhibit flames lengths 5-10 feet tall. There is limited availability of water that could be used for drafting firefighting equipment located within the development. However, there are several ponds in the area that could be utilized by aircraft for dipping and Little Squaw Creek for drafting capability.

8. Description of existing features that may assist in wildfire control.

High Valley Road and Dry Buck Road will provide good access for wild land firefighting equipment. Haven Ranch Road being reconstructed to meet Valley County private road standards in combination with the proposed *Shaded Fuel Break* installed on both sides of the road will minimize the risk of fire entering or leaving the property along the south boundary. The existing main ranch access road north of the proposed development could also provide a fire break. Along with two ponds (one south of Haven Ranch Road where it flows underneath the road and the other north of proposed Lot 7) that could be used for aircraft dipping or drafting by firefighting equipment.

9. Current structural and wildfire jurisdiction agencies

There is **no** structural fire jurisdiction for the High Valley area, the closest fire department being in Ola. The Idaho Department of Lands Southwest Area provides wildfire protection for all timber lands in the area.

Wildfire Risk Assessment Summary:

The property lies within Valley County's Geographic Hazard Assessment Wildland Urban Interface **high** level condition and the overall wildfire risk is high for the following reasons:

- The current timber stand is dense with young trees growing with crowns touching each other and limbs to the ground. Also, numerous small slash piles were left unburned after the previous timber harvest.

- There are limited water sources available on or close by the property to draft water.
- The proposed subdivision is surrounded on three sides by continuous fuel (thick timber stands in various stages of management) and dense sagebrush on the eastern side.

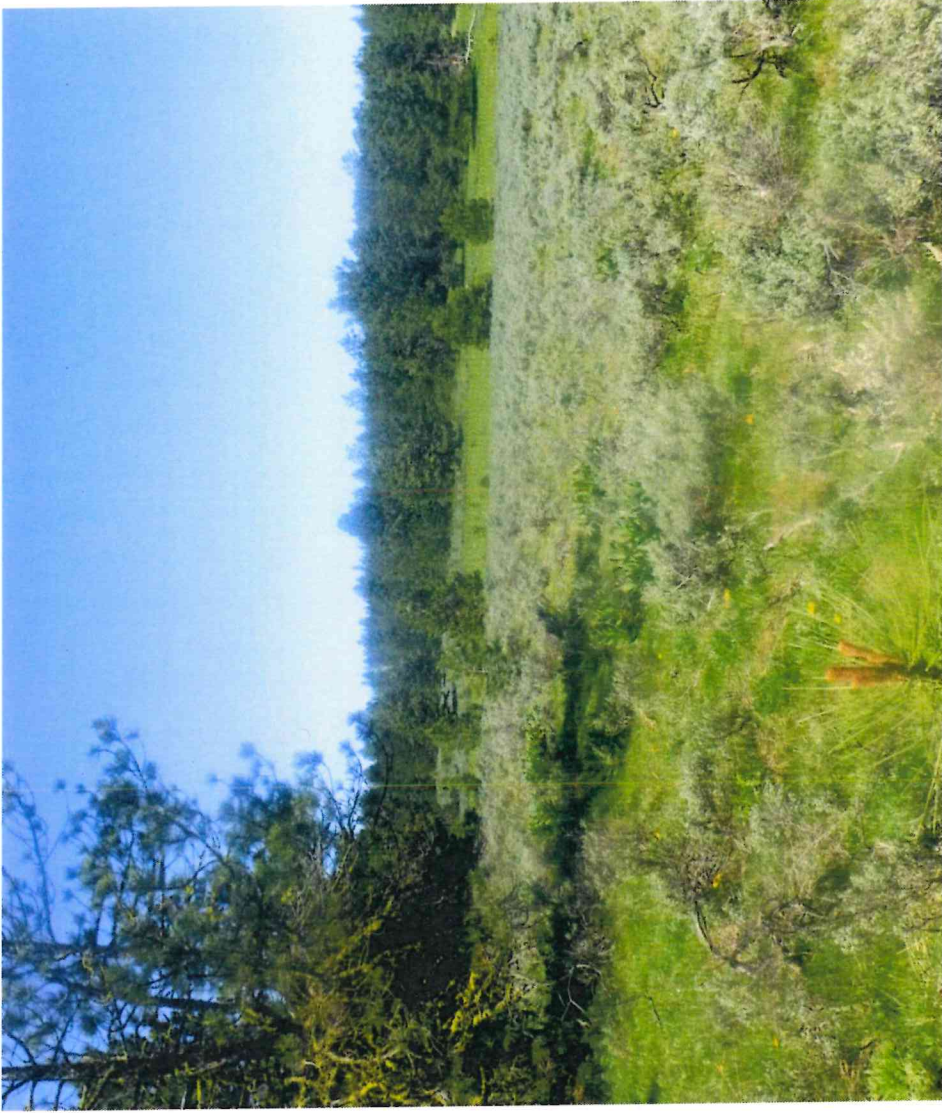


Figure 3 : Dense timber stands and heavy sagebrush layer surround the proposed subdivision.

Section B *Wildfire Risk Mitigation:*

The Fire Behavior Triangle consists of three factors that combine to determine how a fire burns—they are topography, weather, and fuels. Topography is fixed as it changes very slowly over time. Weather is highly variable and the ability to predict is somewhat limited. Fuel (anything that burns and changes from season-to-season or time of day) is the only factor that can be manipulated to minimize wildfire risk.

1. Access-Planned ingress and egress routes

High Valley Road and Dry Buck Road are the primary access routes as well as the primary escape route to travel away from the property. The Haven Ranch Road and two short spur roads will be the primary roads within the development and must be reconstructed to meet County private road standards with the appropriate turnarounds installed at each end. However, these roads will still be a dead-end road which can pose problems if evacuation is necessary.

2. Water supply for structural and wildland fire responses

Water supply for structural fire will depend on either the well located on the individual Lot or what is supplied by a Structural Fire Department if responding. Water supply for wildfire could be provided by aircraft dipping from any nearby ponds or engines drafting from nearby streams.

3. Estimated response time and distance for jurisdictional fire agencies

The estimate response time from the Ola Rural Fire District is at least 45 minutes depending on weather conditions. The IDL Southwest Area response is even greater with engines coming from Boise. The extended response time could be critical in stopping or slowing wildfire from impacting residences.

4. Proposed internal fire protection systems.

No internal sprinkler systems within future residences are planned currently.

5. Proposed infrastructure (including driveways, signage, and power connections).

The future driveways to each residence should not exceed 10% grade, be at least 12 feet running surface wide excluding shoulders, have an unobstructed vertical clearance of 13.5 feet, and should be maintained to support fire apparatus up to 70,000 pounds.

New structures are strongly urged to utilize building materials meeting a standard of fire resistance advocated by the Valley County Building Department and the International Fire Code (IFC).

All new residences will have the address number posted as per Valley County standards (i.e., numbers posted at the entrance to the driveway or on the house and the numbers must be at least 3 and 1/2 inches tall with a reflective coloring).

Electrical power is planned to be provided to the individual Lots via an underground service.

6. Evacuation and Pre-incident planning.

A pre-incident action plan will be developed and instituted in the Community Covenants (CCR's). This action plan should address the escape route and evacuation plan to encourage pre-planning by residents for preparation in the event of an incident. Every five years the IDL Southwest Area fire staff and the future residents should formulate an assessment of the existing structures and vegetation that will aid in addressing whether the current action plan needs to be updated.

7. Planned vegetation treatments to reduce fuel loads.

Vegetation treatments that need to be completed to reduce the **High** Wildland Urban Interface Hazard Assessment level include the following:

- A. Install a *Shaded Fuel Break* on both sides of Haven Ranch Road and the two short spurs while the roads are being reconstructed to Valley County standards. The shaded fuel break should be at least 20-30 feet wide on each side utilizing the following specifications:
 - Young trees (i.e., sapling/pole size age group) leave trees spaced about 12-15 feet apart to obtain a minimum of 6-8 foot live crown distance. Prune

these trees at least 6-8 feet above ground level of the lowest branch leaving at least 40% of the tree height in live crown.

- Overstory age group leave trees spaced about 20-25 feet apart to obtain a minimum of 10 live crown distance. Prune these trees 8-10 feet above ground level of the lowest branch.
- Masticate all slash created from the thinning and pruning activity plus any dead material lying on the ground that is less than 10 inches DBH and 50% sound wood. Masticate all the small slash piles that were left from the previous timber harvest.

B. Driveway construction will be the responsibility of the individual Lot owner.

Construction specifications should meet the minimum standards as stated in #5 above. In addition, installing a *Shaded Fuel Break* on both sides of the driveway to minimize fire risk and the ability for evacuation is necessary.

C. Future Lot owners should install the following **Firewise Defensible Space Zone** guidelines as the pad is constructed for a future structure or parking a RV as they will greatly minimize the risk of loss from wildfire.

The recommended **Firewise Defensible Space Zone** treatments are as follows:

1. **Immediate Zone-** 0 to 5 feet around the future building structure.
 - i. Recommend using rock or gravel instead of flammable vegetation or mulches next to the house.
 - ii. Trim branches from large trees or shrubs that overhang the home, porch, or deck.
 - iii. Do not stack firewood on or under decks.
2. **Intermediate Zone-** the next 5 to 30 feet from the building structures.
 - i. The landscape vegetation should consist of a well-maintained greenbelt. Utilize native low-lying plants that are fire resilient (visit idahofirewise.org for list). Favor deciduous trees and shrubs over evergreens, although Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir can be fire resilient due to their thick bark. Keeping this zone green as much as possible in the hot dry summer months will also minimize surface fire from reaching the buildings.
 - ii. Shrubs can be limited to small clusters or groups of a few each to break up the continuity of vegetation across the landscape.
 - iii. Place propane tanks on gravel or concrete pads at least 30 feet from structures and surround them with non-flammable fencing.

3.Extended Zone- the next 30 to 100 feet from the building structures.

- i. Space trees to have a minimum of 15-20 feet between the crowns.
- ii. Remove the ladder fuel by pruning the lower branches at least 6-10 feet from the ground not to exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height.
- iii. Remove dead trees and shrubs. Also remove large accumulations of ground litter/debris.

8. Long-term maintenance schedule to sustain fuel treat effectiveness.

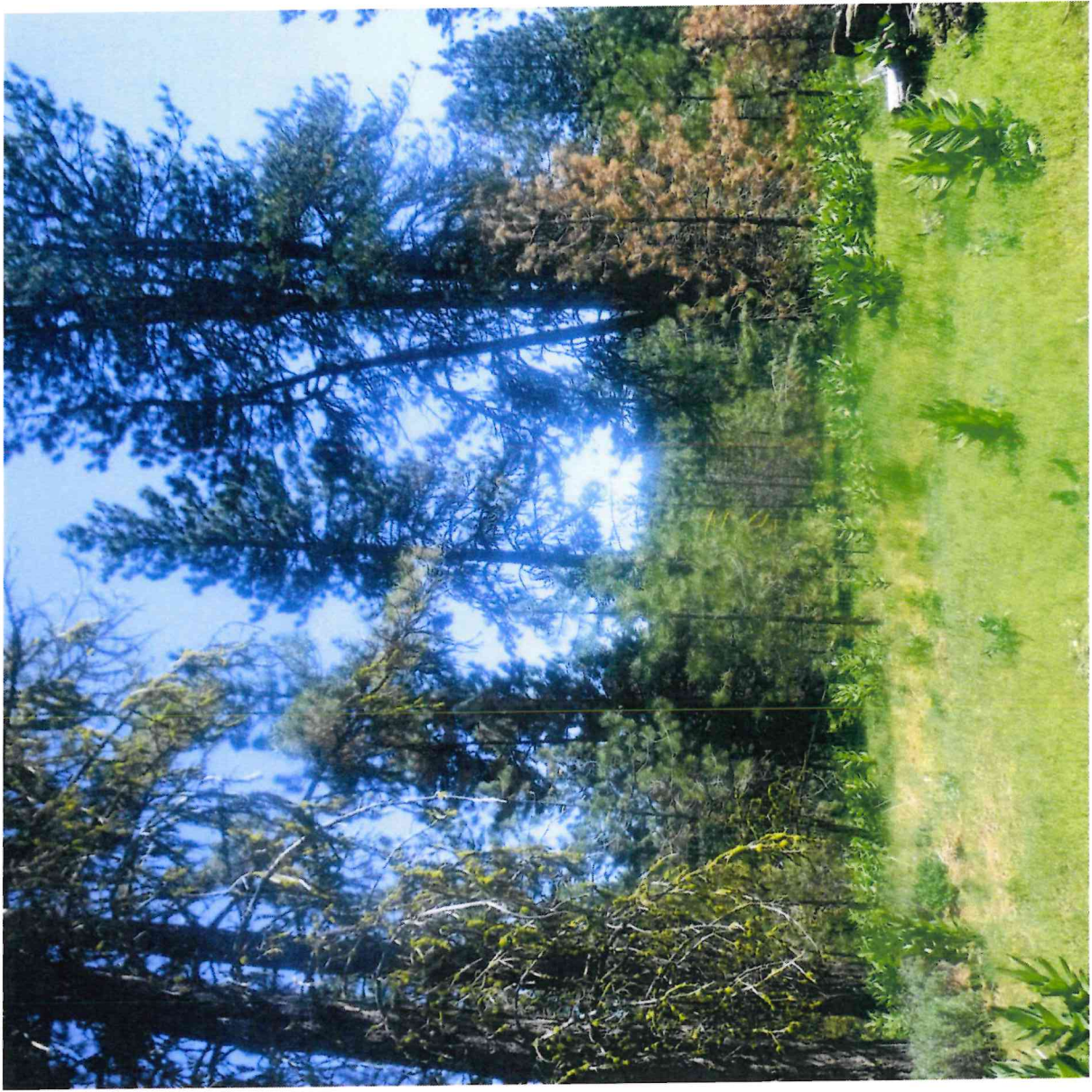
- Maintain the current grazing regime to minimize the amount of fuel loading and height of grasses.
- Promote the opportunity to maintain or return to native plant species and resistance to fire (such as Ponderosa pine, Western Larch, and Douglas-fir).
- Keep the shrubs and tree branches cut back along Haven Ranch Road and future driveways to provide good access for firefighting equipment.
- Future Lot owners should thin the timber stand or reduce the sagebrush density to reduce fuel loading which will ultimately minimize wildfire risk.
- Woody debris and vegetation encroachment within the 100' zone of each structure will be reduced annually. This may be accomplished by the homeowner, during a community workday, or by a professional contractor hired by the homeowner.
- No debris burning will be allowed during the closed burn season (May 10- October 20) without a approved burn permit. Fire pits at the residence site, if installed should be maintained to prevent a fire from escaping the structure. Recommend using metal containers for the fire pit.
- Periodically (1-5 years) the current Lot owner or HOA meet with the respective structural and/or wildland fire organizations meet to review trends and projections of future fire risk and fire risk reduction capabilities to ensure that mitigation measures are adequate.



Portion of Haven Ranch Road that needs reconstruction to meet county standards and a shaded fuel break installed on both sides of the road.



Small slash piles that were left from the previous harvest that need to be masticated or disposed of to reduce fuel load.



Thinning of the overcrowded younger trees will minimize wildfire risk and improve the health of the trees (reduce mortality losses from bark beetles like the red needle trees at right).



Minimizing the density of the sagebrush by providing openings where grasses can grow will reduce the continuity of the tall shrubs to carry a fire into the trees.