

Chapter 4. Regional Focus Area Recommendations

The two primary goals of this Regional Wildfire Protection Plan are to:

- 1) Provide general recommendations for the southwest Utah region;
- 2) Provide guidelines and direction for the preparation of county and local CWPPs.

Although county guidelines are included, specific recommendations for each community were not designed to be part of this process as the needs for each community will vary depending on local fuels, topography, organization, public knowledge of the issues, and the desire to address those issues.

4.1 FOCUS AREAS

The Color Country Interagency Fire Center Fuels Committee has identified the general location of ten “Focus Areas” within the southwest Utah region. These focus areas are identified in Table 4.1. The selection of these specific areas was based on the need for fuels reductions as understood by fuels specialists and fire wardens, risk levels in the Regional Wildfire Protection Plan risk assessment, values at risk in the area, firefighting concerns including access and evacuation routes, the presence of Communities At Risk (CARs), and local interest in the community documented by having a Community Wildfire protection Plan in place.

The complete list of Communities At Risk (CARs), by county, was presented in Chapter One. The list of CARs contains additional areas not focused on in this chapter. In addition, it is recommended that more detailed analysis should be accomplished on all of the CARs.

The Color Country Interagency Fire Center Fuels Committee has not prioritized these ten focus areas. The Committee determined that to do so would have the effect of minimizing the fact that every one of these areas is in need of treatment and all are of concern.

Section 4.2 contains descriptive information about the focus area boundaries and general description of each of the ten focus areas including vegetation, known values at risk, and firefighting/access concerns. Each focus area also includes a list of general goals resulting from activities and treatments for the area.

Goals common to all treatment areas include fuels reduction, public education, and increases in equipment and training available to firefighting personnel.

Goals that are generally applicable to all of the focus areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Protection of human life, firefighter and public safety as the highest priority.
- Public education and partnerships with citizens or community-centered approaches

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to manage fire risks and hazards in WUI areas located in the focus area, including effort aimed towards the implementation and maintenance of defensible space projects to reduce risk to homes and personal property.

- Protection of high value resources and watersheds through fuels reduction treatments as determined locally.
- Restoration and maintenance of ecosystems consistent with land uses and historic fire regimes. Restoration of vegetation to the appropriate Condition Classes and Fire Regimes.
- Maintenance and/or improvement of fire prevention and road/structure identification signage. Dissemination of fire restriction information through appropriate signage and/or visitor contacts when necessary.
- Improvement of wildland firefighting equipment, training and information for volunteer fire departments located in the focus area, including the improvement of GIS and road data.

There are five region-wide priorities that were determined by the Core Team to apply to all focus areas. These are:

1. Protect human life
2. Firefighter and public safety
3. Equipment access
4. Protection of infrastructure
5. Reduce cheatgrass occurrence after wildfire

Also presented are recommendations for potential treatments in each of the focus areas. These recommendations were developed by the Color Country Interagency Fire Center Fuels Committee.

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TABLE 4.1 - SOUTHWESTERN UTAH REGIONAL FOCUS AREAS			
Focus Area Name	Watershed Area	Community At Risk Name(s) Within Focus Area	Lead Agency
Central Dixie Deer	Upper Santa Clara River Watershed (HUC5)	Brookside/Central Mountain Meadows Pine Valley	U.S. Forest Service
New Harmony	Ash Creek Watershed (HUC5)	New Harmony/New Harmony Heights	Bureau of Land Management
Kolob Terrace	North Fork Virgin River (HUC5)	Kolob Terrace/Blue Springs	National Park Service
Duck Creek	Asay Creek Watershed (HUC5)	Duck Creek Area Ponderosa Estates Ponderosa Village	U.S. Forest Service
Ruby's/Bryce	Upper East Fork Sevier River Watershed (HUC5)	Ruby's Inn/Bryce Canyon/Pines/Foster	U.S. Forest Service
East Zion	North Virgin River Watershed (HUC5) [southeast portion]	East Zion Estates Little Ponderosa	State of Utah
Comstock/Farwest	Shurtz Creek-Quichapa Lake, Iron Springs Creek, Escalante Valley-Pinto Creek (HUC 5)	Newcastle Old Iron Town Far West/Comstock/Quichapah	Bureau of Land Management
Cedar/Parowan Front	Jack Rabbit Wash/Rush Lake Watershed, and Little Salt Lake Watershed (HUC5)	Cedar Highlands Cedar/Parowan Front Brian Head	U.S. Forest Service
Mammoth Creek	Mammoth Creek Watershed (HUC5)	Mammoth Creek Ireland Meadow Castle Valley Rainbow Meadow Meadow Lakes	U.S. Forest Service
Bryce Woodlands/ Sunset Cliffs	Pass Creek - Sevier River Watershed (HUC5)	Bryce Woodlands Long Valley/Canyon	Bureau of Land Management

4.2 FOCUS AREAS DESCRIPTIONS

The following list describes the ten Focus Areas presented in Table 4.1 in detail. The Color Country Interagency Fire Fuels Committee developed the descriptions for the ten focus areas, as well as the firefighting concerns and recommend potential treatment(s) for each focus area.

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Central/Dixie Deer:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

Upper Santa Clara River Watershed (HUC5) lands consist of mixed ownership, representing BLM, Forest, State and Private.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

Brookside, Central, Dixie Deer, Pine Valley, Veyo

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

This lower reaches within this watershed are composed of drought stressed and closed canopy pinyon-juniper, interior chaparral, live oak and sagebrush. Cheatgrass continues to increase and is the primary understory within the pinyon-juniper woodland and sagebrush/steppe communities. Mountain brush, ponderosa and mixed conifer are common in the upper reaches of the watershed.

Firefighting and Access Concerns:

Expanding cheatgrass increases the risk for fast moving fires, especially in dry, windy conditions. Many subdivisions have limited ingress/egress, especially the Pine Valley area, which accesses the Pine Valley Wilderness area.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$204,000.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreational resources

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Continue interagency fuel treatments that are adjacent to and within communities at risk. Such projects could include community fire plans, fuels reduction projects, and fuel breaks.
- Develop cheatgrass focus areas, to include fire tolerant vegetation and strategic fuel breaks to protect resources and communities at risk.

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Representative view of terrain and vegetation in much of the Central/Dixie Deer focus area. Note the homes in the wildland urban interface. Photo courtesy Color Country Interagency Fire Center.



View of a portion of the Dixie Deer community located in the Central/Dixie Deer focus area. Photo Courtesy Color Country Interagency Fire Center.

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Representative example of wildland urban interface concern in the Central/Dixie Deer Focus Area. Photo courtesy of Color Country Interagency Fire Center.

New Harmony:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

Ash Creek Watershed (HUC5), composed of State, Private, BLM and Forest Service lands.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

Chekshani, Kannaraville, Black Ridge Ranches, New Harmony, New Harmony Heights, Pintura.

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

Fuels are primarily composed of pinyon-juniper woodlands, chaparral, and grasslands interspersed with agricultural lands.

Firefighting and Access Concerns:

Strong diurnal winds along the Black Ridge, fueled by dense stands of pinyon-juniper, chaparral and oak along steeper slopes can increase rapid fire spread. Continual growth in urban interface areas increases human caused fire potential. Ingress/egress into developed subdivision is limited, with many individual properties having only a single dead-end road

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with little or no turnaround.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$222,755.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreational resources

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Continue ongoing mechanical fuels treatments and maintenance of existing fuel breaks through interagency fuels committee coordination.
- Work with new communities and volunteer fire departments to identify risks in WUI areas.
- Encourage landowner mitigation and defensible space work
- Increase fuels reduction along I-15 to decrease fire starts off the interstate. Such measures could include mowing and establishing fuel breaks/green stripping.



Representative example in the New Harmony focus area of treatment techniques to reduce fuel available for wildfires.
Photo courtesy Color Country Interagency Fire Center.

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Kolob Terrace:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

North Fork Virgin River (HUC5), generally consisting of Private, BLM and state lands.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

Kolob Terrace

Blue Springs

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

This area is composed of the northwestern portion of the North Fork Virgin River Watershed. Vegetation in the upper reaches of the watershed is composed primarily of mixed conifer, ponderosa pine, oak brush, chaparral, and decadent aspen. Much of the white fir within the mixed conifer vegetation type is dead or dying. Development within the focus area is increasing, with many smaller subdivisions being built within the general focus area boundary.

Firefighting and Access Concerns:

Most of the area consists of slopes greater than 20%. The steep slopes, combined with many different aspects, create extreme fire behavior and risk to firefighters. Distance to incorporated subdivisions is remote, with access from both the north and south over steep, winding roads. There are numerous narrow one-way roads into single residences. There are also several youth camps which are utilized heavily throughout the summer. Homes within this focus area are utilized almost entirely by part-year residences, many of which owners live out of state.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Zion National Park
- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$94,892.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreational resources

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Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Reduce hazardous fuels within the mixed conifer and oak brush, especially on private lands
- Develop a community fire plan for the Kolob Terrace and Blue Springs area
- Continue ongoing mechanical fuels treatment project and maintenance in conjunction with the interagency fuels committee.
- Work with individual subdivisions/communities to identify risks in WUI areas.
- Encourage landowner mitigation and defensible space work
- Educate landowners regarding ecosystem health
- Utilize stand inventory assessments to determine total biomass on potential disposal methods for fuels on private lands.
- Coordinate with Zion National Park to use prescribed fire for ecosystem restoration projects adjacent to private lands.

Duck Creek:

Focus Area Boundary:

Asay Creek Watershed (HUC5), primarily composed of private, state and Forest Service lands.

Communities at Risk:

Duck Creek Area, Ponderosa Estates, Ponderosa Village, Swains Creek, Zion View, Strawberry Valley

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

This area is composed primarily of mixed conifer and aspen. A recent spruce beetle outbreak has resulted in a huge mortality in the spruce vegetation component. There is a large component of heavy, downed ladder fuels. Highway 14 is a primary recreation corridor, with over 3 million annual visitors to area national parks.

Firefighting and Access Concern:

A primary concern is the potential for long-range spotting due to downed and standing dead fuels. Such fuels result in long duration fires, extensive fire crew needs, and long-term evacuation needs within communities. This may also result in long-term air quality impacts within south-central Utah airsheds, both from smoke and area emergency crews traveling

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on dirt roads. Heavy recreation traffic could also impede emergency response times.

Community and resource values at risk include, but are not limited to:

- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$96,987.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreational resources

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Interagency fuels projects, education and mitigation should continue throughout the focus area.
- Continued implementation of the Duck Creek Fuels Treatment Analysis will reduce fuel loads within the watershed.



Representative example of a residential structure located in the Duck Creek focus area. Note the lack of defensible space.

Photo courtesy Color Country Interagency Fire Center.

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Ruby's/Bryce:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

Upper East Fork Sevier River Watershed (HUC5), composed of private, state, Forest Service, BLM and National Park Service Lands. The primary concern within this focus area is located within the east-central portion of the watershed, located along Highway 12 and Highway 63 toward Bryce Canyon National Park.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

Ruby's Inn, Bryce Canyon, Pines, Fosters

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

This area is primarily composed of ponderosa pine, sagebrush and grasslands.

Firefighting and Access Concerns:

The Bryce Canyon area is classified as a Class 1 airshed. Firefighting and access concerns are related to heavy seasonal tourist traffic.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ruby's Inn and Bryce Canyon National Park – a primary employer for Garfield County residents
- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$96,987.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreation

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Compliment fuels reduction work being done by the Park Service and Forest Service onto Private Lands.
- Prevent fires on private lands which may spread onto federal lands.

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East Zion:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

North Virgin River Watershed (HUC5). This focus area is located in the southeast portion of the North Virgin River Watershed and is composed of state, private, BLM, National Park Service, and Forest Service lands.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

East Zion Estates, Little Ponderosa

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

Vegetation is composed primarily of oakbrush, ponderosa pine and grasslands. It is bordered on the west by Zion National Park. This area is considered a Class 1 airshed. Growth continues with small subdivisions occurring throughout the area.

Firefighting and Access Concerns:

Distance to incorporated subdivisions and individual residences' is remote, with access off Highway 9 along dirt roads. There are narrow one-way roads into most residences. Brush limits visibility along roads and to individual structures. Access to this area, when wet, makes travel almost impossible.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Zion National Park
- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$125,857.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreation

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Increase ingress/egress into private property/subdivisions.
- Work through the interagency fuels committee to strategically place fuel breaks.
- Coordinate the work being done by private land owners with the work being done by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

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- Complete demonstration Community Wildfire Protection Plan project on planned community within the Chamberlain Ranch Area.

Comstock/Far West:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

Shurtz Creek-Quichapa Lake, Iron Springs Creek, Escalante Valley-Pinto Creek (HUC 5). This focus area encompasses those areas along Highway 56, generally composed of private, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and state lands.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

Newcastle, Old Iron Town, Far West/Comstock/ Quichapah

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

Vegetation is comprised primarily of pinyon/juniper woodlands and sagebrush/steppe areas with little or no understory. The primary travel corridor is along Highway 56.

Firefighting and Access Concerns:

One of the primary concerns in this focus area is the many side roads leading to individual residences that are not clearly marked. Additionally, many subdivisions and single residences have limited access with one-way, dead-end, ingress/egress. Potential for crown fire exists within the pinyon/juniper ecotype. Visibility is limited along some travel corridors due to heavy tall brush along roads.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$138,099.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreation

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Increase visibility and create a fuel break along the Pinto Road.
- Maintain existing chainings within the watershed.

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- Continue work on individual lot assessments, wildland urban interface education and defensible space within area communities at risk.
- Continue fuel breaks and fuels reduction work along Highway 56.



Representative example of residential structures located in the wildland urban interface area without defensible space. These structures are located in the Old Iron Town area which is within the Comstock/Farwest focus area. Photo courtesy of the Color Country Interagency Fire Center.

Cedar/Parowan Front:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

Jack Rabbit Wash/Rush Lake Watershed, and Little Salt Lake Watershed (HUC5). This area encompasses the east benches along the I-15 corridor, and is composed of state, private, Forest Service and BLM lands.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

Cedar Highlands, Cedar/Parowan Front, Brian Head

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

Vegetation in this area ranges from pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush/steppe grasslands in the lower elevations, to mixed-conifer spruce-fir aspen in the upper elevations.

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Firefighting and Access Concerns:

Many of the residences within this focus area consist of permanent, year-long homeowners. Many are accessed only by narrow one-way roads. Steep slopes and dangerous topography increases the potential for extreme fire behavior. This area has high ATV use and is easily accessed from incorporated towns.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$89,457.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreation

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Continue to place strategic fuel breaks throughout the area.
- Encourage landowner mitigation and defensible space work.
- Implement Community Fire Plan for Parowan Front Area.



Representative example of a residential structure located within the Cedar/Parowan Front focus area. Need for adequate provision of defensible space around structures such as this is a concern of area fire management officials. Photo courtesy of Color Country Interagency Fire Center.

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Mammoth Creek:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

Mammoth Creek Watershed (HUC5), composed primarily of private and Forest Service Lands.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

Mammoth Creek, Ireland Meadow, Castle Valley, Rainbow Meadow, Meadow Lakes

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

Vegetation is composed primarily of ponderosa pine, mixed conifer and aspen. Area homeowners are mostly part-year residence.

Firefighting and Access Concerns:

This area has recently experienced a wide-spread spruce beetle outbreak. The high number of dead spruce increases fire severity, spotting and high fire intensity. Ingress/egress into residences and small subdivisions is limited by narrow one-way roads.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$100,175.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreation

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Continue to place strategic fuel breaks throughout the area.
- Encourage landowner mitigation and defensible space work.

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Representative example of a residential structure located within the Mammoth Creek focus area. The need for adequate provision of defensible space around structures such as this is a concern of area fire management officials. Photo courtesy of Color Country Interagency Fire Center.

Bryce Woodlands/Sunset Cliffs:

Focus Area boundaries are generally defined as follows:

Pass Creek - Sevier River Watershed (HUC5). Consisting of private, BLM and state lands. This area within Kane County is composed of the emerging interface area along the Long Valley, Highway 89 corridor.

Communities at Risk in the Focus Area:

Bryce Woodlands
Long Valley/Canyon

Focus Area Description and Vegetation:

This area is composed of pinyon/juniper woodlands, sagebrush grasslands, mixed conifer and Ponderosa Pine.

Firefighting and Access Concerns:

Seasonal recreational travel along the Highway 89 corridor may impede emergency response crews. Single residences have limited access, with one-way, dead-end

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ingress/egress. Potential for crown fire exists within the pinyon/juniper ecotype. There is greater response time from firefighters due to the proximity of established fire districts.

Community values at risk include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Residential Structures. The average market value of a residential structure in this focus area is approximately \$85,051.
- Watershed
- Wildlife resources
- Cultural resources
- Recreation

Potential Treatment Recommendations:

- Work to increase ingress/egress into establishing communities.
- Continue to work with federal agencies and the interagency fuels committee to complete landscape level pinyon/juniper treatments.
- Continue to place strategic fuel breaks throughout the area.
- Encourage landowner mitigation and defensible space work.

4.3 FOCUS AREAS LOCATIONS

Map 4.1 shows the general location of each of the ten focus areas in southwestern Utah described in Section 4.2.

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Map 4.1 - Focus Areas Map

