



## Grand County Fuels Reduction Projects Successful During Wildfire

### 2018 Golf Course Fire – Grand Lake, Colorado

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Prior to the Golf Course Fire in July of 2018, the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and Grand Lake Metropolitan Recreation District located in Grand County completed forest management activities to achieve several objectives.

- Create a fuelbreak between National Forest land and the Grand Lake community
- Salvage bark beetle-killed lodgepole pine trees while the timber retained some commercial value
- Facilitate healthy forest regeneration

Between 2016 -2018, the CSFS employed the use of clearcutting, an effective and frequently utilized forest management technique in lodgepole pine across the 215 acre project area. After the Golf Course Fire was extinguished, responding firefighters concluded that the fuelbreak was successful in facilitating safe and effective suppression efforts and home protection.



### Golf Course Fire – Quick Glance:

- 300 homes evacuated
- No injuries or loss of structures
- 20 acres burned
- 100% containment within 3 days
- The progress of the Golf Course Fire was stopped as a result of moderated fire behavior in the fuels mitigation work completed by the CSFS.

Photo Credit: Matt Schiltz, CSFS

## DEFINITION & IMPLEMENTATION OF A FUELBREAK

A fuelbreak is an area of vegetation altered by tree removals intended to reduce the fuel load and change the structure of a forest. Trees that are growing closely together create a situation where it is easy for a fire to move from tree to tree (as a crown fire). Dense stands can also create a heat trap that does not allow heat to escape which can further intensify the fire.

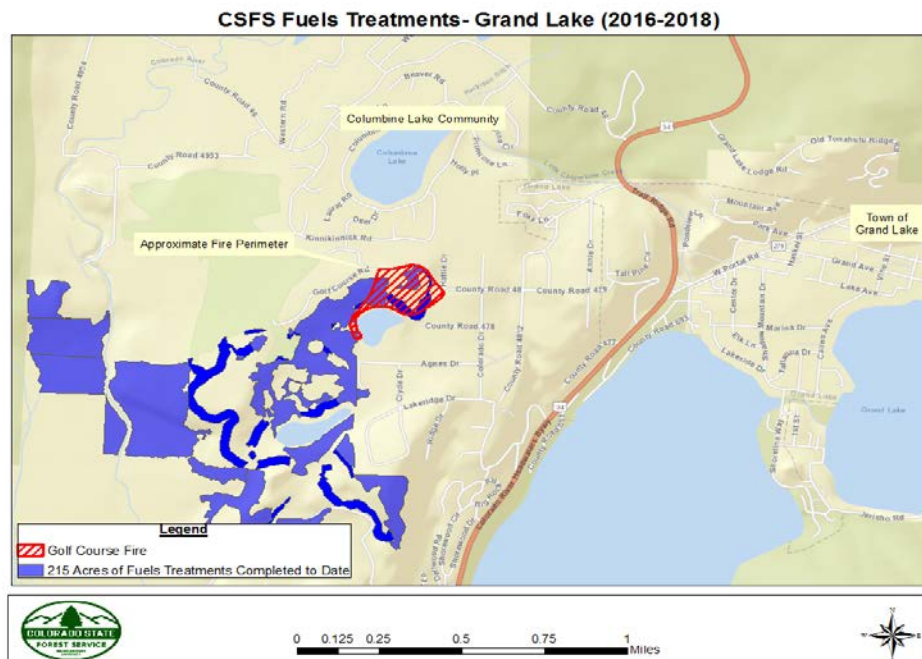
The intent of a fuelbreak is not to stop the forward process of a wildfire, but to moderate fire intensity and slow its spread so that firefighters can safely engage and stop the fire. In lodgepole pine, between 50-70 tons of woody material per acre are removed to reduce the amount of fuel available to a wildfire. The size and shape of a fuelbreak depends on several factors including the type, density and height of fuels (e.g., trees) and the local topography.

## HOW FUEL MITIGATION WORKS DURING A FIRE EVENT

During the Golf Course Fire, firefighters observed different fire behavior in the mature, unmanaged lodgepole pine stands in comparison to the fire activity within the fuelbreaks. In the unmanaged areas, the fire burned up into the crowns of the trees and created dangerous conditions where firefighters were unable to engage with the fire. In the fuelbreaks, however, the fire behavior moderated enough for

firefighters to safely construct a fire line to flank the fire and create a perimeter around it. The fuelbreak also provided a location where planes were able to drop fire retardant that slowed the fire's rate of spread.

## MAP



## HOW CSFS CAN HELP

The CSFS mission is “to achieve stewardship of Colorado’s diverse forest environments for the benefit of present and future generations.”

Through reducing the woody fuels available for wildfire by strategically managing forestlands, general forest health is improved while reducing the risk of intense fire behavior that could negatively impact the larger forested area. In order to protect landowners, communities and watersheds, these efforts must span numerous land ownership boundaries and be strategic in design. The CSFS works to ensure that private landowners are engaged, educated and involved in these larger efforts to manage the forest at a landscape scale. Working collaboratively with its partners, the agency leverages financial and social capital to ensure that management efforts focus on priority areas identified in watershed plans, Community Wildfire Protection Plans and the state’s Forest Action Plan.

At the individual home site/property level, the CSFS offers services to private landowners that include:

- providing information and education about forestry concerns such as insects/disease and wildfire
- designing and implementing customized forest management projects
- assisting landowners and communities in obtaining financial assistance for project work
- locating and administering forestry contractors to successfully complete projects

## COOPERATORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

Key partners included Grand Lake Metropolitan Recreation District, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, local forest products industry, adjacent landowners, and the Grand County Wildfire Council.

## RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

CSFS: <https://csfs.colostate.edu>  
 CSFS\_Granby@mail.colostate.edu

P: (970) 887-3121

Northwest Area  
 Granby Field Office



[www.csfs.colostate.edu](http://www.csfs.colostate.edu)



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