



*2012 Waldo Canyon Fire  
Colorado Springs, CO  
346 Homes Lost, 2 Fatalities*

# **GAME TRAIL WILDLAND FIRE ACTION PLAN**

*2021 Marshall Fire  
Boulder, CO  
1084 Structures Lost, 2 Fatalities*



Published by the Game Trail Forestry Committee and the Game Trail Association Board of Directors  
May 2023

## Abstract

If you highlighted a map of Colorado with areas affected by wildfires in the last 20 years you would see a map covered with brightly colored highlights. Conspicuously, you would also see that the area around Buena Vista and Game Trail has been spared. Are we living on borrowed time in Game Trail? The Forestry Committee can't answer that question; but to account for that eventuality, we wrote the Game Trail Wildland Fire Action Plan (WFAP) to help our residents become educated in wildfire operations, to help residents personally prepare for a wildland fire, and to provide step-by-step actions to follow throughout wildfire season and a possible wildfire event in Game Trail.

While we may never experience the horror of a wildland fire racing across our community, the consequences of not being prepared could be lethal and far outweigh the cost of preparation.

- Becoming educated in wildland fire operations includes knowledge about local response agencies, fire notification procedures, local assistance resources, and evacuation procedures.
- In addition to becoming educated, wise wildland-urban interface residents should prepare before fire season by conducting several personal planning actions.
- The final step in being ready for a wildland fire in Game Trail is executing actions as a fire event approaches the area. Because wildland fires are stressful events, the execution steps should be step-by-step and emergency checklist-like in nature.

If Game Trail residents are educated about wildland fire operations, have completed rational planning actions, and follow step-by-step procedures in an actual wildland fire, we can maximize our personal and home's survival chances.

## How To Use This Information

The following plan is constructed to allow readers to choose their level of involvement by reading the full document or selected standalone sections:

- Education
  - Planning
  - Actions, including Checklists
- Individual checklists are also available on the Game Trail Forestry Committee webpage for reproduction and use purposes.

Regardless, now is the time to become involved!

*Keywords: Wildfire, wildland, Game Trail, WUI, wildfire action steps*

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# 1. Purpose and Introduction

The purpose of the Game Trail (GT) Wildland Fire Action Plan (WFAP) is to maximize the survival of GT residents during a local wildfire and to encourage preparations that will minimize personal losses if a fire threatens or destroys your residence. This action plan is composed of basic wildland fire information (education), preparatory planning information, and step-by-step actions to execute during all phases of a wildland fire event. While the basic wildland fire information is useful, preparatory and actual event actions may be key to your survival and minimization of personal losses. However; first, a brief review of why it's important for all GT homeowners to be prepared for wildland fires. The fundamental questions are: is our area really at risk, and what can we do about it?

Wildland fires are now commonplace each summer in the western U.S., including Colorado. Although wildland fires can occur at any time, they are most probable from May through October as temperatures increase and heat and wind dry the forests and grasslands. With the exception of periodic average or greater precipitation years, Colorado is experiencing a multi-decade drought that creates low moisture vegetation or fuel for wildfires. Table 1 lists drought periods during the last 100 years in Colorado and highlights the many dry years since 2000. (McKee,15) See <https://www.drought.gov/states/colorado/county/Chaffee> for more information about current local drought conditions.

<b>Table 1 – Colorado Drought Periods</b>	
<b>Drought Periods</b>	<b>Driest Years</b>
1930-1940	
1950-1956	
1974-1978	
2001-2009	2002 (100% of state in severe drought) driest year on record
2011-2015	2013 (> 90% of state in severe drought)
2018-2019	2018 (> 60% of state in severe drought)
2020-2021	2021 (> 90% of state in severe drought)

In addition to drought conditions, the increase in human use of wildlands and the expansion of Colorado's wildland-urban interface heighten the odds of a human-caused wildfire. According to the 2017 Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment, over half the state's population now lives in the Colorado wildland-urban interface, having increased by approximately 50% in the five years from 2012 to 2017. Chaffee County and areas surrounding GT are impacted by all of these factors and are prime territories for a wildland fire.

Knowing wildfire characteristics can forewarn you about their dangers and potential lethality. Wildland fire ignition sources are many. Typical causes are lightning strikes, unattended campfires and heat/sparks from vehicles, chainsaws, or firearms. The resultant fires can be erratic and unpredictable, and can cover ground rapidly, offering little time for escape. Once started, they can travel at speeds of 6 miles per hour (mph) in forests and 14 mph in grasslands. (NHMU, 4). At these extreme wind-driven speeds, a wildfire could travel through

GT in an hour and give virtually no time to leave, much less prepare your home and belongings. According to the 13 Feb 22 *Colorado Springs Gazette*, some 2021 Marshall fire residents in Boulder County had approximately 15 minutes to evacuate.

Wildfires typically travel faster uphill and can jump firebreaks, water courses, and roads, vaulting long distances as embers become passengers of wind currents sometimes generated by the fire itself. Many of Colorado's most devastating fires were driven by winds of 40 to 50 mph, consuming large areas and homes as they burned as surface, ladder, and crown fires becoming virtually unstoppable. These fires grow into apocalyptic-like events, racing across forests and instilling unreserved fear in those in their path. However, there are some constants to these fires: they will occur, humans are cause factors in many of them, and when a fire approaches GT, it may be too late to prepare.

In summary, the answers to the previous questions are "yes." We are at risk, and preparation is our best and vitally important course of action. The knowledge and actions in this plan can improve your odds of surviving a wildland fire and saving your valued property.

The GT Wildland Fire Action Plan consists of the following five elements. They are designed to educate, plan, list step-by-step actions for residents, provide checklists, and offer details about GT wildfire procedures and assistance programs. Following this introduction, sections are as follows:

2. Basic Wildland Fire Information
3. Pre-Wildfire Planning
4. Step-by-Step Actions
5. Checklists
6. Evacuation Routes

## 2. Basic Wildland Fire Information

### 2.A. Local Response Agencies

Response to wildfires is almost always conducted by multiple local agencies and, depending on the extent of the fire, by state and national interagency teams. Each local office or agency has a role as outlined below. The Forestry Committee recommends GT residents visit these agencies' websites for extensive information on their various services and how to contact them in an emergency.

#### 2.A.1. Chaffee County Sheriff

(Non-emergency 719-539-2596)



The Chaffee County Sheriff's Office is located in Salida and is responsible for law enforcement in the county. Before fire events, the office manages county burn stages, the Chaffee County Emergency Notification System and, as a part of this plan, may have access to a database of permanent (full-time) versus seasonal or part-time GT residents. During wildland fires, they will be the main agency interfacing with GT residents. In accordance with basic law enforcement's charter to provide public safety and security, the office may issue evacuation notices/orders, create and staff roadblocks, and, if necessary, conduct door-to-door operations to notify and evacuate residents.

GT residents can improve their wildland fire survival odds by completing several pre-event actions with the Sheriff's Office and GT HOA. First, register for the Everbridge-powered Emergency Alert Program by signing up on the Chaffee County Sheriff's website. In the event of an emergency in the area, this program should contact your registered phone number to issue cautions, warnings, notices, and orders. Second, make sure your GT residency status is accurate by completing the Owner Contact Form located on the Forms and Links tab of the GT website. During emergency situations, GT may share full-time and part-time resident information with the Chaffee County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Sheriff's Office. If provided, the office will then maintain the information in a "close-hold" secure manner and use it to determine whether you may be in your home during a wildfire event.

**Register for the  
Everbridge Emergency  
Alert Program  
by signing up on the  
Chaffee County Sheriff's  
website.**

<http://chaffeesheriff.org/communication/everbridge/>

Determining whether residents are in homes in wildland fire areas is a severe challenge for first responders. The Chaffee County Sheriff's Office told the GT Forestry Committee that during the 2019 Decker's Fire it used the majority of its personnel to determine if residents were still in homes after the issuance of evacuation orders. In addition, door-to-door searches place officers at risk as evidenced by the recent 2022 death of an Eastland County, Texas deputy as a consequence of a door-to-door search during the Eastland

Complex wildfire. Our GT residency database should enable the office to focus on the status of full-time residents versus those not in the area and help keep deputies out of harm's way. As you can imagine, the accuracy of the database is important.

As mentioned earlier, during wildland fire events, the Sheriff's Office may issue evacuation notices and orders (see Table 2), staff roadblocks to control access to and from the incident area, and conduct actions to locate and evacuate residents after issuance of orders. Their priorities (as all first responders) will be life, private property, critical infrastructure, and cultural resources. Although the Sheriff's Office does not typically predetermine evacuation routes, as risk increases, they may publish them and staff appropriately placed roadblocks to prevent unauthorized entry. Of note for GT residents is that evidence of residency (driver's license with address, utility bill, etc.) may be needed to pass these roadblocks during initial evacuation stages and post-fire operations. Because GT roads are private roads and beyond the Sheriff's authority, the GT Forestry Committee has predesignated evacuation routes within GT based on the distribution of homes and the limited number of GT escape routes. The only two exit routes are via Great Peaks Drive (northern route) and County Road 365 (southern route). See [Section 6](#) for details. While the Forestry Committee doesn't believe making these routes mandatory is prudent, residents should use the route linked to their residence if conditions permit.

**Table 2 – Evacuation Stages**

<p><b>Pre-Evacuation Notice:</b> A wildfire incident is taking place in the area that could threaten your residential area and that could block roadways and transportation arteries. Residents should begin making preparations for their property and for personal evacuation.</p>
<p><b>Evacuation Warning:</b> With increased risk, there is a good probability of the need to evacuate. Residents should maintain constant awareness of the danger that exists in their area and monitor local media outlets for information. Begin preparations for a possible evacuation.</p>
<p><b>Voluntary Evacuation Order:</b> This level indicates there is significant danger to your area. Residents should either voluntarily relocate to a shelter or with family/friends outside of the affected area, or if choosing to remain, to be ready to leave at a moment's notice.</p>
<p><b>Mandatory Evacuation Order:</b> Danger to your area is current or imminent, and you should leave immediately. Listen to local media and watch for emergency personnel who may be coming by to give further instructions regarding the evacuation.</p>

## 2.A.2. Chaffee County Fire Protection District

(Non-emergency 719-395-6545)



The Chaffee County Fire Protection District (CCFPD) is responsible for education, training, fire prevention and combating all fires in unincorporated Chaffee County. They maintain six fire stations that range from Highway 24 north of Buena Vista to Salida. Although not the primary wildland fire agency in the area, they typically become part of an interagency or incident command system to fight wildfires and resultant structure fires in the county. Depending on the fire location and type (i.e., severity) in Colorado, the

Wildland Fire Incident Command System participants may include the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Tribal Lands Councils in addition to local first responders and emergency management agencies. Locally, the CCFPD provides many educational and property assessment opportunities. See their excellent website at <https://www.chaffeecountyfire.org>.

### 2.A.3. Forest Services (USFS and CSFS)

The United States Forest Service (USFS) trains, equips, and provides firefighters and equipment for wildland fires on U.S. Forest lands and supports state and local agencies with ground and airborne firefighters. In addition, they provide trained personnel for Incident Management Teams, provide fire-forecasting services, and conduct and manage prescribed burns on US forest lands. They may be heavily involved during all but the smallest wildland fires in and around Chaffee County as they respond to fires on bordering National Forest System land or partner with other federal, state, or local agencies.

The primary mission of the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) is to provide forestry education and information to Colorado citizens. The CSFS is a service agency of the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University and as such is headquartered in Ft. Collins. Although the agency is intimately involved with wildland fire mitigation and various community wildfire education programs, the CSFS transferred its wildland fire operational responsibilities to the Colorado Department of Public Safety in 2012. CSFS has a field office in Salida and is heavily involved with helping Game Trail's forest health and wildfire mitigation programs.



### 2.A.4. Office of Emergency Management

(719-207-2730)



The Chaffee County Office of Emergency Management is a county agency that coordinates and supports preparations for, response to, and recovery from large-scale emergencies and disasters in the county. During wildland fire events, they may provide coordination between county, state, and federal agencies and support the operations of a fire-related Emergency Operations Center.

### 2.A.5. Ark-Valley Humane Society

(719-395-2737)

The Ark-Valley Humane Society has locations in Buena Vista and Poncha Springs. They provide services to improve and ensure the welfare of (predominately) small companion animals. During wildland fire events, the two locations can provide shelter services for small animals on a space-available basis. GT residents should directly contact their office if sheltering might be required during a wildfire.



## 2.A.6. Local Communications

Your ability to respond effectively to wildland fires in Chaffee County may be directly related to your knowledge of current situational information. This information can consist of wildfire locations, current response, evacuation status and affected areas, forecast weather, evacuation routes, and local shelters/evacuation centers. Residents can receive this information from the following sources:

1. Chaffee County Sheriff Everbridge System
2. Local FM radio stations. The following can be received in our area:
  - a. FM 88.1
  - b. FM 92.3
  - c. FM 93.7
  - d. FM 97.5
  - e. FM 104.1
3. Colorado-based television stations
4. Web-based resources (links are active on Windows OS devices)
  - a. [Buena Vista CO weather alerts, warnings, watches and advisories - LocalConditions.com](#)
  - b. [Everbridge - Chaffee County Sheriff \(chaffeesherriff.org\)](#)
  - c. [Fire Information \(nifc.gov\)](#)
  - d. [InciWeb the Incident Information System \(nwcg.gov\)](#)
  - e. [RM GACC Home \(nifc.gov\)](#)
5. Weather/Emergency radios: Unfortunately, Chaffee County does not have a NOAA Weather Radio station within 40 miles. See the following website for information [NOAA Weather Radio](#). While there are no NOAA weather radio stations within reception range of GT, there are still uses for emergency radios designed to provide radio access during emergencies. For example, many of these radios not only work off battery power in the event of power failures, but also provide either/both solar or 'hand-crank' power. These radios are wise options to maintain situational awareness during power outages.
6. Game Trail Alerts via email. Time permitting, the GT Communications Committee may publish alerts with current fire conditions and information. Because this method requires email capability, electrical power, and web services; please do not count on GT alerts as your primary method of fire information. Additionally, as fire conditions worsen, this service may stop as GT committee members likely will be making evacuation preparations.
7. Emergency Scanners. These base or portable radios operate in the UHF and VHF frequency bands and can provide GT residents the ability to monitor first responder communications during wildland fire events. The portable, battery powered models provide a means to maintain a high state of awareness during threatening wildland fires in our area while not counting on electric power. They can allow GT residents to monitor emergency fire operations without having to wait on news outlets. Although potentially useful, the Chaffee County OEM cautions that the many frequency bands used during wildfire events may prevent you from receiving information in all circumstances on a civilian emergency scanner.

## 2.A.7. Other Potential Wildland Fire Responding Agencies

1. Central Colorado Regional Airport: With an 8,300 ft. x 75 ft. runway, this facility can provide air support staging for all but the largest air tankers.
2. Chaffee County Search and Rescue (contact via the Chaffee County Sheriff)
3. Buena Vista Police (719-395-8654)
4. American Red Cross (four Colorado chapters – Chaffee County is the responsibility of Colorado Springs) Contact them via the Chaffee County OEM at 719-207-2730.
5. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (see [Individual Assistance | FEMA.gov](#))
6. Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (303-239-4600 / 4100)

## 2.B. How Can You Be Notified?

### 2.B.1. Fire Restriction & Ban Stages

REMEMBER, NO OPEN BURNING IS EVER ALLOWED IN GAME TRAIL. See [GTA Rule and Regulation 2021-01 Outside Burning](#) for details.

There are two levels of fire restrictions in Chaffee County. See Table 3. The Chaffee County Sheriff's office declares and publishes Fire Restrictions via their website, local radio stations, highway signs, and the Everbridge powered notification system. Please note that fire restrictions on other than federal lands are governed by county officials and may vary from county to county.

For website hosted fire ban stages, including definitions, see: [Fire Restrictions in Chaffee County - Chaffee County Sheriff \(chaffeesheriff.org\)](#). This website also lists BLM and USFS fire restrictions, which may differ and be more restrictive.

Table 3 – Chaffee County Fire Restriction Descriptions	
<b>Stage 1</b>	<p>The following acts are prohibited:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Building, maintaining or attending any Open Fire.</li> </ol> <p>Excluded from Stage 1 Fire Restrictions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Campfires within a permanent constructed ring or fire grate, 3 feet in diameter maximum, in a developed public campground, public picnic ground, commercial campground, or on private property. An example of a permanently constructed ring would be a cement ring that is not movable. Rocks lining a fire pit are not considered permanent and therefore in violation.</li> <li>b. LP gas or liquid fueled stoves that allow the operator to turn the appliance on or off.</li> <li>c. Fireplaces within enclosed buildings equipped with fire screens on the flue.</li> <li>d. Charcoal grill fires at private residences.</li> </ol>

<p><b>Stage 2</b></p>	<p>The following acts are prohibited:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Building, maintaining or attending any Open Fire.</li> <li>2. Smoking, except within an enclosed vehicle or building or in an area at least 12 feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable material.</li> <li>3. Using explosive material: i.e., exploding targets, tracer rounds, fireworks, blasting caps or any incendiary device.</li> <li>4. The use of combustion engines and chainsaws, except to the extent exempt (see below).</li> <li>5. Welding, grinding metal or operating an acetylene or similar torch with an open flame, except within an area of at least 20 feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable material.</li> </ol> <p>Excluded from Stage 2 Fire Restrictions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. LP gas or liquid fueled bar-b-ques/stoves and appliances which allow the operator to turn the flame on and off.</li> <li>b. Fireplaces within enclosed buildings which are equipped with adequate spark arresting screens.</li> <li>c. The use of combustion engines and chainsaws with adequate spark arrestors, <u>provided</u> the operator has with him or her a chemical-pressurized fire extinguisher of not less than 8 ounces capacity by weight, and has readily available for use a size 0 or larger round pointed shovel with an overall length of at least 36 inches.</li> </ol>
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## 2.B.2. Initial and Continuing Wildland Fire Status

Wildland fire status information can be obtained from the following agencies. Also, see paragraph [2. A.6.](#) above for specific agency contact information. The below “incident” information system sites allow you to monitor fires, controlled burns, and slash burns throughout the United States. The RM GACC site is the best source for Colorado and bordering states.

1. Local radio stations
2. TV news
3. Emergency alert program powered by Everbridge
4. Websites
5. Local highway signs
6. GT Alert message
7. The National Interagency Fire Center: [Fire Information \(nifc.gov\)](http://www.nifc.gov)
8. Incident Information System: [InciWeb the Incident Information System \(nwcg.gov\)](http://www.nwcg.gov)
9. Rocky Mountain Area Coordination System: [RM GACC Home \(nifc.gov\)](http://www.nifc.gov)

## 2.B.3. Evacuation Orders and Notices

These notices and orders are issued by the Chaffee County Sheriff based on the fire status, weather, fire behavior forecasts, and estimated time available for evacuation. Just

as with fire status reports, the Sheriff likely will communicate these notices and orders by all means available in the local area. The Forestry Committee believes all GT residents should be prudent by not counting on having residential electrical power (think battery-powered devices), and by strictly following the Sheriff's evacuation notices and orders. Finally, don't depend on the GT Alert email messages for these evacuation directions as these alerts may not be rapid enough given conditions and may not be a Communications Committee priority at the time.

- |                                       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Local radio stations               | 4. Websites            |
| 2. TV news                            | 5. Local highway signs |
| 3. Everbridge emergency alert program | 6. GT Alert message    |
|                                       | 7. Emergency Scanner   |

## 2.C. First Response and Responders

In the area surrounding our GT subdivision, the primary first responders are the Chaffee County Sheriff's Office, the Chaffee County Fire Protection District, the Chaffee County Office of Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, and a wildfire severity-based level of the Wildland Fire Incident Command System. The Sheriff may issue evacuation notices/orders, designate evacuation routes beyond the GT subdivision boundaries, and staff checkpoints for control of the wildland fire incident area. The Incident Command (IC) level may range from a very small Type 5 system with only singular individuals to a large Type 1 system with all IC positions active including multi-agency and national-level participants. This command system may begin leading the multi-agency response to the wildfire incident.

In addition to these agencies, the GT Forestry Committee has outlined a wildland fire first-response by activating a single program:

GT Predesignated Evacuation Routes. At the issuance of any evacuation notice, all GT residents should begin using the GT Predesignated Evacuation Routes within the boundaries of Game Trail. These routes and procedures are defined in [Section 6](#).

## 2.D. Power and Utilities Outage Information

Although the Sangre de Cristo Electric Association power grid in Game Trail is buried and extremely fire resistant, plan for and assume you may lose power and possibly other utilities before and during a wildland fire. Remember, GT water is provided by electrically powered wells and is vulnerable to natural disaster related events. As a result, prepare before the outage as appropriate:

- Learn how to manually open your automatic garage doors.
- Be familiar with your home's utility service boxes and sources (electricity, water and gas).
- Keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed if you lose power.
- Before you lose electricity, fill tubs and sinks with water for outage usage.
- Keep some bottled or stored water on the premises.
- Stage flashlights around the house for power-out usage.
- Keep your cell phone charged and have a car-compatible charger.



## 2.E. GT Predesignated Evacuation Routes



GT residents should depart GT via a designated Northern or Southern Evacuation route. See [6.A.](#) for route maps and details. GT Forestry has established these two routes on our private roads to prevent unnecessary congestion on the limited paths leading out of GT. In fact, other than traveling off-road, these routes are the only motorized vehicle escape roads out of our area.

Your designated route is based entirely on the quickest and most direct route out of our subdivision. Directive policies for these evacuation routes are:

- They are activated at the first evacuation order. This will probably be the Sheriff-directed voluntary evacuation order.
- Do not use a non-designated route unless you are in a blocked or life-threatening situation, you are traveling to another part of GT to assist the evacuation, your vehicle cannot navigate its intended route, or you are ordered by law enforcement.
- Follow your designated GT evacuation route all the way to Hwy 24 or Colorado 306.
- Comply with law enforcement instructions, road closures, and road blocks.

## 2.F. Evacuation Centers

During mandatory wildfire evacuations, GT residents should move to locations outside the immediate GT vicinity and beyond Chaffee County if practical. Ideal locations are Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Denver, and other Front Range cities as these areas have significantly more living accommodations. Do not assume you will be at these locations for only a few days, which is a best-case scenario. Probable worst-case scenarios are weeks of isolation from your GT home or a loss which prevents any ability to return.

Chaffee County officials may open evacuation / reunification center(s) at “to-be-determined” and announced locations. The local evacuation center may be the best location to access up-to-date information on all aspects of the fire event to include when you may be allowed back into Game Trail. Even if you plan to evacuate to the Front Range, we recommend stopping by these centers to access potentially important information from relief agencies and insurance companies. Monitor radio and TV stations for information on these locations. At the centers: GT residents may learn about current wildfire status, temporary emergency shelter and supplies, and assistance teams from medical facilities, Red Cross, FEMA, and insurance companies.

Of primary importance is that GT residents plan to take care of themselves, not anticipate long-term shelters, and evacuate with important items that were prepared well before the wildland fire event. See checklists beginning in [Section 5.](#)

## 2.G. Pets and Livestock

Pets and large animals can become members of your family, and other than an ingrained “flight” response, have no way to care for themselves. GT residents with either small or large animals should prepare early for their evacuation and care. This includes transportation carriers, health and food supplies, and lodging. We can assume that BV and Salida may open their respective rodeo grounds for large animal boarding and that the Ark Valley Humane Society may shelter small animals on a space-available basis. However, we recommend you

investigate more appropriate and longer-term facilities in and beyond Chaffee County. Local radio, TV and emergency notifications may advertise these temporary animal shelters and boarding locations.

One final note – do not delay an evacuation or return to your home after an evacuation order if your animals have run away, cannot be located, or refuse to be loaded into a vehicle or trailer. With their survival instinct, animals can and will normally flee and survive. However, if their human family delays an evacuation and perishes during a wildfire, their future may be in doubt. Please make early preparations for their welfare, evacuate as recommended, and notify animal welfare officials if you were unable to bring them out during your evacuation.

## **2.H. Reporting a Wildland Fire or Fire Ban Violations**

Game Trail residents detecting a previously unreported wildland fire or any fire ban violations should immediately call 911 and report the incident to authorities.

## 3. Pre-Wildfire Planning

Without question, pre-wildfire planning is the key to survival, minimizing residential damage, preventing loss of personal items, and post-fire actions. During a wildland fire event in GT, residents may have only minutes to prepare, evacuate, and survive. Try to visualize that situation - you have received a mandatory evacuation notice and have minutes to decide what lifetime possessions to save from near-certain loss. Adrenalin likely will be flowing, and you may not be able to think clearly as smoke and heat approach your home. Commonly, a wildfire smoke column can approach 15,000 feet in altitude and may tower over GT if within 10 miles. These columns and dense downwind smoke can darken skies and turn daytime into near-nighttime conditions. If you are in GT during a threatening wildland fire, it is certain you may be a part of an adrenalin-stoked event with short timelines, confusion, and unclear thoughts and actions. NOW is the time to prepare both personally and GT community-wide.

### 3.A. Personal Planning

Pre-wildfire personal planning should consist of long lead-time actions to prepare your property and residence, and personal-business preparations for a wildfire event that might destroy your home and its contents. Because the GT Forestry Committee has published extensive basic information and contacts to help mitigate wildfires through preparation of your lot and home's exterior, we will concentrate on the personal-business aspect of wildfire preparation in this section of our action plan. However, do not neglect these key points with respect to lot and home preparation:

- The Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and trained GT Forestry Committee volunteers are willing and able to conduct lot and home assessments to help you gage your current condition and determine the next steps to better defensible space. To request an assessment either call the CSFS (719) 539-2579 or email the Forestry Committee [forestry@gametrailassn.org](mailto:forestry@gametrailassn.org).
- Home construction materials and maintenance of your home play a role in wildfire resistance. If you are building new construction or renovating your home; choose fire resistant roofs, siding and exterior wall materials, exterior trim materials, and construction techniques to reduce combustibility. Finally, well-maintained exterior wood is more fire resistant than dry, poorly maintained materials.
- Ensure your home's defensible space meets CSFS guidelines. For details, read the CSFS guidebook on defensible space called [The Home Ignition Zone: A guide to preparing your home](#).

The personal affairs component of wildland fire preparation can be described as preparing your home and contents, insurance, personal property records, and your financial and medical records as if you leave your home and are never able to return again; that is, your home and its contents are total losses. The GT Forestry Committee recommends you plan to pack at least two sets of items in luggage, totes, bags, or boxes that can be picked up and placed in your vehicle rapidly when confusion reigns during an evacuation. These two sets are 1) personal clothing/bath items in a "Go-Bag" and 2) important documents/records in a transportable tote or hard-case "Escape-Bag." The winter months in Buena Vista are a perfect time to prepare your Go-Bag and Escape-Bag and the following basic essentials:

- **Adequate Home and Personal Property Insurance.** With increased construction costs, there's a good chance your home is underinsured. If you haven't talked to your insurance company in several years, consider reviewing your home and personal property policies and asking about proper coverages and limits of your policy. For example, does your policy cover costs of debris removal if your home is destroyed? While talking to them, ask if they provide discounts to Firewise USA® communities, a rating which Game Trail possesses.
- **Home Inventory.** An essential piece of information for judging the adequacy of coverage and filing loss claims is an accurate listing and visual evidence of your home's contents. Your data should include the item model and serial number, purchase price, and date acquired. Visual evidence can be pictures or videos of your home's contents. This list should be updated annually as you acquire new items. At the very least, maintain a video of your entire home's interior.
- **Important Documents.** Homeowners should consider gathering originals, copies, or scans of important documents for quick access and evacuation. In addition, remote storage, if in electronic form, is a possibility. These may include, but are not limited to:
  - Birth certificates
  - Marriage certificates
  - Home deeds
  - Tax records
  - Social Security and Medicare information
  - Insurance policies
  - Passports
  - Wills
  - Vehicle titles
  - Contact information for business associates, friends, and family
  - Password books
  - Computer backups
  - Medical and immunization records
  - Retirement/pension information
- **Financial Information.** While most financial information can be accessed via online accounts, consider gathering the following records, items, and resources. Much of the information can be stored electronically with remote storage, CD/DVDs, or flash drives. The purpose of collecting these items is to permit you to purchase immediately needed items if you evacuate and to rebuild your finances if you lose your home.
  - Cash – store an emergency amount in your wildfire Go-Bag to permit rapid purchases. A Go-Bag is your emergency bag that is packed with essentials and that can be carried out-the-door within minutes during evacuations.
  - Financial account numbers and access information (user/password) for all accounts
  - Credit card information
  - Stocks, bonds, and CDs
  - Employment/pension information
  - Retirement information
  - Online account user ids and passwords

- **Medical Records.** If your home is destroyed, consider the type of medical information you would need to recreate your medical history and accounts. As with financial records, much of the information can probably be stored at your physician’s office or insurance company. However, if you need immediate access to records or are treated in a new location, we recommend including the following in your wildfire Escape-Bag.
  - Records relating to diagnosis, illness, and current treatments
  - X-rays, scans, and MRIs
  - Prescriptions
  - Shot/immunization records
  - Medicare or insurance account information and card
  - Medical bill status and supporting Explanations of Benefits
  - Pet medical records
  
- **Short-Term Rentals (STR).** STRs present a special challenge to homeowners and renters, especially in regard to local area awareness, wildfire planning and mindfulness, and communication. STR owners should educate their renters on the elements of this wildland fire action plan and steps necessary for survival during wildfire events. The Forestry Committee encourages landlords to make this plan available to renters and to verbally brief them on wildfire risks, notification basics, and evacuation procedures.

### 3.B. Game Trail Planning

The GT HOA and committees feel a responsibility to prepare our community for wildland fire events and to conduct actions to preserve life and property. Under the leadership of the Forestry Committee, the Board of Directors and committees strive to do the following:

1. Prepare recommendations for GT residents on necessary wildfire preparations.
  - a. Wildfire mitigation
  - b. Home preparation
  - c. Personal preparation
2. Prepare and execute notification procedures.
3. Interface with local agencies on notification procedures, full and part-time resident status, and possible use of GT land for fire fighter, equipment, and medivac purposes.
4. Manage the within-GT evacuation routes.
5. Create and distribute wildland fire “step-by-step” checklists.

## 4. Step-By-Step Actions

While the GT Board of Directors and Forestry Committee can develop wildland fire plans and encourage residents to prepare, the main responsibility rests with each GT resident. As a consequence, your survival and the state of your residence and its belongings may hinge on how well you prepare and act as an individual during wildfire events. To assist you, the following paragraphs lay out a step-by-step action plan that begins as fire season approaches and ends with a GT wildfire evacuation. The six action phases are based on local fire threat conditions and list suggested actions for each phase.

The Forestry Committee sequenced these actions relative to an estimated time to complete an action versus the time in which a wildfire could reach GT under each phase's conditions. For example, in Phase-4, a wildfire located 10 miles from GT could reach our boundaries in less than two hours, hence, the Phase-4 actions should be feasible to complete in fewer than two hours. If you are slower than average, you should begin earlier than recommended. Also, modify steps as desired according to your situation.

Lastly, these "step-by-step" actions assume you have accomplished the personal pre-wildland fire preparations discussed in previous sections of this plan.

### 4.A. Phase 1 Fire Season

**Local Conditions:** Late spring and summer fire season begins as winter moisture gives way to drier conditions.

**Your Actions:**

1. Place critical fire evacuation items in transportable containers.
  - a. Pack your Go-Bag. [See 5. B.](#) for a checklist.
  - b. Pack your Escape-Bag. [See 5. C.](#) for a checklist.
2. Check your Everbridge notification program status.
3. Check batteries in flashlights and radios.
4. Check fire extinguishers and purchase new ones, if needed. Review how to use them.
5. Move firewood at least 30 feet away from the house – outside Home Ignition Zone 2.
6. Remove fuels from your lot following Forestry Committee recommendations.
7. Maintain your home's exterior in accordance with fire mitigation recommendations.

### 4.B. Phase 2 Dry Conditions

**Local Conditions:** Chaffee County and the areas around GT are in "Severe" or worse drought conditions, or Stage 1 fire restrictions are issued in Chaffee County.

**Your Actions:**

1. Ensure cars and trailers are trip-ready.
2. Position your Go and Escape-Bags, and valuables in a central, accessible location.
3. Ensure adequate fuel for chainsaws.
4. Ensure your personal firefighting tools, water hoses, and ladders are available.
5. Check lot for hazards.

## 4.C. Phase 3 Heightened Fire Risk

**Local Conditions:** Previous drought conditions persist or worsen, and Stage 2 fire restrictions are issued in Chaffee County. In addition, fires may be igniting in nearby counties.

### **Your Actions:**

1. Double check all Go-Bags and Escape-Bags. If feasible, place them near or in vehicles.
2. Conduct final lot clean up to remove fuels and create adequate defensible space.
3. Fuel and lubricate chainsaws.
4. Gather and remove flammables from house, if feasible.
5. Position detachable RV propane tanks away from house and relocate motorhomes.
6. Connect water hoses.
7. Load trailers with evacuation items like UTVs, ATVs, and motorcycles when not in use and if practical.
8. Start keeping clothing, durable shoes or boots, and flashlights in your sleeping area.
9. Get adequate cash for emergencies.

## 4.D. Phase 4 Fire in Vicinity

**Local Conditions:** An active wildland fire is within 10 miles of GT.

### **Your Actions:**

1. Move extra vehicles off lot, if possible.
2. Move boxes and totes to include Go-Bags and Escape-Bags to vehicles.
3. Place desired items on trailers (ATVs, motorcycles, valuables).
4. If feasible, hitch trailers to vehicles.
5. Begin parking vehicles facing down the drive and carry spare keys with you.
6. Clear last fuels from house vicinity.
7. Remove flammables and explosives from home to include propane tanks from decks, RV's, campers, etc.
8. Close all outside home vents.
9. Position ladders near home.
10. Pack food boxes with non-perishables.
11. Stage clothing you can use during evacuation (long shirt, long pants, heavy boots, scarf or bandanna for face, helmets, goggles or glasses). Note – if you have fire-proof clothing, use it.

## 4.E. Phase 5 Pre-Evacuation Warning Issued

**Local Conditions:** An active wildland fire is in the vicinity warranting issuance of a pre-evacuation warning. (If you want to evacuate early, do not wait for an additional order...leave.)

### **Your Actions:**

1. Move vehicles out of garage. Park facing the escape route.
2. Disconnect automatic garage door openers, but keep doors closed.
3. Close all windows.
4. Move furniture away from windows and off decks.
5. Remove flammable window coverings. If fireproof, close them.

6. If desired, wet roof or apply fire resistant materials to home.
7. Move food to coolers and/or boxes.
8. Place final items in evacuation vehicles.
9. If feasible, move pets to another location.

## 4.F. Phase 6 Immediate Fire or Evacuate Order

**Local Conditions:** An active wildland fire is within 2 miles of GT boundaries or a Mandatory Evacuation order has been issued. (If you want to evacuate earlier, do not wait for an order...leave.)

### **Your Actions:**

1. Shut off propane. <https://preparednessadvice.com/turn-large-propane-tanks/>
2. Turn on interior and exterior house lights.
3. Move final items to vehicles.
4. Evacuate GT via your designated evacuation route.
5. Travel to the announced evacuation center for information or services.
6. Do Not Return to your Home until the all-clear is announced by emergency personnel.
7. IF YOU ARE TRAPPED IN THE HOUSE:
  - a. STAY CALM AND GATHER YOUR FAMILY IN ONE AREA.
  - b. CALL 911 AND STATE SITUATION AND LOCATION.
  - c. FILL SINKS AND TUBS WITH WATER.
  - d. WET NATURAL FIBER BLANKETS FOR COVER.
  - e. KEEP AWAY FROM OUTSIDE WALLS AND WINDOWS.
  - f. STAY IN CENTRAL AREA OF HOME OR AREA OF REINFORCED STRUCTURE.

## 5. Checklists

All of the following checklists are posted as separate documents on the GT website to permit easy access and printing. The checklists are available as Word documents so you may customize them for your personal needs. In addition, this action plan houses a single checklist on individual pages to permit printing directly from the plan.



[GO-BAG CHECKLIST](#)



[ESCAPE-BAG CHECKLIST](#)



[HOME EVACUATION CHECKLIST](#)

## 5.A. Step-by-Step Actions Quick List

This checklist is available on the GT website for reproduction and customization. We recommend you post it in a visible location in your home.

<b>Step-By-Step Actions – Quick List</b>	
<i>Note: A thorough list of actions is included in the Game Trail Wildland Fire Action Plan. For this Quick List, some early phase actions are not repeated in later phases.</i>	
<b>Phase 1: Fire Season</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pack Go-Bag and Escape-Bag</li> <li>• Check your emergency notification status</li> <li>• Check batteries in flashlights and radios</li> <li>• Check fire extinguishers; review usage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move firewood away from house</li> <li>• Remove fuels from your lot</li> <li>• Maintain your home’s exterior</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2: Stage 1 Fire Restrictions or “Severe” Drought</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure cars and trailers are trip-ready</li> <li>• Position Go- and Escape-Bags and valuables</li> <li>• Ensure adequate fuel for chainsaws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure personal fire tools, hoses, and ladders are available</li> <li>• Check lot for hazards</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3: Stage 2 Fire Restrictions &amp; Heightened Risk</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place Go- and Escape-Bags near or in vehicles</li> <li>• Conduct final lot clean up to remove fuels</li> <li>• Fuel and lubricate chain saws</li> <li>• Gather and remove flammables from house</li> <li>• Relocate/account for RV and MH propane</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect water hoses</li> <li>• Load practicable items on trailers</li> <li>• Keep clothing, durable shoes and flashlights in your sleeping area</li> <li>• Get adequate emergency cash</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 4: Fire in Vicinity, within 10 Miles</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move extra vehicles off lot</li> <li>• Place Go and Escape-Bags in vehicles</li> <li>• Load items on trailers and hitch to vehicles</li> <li>• Park vehicles facing down drive</li> <li>• Position ladders near home</li> <li>• Close all outside home vents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pack food boxes with non-perishables</li> <li>• Stage clothing you can use during evacuation</li> <li>• Remove flammables and explosives from home including propane tanks from decks &amp; RV’s</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 5: Pre-Evacuation Warning Issued</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move vehicles out of garage and face exit path</li> <li>• Disconnect automatic garage door openers, but keep doors closed</li> <li>• Place final items in evacuation vehicles</li> <li>• Move food to coolers and/or boxes</li> <li>• Close all windows</li> <li>• Move furniture away from windows and off decks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove flammable window coverings; if fireproof, close them</li> <li>• If desired, wet roof or apply fire resistant materials to home</li> <li>• If feasible, move pets to another location</li> </ul>

### Phase 6: Mandatory Evacuation Order Issued or Fire within 2 Miles

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shut off propane<br/><a href="https://preparednessadvice.com/turn-large-propane-tanks/">https://preparednessadvice.com/turn-large-propane-tanks/</a></li> <li>• Wet roof and home as time permits and as desired</li> <li>• Turn on interior and exterior house lights</li> <li>• Move final items to vehicles</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evacuate via your designated evacuation route</li> <li>• Travel to evacuation center</li> <li>• Do not return to your home until the all-clear is announced by emergency personnel</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

### IF TRAPPED IN THE HOUSE

- STAY CALM AND GATHER YOUR FAMILY IN ONE AREA
- CALL 911 AND STATE SITUATION AND LOCATION
- FILL SINKS AND TUBS WITH WATER
- WET NATURAL FIBER BLANKETS FOR COVER
- KEEP AWAY FROM OUTSIDE WALLS AND WINDOWS
- STAY IN CENTRAL AREA OF HOME OR AREA OF REINFORCED STRUCTURE

## 5.B. Go-Bag Checklist

This checklist is available on the GT website for reproduction and customization.

### Go-Bag Checklist



A Go-Bag is your collection of personal clothing and hygiene items pre-packed in a container or bag that can be moved to your vehicle within minutes for a rapid departure in the event of an emergency. The purpose of this bag is to permit you to gather and depart with all personal items you may need for at least one week if Game Trail receives a mandatory evacuation notice. Finally, the Chaffee County OEM encourages the use of available campers and RVs as a combination Go-Bag and temporary housing.

**Pack this bag as Game Trail enters fire season and set aside for immediate use. Each family member should have a Go-Bag. Discuss with your children their desire to pack a few memorable and irreplaceable items as this may be a traumatic event for them.**

#### CLOTHING

- Pants, leggings, etc.
- Shirts
- Socks
- Underwear
- Shoes
- Hat
- Light raincoat
- Light jacket

#### PERSONAL TOILETRIES


- Toothbrush & paste
- Deodorant
- Soap & shampoo
- Washcloth
- Razors, shaving lotion & after shave
- Lotions & sunscreen
- Hair care items

#### ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- Flashlight
- Eyewear or contacts
- Medicines & prescriptions
- Sunglasses
- Personal computer & power unit
- Cell phone chargers
- Cash

## 5.C. Escape-Bag Checklist

This checklist is available on the GT website for reproduction and customization.



### Escape-Bag Checklist

The Escape-Bag is a suggested hard-side tote, box, or container that is capable of holding personal records that are necessary for your family to conduct personal business if your home is destroyed. If these records are electronically stored outside your home, that is a benefit, but don't forget to place account numbers and access information in your Escape-Bag.

**Pack this bag as Game Trail enters fire season and set aside for immediate use.**

FINANCIAL RECORDS	HOME RECORDS
<input type="checkbox"/> Account numbers and access information <input type="checkbox"/> Stocks, bonds, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Employment information <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement information	<input type="checkbox"/> Deeds <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance Information <input type="checkbox"/> Home Inventory Data <input type="checkbox"/> Tax Records
MEDICAL RECORDS	PERSONAL BUSINESS ITEMS
<input type="checkbox"/> Immunization records <input type="checkbox"/> Prescriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant medical history records <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnosis, treatment, or imaging records	<input type="checkbox"/> Employment numbers and records <input type="checkbox"/> Business contacts <input type="checkbox"/> Current and relevant business work or project information <input type="checkbox"/> Wills
ADDITIONAL ITEMS	
<input type="checkbox"/> Family contact information <input type="checkbox"/> Family photos	<input type="checkbox"/> Valuable collections <input type="checkbox"/> Important personal mementos or collectables that can't be replaced.

## 5.D. Home Evacuation Checklist

This checklist is available on the GT website for reproduction.



### Home Evacuation Checklist

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pack Go-Bag and Escape-Bag, then place in vehicle or garage  | <input type="checkbox"/> Disconnect auto garage door opener and close door   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Face vehicles in direction of escape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Turn exterior lights on   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure driveway and turnarounds are clear for firefighters   | <input type="checkbox"/> Close all access doors from outside (dog doors, vents, fireplace dampers)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place flashlights in vehicle   | <input type="checkbox"/> Leave exterior doors unlocked   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place emergency radio or scanner in vehicle  | <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off propane tank and pilot lights  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn interior lights on  | <input type="checkbox"/> Move exterior furniture off decks   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place water in vehicle   | <input type="checkbox"/> Place ladders near home   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communicate meeting place info to family if separated  | <input type="checkbox"/> Connect exterior water hoses or place near faucets  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wear evacuation clothing – natural fibers, long pants and shirts, hat, boots, face covering, sunglasses or goggles | <input type="checkbox"/> Optional and if time available: board up windows, fill exterior containers with water, and place fire retardant on home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Move flammable furniture to center of rooms  | <input type="checkbox"/> Close interior doors  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Close fire resistant/proof drapes, shades, etc.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Gather pets and family, leave and do not return until 'all-clear' is issued   |

## 6. Evacuation Routes

Referencing the graphic maps and route demarcation line descriptions in this section, residents should use designated evacuation routes after issuance of any Chaffee County Sheriff directed evacuation order (voluntary or mandatory). Prior to that time, the predesignated evacuation routes are not in effect. The purpose of this route plan is to prevent excessive congestion on the only two escape routes out of Game Trail. Your designated route is based entirely on the quickest and most direct route out of our subdivision. Directions for these evacuation routes can be found in [Section 2. E.](#) of this action plan.

### Route Demarcation Lines (See Figure 2)

#### Eagles Ridge Drive

Eagles Ridge intersection with Aspen Turn – Lots south of intersection (starting with lots 12-29 and 12-30) use southern evacuation route. EXCEPTION: If your vehicle cannot negotiate County Road 365, you should evacuate using the northern evacuation route regardless of your lot location.

Eagles Ridge intersection with Timberline Drive - Lots south of intersection (starting with lots 6-2 and 6-3) use southern evacuation route. EXCEPTION: If your vehicle cannot negotiate County Road 365, you should evacuate using the northern evacuation route regardless of your lot location.

#### Valley View Drive

Lots southwest of midpoint of Valley View (starting with lots 7-13 and 7-14) use southern evacuation route.

#### Elk Meadow Drive

Lots south of the northern intersection with Habitat Drive (starting with lots 11-16 and 11-17) use southern evacuation route.

#### Habitat Drive

All lots with frontage on Habitat Drive should evacuate using the southern evacuation route to County Road 365

#### GT Roads Evacuating on 365 in Entirety

Princeton Circle	Aspen Turn
Princeton Hills	Trails End
Yale Crest	Antelope Lane
Mountain Top	Elk Corridor (direct to CR 361 is an option)
Creek Run	Orion Way

**Continued on next page**

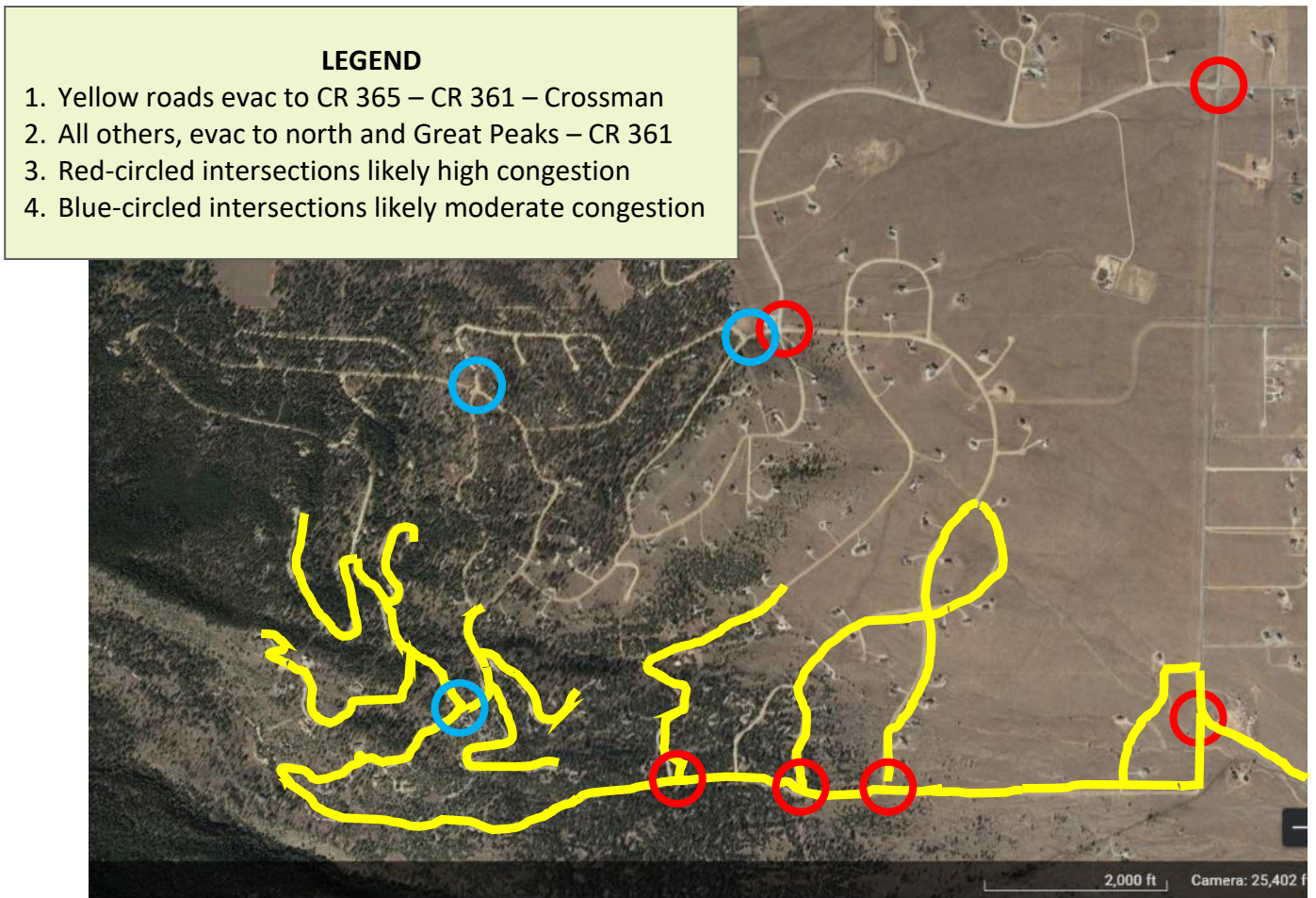
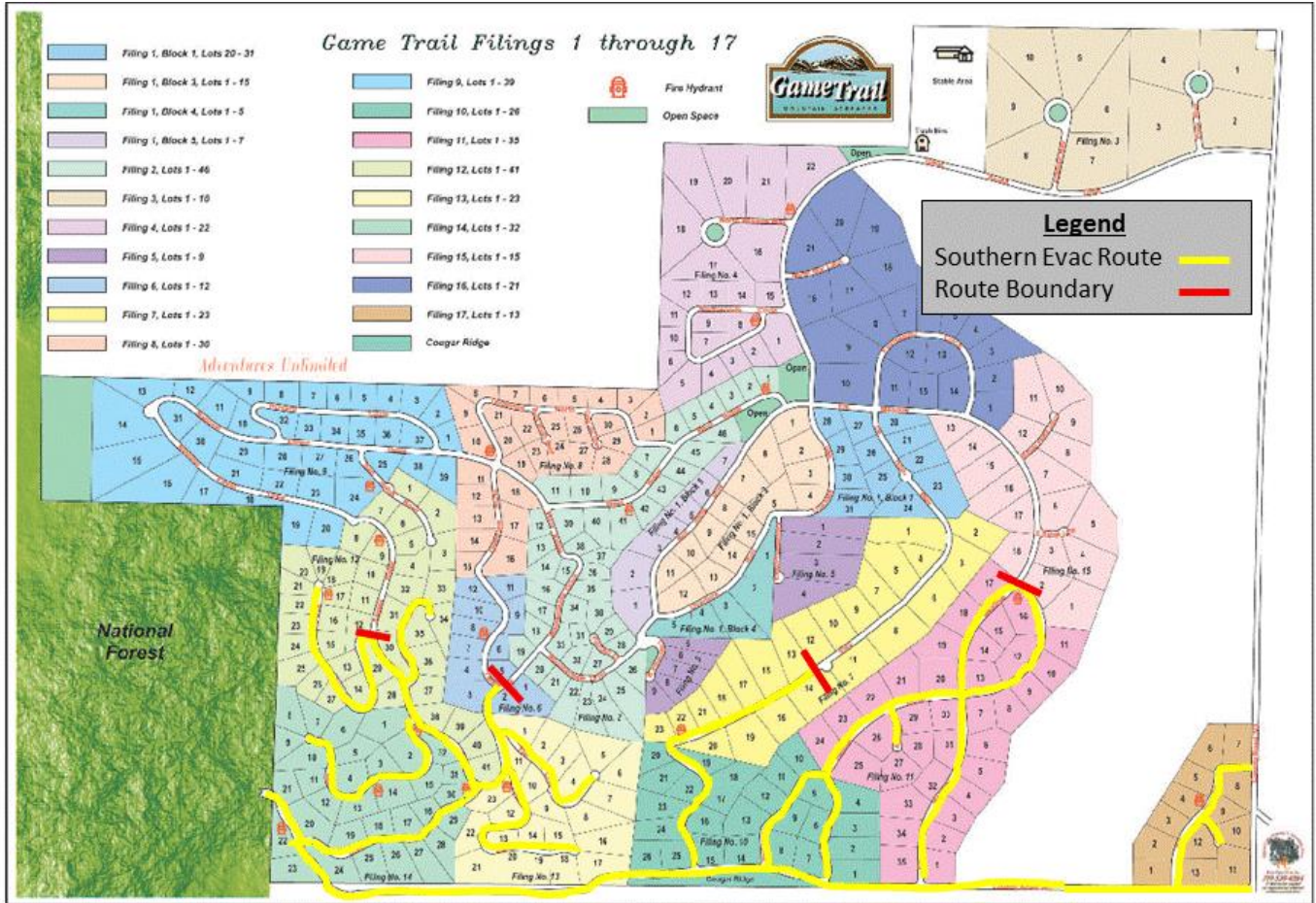
**Figure 1 – Evacuation Route Terrain Map**

Figure 2 – Evacuation Route Street / Filing Map



Note – all unmarked roads evacuate to northern route.

## 7. List of References

1. McKee, Thomas B., et al, A History of Drought in Colorado: No 9 Second Edition. Ft. Collins: Colorado Climate Center, 2000
2. Editors of All About Wildfires: The Science Behind Wildfires. Salt Lake City: Natural History Museum of Utah, University of Utah, date unknown.