

Fire Adapted Communities

LEARNING NETWORK

Ely, Minnesota is a community within hiking distance of the Canadian border and about a 4-hour drive north of the Twin Cities. With a population of about 3,400, Ely is in the middle of a complex landscape. Forests in this region have regrown from the heyday of railroad logging and Paul Bunyan more than 100 years ago. Ely also provides a gateway to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), drawing residents and visitors from all over the world.

Ely is on the frontlines of wildfire risk for many reasons. The area has beautiful forests, but the forests are thick with balsam fir which burns like paper when green and is almost as bad as a box of matches when it is dead and dry. The balsam fir and other understory growth in the forests around Ely can act as ladder fuel and



A FAC and Firewise presentation held at the Morse/Fall Lake Fire Department was aimed at raising awareness about the need for homeowners in the Ely region to create defensible space.

Photo: Gloria Erickson



The owners of this lake resort have worked with the Firewise program in Lake County and the Forest Service to mitigate wildfire risk on their property.

Photo: Lake County

increases the risk of destructive crown fires, including the May 2012 Highway 1 wildfire.

This past summer, local Ely FAC partners came together to implement a “chipper day” fuels reduction project. This event has sparked the interest of more neighborhoods, residents and lake associations. Additional chipper days are being planned, and local leadership and capacity are developing.

Partners are also in the early stages of developing an Ely Area Fire Safe Council. The goal of the Council will be to engage and encourage community partnerships to establish a wildfire resilient landscape for Ely and the surrounding wildland-urban interface.

Our main objectives are to: (1) provide education and demonstrations of Firewise best practices, and (2) continue to identify and implement fuels

Dovetail Partners

HUB ORGANIZATION



Working in ELY, Minnesota

FIRE SAFE COUNCIL VISION

To engage and encourage community partnerships to establish a wildfire resilient landscape for Ely and the surrounding wildland-urban interface.

reduction projects using our CWPPs as a baseline.

We will also continue to work with the Ely Emergency Preparedness Committee to establish evacuation strategies for Ely residents. And we hope to work with County Emergency managers on much-needed evacuation plans/routes in the surrounding wildland-urban interface.

For Ely, being fire adapted requires balancing recreation needs, resource utilization and public safety. That’s not always an easy balance to strike, but we are making progress.

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KEY PARTNERS

Ely Emergency Preparedness Committee
Firewise—Northeast Regional Specialist Lake County
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Morse/Fall Lake Township
USDA Forest Service
Vermilion Community College



Ely’s first annual Chipper Day was sponsored by local FAC partners in the summer of 2014.

Photos: Gloria Erickson



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