

**THE GREAT OUTDOORS  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICES  
ASSOCIATION  
FIREWISE  
MITIGATION  
PLAN**

# **THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN**

## Table of Contents

Firewise Communities Overview .....	3
Firewise Education Plan.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Issues to be Covered.....	3
Reduction of Fuels .....	3
Firewise Landscaping .....	4
Property Identification.....	4
Plan of Action.....	4
Firewise Mitigation Plan .....	6
Risks .....	6
Hazards .....	6
Evacuation Map for The Great Outdoors Community.....	8
CSA Emergency Evacuation Plan Summary .....	9
Recommendations When Told To Evacuate.....	10

# **THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN**

## **Firewise Communities Overview**

In October 2009, the Florida Forest Service (FFS) and Brevard County Fire Rescue (BCFR) began working with The Great Outdoors (TGO) to become a Firewise Community. TGO is approximately 2 miles west of Titusville, Florida on State Road 50. TGO encompasses over 1,000 acres of property and is designated as a Recreation Vehicle Park Resort Destination. The community currently has 1622 developed properties and approximately 20 Community Services Association (CSA) structures. TGO is built within a wildland urban interface bordering both woodlands and grasslands. This area has a history of periodic wildfires that are typical of Florida's pine flatwoods. However, both the natural fire regime and the use of prescribed fire have been curtailed since development began at TGO. As a result, vegetative fuels have continued to accumulate to the point that they are heavy fuel loads and pose an increased risk from wildfire.

An assessment was conducted in February 2010 with involvement from the FFS, BCFR, and TGO homeowners from the Firewise Committee. The assessment was completed with a score of 85, which is near the middle of the high hazard range (75-99). The Firewise Committee decided that we needed to work on several areas to reduce the hazard assessment score into the moderate hazard range. The areas identified were egress, defensible space behind homes, and reduction of high fire hazard vegetation types.

The Firewise Committee concentrated on two areas for the community:

- Education,
- Mitigation

## **Firewise Education Plan**

### Introduction

The wildland urban interface has been of great concern nationally for several years. Through experience and research, there are volumes of literature available on this topic, from which non-combustible materials to use when building your home to what to plant in your garden that is less flammable. Due to the immense volume of information that can be found on this issue, the Firewise Committee chose to limit its educational campaign to three topics. The three the most important topics in the order of priority are 1) reduction of fuels, 2) Firewise landscaping, and 3) property identification.

### Issues to be Covered

#### *Reduction of Fuels*

The Education Plan will recommend a thirty feet defensible space around the home to reduce wildfire risk and improve accessibility for firefighting personnel.

# **THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN**

## Firewise Landscaping

It was agreed that educating residents on landscaping would make a positive impact on making their properties less vulnerable to wildfires. The Firewise Committee created a custom handbook for all current and incoming residents called “The Great Outdoors Guide to Preparing for Wildfire”. This handbook has a section dedicated to landscaping suggestions including comparisons of plant flammability, proper mulch selection, and tree pruning guidelines.

## Property Identification

The Firewise Committee agreed that it was vitally important that the firefighters be able to find the correct property. They agreed that address numbers should be clearly marked and easily seen from the street. The CSA will annually publicize their service of painting street numbers on resident driveways.

## Plan of Action

The following plan of action for TGO was implemented for residents:

- **Printed material**  
Distribute our “The Great Outdoors Guide to Preparing for Wildfire” handbook to all current and incoming residents. The handbook also lists links to NFPA, Florida Division of Emergency Management, and our TGO Firewise video “Reducing Wildfire Risks at TGO”. We will ask that The TGO Welcome Center distribute these materials to new residents. An electronic copy of our handbook and a link to our TGO Firewise video will be set out twice a year to residents via the community Facebook pages.
- **Piggyback Events**  
Piggyback our efforts with existing community events. Each year, TGO community holds several events which are well attended such as the Fun Fair and the annual owner’s meeting. The Firewise committee and fire personnel (if available) will set up an information table with educational material and give-away items. If possible, the fire personnel will display wildfire fighting equipment. Another opportunity is to work with our Nature Center to include Firewise speakers in their guest lecture series. Past speakers have discussed prescribed burns. Future talks should include landscaping, native fire-resistant plants, and the natural fire ecosystem.
- **Article in Newsletter**  
Members of the Firewise Committee contribute an educational Firewise article for every community newsletter that is distributed every two weeks.
- **Spring Clean-up Day**  
The Firewise Committee will declare a day in February (before the start of wildfire season) as Spring Clean-up Day. This is a time where we work with residents in a community common area teaching them Firewise techniques. It is the hope of the Firewise Committee that this event will act as a catalyst to motivate residents to:

## **THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN**

- Check their house numbers are visible from the street; call the Association if the number needs to be repainted.
- Remind them to plant less-flammable plants.
- Clear their roofs of dried leaves and tree limbs.
- Ensure that there is a thirty-foot defensible space around their home.

With a goal of increasing visibility and participation by 10%, we will:

- Approach home improvement stores or nurseries for donations of plant that are less flammable and recommended in our handbook for door prizes.
  - Ask that FFS, St. John's River Water Management District (SJRWMD), and BCFR have tables and distribute information and free give-away items.
  - Request the FFS to bring Smokey to this event.
  - Publicize the event through our new social media pages.
- **Signs**
    - Maintain our Firewise Communities U.S.A. signs on our Nature Trail, Front Gate Security Station, and CSA office.
    - Write a procedure for the Fire Danger Level sign at the Front Gate Security Station. Only put-up signs for High, Very High, and Extremely High wildfire levels.
  - **Media**
    - Write article(s) about TGO Firewise program for submission to newspapers and magazines.
    - Use social media to broadcast Wildfire alerts, mitigation tips, etc. on our community Facebook pages as well as our community Firewise page.
    - Set up screenings of our custom Firewise video "Reducing Wildfire Risks at TGO" at our Nature Center, Newcomers Meetings (for new residents), and condo meetings.
  - **Volunteers**
    - Appoint a "volunteer coordinator" to promote participation and optimize volunteer resources.
    - Keep track of volunteer hours.
    - Aid with community events/programs.
    - Recruit volunteers to help with Firewise Clean Ups along our trails with a goal doubling our trail workdays to twice a week.

# **THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN**

- **Evacuation Drills**

Perform at least one drill per year with our professional partners. Our goal is to increase participation to also include CSA staff and condo board members. Our second goal is to perform feasibility drills for using our CSA building as emergency shelters, determining how to use the buildings and what supplies are needed.

## **Firewise Mitigation Plan**

The Goal of the Firewise Mitigation Plan is to reduce wildfire risk, hazard, and loss in TGO Community. Mitigation may be categorized as either prevention (reduce the number of fire starts) or suppression (reduce the fires severity and the difficulty to control the wildfire).

Risk: the chances a wildland fire may start

Hazard: the difficulty in controlling the wildland fire

### **Risks**

Human activity accounts for 4 out of 5 wildfires in Florida, therefore, risk reduction efforts fall mainly into the prevention category. The Firewise Committee will be responsible for increasing the awareness within the TGO Community of steps they may take to mitigate wildfire risks.

The treatment (mowing and/or prescribed burning) of fuels at the perimeter of the development also reduces the risk of fires starting in those areas. The FFS and SJRWMD will attempt to treat the perimeter fuels on a three-year rotating basis. Where possible, prescribed burns could be conducted in strategically chosen blocks to reduce fuels and break fuel continuity.

The top possible causes of wildfires in TGO:

- Wildland urban interface – humans and their supporting infrastructure
  - Vehicles
  - Powerlines
  - Maintenance/construction projects
  - Transportation corridors
- Lightning
- Debris burning
- Incendiary
- Recreation

### **Hazards**

Fire behavior is driven primarily by two factors – fuel, and weather. Weather cannot be controlled so hazard reduction methods focus on fuel management. The FFS fuel management plan for TGO concentrates on perimeter treatments aimed at stopping (or slowing) wildfires burning into TGO from adjacent lands. As a result of the current Firewise initiative, plans are being formulated to maintain

## **THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN**

interior firebreaks using the FFS Fire Management Team. More will need to be done to manage the fuel loads within the development. Several options are being explored including cooperative agreements with other state and local agencies, subcontracting, or expanding TGO maintenance program to include fuel management.

Another ongoing fuel management initiative is a general Firewise cleanup of the community nature trails. The community maintains several miles of trails that also double as firebreaks and egress routes into the surrounding woodlands and grasslands. With the approval of the SJRWMD, we thin trees and shrubs, remove ladder fuels, remove dead plant material, and clear out excess underbrush.

However, the primary determinants of structural ignition are proximity to fuel and building (especially roof) materials. These two factors are entirely at the discretion of the individual homeowner. Therefore, the greatest gains in hazard reduction will come from raising the level of wildfire awareness and education among TGO residents. Our Firewise handout “The Great Outdoors Guide to Preparing for Wildfire” is distributed to all current and future residents. It includes information on Firewise construction and landscape techniques and materials, fire’s role in nature, and prescribed burning. This handout is distributed at the CSA Office and at The Welcome Center.

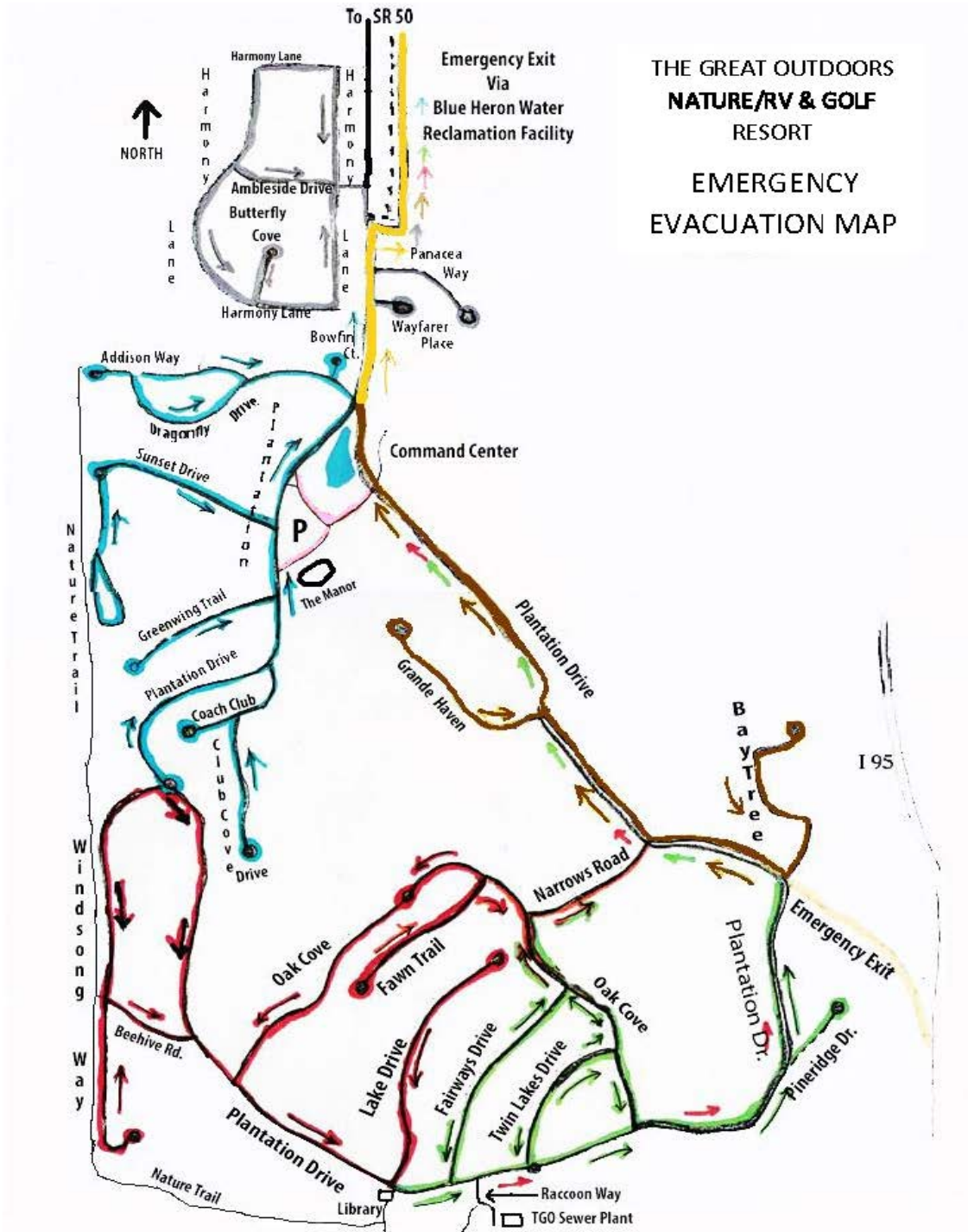
The top three areas for hazard reduction are:

- Maintaining defensible space around structures
- Thinning dense underbrush
- Removing ladder fuels

**Note: All fuel thinning and cutting within any conservation easements must be in accordance with the current SJRWMD permit.**

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN

## Evacuation Map for The Great Outdoors Community





# **THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN**

Updated: 20 Mar 2018

## **CSA Emergency Evacuation Plan Summary**

When an emergency is declared by Brevard County Officials, they will notify the CSA Manager and/or Chairman of the Board of Directors. If Brevard County considers it necessary to evacuate TGO, the following steps will be taken:

1. The CSA Manager will notify the CSA department heads and the employees will gear up according to the CSA TRAFFIC CONTROL FOR EMERGENCY EGRESS PROCEDURE.
2. Evacuation information will be posted on the Community Channel 732.
3. Announcements will be made over the TGO Notification System. If necessary, the CSA patrol vehicle will tour TGO with a siren and bullhorn to notify specific areas as directed.
4. The regular Plantation Dr entrance will be used for Emergency Equipment / Personnel to enter TGO and when available, as an evacuation exit.
  - a. If necessary, the Emergency Exit through the Titusville Blue Heron Plant will be opened for evacuation to SR 50.
  - b. If evacuation to SR 50 is not advised, the Secondary Emergency Exit, to the south of Baytree Drive will be used for evacuation to I-95. The entrance to this evacuation route will be marked with signage. The Brevard County Sheriff's Office must authorize the use of this exit.

**Because of the urgency of the event and the road conditions of the emergency exits, only passenger vehicles (cars, pickup trucks, etc.) will be permitted to leave once the mandatory evacuation is announced. If you want to leave with a towed vehicle or a vehicle longer than 18 feet, you must leave before the mandatory evacuation is called.**

### **Chain of Command:**

BCFR or Brevard County Sheriff's Department notifies the CSA Manager or Chairman of the Board of Directors. Under the direction of Brevard County Officials, the Manager or Chairman coordinates the call up of the Traffic Control for Evacuation Group.

# **THE GREAT OUTDOORS FIREWISE MITIGATION PLAN**

## **Recommendations When Told To Evacuate**

- Listen to a battery-powered radio and follow local instructions.
- Watch Spectrum cable news Channel 13 or other local stations.
- Call 211 - this is Brevard County's information line, and they receive updates from the Emergency Operations Center. You can also call the Emergency Management Office directly during a disaster at 321-637-6674.
- If immediate evacuation is indicated, take one vehicle per household - this will keep your household together and reduce traffic congestion and delay.
- Take your emergency kit and any medication you may need.
- Secure your home:
  - Close and lock doors and windows.
  - Unplug electronic equipment.
  - Turn off main water valve and electricity if told to do so.
  - Let others know where you are going.
  - Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather.
  - Turn off all propane devices and tanks.
  - Don't forget your pets.
- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts because they may be blocked. Be alert for washed out roads and bridges and do not drive into flooded areas. Stay away from downed power lines.

### **Area shelters for TGO are:**

#### Apollo Elementary School

3085 Knox McRae Dr. @ 321-267-7890

#### Imperial Estates Elementary School

5525 Kathy Drive @ 321-267-1773 (enter off Sisson Road)

#### Oak Park Elementary School

321-269-3252

Special Needs shelter arrangements must be made in advance with Brevard County. Call Brevard County Emergency Management Office at 321-637-4088 for more information. While the shelters often provide water, food, and basic sanitary facilities, you should plan to have your own supplies as well, especially water.

- Cooperate with shelter manager and others staying in the shelter.
- Restrict smoking to designated areas that are well-ventilated. Ensure that smoking materials are disposed of safely.
- Remember, alcoholic beverages and weapons are prohibited.
- Pets, except for service animals are also not allowed in public shelters. Make arrangements with someone sheltering in place or contact North Area Animal Center in Titusville @ 321-264-5119.