



NEWS Release

For Immediate Release: Tuesday, April 23, 2013

Contacts:

Upper Jacoby Creek Firewise Committee at upperjacobycreekfirewise@gmail.com

Cybelle Immitt, County of Humboldt Natural Resources Planning Division and the Humboldt County Fire Safe Council, 268-3736 cimmitt@co.humboldt.ca.us

UPPER JACOBY CREEK EARNS NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Jacoby Creek, California -- As a result of its dedicated efforts to reduce the vulnerability of homes and landscapes to wildfire, **The Upper Jacoby Creek neighborhood** has earned Firewise Communities/USA® recognition from the National Firewise Communities Program. In celebration of this achievement, residents of Upper Jacoby Creek congregated on Sunday, April 14, 2013 in the cozy living room of Marilyn Kelly, a Firewise Committee member. About 15 neighbors and agency partners came together to acknowledge the hard work and successes of the Upper Jacoby Creek Firewise Committee.

Committee members reminisced about the inspiration for forming the Firewise group: a structure fire in the neighborhood that started in the chimney and burned the house to the ground. That incident made them all realize their vulnerability to fire and how much work needed to be done to improve fire safety in their community. Committee member, Sarah Trapkus, reflected on the group's accomplishments and is already looking to the future, imploring more neighbors to join in the effort to enhance the community's fire preparedness:

"We have really come together as a community in the last couple years. We turned a tragedy for one neighbor into the shared responsibility of all the neighbors. Learning together what fire safety means, and becoming aware of what our responsibility actually is was transformative. We worked together to educate each other, set goals, and supported each other in achieving those goals. After becoming a recognized Firewise community, we feel more confident in tackling some of the bigger challenges we share living where we do. With the amazing support from the Humboldt County Fire Safe Council, CAL FIRE and local Fire departments, we are creating a safer, closer and overall much better living environment for ourselves. It is very exciting."

Upper Jacoby Creek residents worked with **The Humboldt County Fire Safe Council, CAL FIRE, and the Arcata Fire Protection District** to conduct a wildfire hazard assessment, identifying risks and hazards that generate fire danger, such as overgrown vegetation along roadsides or power lines. Based on this assessment, the group developed an action plan to address those safety concerns. Residents then worked together to implement that plan, taking specific actions to reduce their vulnerability and enhance fire safety. By preparing homes, structures, and landscapes *before* a wildfire happens, **the Upper Jacoby Creek community** has dramatically increased its chances that lives, homes, and properties will be protected when a wildfire does occur.

Upper Jacoby Creek is the **6th** community in **Humboldt County** to be recognized by Firewise Communities/USA, joining many other communities nationwide that have been recognized since the program's inception in 2002. The national Firewise Communities program provides free information resources and direction for residents, communities, businesses, and fire and forestry organizations.

Third District Supervisor, Mark Lovelace, and Humboldt County Fire Safe Council coordinator, Cybelle Immitt, joined the celebration by presenting the Upper Jacoby Creek Firewise Committee with road signs declaring the area a Firewise Community, and a plaque recognizing the valuable work of its members.

"I am very proud of what residents in Upper Jacoby Creek have accomplished," Immitt said. "I hope that the Firewise recognition gave them an opportunity to celebrate their successes and inspired them to increase their local collaboration and get even more work done. The Humboldt County Fire Safe Council supports the Firewise program and encourages other communities to get involved."

Supervisor Lovelace congratulated the group on their accomplishments and acknowledged how important these efforts are: "In these remote communities fire response can take a long time, making planning and prevention efforts even more critical. This is a true grass-roots effort to make the community safer, and it's great to see what they've been able to accomplish. I'm glad that the County was in a position to provide some assistance through the Firewise Program."

Also in attendance were CAL FIRE Battalion Chief, Bob Ellis, and retired Arcata Fire Chief and former Humboldt County Fire Safe Council member, Dave White. Both firefighting professionals expressed gratitude for the small group of tenacious community members who have done so much to enhance the fire safety of their community in such a short time. Chief Ellis commented that there were noticeable improvements that he knows will aid CAL FIRE's emergency response. Examples include reflective street signs and home address markers that add visibility, as well as bold lettering and blue reflective dots placed on water tanks, identifying them as firefighting water sources. Chief White said, "Remember, the majority of our calls are for medical emergencies and you want us to find your home fast. These reflective signs are going to make a big difference, especially at night." These and other improvements are simple steps communities can take to enhance their emergency preparedness that can have big returns when disaster strikes.

If you are interested in learning more about Humboldt County's Firewise Program call Cybelle Immitt at 707 268-3736.

Information about individual and community-wide wildfire preparedness is available at www.firewise.org.

More information about the Humboldt County Fire Safe Council can be found at www.co.humboldt.ca.us/natural-resources/fire_safe_council/

