

# THE FIREWISE COMMUNITY – EXAMPLE

## — CHOCORUA SKI & BEACH



**L**ocated in Tamworth, New Hampshire, Chocorua (pronounced sho-kor-oo-ah) Ski & Beach Association is a small community set among pine barrens whose 50-year natural burn is a decade overdue. It is the first community in New Hampshire to achieve Firewise status.



**M**embers of the Ski & Beach community first sought advice from the local Tamworth Fire Chief, Steve Solomon, after a community member lost his life in a fire. Chief Solomon was aware that New Hampshire's Forest Ranger, Robert Boyd, was interested in approaching communities in the pine barrens to introduce the Firewise program and suggested that the Board for the Association meet with Ranger Boyd. After seeing a presentation by Ranger Boyd, the community's Board invited him to make his presentation at the Association's annual meeting. About half of the community members attended and all agreed that the Association should move forward with the program.

Ranger Bob Boyd makes a presentation illustrating the existing fire hazards in Chocorua Ski & Beach at the Association's annual meeting. Those in attendance were unanimous that the community should take action to become Firewise.

"Ranger Boyd had taken photos around our community that illustrated the fire hazards that placed us at high risk, including pine needle accumulation on our roofs, stacked wood too close to homes, and inadequate fuel clearance from structures," said Bob Pariseau, president of the Association's Board. "It was eye-opening to learn that our wildfire risk was so great and our community members were eager to do what was needed to make our homes safer."

"We discussed possible projects that the community could do," said Ranger Boyd. "These included fuel reduction, creating better egress in case of emergency, improving the water supply, and building a fire danger sign."



With only one road leading into and out of the community, Ranger Boyd recommended construction of an egress road that would be available to community members and fire fighters in the event of an emergency. The community recently completed construction of the road, which is shown here in an earlier stage of development.

"Although a number of our residents are only present on weekends or part-time, most everyone has been enthusiastic about participating," said Mary Currier, who updates the community's web site and oversees its newsletter which both offer reminders about Firewise practices and upcoming activities. (The community often has 50% participation or better, with younger residents pitching in to help more elderly neighbors.) "Awareness is the cornerstone of our success. When we hold chipper days or clean-up activities, or consider other projects for improving our safety, it sure helps that we know what is at stake."

In its first year, Chocorua Ski & Beach set the following goals:

- Smokey Bear Fire Danger sign at the entrance to the community to raise members' awareness of current fire conditions
- Post Firewise and fire rules/regulations information on the community's bulletin board
- Post similar information and notices on their web site with a link to Firewise's web site
- Patrol for illegal fires & check fire permits
- Clean-up days - homeowners remove fuels & debris (May & August)



- Hire a chipping contractor to remove homeowners' fuels & debris and mow sides of roads (7 miles)
- Construct a gated egress road for emergency evacuation only - made wide enough for fire apparatus
- Apply for grant funding to buy and install a 30,000 gallon cistern
- Purchase metal screening for members' decks, roof vents, etc.
- To create more space in the home ignition zones, the community also plans for members to remove heavier fuels in spring through fall of 2008 and to hire another chipping contractor to remove the fuels.



The community completed two clean-up weekends, one in May and another in August, where homeowners removed light and heavy fuels from their properties and brought them roadside for the chipping contractor to remove.



Information about Firewise practices and general safety reminders are continually posted and updated on the community's bulletin board and web site.

Partners in the Association's Firewise efforts include: Chocorua Ski & Beach Association, NH Division of Forests & Lands' Forest Protection Bureau, U.S. Forest Service, Northeast Forest Fire Protection Commission, Tamworth Fire Department, Tamworth Forest Fire Warden, and contractors. Tamworth Fire Chief Steve Solomon assisted with the program from the beginning, educating the Chocorua Ski & Beach Board mem-

bers on fire rules & regulations, giving presentations, and assisting the Board in researching and applying for grant money to pay for purchasing and installing a 30,000-gallon cistern to address the community's currently inadequate water supply. Forest Fire Warden Milton Norcross also assisted by helping educate the community on fire rules/regulations and in issuing fire permits to homeowners after explaining proper burn pit construction, adequate fire suppression equipment, and how to burn campfires safely.

Division of Forests & Lands' Forest Ranger Robert Boyd presents a check from the Northeast Forest Fire Protection Commission in the amount of \$26,168.16 to Chocorua Ski & Beach Club Association in Tamworth for its Firewise program efforts in reducing the threat of wildfire to the community. Pictured from left to right, John Currier, Forest Ranger Robert Boyd, Henry Bourgeois, Mary Currier, Don Pepin, Selectman Tom Abugelis and Fire Chief Steve Solomon. Photograph by Mary Pepin.



**How-To Newsletter** thanks NH Forest Ranger Robert Boyd along with Mary Currier and Bob Pariseau, of the Chocorua Ski & Beach Association Board, for contributing the information and photographs for this segment of "The Firewise Community - Example."

