



Colorado US-285 Corridor's Wildfire Prevention Efforts Take Another Big Step Forward

- Elk Creek Fire Protection District third "285-Corridor" fire district to meet 2003 Congressional directive
 - Area home to Hayman, Hi-Meadow and Buffalo Creek wildfires

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BOULDER, CO. – One of Colorado's most vital and threatened highway corridors will be one step closer this spring to being ready for a catastrophic wildfire event.

The Elk Creek Fire Protection District Board of Directors on Wednesday contracted with the Boulder-based Anchor Point Group LLC, the nation's leading wildfire and forest management company, to help reduce the possibility of a devastating wildfire impacting the district. Elk Creek's move marks the third of approximately six key districts in the "US-285 Corridor," one of Colorado's most important highways, to contract with Anchor Point in an effort to reduce the area's high-risk to a devastating wildfire.

The 285 Corridor fire districts are home to three major and costly wildfires – the Buffalo Creek Fire (1996), the Hi Meadow Fire (2000), and the Hayman Fire (2002), all just south of the highway. The collective suppression and rehabilitation costs alone for those three fires amounted to more than \$280 million.

Anchor Point will assist Elk Creek to improve its emergency response, identify vegetation types and wildfire danger, define community evacuation plans, provide potentially life-saving "Pre-Attack Plans", recommend sites for fuel reduction projects and complete the district's *Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)* by April 2005. Two neighboring fire districts – Platte Canyon and North Fork – completed CWPP's with Anchor Point in 2003 and 2004.

The CWPP is a federal directive from the 2003 *Healthy Forests Initiative Act* that directs communities at high risk to a wildfire event to begin efforts to mitigate those risks. The CWPP will bring together regionally key officials, agencies and groups to collaboratively identify areas at risk, and to develop an action plan for reducing those risks.

"With a history of devastating wildfires in the Corridor, there's no question the residents and even the highway itself are at a tremendous risk to a catastrophic wildfire," said Chris White, managing partner of the Anchor Point Group.

Anchor Point has partnered with the Boulder-based RedZone Software LLC, a leading provider of wildfire software and services to provide fire-behavior modeling and map products using a Geographical Information System (GIS). RedZone will equip the Elk Creek department with its emergency response and planning software.

"With such a high density of homes in Elk Creek, we certainly look forward to working with the department to reduce the hazard and threat," says Clark Woodward, president of RedZone Software.

Elk Creek Fire District volunteers will complete detailed wildfire hazard assessments using RedZone handheld software for each of the approximately district's 4,800 homes. This information will be used to educate homeowners and create digital maps of the district, which will also help Elk Creek's firefighters respond to structure fires, medical calls and car accidents.

Community meetings with local fire experts are scheduled to be held in January. Contact the Elk Creek Fire Department at (303) 816-9385 for more information.



Contact: Clark Woodward
Tel.: (303) 386-3955
E-mail: clark@redzonesoftware.com
Website: www.redzonesoftware.com



Contact: Chris White/Jim Moscou
Tel: (303) 665-3473
Email: jim@anchorpointgroup.com