



Four Mile Fire Department

Newsletter, Spring 2008

A-Brief History

Doug Ray, President and Chairman of the Board

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In 1981 I was first elected to the Board as Treasurer. From the previous Treasurer I received a ledger book (illegible) and a few shoe boxes of bills and receipts. The laptop seemed to be missing -- oh that's right, we didn't have one. Our annual budget was almost nothing, and we tried very hard to spend that nothing wisely. We didn't have a meeting room so we met in each other's living rooms. (I am really glad that I don't have to drive to Margaret Hansen's house anymore.) Margaret was our Chief for a long time, until she decided that she needed to spend more time being an architect than fire department Chief. Margaret was a great Chief. She managed to keep all the County Officials wary of her as well as doing her bidding! Truly she did much more than that; she modernized the department, put it on a "professional" footing for the first time, instituted regular trainings, got us in the grant application business, created the auxiliary, she was equally responsible to Ginger Harris for initiating medical response in Four Mile Fire as well as new, upgraded trucks and the construction of three "new" stations. Wow.

The current department is a wonder of dedication and purpose. Our budget is around \$100,000, up from \$2,000 when I started. We still do our best to spend your tax money wisely. We supplement our tax income with grant money -- both federal and state as well as donations. Gambling has been our friend (we receive State "gambling impact" grants occasionally because we serve the lower part of Boulder Canyon). We happen to have in the department a grant writer extraordinaire, Bruce

www.fourmilefire.org

History of Four Mile Fire

(cont'd from page 1)

Four Mile Fire Department

Fire Chief

Bret Gibson

303.444.0882

Quarter Master

LouAnn Shirley

303.442.4271

Board of Directors:

President and Chairman

Doug Ray

303.449.7994

Treasurer

Allison Wagner

Secretary

Greg Berbaum

Michael Carpenter

Karen Benjamine

Emergencies call 911

Immediate help that are

Non-Emergencies

303.441.4444

4 Mile Fire Department

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Boulder, CO 80302

www.fourmilefire.org

Vaughn. He tackled the bureaucratic maze of grant proposals and prevailed. Over the years with Bruce's expertise we received monies that paid for new trucks and other very necessary equipment. Just goes to show what intelligence and honesty can get. Thanks Bruce, you are doing an amazing job.

Our truck situation was pretty pathetic back then, especially compared to the present. Duct tape was our friend! Big thanks to Chuck Gray and Margaret Hansen for designing affordable trucks that worked. Actually, two of them are still clinging to life but will soon be retired -- Chief Gibson will be taking less Advil when they are gone. My suggestion is that we push them off a cliff on the way to Gold Hill and watch them disintegrate. Just kidding! They are still worth a few bucks, and so we will try to sell them. Nowadays all of our trucks are ready to jump into action for the next emergency. Unlike the old days, they even start!

Originally there was no medical response team and no thought of one. Basically there were no funds but somehow we managed to make it all work. Of course, there were fewer people in the canyon then, which meant fewer challenges. Money comes with people. This brings us to our current state of affairs. We are a real fire department with good trucks, dedicated volunteers, well-trained EMTs, fire houses and good equipment.

Over the years, we have increased the number of our fire stations from one, the Quonset hut, to four, strategically located throughout the Canyon. Well, only one of them is a "real station". The "station" at the bottom of the Canyon is really just a garage for our emergency response truck. And the Quonset hut and the "station" at Wall Street are also just garages. Only the station in Salina is large enough to hold small meetings and trainings, while bursting at the seams. We hope to be able to build a real station soon - one with enough room to hold all of our trainings in, to keep all of our records, and to store our equipment. In the last few years we have begun a program of placing cisterns throughout the District, so there is now some water available even in parts of the Canyon that are far from Four Mile Creek. We have a very active program of advising homeowners how to make their homes and property safer, and we have begun a program of forest thinning in order to reduce the risk of major conflagrations.

We now have a very capable medical response team. My hope is that you never get to meet them. Headed by Dave Hustvedt, they are up-to-date on procedures, trained and ready to respond at a moment's notice. You can feel confident that they know what to do.

Lou Ann Shirley, another member of the board who has been in the department since the dawn of time, keeps tally of the fire fighter equipment needs. She keeps that end of the department running smoothly and efficiently. Because we have never had enough room in any of our buildings to store all of our equipment, much of it has always lived in Lou Ann's garage. Thank you Lou Ann and keep dancing. (I stole all of your grammar correcting red pens so don't even think about it.)

For those of you who don't know, this is a 100 per cent volunteer fire department composed of people just like you who care about their neighbors, their community, and this Canyon. Like most mountain people, I have the ability to be completely happy being left alone. I was dragged into the department 28 years ago by my neighbor Rob Beebe. I'm really glad he did because I have met people who are at times odd, at times frustrating, and generally independent, but who are always interesting. And they are forever dedicated to making our Canyon a better, safer place. Being in the Four Mile Fire Department has made my life richer (not financially - no one in the department receives a cent). My thanks and hopefully yours to all those involved in what I consider to be the best volunteer fire department in the county. Special thanks to Chief Bret Gibson who does an incredible job as ringmaster. I won't hold the flames on the side of his truck against him.

And, as I said, this is a volunteer department. It is only as good as you are. We need you and your skills - whatever they may be - in this department. If you are interested in making your canyon a better, safer place, contact Bret Gibson at 303.444.0882, check out our website for additional information: www.fourmilefire.org. However much or little time you can spare, we have a job for you.

Volunteer - Not Sure?

Excerpt from the www.fourmilefire.org website

HOW MUCH TIME IS INVOLVED?

We respond to everything from roll-over injury accidents in Boulder Canyon to structure fires in remote locations, medical emergencies, or wildland fires that threaten the forested areas and homes. In a typical year we respond to 80 to 100 calls, with more than 70% having some medical component to them. Four Mile does not use any kind of shifts or scheduling for being “on call” to respond to emergencies. We are a small, unique department with special needs that are better served by the following strategy: anyone who can respond to a call, does so. Generally we get a good response, and this self-balancing system seems to compensate for people being out of town, sick or otherwise unable to respond. This also insures that we have a good mix of people with different types of training responding to the call - no matter which end of the district it occurs in. Calls can last from 45 minutes for a minor emergency to all day for a wildland fire. How much time you spend responding to calls depends on you.

Training is, by necessity, a big component of what we do. We meet for about three hours in the morning on the second Saturday of each month, and for two hours every fourth Thursday evening of each month. Additional medical training is the second Thursday evening each month. Other training opportunities exist both inside and outside the department as well.

WHAT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE?

Four Mile provides frequent in-house training sessions covering basic incident operations such as driving fire trucks, running pumps, structure fire safety, medical evacuations, traffic control, and digging fire line. Once a level of commitment is demonstrated by a volunteer, the department encourages and supports additional formal training including:

- * Wildland fire training: S-190/S-130, a 36 hour course that provides the first level ‘red card’ certification, and many more courses offered by the county and state
- * Fire Fighter Academy: (four month structure fire fighting course)
- * Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification courses

- * *How can I help?*
- * *How much time is involved?*
- * *What training opportunities are there?*
- * *Who pays for special clothing or gear?*
- * *How do you get called to respond to an emergency?*
- * *Is it dangerous?*
- * *What is your typical kind of emergency?*
- * *Is it worth it?*
- * *Who should I contact?*



**Four Mile Fire Department
FIRE MITIGATION SERVICES**

303.588.3440

David Lasky

4MileFireMit@gmail.com

Providing:

- X Environmentally sensitive fire mitigation**
- X Forest health and Bark Beetle consultation**
- X Defensible space design & implementation**
- X Thinning, chipping and lot clearing**
- X Firewood**
- X Portable sawmill and locally produced rough-cut lumber**
- X Native grass seeding and tree planting**
- X Over 12 years of experience**

Not-for-profit Fire Mitigation

Flood of 1969

by Thelma Robinson

... heard a loud crashing and saw a ten foot wall of mud, trees and rocks slide down the gulch taking out a corner of their deck.

Perhaps they were lucky after all. They were alive.

The flood of 1969 created an awareness that the fledging Four Mile Fire Department had more to offer than fighting fires. We had heard and read stories of flooding in our area. The narrow gauge railroad was just completed to Sunset but unfortunately in July of 1883 there was a major washout followed by a second in August. It was reported that the little stream of Gold Run was out-of-control and water came down the steep gully in large, rolling, murky, thundering waves and rushed through Salina at a terrible rate taking bridges, sticks, timber and debris along with it. When the storm cleared, holes up to three feet deep obstructed the roadway, railroad bridges were washed away and portions of the track were buried under deep mud.¹

In 1890 the scene was repeated but more disastrous in regard to loss of human life. Salina residents, Mary and William King from England had been in the United States for less than a year when a heavy rainstorm fell and Gold Run swelled and overflowed its banks. William rushed to help the Postmistress up the mountain to safety, then returned to assist his wife. As the couple stepped out their door a larger wave of water -- some said 15 feet high, swept them downstream.²

The railroad was rebuilt and began operating but life would be short for the narrow gauge. July of 1919 a flood roared down Four Mile Canyon and Boulder Creeks, washing out tracks and bridges with the majority of damage in Four Mile Canyon. The Swizerland Trail of America had met its demise.³

In 1965 Four Mile residents were devastated and reminded of the danger of a heavy spring runoff when a three year old wandered too close to the creek bank and was lost in the fast moving stream. Our Rockies drain immense areas. Any runoff above normal, cascades down long slopes gathering speed until it spills into a gulch. Each gulch pours its flow into the creeks. The results can be a terrible flood such as we experienced in 1969.

The first week in May an unremitting slow and steady rain began falling adding to the spring runoff. On May 6 and 7 the already saturated ground received nine inches in two days. Culverts and bridges clogged with trees and debris diverted the raging creek to the roadway washing the road down to bedrock in places.

Our neighbor's house, tucked between Four Mile Creek and a gulch cutting down from Emancipation Hill, was threatened. Sand bagging efforts became futile. In two hours time the Dick Hillyer family moved lock, stock and barrel into our garage. We had seven unexpected overnight guests sleeping on

our floor that night including Pete, a graduate student living on Wall Street. He had set up a short wave radio communication system in our living room. Power and telephones were out as support poles became 'uprooted' and swung vicariously from their wires. Boulders were clanging and banging as they moved down stream, a sound one never forgets.

When nighttime came it was time to start helping neighbors. The road below Poorman was washed out as well as the road at the junction of Salina and Wall streets so rescue efforts were focused in the Crisman area. A raging torrent was just a foot below the Logan Mill bridge when Dick and other volunteers moved the Four Mile Canyon Department's World War II military surplus fire trucks across the bridge. Logan Mill residents would now use the abandoned wagon road up and over Sugarloaf.

There was no sleep that night for the volunteers as they began knocking on doors alerting neighbors to move their automobiles and other property to higher ground and to keep an eye out for personal safety. The big powerful 6 x 6 pumper truck was used to drag debris out of the creek and the smaller 1942 half-ton Dodge truck was driven to check on neighbors in precarious places. By morning most bridges along Four Mile Creek had washed out including the two to lower Crisman. Propane tanks had floated downstream and a corner of the Fire Station was gone. But there was good news. Four Mile Creek had crested, thanks to the rain that had now turned to snow during the night.

The next morning the Ken Vollmer family of five in lower Four Mile surveyed the damage. Their new concrete bridge was gone and they were stranded. While taking all of this in they heard a loud crashing and saw a ten foot wall of mud, trees and rocks slide down the gulch taking out a corner of their deck. Perhaps they were lucky after all. They were alive. Five days would pass before a temporary bridge could be built. Kathy said that they had shared food with another stranded neighbor but they were running out. The Red Cross came up and a rope tow was thrown across the creek. A bucket was pulled back and forth bringing milk, bread, eggs and hamburger.

Canyon kids received a week of hiatus from school before the buses could run again. Mail for Wall Street was delivered to our house. Our teenage daughter,

Mary Louise and a friend dodged holes and picked their way up Four Mile with mail sacks.

As property lines eroded, legal disputes became an issue. In some locations questions rose as to who was responsible to replace the roads and bridges. The car of one family in lower Crisman would remain in the garage for six months before travel to and from their property could be resumed.

In the past four decades the Four Mile Department has come a long way. Instead of one fire house, we now have four. Thirty-two volunteer dedicated men and women, ten of whom are medically trained as well as a reserve of ten serve our community. They are prepared to combat fire and flood emergencies as well as EMT rescue work for which we are grateful.

**But still as a family, we need to be prepared.
Do we have enough food and water on hand to sustain us for an emergency?
How about heating and lighting back up?
An escape plan?**

**Some day a flood will happen again.
Are we ready?**



1 M.M. Anderson (2005). *The Mining Camps: Salina and Summerville, Salina, CO: Junction House.* p. 24.

2 *Ibid.* p. 35-36

3 F. Crossen. (1962). *The Switzerland Trail of America.* Boulder, CO: Pruett Press, Inc. p. 260.

4 Mile Mitigation Crew

by David Lasky

When we do work for an individual landowner, any “profit” goes straight into a fund to be seed money for the next matching grant to apply to another large scale community project.

The 4 Mile Mitigation Crew is completely non-profit. Our goal is to engage in large scale projects that benefit the community (and private contractors won't or can't do) like fuel breaks, escape routes and more. We are focused on using the CWPP's (COMMUNITY Wildfire Prevention Plans) of the five partner districts (Four Mile, Sugarloaf, Sunshine, Gold Hill, and Boulder Rural) as the roadmap for the mitigation program, targeting our work to maximize community fire safety and to build a large scale, holistic approach to forest health issues such as Bark Beetles.

The 4 Mile Mitigation Crew is structured to have the most positive effect on mountain communities. One of our strengths is organizing entire communities to pursue individual Defensible Spaces. We can effectively impact fire hazard and even more importantly assist nature to create a healthy ecosystem. Did you know that by working on your property alone you truly only create 30-40% of defensible space? By combining efforts within your neighborhood and clearing 60-70 acres at a time the fire impact is more along the lines of 80-85% defensible. When assisting nature on larger plots of land such as this, it is simultaneously healthier for nature corridors, native birds and undeniably entire ecosystems. By doing so, we greatly magnify the efforts and impact of such work. A community approach is truly the only way to maximize benefit.

Naturally there are going to be unique needs as well, with our experience we can also assist those individual land owners. You may find there is a need to cut down sick trees, create a corridor for your property -- maybe to align with another communities' efforts. If that is your case we can support you in those endeavours as well.

Virtually all of our funding comes in the form of matching grants, free ads or a newsletter article is enormously helpful because we do not have a marketing budget. When we do work for an individual landowner, any “profit” goes straight into a fund to be seed money for the next matching grant to do large scale community projects. One of the great things about large scale projects is that they protect everyone, rich and poor. There are many seniors living on a fixed income, who can't afford to pay a private contractor, but benefit enormously from something like the Arkansas Mtn./ Logan Mill escape route project.

The Mitigation Crew is technically “run” by Four Mile, but because we have Intergovernmental Agreements with the other partner districts,

the crew is for the benefit of all five districts. It is structured this way to deal with these issues on a landscape scale, which is the only way to have a lasting impact. Also, by being part of the various Fire Departments, we leverage the great work and infrastructures the community has already built. This allows us to partner with the CSFS, USFS, BLM, City and County of Boulder, etc. much more effectively, use the volunteers and framework of the fire departments and generally magnify our efforts without to reinventing the wheel.

Similarly 'community' is already built in. Since we use the CWPP's as the basis of everything we do, the community has already had an opportunity to comment and influence how and where mitigation happens. Currently, the USFS (United States Forrest Service) cuts and burns where ever they want without any significant community input and/or a private contractor shows up one day and does a 'one off job' for a neighbor without any coordination. We seek to remedy that and have a larger impactful community effect.

Finally, the \$64,000 question is what do we do with all of the BioMass (slash, logs, etc.) created by these fuels reduction projects. Currently it is a dangerous and unsightly waste product. Few people still heat with wood, burning slash is potentially dangerous and carbon intensive, and there is virtually no market and/or infrastructure for small diameter logs, which COULD be turned into fence posts, lumber, etc. Small private contractors are unable to, individually, deal with this issue. A five fire department consortium however, suddenly has both the volume of biomass and political power to start solving this problem.

We can now start applying for utilization grants from the State, and produce raw materials in quantity sufficient to attract infrastructure investment. My pipedream is small scale wood pelletizers at every firehouse, selling wood pellets in their own neighborhoods to homeowners who heat their homes with pellet wood stoves. Stoves that are fueled by pellets made from wood that just months ago was a fire hazard threatening their home.

Currently the 4 Mile Mitigation Crew is working on a \$70,000 Defensible Space Project in the Poorman Neighborhood. The crew did an amazing job on Rim Road this past Fall, Gold Hill in the early summer, and other community projects such as Alaska Road, Wild Turkey and Camino Bosque through the summer of 2008.

*Please contact David Lasky
with any questions in how
4 Mile Mitigation can impact
a community near you.
303.588.3440 and
4milefiremit@gmail.com*



It's What We Do in Colorado

by Denny DiPaula

Being a volunteer fireman is a lot like that, you help out and it usually leaves you feeling inexplicably good.

A few months ago, one of my son's was studying vocabulary when he asked me "Dad what is altruistic?" I said it means selflessness, doing something for someone else without expecting anything in return. "Like what," he said. "Follow me," I responded.

The day before it had snowed 14 inches and I took him over to our neighbor's house. She lives alone and has a long driveway. My son and I proceeded to hand shovel the entire driveway. When we were close to finishing he asked if we should go and tell our neighbor what we had done. I said "no, it doesn't matter who did it and it's not necessary for anyone to know. I said, "let's go, we're done."

On the way home, I looked across at my 16 year old and asked "how does it feel? He turned toward me and responded, "Dad it really feels great." "Even though no one knows what you did?" "Yeah, maybe even better," he replied.

Being a volunteer fireman is a lot like that, you help out and it usually leaves you feeling inexplicably good.

Colorado has a history of helping neighbors .

When I first moved to Colorado 30 years ago I read a story about a Rancher in Steamboat Springs who had come on hard times and how his neighbors pitched in selflessly until he was back on his feet. When asked 'why' by the local newspaper, each rancher responded the same, "because it's what we do in Colorado".

Well that's the way it used to be in Colorado and I think it still is today. We could sure use your help. If you want to be a firefighter, we'll teach you. If you want to be involved in medical, we will teach you. If you want to help out in any way, we welcome you.

Being a volunteer is about feeling good. Because if not you, then who?

It's what we do in Colorado.

Contact Bret Gibson at 303.444.0882

*Denny DiPaula is a husband, father and a local business owner.
A Fourmile Firefighter 1 and a Wildland Firefighter.*



Denny DiPaula atop rock working the most recent Settler's Park Fire, off Red Rocks loop trail. The fire threatened Knollwood Estates and the surrounding areas.

photo courtesy of Daily Camera

www.fourmilefire.org



Four Mile Fire Department

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