



**WORK
BEGINS
JANUARY
2024**

Granite Falls HOA Natural Area

Creating a pleasant and useful space that mitigates fire hazards, benefits wildlife, and provides maximum enjoyment for Granite Falls residents at minimal cost

BOARD APPROVED
AUGUST 2023

Grand Junction
Colorado

NATURAL AREA
SUBCOMITTEE



Overview

Exciting work is occurring in the Granite Falls Subdivision Natural Area to benefit the subdivision residents and protect property values, all at minimal cost to the HOA members. The fundamental objective for the Natural Area is to: Mitigate fire hazards, benefit wildlife with useful habitat, and provide an enjoyable and useful natural area for the maximum benefit of the Granite Falls Subdivision residents with the least cost in management and annual maintenance to the Granite Falls Subdivision HOA members. There are multiple additional objectives for the Natural Area furthering the benefit to the Subdivision residents; see the management plan for all the exciting details.

“Firewise” is a National Fire Protection Association program that teaches people how to adapt to living with wildfire and encourages neighbors to work together and take action. A Firewise Natural Area is consistent with the Management Plan and will help to protect neighborhood property values, aesthetics, recreation, and wildlife habitat. Some insurance providers have indicated that homeowners may be able to save about 15% on their premium as a result of the Firewise status.

We have three Neighborhood Ambassadors: Elizabeth Brookmeyer, Vanessa Thompson, and Rich Bradfield. These ambassadors are helping to provide a family values perspective to the work being done in the Natural Area, and are leading associated community projects including: 1) Emergency Notification Education (reverse 911), 2) Community Fire Safety Education, and 3) cost sharing for the Natural Area mitigation work.

A management plan for the Granite Falls Subdivision Natural area was adopted by the Granite Falls Homeowners Association Board of Directors on August 16, 2023.



Financing

Due to the extraordinary efforts of the HOA Board members and Beautification Committee (Natural Area Subcommittee), Granite Falls Subdivision received a grant of \$8,000 from Two Rivers Wildfire Coalition to help offset costs of managing the Natural Area; but requires a match of 40:60 HOA dollars to grant dollars. The 40:60 match means for each \$0.40 of money our HOA spends on these projects, we get \$1.00 of project work. Mesa County is contributing \$3,300 to cover the Wildland Fire Professionals crew boss, the individual who supervises their work crew. If work costs exceed their estimated cost, the County will use BLM Community Assistance Funds to cover the remainder of the project. The County does not make any revenue (profit) from these projects.

The Granite Falls Homeowners Association Board of Directors have made funds available to help achieve the goals of the Natural Area and take full advantage of the grant dollars: \$5,333 in 2023 and has committed to an additional \$3,500 in 2024. The HOA member dollars for the Natural Area management have essentially been matched dollar for dollar resulting in the greatest benefit to the Subdivision residents at the least cost to the HOA members. We can expect that the area will require annual maintenance to the tune of several thousand dollars for the firebreak in particular.

What to expect

As a result of the grant received and HOA funding, two contractors (The Freedom Institute and Wildland Fire Professionals employed by the Mesa County Sheriff's Wildland Fire Program) will be on site in early 2024 to help achieve the management objectives for the Natural Area with a priority on wildfire mitigation.

The Freedom Institute will establish a 20-foot wide short-grass fire break along the east and south border of the Natural Area. Work will include cutting and mowing and some grading. The fire break will go up to, but not encroach on, private property.

The Wildland Fire Professionals will work to reduce fuel volume and break up continuous stands of trees and shrubs for wildfire mitigation. Work will involve ground fuel reduction, delimiting trees up to a maximum of 8 feet above ground, cutting corridors through thick stands of Russian Olive, and removing dead trees and grinding stumps to ground level. Equipment used will mostly be chainsaws, a commercial chipper, and a trailer.



How you can help

There will be some exciting opportunities for Subdivision residents to participate in volunteer projects to help achieve our objectives for the Natural Area. Projects may include: 1) Remove the abandoned car and other debris on the property, 2) Remove exotics from the riparian corridor, specifically tamarisk and Russian olive to allow native trees and shrubs to regenerate, 3) Find and remove all Tamarisk plants on the property, 4) Establish and enhance a trail system across the property and distribute any available shredded material from cuttings and chipping, and 5) Plant native tree, shrub, and grass plants across the Natural Area. Look for upcoming opportunities to get involved and contribute toward the human, wildlife, and ecosystem values of the Natural Area.