



NORTH ROUTT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

**P.O. Box 758 Clark, CO 80428
970.879.6064 Fax 970.879.6726**

Fall, 2017

Dear Resident,

Hopefully you have enjoyed the fall colors and are prepared for and looking forward to winter in North Routt County. In our continued effort to keep you informed of events and information relative to the North Routt Fire Protection District we offer the following.

WILDLAND FIRES – FIRE AND EMERGENCY CALLS

For the most part, the wildfire season is over! This summer proved to be quite active and demanding for the volunteers of the NRFPD. The Big Red Fire, first discovered August 1, was caused by lightning, and consumed 2,940 acres. The portion of the perimeter which needed to be contained was done so quickly and the balance of the fire was permitted to burn itself out. The second incident, the Deep Creek Fire, started from unknown causes on September 4th, consumed 4,161 acres and is 100% contained.

NRRFD volunteers and equipment were provided to both major fire sites in support of Federal, Local, and State firefighting crews for varied tasks including:

- Responded for initial attack when first reported with District's brush truck and other apparatus.
- Providing firefighting water to containment crews by hauling to points along perimeters
- Access road dust suppression
- Containment perimeter monitoring
- Helicopter Landing Zone dust control
- Set up and maintained water supply portable tanks

In addition to and during the major incidents, NRFPD volunteers responded to 7 other smaller wildland fires and several EMS calls as well as assisting other county agencies with fires in their districts on several occasions. In total, volunteers and our Chief spent over 700 man hours on these fires! Our volunteers gave of their time and talents this past season above and beyond! Please express your appreciation to them as you see them!

VOLUNTEERS & PERSONNEL

We reported to you last fall that our volunteers totaled 12. Currently, 2 new volunteers are in Probationary status and upon completion of training our total volunteer staff should be up to 14. Our need for volunteers is never ending!

Recently, we lost longtime volunteer Greg Murray. Greg and his wife Bonnie relocated to the Genesee area to be closer to their 2 sons and their growing families and grandchildren. Greg joined the District in 2005 and served as a firefighter, EMT, Ropes Technician, and EMS Captain. Greg's medical, and technical knowledge was invaluable to the District, he provided countless hours of assistance performing medical trainings to the volunteers, and was almost always available in district to respond to calls. He will be truly missed.

Regarding Personnel, the Board continues to struggle with volunteer issues and faces a number of ongoing problems:

1. Our Chief has difficulty taking any time off and away from the District duties.
2. While we are fortunate to have Deputy Chief Matt Mathisen, his ability to step in for our Chief is limited and dependent upon his work schedule. Matt is a full time Steamboat Springs fire fighter.
3. The loss of EMS Captain Murray leaves a significant void in our management/training programs.
4. Providing support to wildfire incidents places additional burden on our volunteers

The Board is concluding that to effectively continue to provide a reasonable level of service to the community, the Department needs to:

- a. Continue to employ a full time, paid, Chief
- b. Employ a full time, paid, assistant to the Chief. The assistant is needed to support and conduct training for our volunteers, assist the Chief in many of the day to day responsibilities and obligations, and allow the Chief to have some time off.
- c. Employ two, paid, half-time fire fighters/EMTs. These individuals are required to provide dependable and reliable coverage for gaps in the duty roster which occur when volunteer's schedules prohibit their availability.

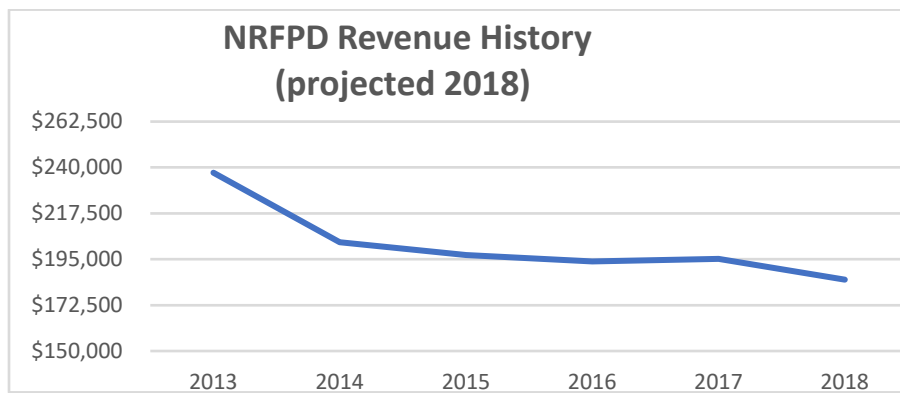
The Board is moving forward to establish an annual cost for the additional staffing and its impact to the District financial condition.

FINANCIAL PROBLEM

In the fall 2016 and spring 2017 newsletters, we described the primary source of our revenue, the District's tax levy on real estate. Also discussed in some detail, was the impact of the Gallagher Amendment on our revenues. We noted in the spring newsletter:

*"Since 2012 the NRFPD has been experiencing a steady decline in tax revenue; for 2017's budget it is at **\$195,000.00** in tax revenue **down** from 2012's tax revenue of **\$237,000.00!** This decrease in revenue cannot be made up, and with another 5% decrease in revenue looming for 2018 it will have serious impacts to the Operational Budget for the District."*

The Routt County Assessor's office notified us in August that the Assessed Valuation for 2017 (taxes paid in 2018) will be approximately \$2,000,000 less than 2016. This will translate to approximately \$10,000 less revenue to the NRFPD or a 5% decrease from 2017.



- As described previously, to provide fire and EMS services to our community, we must expand to include some paid full and half-time personnel.
- Our equipment is older and continues to age. Declining revenues have prevented the District from putting any money into the equipment reserve account for the past 5 years.
- Balancing the needs for firefighters/emergency medical volunteers and future equipment requirements against a steadily declining tax revenue source has been the source of consternation and discussion for quite some time.
- The Board of Directors have determined that to continue to operate the NRFPD, revenue needs to increase.
- We have no control over the market values and assessed values of properties in our taxing district.
- The District has no alternatives other than to increase the District's mill levy tax rate.

Presently, the Board of Directors, Chief Swinsick, and several of our volunteers are evaluating our needs, their costs, and the impacts to revenues on a going forward basis. Ultimately, we will arrive at a mil levy increase that we believe will meet the needs of the NRFPD. Our plans are to have the mil levy increase presented to you to vote on and hopefully approve, during the spring 2018 elections.

SAFETY MATTERS:

As we get into the heating season it is always a good idea to have chimneys and furnace venting systems cleaned and inspected. Also remember to have your alarm systems (smoke detectors, CO monitors, etc..) cleaned and inspected by your service provider.

Have fire extinguishers nearby (inspect them annually); typically have one near the kitchen, one in the garage or barn, as well as one near the wood burning appliances. We also recommend having Chimfex nearby in the event of a chimney fire in your wood burning appliance chimney. This chimney fire extinguishing device resembles a flare in size and shape and is available at several local hardware suppliers.

House address – please make sure that the street number of your property is clearly marked and visible from your road to our firefighters and EMS volunteers. This also means keep your

street address sign/number from being buried in snow! Clearly marked and visible address signs are key in avoiding confusion as to specifically where our volunteers need to respond!

SPECIAL NOTE: Are you aware that Routt County has a system in place which will notify you of special emergencies in the County? Be sure to sign up for reverse notification on Routt County Alerts web page to receive critical messages to your home telephone, cellular telephone, and email or text in the event you are ever needed to evacuate during wildfires or other disaster situations. You can find the link at

<http://www.co.routt.co.us/144/Communications>

or contact the **Routt County Office of Emergency Management at (970) 870-5551**.

Understanding wildfires in our area, the issues and problems they create and the impact on our lives and property is critical. As important is understanding what we, as property owners can do to help protect our homes, structures and properties. An excellent source for information and guidance is the Colorado State Forest Service. On their website are several publications directly related to steps and measures that homeowners can take to protect their home. The direct link to the site is:

<http://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/protect-your-home-property-forest-from-wildfire/>

WEBSITE

NRFPD has had a website in place for many years (northrouttfire.org). While this website has served us well, most recently it has been subjected to several internet related problems. The Board has elected to change the website provider and currently is in the process of building the new site; it is expected that the new site should be in place and fully functional early 2018.

In the interim, the District also posts messages, comments and photo on its' Facebook account, "**North Routt Fire Protection District**".

We will endeavor to keep you informed and appreciate any comments or concerns you may have.

Sincerely

NORTH ROUTT FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

P.S. If you have an interest in becoming a North Routt Fire volunteer, please contact:
Chief Mike Swinsick Office - 970-879-9094 Cell - 970-846-4311
mike.swinsick@northrouttfire.org