

## *Surprise Valley Firebreak/Defensible Space Project Update*

### **Background:**

For several years the Surprise Valley Homeowner Association Board has been concerned with the threat of wildfire, especially with the recent deadly and disastrous fire less than a mile away in the Oregon Trail Subdivision. As a result outreach efforts were initiated with a variety of expert resources such as Boise Fire, Boise Fire Rehabilitation, fiscal agent SWIRCD, the BLM and Idaho Fish and Game. The area identified as the largest threat due to terrain, access and heavy ember generating Sage growth, was the North Rim of Surprise Way, an area ~5900 feet in length.

..”During a wildfire, thousands of embers can rain down on your roof and pelt the side of your home like hail during a storm...embers coming into contact with flammable material is the major reason why homes are destroyed during a wildfire” Source Credit: “Be Ember Aware” University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

### **Objective/Project Update 2017:**

Surprise Valley was funded thru a grant in spring of 2017 to initiate efforts on the development of a 20’ buffer the length of the North Rim would be a good starting point to modify fire size, intensity and behavior. To prevent erosion concerns/efforts sage stumps would be left as would roots of wild roses and other vegetation. Experts advised sage would retain their root structure for several years.

Removal of amounts discarded garbage, wood, firewood scraps, wood framed structures, lawn and garden clippings, over grown vines, overgrown junipers and other plantings and leaking irrigation lines are not in the scope of this grant.

Applications of herbicide to remaining sage stumps, broad leaf and cheat grass along the firebreak would be treated to dampen the weed growth, then reseeding was planned for the fall. Due to concerns of the contractor and the board of weed growth in some areas we asked Bryan D. from Ada County Weed Control to come out and assess the situation. He advised against seeding until weeds were better controlled, thus that effort was suspended for the 2017 season.

### **Objective/Project Update 2018:**

In Mid-April SVHOA was advised that the Phase 2 grant was approved. To address the weed issue which disrupted some of 2017 efforts. The current plan (which is subject to change due to weather or other conditions) are:

- First herbicide/Weed Whack Application expected to be completed by ~end of April
- Second herbicide/Weed Whack Application expected to be completed by ~end of May
- Third herbicide/Weed Whack Application expected to be completed by ~mid-July
- Fourth herbicide/Weed Whack Application expected to be completed by ~late August

Firebreak Effort is scheduled for early June and is expected to take the up the bulk of the month where the next 20’ of overgrowth will have ~50-60% of sage and other heavy vegetation will be removed/trimmed up. This area covered is less than previous year to help ensure plant and or sage structures remain in place to address any erosion and ensure wildlife habitat is maintained.

- Depending on weed conditions, reseeding is planned for October