NEWSLETTER

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Ideas for Protecting Our Properties

Spring Focus: We are Approaching Wildfire Season

14 Mile Watershed Friends and Supporters . . .

FIRE?, you say? Isn't that a bit strange in a newsletter that is about **WATER**?

We've all seen the horrifying images on TV of California wildfires as well as most recently, wildfires on Long Island, New York. It's so easy to think that those images 'can't happen here.' But, it doesn't take much for a fire to get out of hand and become a destructive force. In fact, this area has witnessed a runaway fire. In 2005, the Cottonville Fire raged just south of Rome in Big Flats and destroyed 3,410 acres, including 30 homes and dozens of other structures.

The *good* that came from that destruction was Rome's realization that ***'it could happen here'*** and resulted in the birth of our town's FIREWISE efforts. The Town of Rome as well as all 4 Lake Associations participate in the national Firewise USA program and have developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. In the Spring of 2024, the Rome Fire Department worked eight wildfires in eight consecutive days for a total of 3.24 acres burnt. Quick responses by the Fire Department helped keep sizes small. Additionally, 2024 curbside brush pickup totaled 375 loads hauled to the transfer site.

Many resources are available to each of us to aid in evaluating our own property to make it firewise safer – **follow this link** https://www.nfpa.org/en/education-and-research/wildfire/firewise-usa/firewise-usa-resources

Spring is WILDFIRE Season in Wisconsin
It's that time again. The sun is shining and the snow is melting. Spring is at our door…and remember, spring is wildfire season in Wisconsin. It's time to think about moving your firewood stack 30 feet away from your home and blowing the remainder of those fall leaves away from the foundation and out of your gutters. It's time to start watching your local Smokey Bear fire danger sign and checking the burning restrictions for the day. DNR is gearing up. Are you?
Here are some key ideas for assessing your property:

- Keep your woodpile 30 feet from structures and fuel tanks
- Keep your roof clear of leaves, needles and other debris.
- Keep your chimney clean and install spark arrester.
- Keep 100 feet of garden hose attached.
- Keep the first 3-5 feet around the base of the house and any outbuildings completely free of any fuel (tall grasses, evergreen shrubs, leaves, pine needles, straw bales and organic landscaping mulch) for a fire.
- Remove all but scattered trees within 30 feet of structures.
- For the next 70 feet, thin and prune your coniferous trees
- Keep fire tools available: shovel, rake, ladder.
- Avoid outdoor burning. Recycle mulch and compost whenever possible or haul it to Rome's Transfer Site.
- Keep burnable materials from under and around all structures.
- Keep driveways accessible for fire trucks and other emergency vehicles.
- Keep propane tanks clear of vegetation and debris for approximately 10 feet.

- Keep your grass green and mowed 100 feet from any structure.

The greatest widfire risk occurs after the snow melts until full vegetation green-up, usually March through June. Another time of wildfire danger occurs in the fall after the first killing frost occurs. However, wildfires can occur any time of the year when the conditions are right. Taking precautions now to mitigate hazards on your property can increase the chance your home or cabin will survive a wildfire.

The 14 Mile Watershed Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement of surface and groundwater in the 14 Mile Creek Watershed in central Wisconsin. See us at 14milewatershed.org or https://www.facebook.com/14MileWatershed

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