

SUN PEAK

Fire Mitigation/Forest Health News

July 15, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

We hope this message finds you well. We've received a few concerns, questions, and support about the ongoing fire mitigation work in our community's open space, and we wanted to take a moment to address them and provide some clarity.

****Why We're Doing This: ****

Our main goal is to keep everyone in our HOA safe by reducing the risk of wildfires and increasing the ability to fight wildfires. To do this, we need to manage the vegetation in our open space. Experts from Utah's Division of Natural Resources, PJ Abraham and Bryce Boyer, walked our open space and have recommended that we remove certain types of trees, such as subalpine fir and white fir, while keeping Douglas fir. There is currently an infestation of BWA, an insect that attacks white fir and subalpine fir throughout UT and is currently in our forest. We will remove dead and diseased trees giving healthy trees room and resources to grow. This helps make our forest healthier and less prone to hot, ground-sterilizing wildfires, according to the State of Utah forest experts. Several other HOAs in Summit County are taking similar actions.

The Board intends to do this work while preserving as much of the forest ecosystem as possible. After learning from Phase 1, the Board is committed to overseeing a more tailored approach to forest management for Phase 2. We are committed to hands-on management and oversight of the project while it is happening. We believe that doing nothing is not an option given the presence of the deteriorating health of the forest. The Board has devoted considerable time and effort to addressing this project and has not based its decisions on recommendations from Alpine Forestry or any for-profit entity.

The HOA hosted a hike to sections of treatment areas in Sun Peak for all interested homeowners on Saturday, June 25. It was conducted by two experts: Bryce Boyer, Summit County Fire Warden and an expert in wildfire management as well as PJ Abraham who is the forest health expert from the Utah Department of Natural Resources. The purpose of this "Walk in the Forest" was to provide the Sun Peak homeowners an opportunity to hear from experts in the field, ask questions, and consider the need for the HOA to continue with wildfire mitigation efforts to improve the sub-par forest health in our open space. As a result, the homeowners in attendance got a better understanding of the need for the HOA to treat the areas of open space.

We have been approved for a FEMA grant through Summit County which will pay for 75% of the cost of completing the project based on State of Utah forestry guidelines. This allows our HOA to receive \$386,000 from FEMA to remove dead trees and diseased trees making room for a new generation of Aspen growth plus \$37,500 for pile burning from Phase 1. The remainder of our share of the expense (\$70,000) was already budgeted in our 2023-2024 budget and the balance will be budgeted in 2024-2025.

****Your Concerns:****

1. **Environmental Impact:**

We understand the worry about disturbing the ecosystem. Rest assured, we're taking great care to protect wildlife and plants. Our mountainous terrain with heavily trafficked trails, proximity to 224, and nearby homes is vulnerable. We've consulted with UT environmental experts to make sure we're doing this responsibly.

2. ****Changes to the Landscape:****

We know that changes to our beautiful open space can be unsettling. While the immediate effects might be noticeable, these actions are essential for the long-term safety and health of our forest. We're committed to maintaining the health of our beautiful surroundings.

3. ****Keeping You Informed:****

We realize that staying informed is important. We will continue to provide regular updates on the progress of these efforts and let you know about any scheduled activities. This way, you'll always know what's happening.

****We Value Your Feedback:****

Your thoughts and suggestions are important to us. If you have any further concerns or ideas, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We're here to listen and work together to keep our community safe and beautiful.

The work will begin later this week or early next week

Thank you so much for your understanding and cooperation.

Warm regards,

The SunPeak Board of Trustees

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