

Public invited to a meeting to discuss efforts to improve fire safety

By Brad Devereaux, Lovell Chronicle 7/6/09

A public meeting will be held Tuesday, July 14, at 6 p.m., at the Lovell Fire Hall because of concerns from town officials about the potential danger of fire on the hill on the south side of town, extending from Hwy. 32 to U.S. 310 in Lovell.

Fire Captain Bob Mangus said the hill is a potential fire hazard because of thick stacked fuels packed around the trees on the hill. Mangus said the “ladder fuels,” including downed trees, could catch fire and ignite the surrounding trees. With no access to the hill in some parts of town, if a fire were to catch on the hill, Mangus said it would be tough for firefighters to put it out.

“It’s a major fire hazard and a major concern of all emergency management workers, to the district and the town of Lovell,” Mangus said. “We’re inviting adjacent property owners to the meeting to see if we can come up with a plan (to improve fire conditions).” The course of action for the hill is unknown at this time, Mangus said, and he is unsure if grants or other funding is available because the area in question is private property.

Mangus and emergency management coordinator John Hyde walked through the hill above the Globe Canal recently and Mangus said there were a lot of downed trees and other fuel that would ignite and spread quickly in dry and windy conditions. The large amount of debris makes it hard to travel on the hill along the canal, he said.

The idea for the public meeting came about when local officials were in the process of drafting a County Wildfire Protection Plan. The committee looked at each town to assess fire safety concerns. The hill near the Globe Canal was the primary area of concern presented by the Big Horn County Fire Protection District No. 1, he said.

“If it catches fire, we’ll do the best we can do to stop it, but there’s a good chance we won’t be able to stop it,” Mangus said. Members of the state forestry or CWPP planner Chris Weydeveld will be at the meeting and 20-page pamphlets will be handed out to inform attendees about how to protect their residences from wildfire.