

Wildfire Adaptation: A Community Collaboration

As Marin County faces the ongoing challenge of wildfire risk, community members and organizations are stepping up with creativity, dedication, and collaboration. Fire Safe Marin partners with a wide range of groups, each bringing unique perspectives to strengthen wildfire resilience. This year, we're spotlighting lessons from some of our valued community members.

“Working together makes the process faster, safer, and more manageable, while also building community connections.”

Firewise Neighborhoods Lead the Way

With over 76 Firewise neighborhoods in Marin County, leaders like Sherrie Vigneron and Stephen Keese are driving grassroots efforts in wildfire preparedness. Sherrie has taken proactive steps to make her property fire-resistant, such as installing fire-resistant vents, replacing wooden gates with metal ones, and removing plants within five feet of her home.

“Adapting our homes, landscapes, and lifestyles to wildfire is an individual responsibility that strengthens our entire community,” she says. Sherrie encourages neighbors to share strategies—whether sourcing fire-resistant materials, creating defensible space, or helping during evacuations. “Working together makes the process faster, safer, and more manageable, while also building community connections,” she adds.

Stephen Keese echoes this sentiment. He highlights the camaraderie among Firewise leaders and the tangible progress in his neighborhood, from cleared vegetation to increased community engagement. While proud of their achievements, he aims for 100% participation, knowing that collective action builds greater resilience.



Educators Inspire the Next Generation

Local educators also play a critical role in wildfire resilience. Karen Madden, a teacher at Terra Linda High School and leader in the Marin School of Environmental Leadership (MSEL), shares how students have partnered with Fire Safe Marin over the past five years.

“Our students have developed fire-safe landscaping kits, created educational campaigns, and even participated in broom pulls,” she explains. These hands-on projects empower young people and foster a mindset that values safety, sustainability, and collaboration.

Protecting Marin's Open Spaces

Marin's expansive open spaces are another critical focus for wildfire prevention. Jim Chayka of Marin County Parks oversees efforts to manage fire risk across 18,000 acres.

"Our priority is to reduce wildfire risk for the thousands of neighbors who live nearby," Chayka says. Through initiatives like shaded fuel breaks and vegetation management, local agencies show how collaboration protects both lives and properties.

For Chayka, wildfire preparedness is deeply personal. "My mother-in-law lost her home in the Tubbs Fire back in 2017. At that time, I had already been an active contributor to wildfire preparedness and was helping my friends and family prepare. However, the intensity and damage from that fire made me re-evaluate what we were doing and underscored the importance of structural hardening. That was a watershed moment for fire preparedness in Northern California and helped catapult wider efforts like MWPA and Fire Safe Marin."



Despite progress, Chayka sees challenges. "The greatest challenge to wildfire efforts is potential community apathy. With so much work happening across the county and messaging from various sources, it can almost become 'white noise.' Sometimes it seems additional efforts from individuals don't feel necessary." To combat this, Chayka highlights the importance of creative, community-focused approaches. "Fire Safe Marin and its partners do a great job finding innovative campaigns to capture attention. Events like Ember Stomp are key strategies for connecting people and raising awareness. Over the next 10 years, it will be critical to keep bringing people together—not just online—to talk and connect about these issues."

Wildfire adaptation is a collective effort

Everyone can help—attend a Firewise meeting, participate in evacuation drills, or harden your home against embers. Let's embrace collaboration and make wildfire adaptation a way of life. Together, we can build a safer, more resilient future for Marin County.



LEARN MORE AT [FIRESAFEMARIN.ORG](https://firesafemarin.org)

