

 Excessive Fuel Accumulation
Santa Fe Trail Ranch POA | Wildfire Mitigation Best Practices | Trinidad, Colorado

OVERVIEW

Fuel accumulation—dense vegetation, dead grass, dry leaves, pine needles, fallen branches, and overgrown shrubs—significantly increases wildfire risk. In our ponderosa pine and mixed-grass foothills environment, thick fuels allow fires to spread rapidly and intensely. Taking action now to reduce fuels on your property protects your home, your neighbors, and our entire community.

HOMEOWNER BEST PRACTICES

Maintain a non-combustible zone of at least 5 feet immediately around all structures; remove all dead or dry vegetation from this zone. Keep native grasses mowed to 4 inches or less within 30 feet of structures, especially during dry summer months. Space shrubs at least 15 feet apart (edge to edge) to break up continuous fuel coverage. Prune tree branches from the ground up to 6–10 feet to eliminate "ladder fuels" that allow fire to climb into the canopy. Maintain a minimum of 10 feet between tree canopy crowns in the 5–30 foot zone from structures.	Remove dead branches, standing dead trees (snags posing ignition risk), and fallen logs from around structures. Clean pine needles, leaves, and debris from gutters, rooflines, valleys, and under decks at least twice per year. Thin dense brush clusters, keeping groups to 2–3 small plants separated by non-combustible breaks (rock, gravel, bare soil). In the 30 – 100 foot zone, remove small conifers growing between larger mature trees to reduce fuel continuity. Document and track your annual fuel management work — this supports our Fire Wise certification and may help with insurance premiums.
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DISPOSAL OPTIONS

Method	Details & Guidance
Chipping	Chip branches and brush on-site. Spread chips in a thin layer (no thicker than 3 inches) over a wide area at least 30 feet from structures. Avoid deep pile accumulations, which can re-introduce a fuel hazard.
Haul Away	Take to the Trinidad dump.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- **NFPA Firewise USA®** — [firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org)
- **USDA Forest Service**, Home Ignition Zone Guidance — fs.usda.gov
- **Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)** — csfs.colostate.edu
- **CSFS Home Ignition Zone Checklists** — csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire
- **NFPA 1144:** Standard for Reducing Structure Ignition Hazards from Wildland Fire

Santa Fe Trail Ranch POA - Protecting Our Community Together