

Neglected Vegetative Debris

Santa Fe Trail Ranch POA | Wildfire Mitigation Best Practices

Trinidad, Colorado · Issued June 2026 · For All SFTR POA Residents

Neglected vegetative debris — accumulated pine needles, fallen branches, dead shrubs, untreated slash piles, and unmowed grass — is one of the most common and preventable wildfire hazards on residential properties in the Santa Fe Trail Ranch area. Left unmanaged, this material creates continuous fuel pathways that allow fire to travel at high speed from the surrounding forest directly onto your property and into your home. **Annual cleanup and ongoing maintenance are essential for all SFTR POA residents.**

Best Practices for Homeowners

- Rake and remove all pine needles, leaves, and dead plant debris from within **5 feet of any structure** at least **twice per year** (spring and fall); do not allow accumulations to exceed **1 inch in depth**.
- Clear fallen branches, dead shrubs, and woody debris from all three defensible space zones: **Zone 1 (0–30 ft)**, **Zone 2 (30–100 ft)**, and **Zone 3 (100 ft or to property line)**.
- Do not allow slash piles to accumulate near structures — chip or haul to dump.
- Mow dead grasses and weeds to **4 inches or less** throughout the growing season; do not allow dry grass to stand over winter within 30 feet of structures.
- Regularly inspect and clear debris that accumulates against **fences, under decks, in window wells, and in roof gutters and valleys**.
- Spread or remove accumulations of wood chips or chipped slash to a depth of no more than **3 inches** in any single area; never pile chips against the house foundation.
- After wind or storm events, **promptly remove** any newly fallen limbs, branches, or uprooted vegetation from around structures.

- Inspect all **outbuildings, sheds, corrals, and vehicles** stored on the property — clear debris from around them as well.

Disposal Options

On-Site Chipping	Rent or hire a wood chipper to process debris in place. Spread chips thinly (max 3 inches deep) at least 30 feet from all structures.
Haul-Away	Take to the Trinidad dump.
CSFS Cost-Share	The Colorado State Forest Service offers technical assistance and may provide cost-share funding to help cover the cost of debris removal and forest thinning. Contact the CSFS La Veta Field Office for details.

References & Resources

- NFPA Firewise USA® — [firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org)
- USDA Forest Service, Defensible Space — [fs.usda.gov](https://www.fs.usda.gov)
- Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) — [csfs.colostate.edu](https://www.csfs.colostate.edu)
- CSFS La Veta Field Office Wildfire Mitigation — [csfs.colostate.edu](https://www.csfs.colostate.edu)
- Colorado Division of Fire Prevention & Control — colorado.gov/dfpc

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