

Town of Rome Community Wildfire Protection Plan

AN ACTION PLAN FOR WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION
2022-2031

Adopted: 9/15/22



Prepared By: Amy Penn, DNR
September 8, 2022



RESOLUTION NO. 22 - 10

**A RESOLUTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE TOWN OF ROME
COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP) (2022-2031)**

WHEREAS, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 was created in order to reduce the threat of destructive wildfires while upholding environmental standards and encouraging early public input during review and planning processes, and

WHEREAS, The Town of Rome has been identified as being at Very High risk in the Wisconsin Communities-at-Risk Assessment, and

WHEREAS, a Community Wildfire Protection Plan is recommended for communities listed as an at risk community in a federal or state risk assessment, and

WHEREAS, The Town of Rome has worked cooperatively with other stakeholders to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and

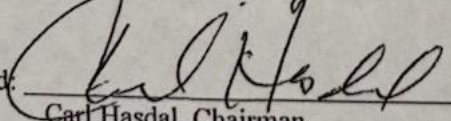
WHEREAS, the intent of the plan is to help fire protection agencies, community leaders, natural resource professionals, and homeowners be better prepared for wildfire, and

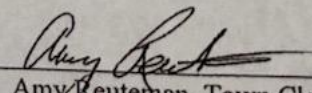
WHEREAS, adoption of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan results in priority consideration for Wildfire Risk Reduction funding made available through DNR, and

WHEREAS, the Town of Rome Board of Supervisors has reviewed the draft of the *Town of Rome Community Wildfire Protection Plan* and concurs with the final plan content.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Rome Board of Supervisors hereby adopts the *Town of Rome Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2022-2031)*.

Adopted this 15th day of September, 2022

Approved: 
Carl Hasdal, Chairman

Attested: 
Amy Reuteman, Town Clerk/Treasurer

Introduction

The Town of Rome is designated as a community at very high risk to wildfire due to several factors, some of which include the vegetation of the area, housing density and fire occurrence. The DNR's Division of Forestry is committed to offering resources and support in planning, preparing and preventing wildfires to at risk towns and municipalities. One way to do this is through the creation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

Community Wildfire Protection Plans

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a document collaboratively created at the township level in Wisconsin. Community Wildfire Protection Plans address issues such as emergency response, fuels reduction, community preparedness and structure ignitability. The Wildfire Risk Reduction Action Plan, or the list of projects to pursue, is the key component of the CWPP. The minimum requirements for a CWPP are collaboration, prioritized fuels reduction and treatment of structural ignitability. The final contents of a CWPP must be mutually agreed upon by the local government (Town Board), the local fire department (Rome Fire Department), and the state entity responsible for forest management (DNR).

Rome's CWPP Background

Rome's first CWPP was adopted in 2007. In the first five years of CWPP implementation, the Town of Rome enacted a nuisance ordinance on dead timber and brush, which was adopted December 17, 2009 (Appendix #1). Three demonstration homes were identified, home ignition zone assessments were offered several times, various educational outreach efforts were implemented, and the Town implemented a curbside brush chipping program.

The original CWPP was reviewed in 2012 with a new updated CWPP adopted January 24, 2013. The update was an opportunity to celebrate successes and recalibrate the action plan after 5 years of experience in risk reduction. There was a commitment to continue and refine the curbside program by considering ways to make it more efficient. Picking up the brush rather than chipping it curbside increased efficiency and hiring a subcontractor with specialized equipment allowed the work to proceed faster. Towards the end of this last implementation period, the Town invested in their own equipment, eliminating the need to subcontract. A new publication called *"Guide to Hazardous Fuels Reduction in the Town of Rome"* was created to help people understand why removing dead trees and brush was important and options for doing so.

Also, with the 2013 update, there was a renewed focus on education. A risk map of the Town was created and posted in several locations, tote bags were handed out at Pritzl's, placemats and kid bags were available at restaurants, and Burma shave prevention signs were posted at Dyracuse. A new flyer on evacuation was created and eventually mailed to all property owners and evacuation signage was posted in Lake Sherwood. For more information on the projects completed between 2013-2018 as well as wildfire risk reduction funds reimbursed by the DNR by year, see Appendices #2 and #3.



After another implementation period, it was time to once again consider a refresh of Rome’s CWPP. On September 21, 2017, the Town of Rome agreed to participate in a CWPP planning process to update their CWPP and passed a *Resolution to Participate*. Three planning meetings were held and took place on July 30, 2018, August 20, 2018 and September 21, 2018.

DNR compiled this new CWPP update (2019-2023) with the planning committee reviewing and agreeing upon its contents. It was reviewed by the Town Board supervisors and adopted on 9/18/19.

With the opportunity to apply for Community Wildfire Defense Grants due October 7, 2022, the decision was made to do a “light refresh” of this plan. The refresh involves revised project language in the Action Plan, an updated list of current work group members, the new revision of the nuisance ordinance, updated plan years, additions to mitigation history and an updated Resolution to Adopt by the Town Board.

CWPP Planning Committee

The following report is a collaborative effort between various participants. The representatives listed below comprise the core decision-making team responsible for this report and mutually agree on the Plan’s contents.

Name	Organization
Bob Baurhyte	Supervisor, Town of Rome
Brad Martinson	Director of Highways & Public Works, Town of Rome
Amy Penn	Forestry Specialist, DNR
Aaron Wallace	Forester, DNR
Jane Gervais	Director, Adams County Emergency Management
Mark Kane	Chief, Rome Fire Department
Steve Crubel	Representative, Lake Arrowhead
Mark Stauss Eileen Borre Colleen Pruss	Representative, Lake Camelot
Dave Trudeau	Representative, Lake Sherwood

Community Background

The Town of Rome is located in the northwest corner of Adams County, Wisconsin. The majority of land in the town is owned by a private timber company and consists of thousands of acres of red pine plantation.

The Town reports that there are 7,306 parcels with approximately 5,000 property owners. The 2010 census reports a population of 2,720 people. Approximately 60% of the homes are seasonal residences.

The majority of homes are located in densely populated housing communities around the “tri lakes” of Lake Camelot, Lake Arrowhead and Lake Sherwood. There are several smaller subdivisions and homes scattered throughout the town as well.

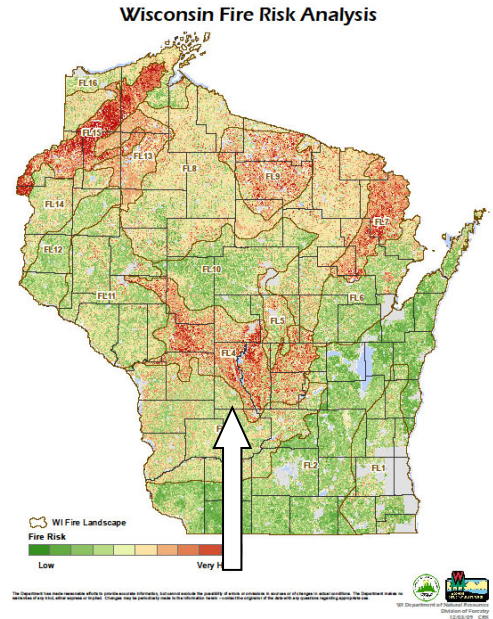
The Town of Rome is known as a recreational area with boating, golfing, ATVs, snowmobiling, and hunting. Rome is also the new home of the Wisconsin Trapshooting Association and Sand Valley Resort Conservancy.

Wildfire Hazard

The Town falls within *Fire Landscape 4: Central Wisconsin Sands* (see map below) which is described as containing extensive areas of jack and red pine, with dry, sandy and organic soils. This is one of the highest wildfire risk landscapes in Wisconsin, with a notable wildfire history and potential for a 10,000-acre fire. Since 1975, there have been several wildfires greater than 2,500 acres in size in this area.

FIRE NAME	COUNTY	YEAR	SIZE
New Miner I	Juneau	1976	3,177 acres
Brockway Fire	Jackson	1977	17,590 acres
Airport Fire	Jackson	1977	3,037 acres
Saratoga Fire	Wood	1977	6,159 acres
Cottonville Fire	Adams	2005	3,410 acres

We've been fortunate not to have had a project class fire in Central Wisconsin since 2005. Although, the 7,500-acre Germann Road Fire did occur in 2013 in northwestern Wisconsin, which has similar soils and forest cover type. Although it's true we don't have a history of very large destructive wildfires on a frequent basis, there continues to be the potential for a significant wildfire in the Town of Rome. Rome does experience smaller wildfires on an annual basis. A wildfire does not have to be large to do significant damage.



Fire Landscape 4: Central Wisconsin Sands

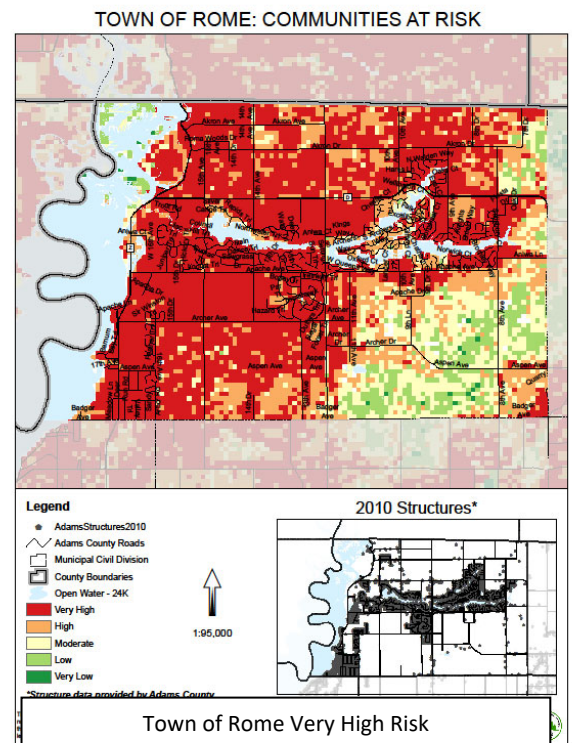
Fire History

Historically, there have been a fair amount of fires throughout the Town. In recent years the Town of Rome has averaged about 7 wildfires per year. Fortunately, the average size for a fire has been under one acre. However there continues to be the potential for large-scale wildfires which could burn hundreds or thousands of acres in the area.

Description of Wildfire Risks

Fuels

The Town, as a whole, is very wooded. It is dominated by nutrient poor, sandy soils. Red pine plantation is the predominant forest cover in the Town and covers many square miles. Overall, the pine fuels represent the greatest risk for carrying crown fire, which is the most difficult type of fire to suppress. Outside of the pine plantations, the forest



cover is generally a mix of scrub oak and jack pine, which is mostly what surrounds the homes in the lake communities.

The amount of red pine plantation in the area is noteworthy as is the amount of dead oak trees and the resulting fuel load resulting from Oak Wilt. Oak wilt is widespread and common throughout central Wisconsin. It's a deadly disease that affects oak trees (Appendix #1). The wildfire risk in the Town of Rome is significant both due to the amount of flammable vegetation and the sheer quantity of structures to protect.

The accumulation of hazardous fuels on privately owned lots, lake association common areas, and public properties is a hazard to surrounding homes. Concentrations of dead and downed woody material burn readily and are difficult to extinguish. Should this material ignite, the heat can affect surrounding homes as well as throw off embers that can cause homes to ignite. Concentrations of fuel can also serve as "ladder fuel" providing a means for a fire burning along the ground to move into the treetops where it can be more difficult to suppress. It can lead to limited resources being used to extinguish or monitor areas of intense fire activity instead of being able to focus on suppression of the wildfire.

Reducing the fuel load continues to be a priority for risk reduction. The Town's transfer site is open for brush drop off and the nuisance ordinance on dead timber and brush continues to encourage property owners to reduce their risk. The nuisance order was revised in 2021 to consider those property owners that own more than 2 acres. They are now required to reduce fuels on their property within 100 feet of buildings (Appendix #2). An intern was able to evaluate homes town-wide in 2022 for compliance with this ordinance and is beginning to see these efforts pay off.



Curbside brush pick up October 2018

Ideally the town would like to offer curbside brush pick up to the whole town every year.

Traditionally Lake Arrowhead has offered curbside brush pick up to its property owners every year with support of the Wildfire Risk Reduction funds available through DNR.

Structural Ignitability

During a busy fire day when a major wildfire is burning or when several smaller fires are occurring at the same time, it is unlikely there will be enough firefighting resources available to defend every home. That's why it is important for homeowners to do their part to protect their home by preparing their homes ahead of time for wildfire. Wise choices in building materials, landscaping and maintenance can make a home less likely to ignite. For more information on recommendations for homeowners, see Appendix 4.

The Town has a growing population with lots of structures in or near the woods. There are a few areas that are of particular concern related to structure ignitability, in part due to the density of homes in a wooded

area. Parts of Lake Arrowhead, Lake Sherwood and Lake Camelot are of concern. Where homes are on the water and have landscaped yards, the risk is lower. There are parts of all three subdivisions, however, where homes are tucked into the surrounding woods and are more vulnerable to ignition.

In some cases, especially around lakes or when lots sizes are smaller, home ignition zones can overlap, making a person vulnerable to the choices of their neighbors. Education, open communication and collaboration are methods for addressing this issue. Fortunately, Lake Camelot (2007), Lake Arrowhead (2009) and Lake Sherwood (2010) are recognized Firewise Sites and are also actively educating property owners and doing fuels reduction work. WestWind Shores (2017) is the newest Firewise site and is becoming engaged in risk reduction.

Wildfire Risk Awareness

Although many projects have been conducted since 2007 to raise awareness of the risk of destructive wildfires in the Town of Rome, there are still those that are not fully aware of the potential. Without a true understanding of the wildfire risk of the area, people may think that a wildfire is unlikely to affect them. They may not feel a sense of urgency to prepare their property for wildfire or be cautious with fire in the outdoors. Although the 3,410-acre Cottonville Fire in 2005 is a very good example of how wildfire can impact the local area, the benefit of having a local fire on increasing wildfire awareness decreases over time.

Fire Prevention

Statewide, the leading cause of wildfires continues to be debris burning. With Pritzl's writing 1,000 burn permits each year (the #1 permit writer in the State), we have good reason to suspect that debris burning is prevalent in the Town of Rome. We should continue to remind debris burners to make sure they have their free annual burning permits and are following the rules, including checking the restrictions on each day they want to burn. Reminders to fully extinguish burn piles might be beneficial as well as general messaging related to safe burning.



Fire trucks need clearance from vegetation both vertically and horizontally to reach homes

Emergency Response

There are many dead ends or cul de sacs within the tri lakes communities which could make it challenging for outside fire agency resources to navigate. It can also present an issue in the event of the evacuation of homeowners from the area.

On a positive note, flag-format fire number signs have already been posted, which can help incoming resources identify the locations of fires. In terms of local resources, the Rome Fire Department has newer GPS technology in their engines which can make responding to



Address signs visible

fires easier. The Adams County Emergency Atlas is another useful tool used by firefighters to get to homes quickly.

For the most part, driveway access in the tri lakes area is adequate. Outside of the tri lakes there are a few issues (perhaps 2%) with driveways that are long, with sharp curves and inadequate clearance from surrounding vegetation. Overall it is felt that the fire department can navigate to all homes in the Town. However, homeowners still need to maintain the vegetation along their driveway over time to accommodate emergency vehicles. For driveway recommendations, see Appendix #5.

Process to Create Action Plan

After a review of the risks in the Town as well as a look back at what projects had been successful in the past, the planning committee created a list of potential projects to address risks. From there, each entity made a list of what projects they had interest and energy to pursue over the next five years. The projects in the Action Plan will help move us towards reaching the following goals and objectives.

Goals

- Reduce hazardous fuels in residential and community areas.
- Educate homeowners on reducing structure ignitability.
- Educate property owners on wildfire risk and prevention.

Objectives

- Increase opportunities for curbside brush pick up and gain efficiencies in managing the program.
- Encourage compliance with the nuisance ordinance for both developed and vacant lots less than 2 acres in size.
- Utilize town and property owner association platforms to share information on wildfire prevention and risk reduction with property owners.

ROME WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION ACTION PLAN 2022-2031

Town of Rome

- Continue to accept brush drop off at the Transfer Site. Consider various options for utilization or disposal of this wood to maintain space for additional drop off (e.g. hire contractor, winter burning).
- Assist and/or support fuels reduction on public property, private property, and/or property owned by homeowner associations, especially in recognized Firewise Sites, using whatever method is deemed most effective (e.g. curbside brush pick up, contracting, prescribed burning).
- Continue to offer curbside brush pick-up. Seek efficiencies to be able to cover more ground.
- Build capacity to maintain the brush pick up program by training town staff on various components of the program: grant, timeline, letters, reporting.
- Update Rome webpage with wildfire content when available.
- Continue to educate property owners on the nuisance ordinance. Include a reference to the ordinance in the chipping letter. Add language...? Enforcement? Management?
- Manage display of wildfire publications at Town Hall (available through DNR).
- Consider a reprint of Rome Fuels Reduction flyer to educate property owners on the “why” behind fuels reduction and what options are available to them.

- Put a loop on Channel 300 during spring wildfire season of Be Ember Aware video or another wildfire video.

DNR Forestry Staff

- Provide webpage and social media content to partners.
- Provide existing DNR wildfire brochures to partners for rack at town hall and at three lake association clubhouses (for example, home ignition zone self-assessment).
- Provide publications, articles and outreach items to partners as needed.

Property Owner Associations

- Wildfire information on association webpage and social media platforms as available. Post social media outreach messages (burning permits in spring, campfires in summer, house prep in fall, safest time to burn and ash disposal in winter).
- Include wildfire articles in POA newsletters. Articles could address: educating property owners on nuisance ordinance, how to reduce structural ignitability, and promoting curbside pick-up projects as well as other topics.
- Provide wildfire brochures at clubhouses (for example, HIZ self-assessment).
- Show ‘Be Ember Aware’ video or other videos or presentations during association meetings or events (for example, at Lake Camelot Frolic or in the lodge on a busy weekend). Perhaps as part of a wildfire display with banners and publications.
- Continued fuels reduction work through the Firewise sites. Currently, this includes:
 - Lake Sherwood: ongoing maintenance of 14-acre Sherwood Forest
 - Lake Arrowhead: provide curbside brush pick up to whole subdivision annually
 - Lake Camelot: volunteer chipping days on common property, and volunteer work days

	Webpage	Facebook	Newsletter	Info Board	Events
Lake Camelot	X	X	X	X	Frolic (Aug)
Lake Arrowhead	X	X	X		
Lake Sherwood	X		X	X	

Fire Department

- Educate property owners on nuisance ordinance. Develop a newsletter article using commonly understood language that the POAs can print in their newsletters.
- Provide regular updates to CWPP work group on number and status of nuisance ordinance complaints. Work with Town to adjust process and policy as needed.
- Display fire engine banner on Rome fire trucks during parades or open houses.
- Consider a wildfire display at fire department events. Could include brochures, banners or a video running in the background.

APPENDIX #1: Oak Wilt Resources

[Oak Wilt | Wisconsin DNR](#)

[Oak Wilt Fact Sheet](#)

[Oak Harvesting Guidelines](#)

APPENDIX #2: Restrictions on Dead Timber & Brush

Article III RESTRICTIONS ON DEAD TIMBER & BRUSH

[Adopted as Sec. 9.10 of the prior Code; amended in its entirety 6-20-2019 by Ord. No. 19-09]

287-14 Purpose.

The Town of Rome is heavily wooded. The combination of woodlands and high-density housing make homes in the Town particularly vulnerable to wildfires. The effects of such wildfires would be devastating to both persons and property. Dead trees and brush are highly combustible and represent an ideal fuel for the start and spread of a wildfire. The Town has determined that dead trees and brush constitute a safety hazard and a public nuisance and that it is therefore necessary to regulate them.

287-15 Dead trees and brush prohibited in managed areas.

[Amended 6-3-2021 by Ord. No. 21-11; 9-2-2021 by Ord. No. 21-15]

Every owner of a parcel(s) of land that is two acres or less, with or without a permanent building on it, shall be subject to these restrictions on their entire property. Every owner of a parcel that is greater than two acres in size shall be subject to these restrictions within 100 feet of a building.

A. The managed area shall be kept free of:

- (1)** Dead trees, standing or fallen, that are six inches or greater in diameter at the base of the tree;
- (2)** Dead brush and trees limbs on the ground greater than three inches in diameter on the larger end;
- (3)** Brush piles greater than three feet by three feet by three feet or one cubic yard.

B. In an attempt to prevent the spread of oak wilt, property owners shall avoid cutting or injuring standing oak trees during the period of April 1 through July 15 of each year, except in the case of natural disasters, where this can be suspended for a time to be determined by the Town Board. Dead wood that is already on the ground can be cut and piled regardless of the time of year.

287-16 Procedure.

Whenever the Town Board's designee shall determine that a property owner is in violation of this article, the Town Board's designee shall send a notice of the violation to the property owner. The notice shall include a description of what constitutes the violation and shall set forth a deadline for the violation to be remedied not to exceed 12 months. If the violation is not remedied by the deadline, the property owner may be issued a citation by the Police Department for the violation. In addition, the Town may abate the nuisance pursuant to the normal procedure for the abatement of a nuisance.

287-17 Violations and penalties.

Any owner of property convicted of a violation of this article shall be subject to a fine of not more than \$200 plus costs. Each day that the subject property remains in violation of this article shall constitute a separate violation.

APPENDIX #3: Wildfire Risk Reduction Funds 2013-2021

Year	Loads	Reimbursed to Town	Projects
2013	323 loads	\$13,909.60+ \$22,76.93 = \$16,186.53 \$16,190	CWPP meeting 2/6/13, 3/27/13, 12/16/13 Spring 2013 – curbside in Sherwood and Arrowhead (9 HIZ) Fall 2013 – West side of 13 (22%) Rome CWPP 2013 Update flyer mailed out \$2276.93 Wildfire Prevention Week Smokey Bear tote bag with Rome flyer 2100 Town of Rome CAR map and Cottonville Footprint poster Wildfire Info Sites established (Camelot, Arrowhead)
2014	483 loads	\$25,199.56 \$25,200	CWPP meetings on 6/4 and 12/3 Rome Dead Trees & Brush flyer Emergency Evacuation flyer Firewise presentation at annual meeting 4/19/14 with display Evacuation signs posted in Sherwood Chipping: Sp 14 on east side (included evacuation flyer) Chipping Fall 2014 on east side (25% participation) Sp 2014 HIZ assessments = 17
2015	257 loads	\$21,981.89 \$22,000	CWPP Meeting on 4/2/15 Spring 2015 = 20% (west side) (included evacuation flyer) Fall 2015 = 17% (west side) (include haz fuels flyer) Display at Rome annual meeting and Env Day. Rome webpage graphics = \$60.00
2016	626 loads	\$28,350.04 \$28,350	CWPP Meeting on 9/20/16 Spring 2016 25% (east side) (largest participation ever) Burma Shave signs posted at Dyracuse Fall 2016 = 23% (east side)
2017	164 loads	\$9702.29 \$9,700	CWPP Meeting on 6/14/17 Fall 2017 = 21% participated (Project Area #1) 119 acres treated We created a Rome chipping poster for project area #1 (\$120 WUI budget)
2018	1788 cubic yards	\$7,171	Planning meetings on 7/30/18, 8/20/18, 9/21/18 Fall 2018 = 19% participated (Project Area #2) 117 acres treated
2019	847 loads	\$9837	CWPP meetings on Fall 2019: 31% Participated (350 acres treated) (whole town) Offered to entire town except for Lake Arrowhead
2020	125 loads	\$3804	CWPP Meetings on 122/439 homes participated (28%; 61 acres treated) Offered to west side of town
2021	518 loads	\$9646	CWPP Meetings on 626-2366 participated (26%; 313 acres treated) Offered to east side of town
TOTAL		\$131,898	

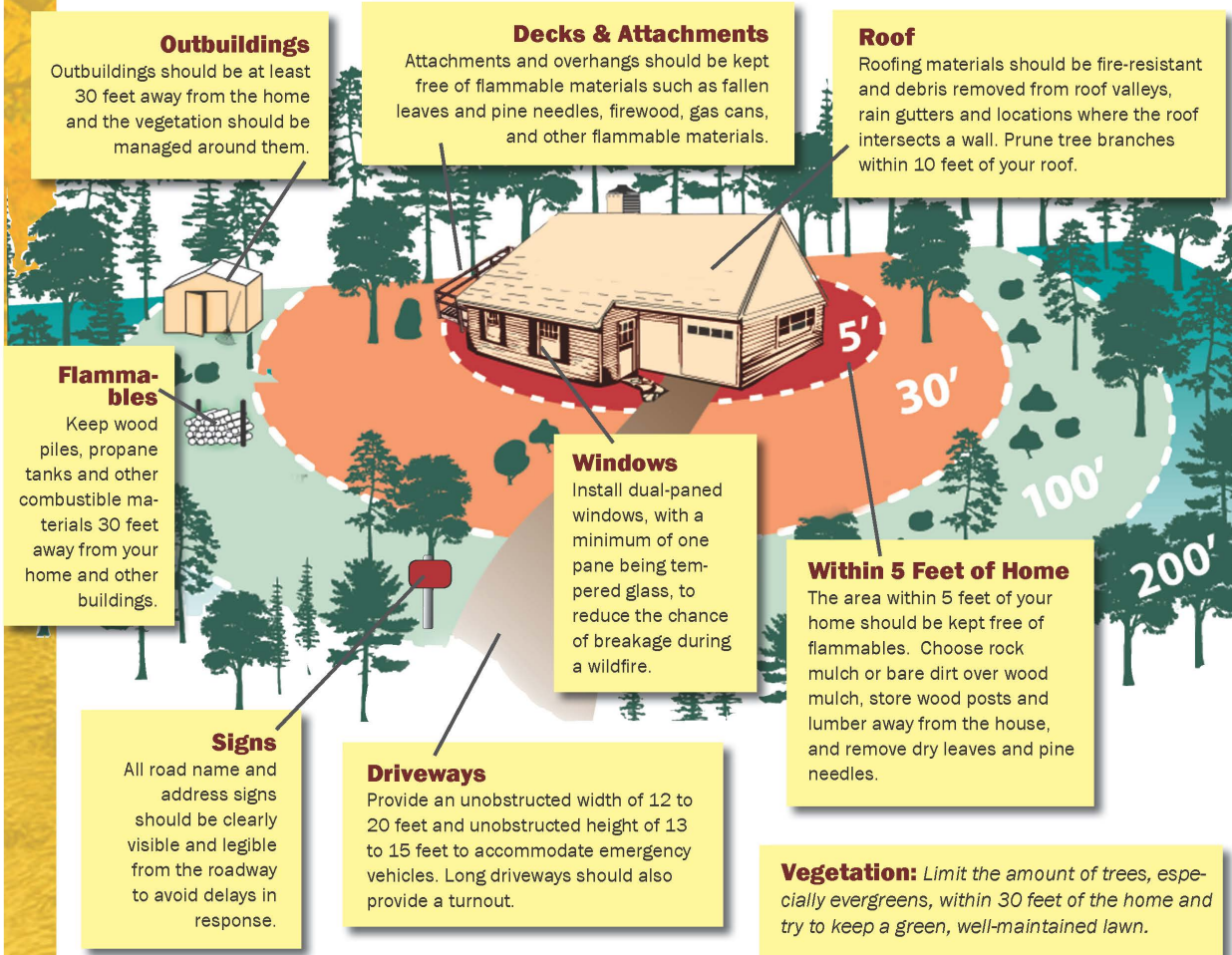
APPENDIX #4: Recommendations for Reducing Structure Ignitability

Reduce the ignitability of your structure and be Firewise

Small steps are the key to a Firewise home!

Improving your home's chance of surviving a wildfire can seem like an overwhelming task – one that you may feel is impossible to achieve. Not necessarily so! Research shows that flying embers (firebrands) and creeping surface fire are significant contributors to the loss of homes to wildfires...

sometimes hours after the fire has passed. To begin making your home and property "Firewise," start with the structures on your property and move out as time allows. Keep in mind that anything attached to a structure (deck, fence, overhangs, etc.) is part of the structure.



The home ignition zone is your home and its surroundings out to 100-200 feet. In this area, vegetation and personal property should be managed and maintained to reduce the wildfire threat and improve the likelihood of your home surviving with little or no assistance from firefighters.



APPENDIX #5: Recommendations to Improve Emergency Response

Driveway Access



Help fire, ambulance and law enforcement personnel get to your home quickly and safely in the event of an emergency



Provide a place for emergency vehicles to

Turnaround

near your home or cabin

Ensure driveway has adequate height and width

Clearance

from vegetation for large emergency vehicles

13.5 feet minimum*



12 feet minimum*

* Based on standards set by the National Fire Protection Association. Talk to your local fire chief, town chair or village administrator to learn about local driveway ordinances or requirements.

Make sure your address sign is

Visible

from both directions of travel

Trim vegetation away from sign



Large reflective numbers

Address numbers on both sides

Questions?

Contact your local fire department or municipality

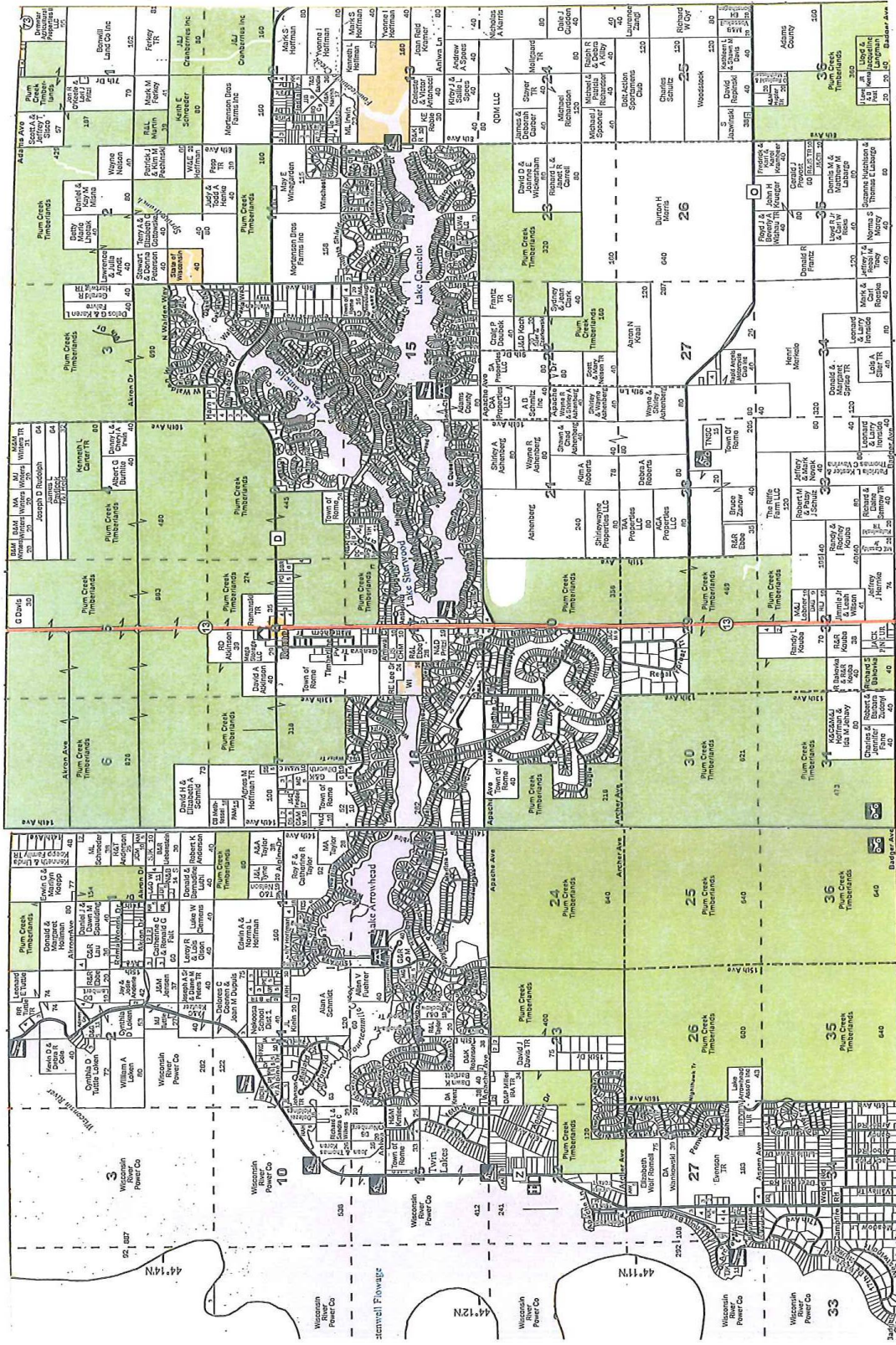


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APPENDIX #6: Town of Rome

Town of Rome



APPENDIX #7: Town of Rome

