

## The West Region Wildfire Council Rapid Assessment Summary

The West Region Wildfire Council<sup>1</sup> mitigation specialists conducted parcel-level rapid wildfire risk assessments in 2022. Risk assessment data collection was collected as a census of all residential properties with a structure in the study area<sup>2</sup>. The rapid wildfire risk assessments were conducted for 1260 residential properties using the standard WiRē Rapid Wildfire Risk Assessment (RA), which is comprised of a set of 13 attributes that includes building materials, vegetation near the home, background fuels and topography, and access to the property. Each attribute of the RA is evaluated relative to other private land parcels within the study area. As a result, the RA serves as an indicator of the relative risk of private land parcels within the study area, rather than an absolute measure of risk.

The 13 attributes are weighted and summed to produce an overall risk score for each parcel. The weights reflect the attributes' relative contribution (ranging from 1% - 30% per attribute) to overall wildfire risk. Following our process for a standard RA, we apply a standard approach for placing the overall risk scores into five risk categories: low (20-260), moderate (261-325), high (326-455), very high (456-540), extreme (541-1000). This process can be iterative over time but has been validated across previous WiRē projects.

To ensure consistent, high quality data collection West Region Wildfire Council conducted a training for those who would conduct the rapid risk assessments. WiRē produced a standardized reference sheet for data collectors for use in the field.

All parcel level assessments were conducted on the property being assessed unless access was blocked by a gated driveway or posted with no trespassing signage. While environmental and situational variables may occasionally impact the rapid assessment data collection process, West Region Wildfire Council is confident that the rapid assessments collected for this project provide an accurate representation of relative wildfire risk to the parcels in the study area.

In instances when West Region Wildfire Council mitigation specialists could not observe a risk attribute, the specialist selected "unknown/not observed." It is WiRē's protocol to assign the "unknown/not observed" and true missing data (i.e., the mitigation specialist did not select a response) the highest risk score for the attribute in

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<sup>1</sup> This project was completed with help from Montrose Fire Protection District, Ridgway Volunteer Fire Department, Montrose County Sheriff's Office, Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control, Colorado State Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

<sup>2</sup> Montrose and Ouray County Assessor data from May 2022 was used as the underlying dataset to collect data.

*\* This project was supported with funding from USDA Forest Service, Washington Office Fire and Aviation Management.*

*\*All data received and processed as of January 31, 2023*

*\*Document prepared February 2, 2023*

question. This is consistent with other parcel risk and structure protection assessments. If a particular attribute is “unknown/not observed” or missing, practitioners and firefighters assume that a hazard exists. At best, the correct attribute response is chosen; at worst, the assessment invites a conversation with the parcel owner to delve deeper into the mitigation needs of the parcel in question and an update to their parcel risk assessment.

This protocol allows us to report results for all residential parcels in the study area rather than only those for which all attributes could be observed. For each risk attribute in the tables below, we report the number of “unknown/not observed” and missing as a footnote.

The following tables present a summary of the West Region Wildfire Council mitigation specialists’ responses to the 13 risk attributes in the RA. Additionally, the tables present the results of the overall wildfire risk rating, which is the sum of the attribute scores. The percentages might not add to 100% due to rounding.

## 1.1 Overall risk rating

<b>Overall risk rating:</b>				
RA: Based on the sum of the 13 attribute scores.				
Response categories	Score range	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Low	20-260	621	49%	
Moderate	261-325	338	27%	
High	326-455	241	19%	
Very high	456-540	15	1%	
Extreme	541-1000	45	4%	

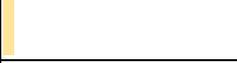
## 1.2 Home ignition potential

<b>Risk attribute: Roof (30% of total RA score)</b>				
What is the most vulnerable roofing material?				
Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Tile, metal, or asphalt shingles	0	1213	96%	
Wood (shake shingles)	300	47	4%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 45 were missing/unobserved (4%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Siding (7% of total RA score)**

What is the most vulnerable exterior siding material?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Stucco, cement, brick, stone, or other noncombustible siding	0	294	23%	
Log or heavy timbers	35	40	3%	
Wood or vinyl siding	70	926	73%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 92 were missing/unobserved (7%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Combustible attachments (10% of total RA score)**

Does the home a combustible balcony, deck, or fence attached to the structure?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
No combustible attachments	0	489	39%	
Combustible attachments present	100	771	61%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 141 were missing/unobserved (11%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Distance to adjacent homes (20% of total RA score)**

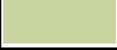
What is the closest distance to a neighboring home?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
More than 100'	0	1200	95%	
30' - 100'	50	48	4%	
10' - 29' away	100	7	1%	
Less than 10'	200	5	0%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 5 were missing/unobserved (&lt;1%) and included in the highest risk category.

### 1.3 Defensible space

**Risk attribute: Distance to overgrown vegetation (0 – 100 ft) (10% of total RA score)**  
 What is the closest distance from the home to overgrown, dense, or unmaintained vegetation?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
More than 100'	0	209	17%	
30' - 100'	50	181	14%	
5' - 29'	75	437	35%	
Less than 5'	100	433	34%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 111 were missing/unobserved (9%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Distance to other combustibles (non-vegetation) (8% of total RA score)**  
 What is the closest distance from the home to combustible items other than vegetation such as lumber, firewood, a propane tank, hay bales, or other materials that could easily ignite?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
More than 30' or no combustible items	0	685	54%	
5' - 30'	40	249	20%	
Less than 5'	80	326	26%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 127 were missing/unobserved (10%) and included in the highest risk category.

### 1.4 Background conditions

**Risk attribute: Distance to dangerous topography (5% of total RA score)**  
 What is the closest distance from the home to a ridge, steep drainage, or narrow canyon?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
More than 150'	0	1178	93%	
50' - 150'	25	17	1%	
Less than 50'	50	65	5%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 6 were missing/unobserved (<1%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Slope (2% of total RA score)**

The slope of a property refers to the steepness of the land. A large property may have steep, moderate, and gentle slopes. How would you describe the slope of the property within 150' of the home?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Gentle - Less than 20%	0	905	72%	
Moderate - Between 20% and 45%	10	186	15%	
Steep - Greater than 45%	20	169	13%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 6 were missing/unobserved (<1%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Adjacent fuels (100 - 150 ft) (4% of total RA score)**

Which of the following best describes the dominant vegetation 100' to 150' from the home? This may be outside the property boundary.

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Light	10	268	21%	
Medium	20	646	51%	
Dense	40	346	27%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 6 were missing/unobserved (<1%) and included in the highest risk category.

## 1.5 Access

**Risk attribute: Address posting (1% of total RA score)**

Does the address sign meet all local standards (Posted, blue reflective, visible from the road)

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Fully meets standard	0	100	8%	
Address sign is visible, but <b>does not meet all</b> standards	5	1059	84%	
Not posted/visible from the primary road	10	101	8%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 1 was missing/unobserved (<1%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Ingress/egress** (1% of total RA score)

If the road to access the home was blocked due to a wildfire, is there another road to get out of the community?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Two or more roads in/out	0	693	55%	
One road in/out	10	567	45%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 51 were missing/unobserved (4%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Driveway clearance** (1% of total RA score)

Does the driveway meet the horizontal and vertical clearance standards: height at least 20' and width at least 12'?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Meets all driveway standards. Meets both height (at least 13.5') and width clearance (at least 20')	0	1131	90%	
Meets one, but not both, standards (height or width)	5	78	6%	
Does not meet either standard (height and width)	10	51	4%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 3 were missing/unobserved (3%) and included in the highest risk category.

**Risk attribute: Driveway length** (1% of total RA score)

What best describes the driveway?

Response categories	Score	Number (N = 1260)	% of all RAs in study area	
Less than 150' long	0	494	39%	
150' or more <b>with</b> "adequate" turnaround	5	661	52%	
150' or more <b>without</b> "adequate" turnaround	10	105	8%	

\* Out of all RAs in study area, 53 were missing/unobserved (4%) and included in the highest risk category.