



WATER TANK DELIVERY, MILE MARKER 4, GREENHORN ROAD, GRASS VALLEY, CA



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# **Greenhorn Firewise Community**

## **Water Tank Installation**

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

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## Acknowledgements

The Greenhorn Firewise Community purchased and installed water tanks with 40,000 gallons of water storage on the Greenhorn Road corridor for the sole purpose of fire suppression. The tanks are strategically located two and four miles from the intersection with Brunswick Road. The availability of water for fire suppression on Greenhorn Road is extremely limited, only worsening the farther one goes from Brunswick Road. Approximately 780 households will benefit from this increased dedicated water supply.

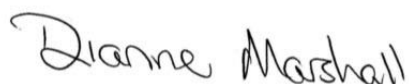
Installation of these tanks reduces turnaround times for fire resources, allowing for sustained fire attack. This greatly increases the ability of the fire agencies to suppress fires early in their progression.

Why are these tanks important? "They are not in my neighborhood" you might say. Any fire can become everyone's problem very quickly. To put things in perspective... 40,000 gallons of water can refill an average of 80 fire engines or 20 water tenders.

The total cash outlay for this project was more than \$82,000.00 plus \$2,500 of in-kind contributions. A grant for \$62,370 from the County of Nevada's American Rescue Plan Act allocation for Community & Economic Resiliency all went to the purchase of the four water tanks themselves. Thank you to Greenhorn Firewise Community donors who gave us the balance of funds needed to complete this project.

This report concludes with a statement of tremendous gratitude. No one in Nevada County has ever tried to do what we accomplished: the installation of dedicated water tanks for fire suppression. A common purpose brought together an excellent group of volunteers and community citizens who gave of their time, expertise, and in some cases, property, during the 16-18 months it took to complete this undertaking.

Many thanks go to: Craig Arthur, Steve Battaini, Vicki Deam, John Deam, Lisa Frederiksen, Bob Fuller, Jerry Funk, Lawren Giles, Samantha Kirk, Linda Lanzoni, Paige Lettington, Ariel Lovett, Michael Mapes, Terry McMahan, Nevada County Board of Supervisors, Nevada County Office of County Counsel, Nevada County Consolidated Fire District, Bill Ryerson, Michael and Tammy Stedman, Paul Tebbel, Keith Thomasson, Elaine Vandehey, Jan Weaver, Leslie Williams. Each one made a critical contribution to this success. Thank you!



Dianne Marshall, Chair  
Greenhorn Firewise Community Water Tank Committee

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## Disclaimer

This document is offered as a snapshot of what it took for the Greenhorn Firewise Community to install four 10,000-gallon water tanks dedicated to fire safety, a process that took approximately a year to achieve. Your experience will probably differ.

## Your Water Tank Planning Committee

If possible, include:

- A fire professional
- A construction site engineer
- Someone with grant writing and management experience
- A “diplomat” (needed to secure utility easements)
- People committed to the outcome!

Along with the Fire Marshal, your fire professional is invaluable when it comes to assuring that all your work is based on what professional fire fighters need to access your emergency water supply. They know what their trucks need to get in, get the water and get back to the fire.

## Endorsements

### Fire Department

Secure the endorsement of the need for water storage for firefighting from your local Fire Chief and Fire Marshal. You will use this repeatedly in your publicity and fundraising efforts.

### Office of Emergency Services

This endorsement of your project also adds to the credibility of need for the water tanks.

## Responsibilities

It is your Firewise Community’s responsibility to fill your water tank initially. If a fire company uses the water, it is their responsibility to refill the tank.

It is also your responsibility to be sure the water tank(s) is always topped off.

In addition, it is your responsibility to care for the area surrounding the water tank--the easement area. Be sure it is free of debris and other fire hazards.

## Publicity

Informing your Firewise Community about the water tank installation project is a first step in securing funding and easements. Publicity helps with fund raising and community building.

- Take photographs!
- Provide your local newspaper with information.
- Talk on your local radio stations.

## Utility Easements

Without a utility easement, you will have no place to install the water tanks. You are asking for use of private property to benefit local firefighting efforts.

Definition: An **easement** is a **nonpossessory** right to use and/or enter onto the **real property** of another without possessing it. It is "best typified in the right of way which one landowner, A, may enjoy over the land of another, B".<sup>[1]</sup> An easement is a property right and type of **incorporeal** property in itself at **common law** in most jurisdictions.

An easement is similar to **real covenants** and **equitable servitudes**.<sup>[2]</sup> In the United States, the **Restatement (Third) of Property** takes steps to merge these concepts as servitudes.<sup>[3]</sup>

Easements are helpful for providing access across two or more pieces of property, allowing individuals to access other properties or a resource, for example to **fish** in a privately owned pond or to have access to a public beach.

The rights of an easement holder vary substantially among jurisdictions.

Informing your Firewise Community about the water tank installation project is a first step in securing easements. **See Publicity, page 3.**

Work with your Fire Marshal and the fire professional on your committee to identify properties that will best address the need for stored water for firefighting. With this information, approach the property owners and request their cooperation.

Considerations include:

- Distance from other water supplies (e.g., fire hydrants, lakes, or ponds).
- Ease of access for water tenders.

You may encounter an owner who will want to negotiate receiving something in exchange for their cooperation. This is entirely up to you and your Firewise Community. **See Sample Letter of Intent, page 11.**

### The Pros and Cons of Holding the Easement

**PROS:** By Greenhorn Firewise Community (GFC) deciding to hold the easements, we were able to get four 10,000-gallon water tanks installed when no other entity was willing to hold the easements.

**CONS:** Should our Firewise Community dissolve, another easement holder will need to be identified. To mitigate this possibility, our easements indicate that the easement holder may change in the future.

In the end we had no choice. The tanks would not have been placed without GFC stepping up. No established agency was willing to hold these easements including the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services, Nevada County Consolidated Fire Department, or Nevada Irrigation District. Should there ever be a considerable number of these types of water tanks throughout Nevada County, this may change. For now, it appears that dedicated water tanks installed for firefighting agencies is up to good Samaritans.

## Attorney

Locate an attorney with experience filing easements and whose life will be the better for getting these water tanks installed (i.e., they live in your community). Be prepared to pay him or her for services rendered. It is worth it.

## Letter of Intent

Letters of Intent represent the basic terms for an agreement between you and the property owner. It is nonbinding. After this Letter of Intent has written and signed, another formal agreement will be developed to the benefit of the property owner, the easement holder, and to file with the County Recorder. **See Sample Letter of Intent, page 11.**

## Utility Easement Agreement

You will need to address who will be the easement holder. After exploring this question with several public entities, our Firewise Community decided to be the easement holder to assure this effort went through to completion.

You are asking for a favor from a property owner to install water tanks on their property. Listen to what they want in exchange. Is your Firewise Community able to give them what they want? If yes, agree to it. If not, move on to another property owner.

Do not overlook the wants of the property owner. You need this document signed and filed with your county.

## Surveyors

You need to hire a surveyor to file an easement agreement with the County. All parties must agree on the boundaries of the easement property.

Be ready for surprises. The surveyor may discover that the property you thought was owned by one owner is really owned by two.

## Filing with the County

In Nevada County, California, easement agreements are filed with the County Recorder's Office. Your attorney will help you complete this step and assure you have a registered copy for your files.

## Funding

### Scope of Work

While you are securing your easements, work with your Project Engineer on what the scope of work will be and what the costs will be.



First consideration (20,000 gallons). After severe snow storm, determined flat top would not bear snow load.



Conical shape preferred (10,000 gallons).

## Budget

Be sure to budget for delays in your grant application. The prices you secure today may not be the costs when you are finally ready to purchase services, rent equipment, pay for gravel, rock, water tanks, water, and the deliveries of same.

Your budget may include:

- Water tank purchase
- Shipping
- Custom plumbing
- Securing the water tank
- Water level indicator
- Tractor with bucket
- Crane truck
- Roller
- Water truck
- Asphalt
- Road base
- Sand or pea gravel for pads
- Dump fees for removal of green waste during site prep
- Surveyor
- Insurance
- Attorney fees (your attorney, easement property owner's attorney)
- County Recorder fees
- Notary fees
- Tank security (fencing, locks)
- Fundraising costs
- Water delivery to fill tank
- Signage

## Raising Funds Within Your Firewise Community

A fundraising letter to go out to everyone living within your Firewise Community gives you the chance to inform the residents about the project emphasizing how they will personally benefit and to make a "direct ask." Your fundraising request is an invitation to your community members to be a part of the success of reaching the goal to install a home and life-saving water tank. Don't forget to mention possible positive outcomes for one's homeowner's insurance!

Be sure your letter:

- Asks for homeowners' contact information e.g., email addresses and phone numbers, explaining how it will be used. **A sample contact information request form may be found on page 12.**

- Invites homeowners to become active with your Firewise Community. Include ways to help.
- States that any funds not needed to complete the project will go to your Firewise Community's operating fund.
- Include return envelopes addressed to your Firewise Community's address.
- Write your section number or initials on the back of the return envelope so your treasurer will know from what road or section the contributions are coming.
- If you have a website and people may donate directly, be sure this letter directs them to that link.

**Bulk Mail:** If your Firewise Community is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, you may work with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to secure a bulk mailing permit to reduce cost.

A nonprofit must apply for authorization at all mailing offices from which it plans to send bulk mailings. The application is called the "Application to Mail at Nonprofit Standard Mail Rates" and required documentation includes your nonprofit's 501(c)(3) letter and proof of its purpose, for example, your by-laws.

USPS presort preparation:

1. Sort your mail into specific mail trays or mail sacks (provided by the USPS at no cost).
2. Fill out a postage statement either manually or online and apply barcoded labels to each mailing container.
3. Deliver to the Post Office that you received your USPS bulk mail permit from.
4. Letters must either be in a sealed envelope or, if not in an envelope, all four sides of the mailing need to be completely sealed.
5. Addressing: Envelopes need to contain a complete address within the defined Optical Character Reader area and, in most cases, a complete return address.

**Every Door Direct Mail:** With [Every Door Direct Mail](#)® (EDDM®) service from the USPS, you can get help reaching potential Firewise Community members in nearby neighborhoods—and you do not need to know names or street addresses. Simply identify the delivery routes you want to reach, prepare your mail pieces, drop off your mail pieces with USPS, and they will deliver the printed pieces to the active addresses in your designated area.

You can use Every Door Direct Mail® Service to:

- Help reach a location without an address list.
- Send out local mailings or national campaigns.
- Help build more traffic.
- Involve new homeowners.
- Potentially increase donations.
- Help reduce mail preparation costs.

If you are not using a bulk mailing permit, use your own return address labels on the envelopes for the mailing of this letter. People are more likely to open a letter if they recognize the sender's name or address.

**Showing Progress:** You may want to use a fundraising "thermometer" in a visible location to keep your community informed regarding progress towards your goal.



## Grant Funding and Management

Grant funding for the installation of water tanks may be available. Get to know the decision makers awarding these funds. Inquire into anything that sounds remotely appropriate--do not say “no” *for* them. Our water tank project received two-thirds of the needed funding through Nevada County’s Community Resilience Grant Program, funded with Federal American Rescue Plan (ARPA) dollars. Tying the impact of covid-19 to the need for water tanks was interesting.

Look to the language found in your letters of endorsement (see page 3) and use it to establish the urgency and importance of installing these water tanks.

**Grants Management:** Pay close attention to how and when your funders want their reports completed. If you do not follow what they want, you may find yourself rewriting your reports. Each funder is different.

Always write your grant applications in the order requested by the funder. Fully address what is important to the funder. Tie the local need for water storage for fire fighting to what is important to your funder.

Should problems arise, your funder is your partner. Problems may include delays in project completion, insufficient funds, and easement issues.

**Accounting:** Your project will need a good treasurer. Always be ready to be audited. Your funders and your donors will want you to account for how you have spent the money they gave you.

Keep all checking/invoices separate from other financial records. You may want to open a separate account rather than trying to keep things separate within the same account when taking on a project of this size.

## Insurance

Include the cost of insurance in your budget. Property owners, funders, and your own Board of Directors may require insurance.

You may find insuring water tanks to be a new experience for your insurance company. It *can* be done. You can tell your broker that the Greenhorn Firewise Community was able to get insurance for our water tanks. Brokers will tell you what they require (e.g., no congregating at the water tank site) and what it will cost.

## Water Tank Installation

You are ready to install your water tank when you have the following in place:

- Funding secured.
- Water tanks purchased.
- Volunteer crew available for site prep and installation work (**See page 12 for sample Volunteer Release**).
- Easements recorded.
- Site prep completed.
  - Green waste removed and hauled away.
  - Gravel/rock delivered.
  - Water tender wet down the site; site rolled (compacted).

- Water tank delivery date established.
  - Crane Operator and Crane available.
  - Delivery truck access assured.
- Traffic control in place.
- Tanks arrive and are put into place.
  - Necessary plumbing installed.
- Water supply delivered.
- Signage, bollards, security installed.

## Water for the Tanks

It is our responsibility to fill the water tanks initially and to keep them full. When this water is used to fight fires, it the firefighting agency’s responsibility to replace the water they use. Work with your fire company to get the best price for the water.



Designated easement area before clearing



After clearing with water tanks installed

## Say Thank You!

Remember to say publicly and directly “thank you” to everyone who contributes to the success of your water tank installation.

- Letters to the editor.
- Opinion pieces.
- Include photographs!
- Certificates of Appreciation (See page 13 for example).

## Security, Protection, and Signage

There are those in our communities who look for water sources and may take that which is not theirs. Secure the fittings on your water tank(s).

Depending on the location of your water tank, the installation of bollards may be important for protection. You may want to add some reflective material to these for visibility.

You will also want to install the standard signage indicating a fire protection water supply.

## Mission Accomplished!



Sign indicating the presence of a 20,000-gallon fire protection water supply is illuminated with reflecting capabilities when hit with a light. These signs and water supplies help firefighters quickly locate water to fight fires when needed the most.

# APPENDICES

## Sample Letter of Intent

This letter of intent, (the “Letter of Intent”), represents the basic terms for an agreement that shall be considered non-binding. After this Letter of Intent has been made, another formal agreement will be constructed to the benefit of the Parties.

**Property Owner:**

**Property Address:**

**Easement Holder:**

**Description of Easement:** The Property Owners, XXX and XXX XXXXXX, agree to grant to the Easement Holder an easement under the following terms:

**Property Owner:**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Easement Holder**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Contact Information Request

**CONTACT INFORMATION REQUEST:** The purpose of the XXXXX Firewise Community is to maximize everyone’s chances of surviving a devastating forest fire. We share information with residents in our community provided by the Nevada County Coalition of Firewise Communities and the fire professionals who attend Coalition meetings. Our website: xxxxxxxx.xxx details all our activities.

**To be included in our communications network, please give us your contact information:**

- Your name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Home Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_
- Cell Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Cell Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Volunteer Release and Waiver of Liability

This Release and Waiver of Liability (the “release”) executed on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) by \_\_\_\_\_ (“Volunteer”) releases Greenhorn Firewise Community, an unincorporated, nonprofit organization existing under the laws of the State of California and each of its directors and officers. The Volunteer desires to provide volunteer services for Greenhorn Firewise Community and engage in [activities](#) related to serving as a volunteer.

Volunteer understands that the scope of Volunteer’s relationship with the Greenhorn Firewise Community is limited to a volunteer position and that no compensation is expected in return for services provided by Volunteer; that the Greenhorn Firewise Community will not provide any benefits traditionally associated with employment to Volunteer; and that Volunteer is responsible for his/her own insurance coverage in the event of personal injury or illness as a result of Volunteer’s services to the Greenhorn Firewise Community.

1. Waiver and Release: I, the Volunteer, release and forever discharge and hold harmless Greenhorn Firewise Community and its successors and assigns from any and all liability, claims, and demands of whatever kind of nature, either in law or in equity, which arise or may hereafter arise from the services I provide to Greenhorn Firewise Community. I understand and acknowledge that this Release discharges Greenhorn Firewise Community from any liability or claim that I may have against Greenhorn Firewise Community with respect to bodily injury, personal injury, illness, death, or property damage that may result from the services I provide to Greenhorn Firewise Community or occurring while I am providing volunteer services.
2. Insurance: Further I understand that the Greenhorn Firewise Community does not assume any responsibility for or obligation to provide me with financial or other assistance, including but not limited to medical, health, or disability benefits or insurance. I expressly waive any such claim for compensation or liability on the part of Greenhorn Firewise Community beyond what may be offered freely by Greenhorn Firewise Community in the event of injury or medical expenses incurred by me.
3. Medical Treatment: I hereby Release and forever discharge Greenhorn Firewise Community from any claim whatsoever which arises or may hereafter arise on account of any first-aid treatment or other medical services rendered in connection with an emergency during my tenure as a volunteer with Greenhorn Firewise Community.
4. Assumption of Risk: I understand that the services I provide to Greenhorn Firewise Community may include activities that may be hazardous to me including, but not limited to involving inherently dangerous activities. As a volunteer, I hereby expressly assume risk of injury or harm from these activities and Release Greenhorn Firewise Community from all liability.
5. Other: As a volunteer, I expressly agree that this Release is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the laws of the State of California and that this Release shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of California. I agree that in the event that any clause or provision of this Release is deemed invalid, the enforceability of the remaining provisions of this Release shall not be affected.

By signing below, I express my understanding and intent to enter into this Release and Waiver of Liability willingly and voluntarily.

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Signature

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Date

# Sample "Thank You" Certificate

We distributed 26 certificates of appreciation. One person shared that she had never before been thanked for services rendered.



  
GREENHORN  
FIREWISE  
COMMUNITY®  
P.O. Box #1014  
Cedar Ridge, CA 95924



## CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

to

XXXXXXXXXXXX

**On behalf of the XXXXX Community,  
THANK YOU for your contribution to our Water Tank Installation Project.  
We could not have done this without you.**

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XXXX, President, \_\_\_ Firewise Community

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XXXXXXXX, \_\_\_FC Water Tank Committee Chair