

A Framework for Community Fire Plans

A collaborative approach to developing community fire plans

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Framework Developed by:

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With Contributions from:

- Josephine County
- Bureau of Land Management, Medford District
- Rogue-River Siskiyou National Forest
- Oregon Department of Forestry, Southwestern Oregon District
- Oregon Office of the State Fire Marshal
- The National Fire Plan office, Region 6, Oregon/Washington

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Community Fire Plans

The National Fire Plan is providing millions of dollars annually for community fire planning, fuels reduction, prevention and utilization across the nation. With the continued threat of fire and attention on the Healthy Forests Restoration Act Community Wildfire Protection Plans, there is increased attention on the need for strategic planning to identify the methods for reducing wildfire risk and engaging diverse stakeholders from throughout a community in the planning process.

This document is a framework that provides guidance and ideas for communities interested in developing a community fire plan. The framework is based on the Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan, developed in 2004 by the Program for Watershed and Community Health. There are state and federal programs and policies addressed in this framework that set forth requirements or guidelines for community fire plans, mitigation plans, or wildfire protection. The outline and process illustrated in this document are intended to address the various requirements of these programs, including:

- Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) Community Wildfire Protection Plansⁱ
- National Fire Plan, A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, August 2001
- BLM Interim Guidance for Community Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plans
- The wildfire element of the FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program
- Oregon Senate Bill 360. Forestland Urban Interface Protection Act of 1997. (Sponsored by Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources)
- Oregon Statewide Land Use Planning Goal 7: Areas Subject to Natural Hazards

How to use the Framework

- ✓ Use this framework as a guide to facilitate community discussions around and about Community Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan development. A community may feel that the framework fits well and can use it as a table of contents for their plan. Or a community may decide to approach it differently to address their unique perspectives and concerns.
- ✓ While potentially daunting, community fire planning does not have to be a complex process. The bulleted items included in this framework can be catalysts for your own ideas, or use them as elements you might include under that heading.
- ✓ A community can use this framework to develop a fire plan that is as complex or as basic as is desired by the community. A completed community fire plan can provide direction on reducing wildfire risk, as well as leveraging funding for fire protection and prevention efforts.
- ✓ There is no requirement to fill out all of the boxes or address all the bullets illustrated in this framework. Every community fire plan will be unique to the community where it is developed.
- ✓ The most important element of a Community Fire Plan is the rich discussion fostered among community members and stakeholders. A fire plan can result in a strong understanding of the community priorities of what they think is important, where they think work should be done, and what they are willing to do to reduce the risk of wildfire.

Another resource to assist communities in developing fire plans is "Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities" Sponsored By the Communities Committee, National Association of Counties, National Association of State Foresters, Society of American Foresters, and the Western Governors' Association - <http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/cwpphandbook.pdf>

Outline for a Community Fire Plan

This outline provides a framework for the elements of a community fire plan and a process for facilitating the development of the plan. PWCH created this framework as part of the development of an integrated fire plan for Josephine County, an ongoing effort involving the County, public agencies and the fire protection districts. The framework addresses elements of fire protection and focuses on engaging the fire protection districts to identify and address the needs of the many diverse communities, neighborhoods, and individuals at risk from fire. This process is also intended to help meet the requirements for developing a fire plan that meets requirements and guidelines of federal grants programs such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency Pre-Disaster Mitigation program and the National Fire Plan.

Throughout the process, there are opportunities for community participation, collecting information about fire risk, holding planning and outreach meetings, and increasing public awareness and education. We highly recommend using or generating the best available information or developing an action item to improve your data. It is important not to become hung up on having “perfect” information and instead focus on utilizing existing resources and capabilities. For the purposes of this table, community can include citizens, towns, cities, counties, Tribes, or other government agencies involved in fire planning.

Another important aspect of community fire planning is ensuring that all members of the population are included when assessing risk, identifying measures to reduce risk and implementing actions. In many rural communities, there is no government body, special district, or advocate to ensure protection for all citizens. Community fire plans should specifically identify and plan for unprotected structures and/or wildland, and address the needs of low-income, elderly, disabled and other citizens with special needs.

Table B.1. Community Fire Plan Outline

Chapter	Elements	Source	Progress
Executive Summary	Goals and objectives	Community	
	Methodology	Community	
	Action Plan	Community	
Introduction	Background and History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of fire occurrences/community impacts Activities for community fire protection 	Community	
	Planning Area Boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities and neighborhoods, fire districts, unprotected areas, etc. 	Community	
	Definitions and Descriptions	Agencies & Community	
	Fire Policies and Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), National Fire Plan (NFP), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Oregon Senate Bill 360 	Agencies & Commissioners	
Planning Process	Description of Partners and Committees	Community	
	Description of Community Fire Committee	Community	
	Collaboration and Community Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of meetings & community, social service, & agency stakeholders Documentation of community meetings 	Community	
	Review of community studies and reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning, land use, visioning, fire List the information needed -- Gaps in data 	Agencies, Commissioners, others	
Community Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment and Natural Resources Population, demographics, socio-economic data Housing and development trends Transportation, infrastructure, land use ISO Fire Hazard Rating 	Community	

Chapter	Elements	Source	Progress
Wildfire Risk Assessment	Fire Hazard (Vegetation, slope) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of community fire conditions, history of fire within the community, seasonal weather patterns affecting fire behavior. 	Agencies	
	Fire Risk (occurrence/ignition) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lightning caused, Human caused 	Agencies	
	Protection Capabilities , i.e. Infrastructure, road systems, hydrants, firefighters (remember to be realistic – what are the true capabilities)	Community	
	Structural Vulnerability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roof Type, Access, Defensible Space 	Community	
	Values (Number of lives at risk - residential density) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic values (business, industry) Ecological values (Biological diversity, habitat, T&E, Endemic Species, soil, air, water quality, and ecosystem health) Social values (Home, property, view, pets, livestock, livelihood, cultural, historic resources) 	Community	
Emergency Management	Protection Capabilities & Infrastructure Protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire District Capabilities Inventory of fire protection resources Wildland suppression procedures Training resources and needs Mutual aid agreements Evacuation, Telephone trees, emergency contacts, community information database Next Steps (Needs and Recommendations) <i>Identify strategies to reduce structural ignitability – HFRA</i>	Community/County Emergency Operations Plan	
Mitigation Action Plan	Current Projects and Policies (i.e. ordinances, policies)	Agencies	
	Community strategy for risk reduction	Community	
	Fuels Reduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partners Description and educational materials Current activities Recommended Actions <i>Identify & prioritize areas for hazardous fuels treatments and methods to be used –HFRA</i> 	Community & Agencies	
	Biomass Utilization and Economic Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partners Description and educational materials Current activities Recommended Actions 	Community/Region	
	Education and Community Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population/audiences Resources Evacuation Plan Current activities Recommended Actions 	Community	

Chapter	Elements	Source	Progress
Monitoring and Evaluation	Prioritization Process/Coordination	Community	
	Plan Adoption & Community Celebration	Community	
	Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline for project implementation, monitoring and evaluation • Interagency collaboration, cooperative agreements, and public/private partnerships • Identify funding for recommendations • Measures to sustain activity and public involvement within the fire plan 	Community, Agencies & others	
	Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-party monitoring • Description of benchmarks and how they are met • Annual updates of progress • Plan for updating and continued community involvement 	Community & Agencies	
	Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons learned • Measure progress using benchmarks and indicators • Revise and update with new information and needs 	Community & Agencies	
Appendices	Notes from public meetings	Community	
	Acronym List	Agencies	
	Bibliography	Community and Agencies	
	Funding and resources	Community and Agencies	
	Maps	Community, local government and Agencies	

Process for Developing a Community Fire Plan

Table 2 illustrates a process for developing a community fire plan. The process provides steps for community organizing, gathering information and identifying priorities for action. This process can result in increased capacity within a community to reduce risk from wildfire. These tasks may vary depending on the resources within a community and build off of information being developed through other county, state or federal fire plans and projects.

Table B.2. Community Fire Planning Process

Activity	Tasks	Timeline	Resources Needed
1. Establish a Community Wildfire Committee	1.1. Identify diverse community and agency representatives for the project steering committee. <i>Include three primary decision makers – local government, fire chief, and state forestry. Engage public agency partners in the process. – HFRA</i>		
	1.2. Establish roles and responsibilities		
	1.3. Review/modify community fire plan outline		
	1.4. Identify communities and neighborhoods within Fire District/planning area boundaries		
	1.5. Identify volunteers in each of the communities/neighborhoods to help with the community fire plan		
	1.6. Develop a timeline for steering committee meetings and public outreach process		
	1.7. Develop system to monitor project timeline, tasks, products, and budget		
2. Identify Goals and Objectives	2.1. Facilitate a session with the steering committee to identify community fire plan goals and objectives		
	2.2. Develop community organizational charts to illustrate organizations and local, state, and federal agencies that participate in various elements of fire protection.		
	2.3. Organize a public meeting to present goals and objectives to community stakeholders and provide project information.		
3. Gather Information on Wildfire Programs	3.1. Coordinate with the County and project subcommittees to present information on fuels reduction and fire protection projects to steering committee		
	3.2. Identify other fire-related projects within the community that have not been identified elsewhere		
4. Review Fire District Capabilities and Household Needs	4.1. Develop an inventory of resources (e.g., staff and volunteers), equipment, service boundaries, revenue and other resources		
	4.2. Distribute household resource surveys to gather data on household accessibility, notification, evacuation routes, special needs, household preparedness, as well as homeowners insurance.		
5. Conduct community meetings	5.1. Organize community/neighborhood meetings		
	5.2. Schedule location and identify logistical tasks		
	5.3. Work with volunteers to conduct community outreach and notify public about the meetings		
	5.4. Coordinate with County to use wildfire risk assessment maps and other background materials for meetings		
	5.5. Coordinate with County to assist w/ meeting facilitation		

Activity	Tasks	Timeline	Resources Needed
6. Identify and Prioritize Activities	6.1.Facilitate committee meeting to reflect on community input. Also review actions outlined in the JCIFP		
	6.2.Identify community needs and potential activities to address those needs		
	6.3 Organize a second public meeting to identify priority activities and strategies for implementation.		
7. Draft the Community Fire Plan	7.1.Document all planning activities, needs, resources, and recommendations		
	7.2.Provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the fire plan and recommended actions		
	7.3.Submit the draft community fire plan to the County		
8. Implement, Monitor and Evaluate	8.1.Develop strategies to prioritize, implement, monitor and evaluate the community fire plan		
	8.2.Provide continued public involvement opportunities throughout implementation of fire plan activities.		
	8.3.Identify potential sources of funding for plan/activity implementation		

Community Fire Planning Resources

- Applegate Fire Plan, Applegate Partnership, (2002) <http://www.grayback.com/applegate-valley/fireplan/index.asp>
- Bureau of Land Management, Interim Guidance for Community Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plans, (2003)
- California Fire Plan Template, California Community Fire Plan Workgroup, (July 2003), <http://www.cafirealliance.org/downloads/CommunityFirePlanTemplate.pdf>
- Central Oregon Partnership for Wildfire Risk Reduction, Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (December 2002), <http://www.coic.org/copwrr/>
- Colorado Springs, CO Plan, City of Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs Utilities, (2001), <http://csfd.springsgov.com/wildfiremitigation.pdf>
- Colorado State Fire Plan, <http://www.dola.state.co.us/oem/PublicInformation/wildfire.htm>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 38, (Tuesday, February 26, 2002), http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a020226c.html
- Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, <http://agriculture.house.gov/h.r.1904confrpt.pdf>
- Jefferson County, Colorado Fire Plan, http://www.co.jefferson.co.us/ext/dpt/admin_svcs/emergmgmt/index.htm
- Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan, (ongoing, 2003-2004) <http://www.co.josephine.or.us/wildfire/index.htm>
- Lower Mattole Fire Plan, Mattole Restoration Council, (September 2002) (http://www.mattole.org/html/publications_publication_2.html)
- National Fire Plan, A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, (August 2001) <http://www.fireplan.gov/reports/7-19-en.pdf>
- Oregon Senate Bill 360. Forestland Urban Interface Protection Act of 1997. (Sponsored by Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources)
- Oregon Statewide Land Use Planning Goal 7: Areas Subject to Natural Hazards, <http://www.lcd.state.or.us/goalpdfs/goal07.pdf>
- Partnership for Disaster Resistance and Resilience Community Pre-Disaster Mitigation Resources. http://csc.uoregon.edu/PDR_website/index.htm
- Rogue River Regional Wildfire Hazard Mitigation/Response Plan, Rogue Valley Council of Governments, (September 2002), <http://www.rvcog.org/>
- Shoshone County Wildland Urban Interface Fire Mitigation Plan, Northwest Management, Inc., (October 2002)
- Utah Community Fire Planning for the Wildland Urban Interface, Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands, (2001) www.nr.utah.gov/SLF/fmcommunityfirepln.htm
- Trinity County Fire Management Plan, Trinity County Fire Safe Council, (February 2003), <http://users.snowcrest.net/tcrd/>

ⁱ *Excerpt from Healthy Forests Restoration Act – HR 1904.* The term ‘community wildfire protection plan’ means a plan for an at-risk community that –

- A) Is developed within the context of the collaborative agreements and the guidance established by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council and agreed to by the applicable local government, local fire department, and State Agency responsible for forest management, in consultation with interested parties and the Federal land management agencies managing land in the vicinity of the at-risk community;
- B) Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment on Federal and non-Federal land that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure; and
- C) Recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability throughout the at-risk community.