

# Community Wildfire Protection Plan Guidance

## CWPP Overview and Guidance

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan, as defined by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group: *A plan developed in the collaborative framework established by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council and agreed to by state, tribal, and local government, local fire department, other stakeholders and federal land management agencies managing land in the vicinity of the planning area. A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) 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 recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability throughout the at-risk community. A CWPP may address issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, or structure protection - or all of the above.* CWPP, codified in the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), established minimum standards (see sidebar) and set the State Forester as the party responsible for oversight in local jurisdictions within each state. It also required local and tribal governments, local fire departments and the state entity responsible for forest management (WA State Department of Natural Resources) to agree and ‘sign off’ on the contents of a completed CWPP.



The minimum requirements for a CWPP as described in the HFRA are: (1) **Collaboration:** A CWPP must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties. (2) **Prioritized Fuel Reduction:** A CWPP must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure. (3) **Treatment of Structural Ignitability:** A CWPP must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WADNR) has been responsible for CWPPs in WA State since the 2003 founding legislation. Through many iterations of early efforts and a 20-year history of HFRA, WADNR has determined that a *County-level planning effort* is the preferred approach to completing a CWPP as defined above, recognizing that neighborhood or smaller jurisdiction-scale (such as an HOA or a fire district) wildfire protection planning efforts are essential elements of a county-level plan. Any efforts within a county at this smaller scale that include a professional wildfire risk assessment and corresponding mitigation strategies conducted in a collaborative manner *can and should be included either as a section, chapter, or appendices in the County CWPP or FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP).*

Table 1. Comparison of different levels of wildfire planning efforts.

Neighborhood/Community-Level Risk Assessments and Action Plans	Jurisdiction/Zone-Level Risk Assessments and Action Plans	*County-Level Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy</li> <li>• Least costly (\$) – little to no monetary cost</li> <li>• Can be done in a few hours – a day or two</li> <li>• Completed by residents of the community with assistance from a local wildfire expert</li> <li>• Guides a community’s mitigation efforts within the neighborhood or community boundaries</li> <li>• No official requirements or buyoff outside the neighborhood/community <i>unless it is for Firewise USA® Program participation</i></li> <li>• Funding to support action items may be available from NFPA, WADNR, County, local organizations, or other entities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging</li> <li>• More costly (\$\$) – some monetary costs</li> <li>• Could take several weeks or months</li> <li>• Executed by jurisdiction staff with input from additional partners as identified by lead jurisdiction</li> <li>• Guides a contiguous geographic area’s (i.e. Fire District) wildfire mitigation efforts and spans multiple neighborhoods/communities</li> <li>• No official requirements or buyoff outside the jurisdiction/zone</li> <li>• Funding to support action items may be available through WADNR, County, State DEM, or other entities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most Challenging – requires multiple partners and a public engagement process</li> <li>• Most Costly (\$\$\$\$) – Range from \$100k - \$250k</li> <li>• Up to a year or more</li> <li>• Executed by County staff or hired contractor in partnership with other agencies, organizations, and the public</li> <li>• Guides a county’s wildfire mitigation efforts and spans multiple zones/jurisdiction; can influence county governance and generate initiatives for positive change</li> <li>• <b>Must meet minimum requirements of HFRA and approved by State Forester</b></li> <li>• Funding to support projects may be available through federal grants like CWDG</li> </ul>

\*A County-level CWPP (or FEMA-Approved County Hazard Mitigation Plan with a Wildfire Chapter) is the recommended approach due to numerous factors including cost, staffing, coordination, collaboration, and economies of scale; these factors exist at all levels of planning represented in the table above, but economy of scale only exists at the county level. A neighborhood that wishes a *full-blown CWPP planning effort* would bear the full responsibility of cost and coordination of efforts, as well as ensuring all required elements are satisfied prior to requesting a State Forester Signature of approval. Alternatively, that same neighborhood could receive a Firewise USA® risk assessment from a local wildfire expert and, based on that risk assessment, create a 5-year action plan to mitigate those identified risks. This neighborhood-level risk assessment and mitigation action plan could then be included in any ‘higher’ level planning efforts that were conducted in the jurisdiction or county.

Due to new federal legislation and funding, CWPPs are making a resurgence at a national level (and here in WA State) because they are required to be eligible for the new funding opportunities. The best example is the Community Wildfire Defense Grant managed by the WADNR on behalf of the USDA Forest Service where projects listed in a CWPP less than 10 years old are the key to unlock the application process. WADNR and other western states land/fire management agencies were successful in negotiating two acceptable pathways to be eligible to apply for a CWDG. Those two pathways are:

- a) Eligible projects are listed in a CWPP less than 10 years old;
- b) Eligible projects are listed in a current FEMA Approved County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) with a Wildfire Chapter—the wildfire chapter must meet *the same minimum requirements set for CWPP in HFRA*.



FEMA Approved Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) in WA State are ‘housed’ in County Offices of Emergency Management (OEM) or County Public Works offices and once approved are mandated to be updated on a 5-year cycle. Counties wishing to utilize this process for Identifying and Mitigating wildfire risk to communities can do so by following *all* guidelines/requirements set forth in HFRA for CWPP and *adding* to the Wildfire chapter/section of the County HMP. This approach has distinct advantages that result in greater cohesion during all-risk planning efforts conducted by OEMs, reduces duplication of efforts, creates ownership, and facilitates timely review and accountability for updates to the plan. WADNR encourages counties to adopt this pathway for conducting county-level wildfire protection planning and supports these efforts with participation of subject matter expertise, data access and coaching/facilitation when requested.

WADNR’s Community Resilience Program is responsible for oversight of CWPPs. Community Resilience Coordinators are now in place throughout the state to assist counties in wildfire protection planning efforts by providing subject matter expertise and process guidance.

There are many new and innovative approaches and tools available to complete a community wildfire protection planning effort (see Resources section for links to these tools), and there is flexibility in how jurisdictions execute their CWPP process and identify priorities. The federal guidance on minimum requirements for CWPPs provides the essential foundation for CWPPs to be valuable and effective.

**\*\*\* Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 wildland urban interface areas shall be determined using the Washington wildland urban interface map (WA-WUI) [for the purposes of implementing/enforcing building codes in all counties and cities of this state]. Chapter 51-55 WAC: STATE BUILDING CODE ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF THE 2021 EDITION OF THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE CODE ([Click here to read the WAC](#)).** The WAC *requires* construction in the interface or intermix is compliant with the provisions of the code *and* describes the required process (*findings of fact*) to update or designate new WUI. It goes on to identify the **code official** for the jurisdiction as the *only* designated official able to approve new or modified *findings of fact*—put simply the local jurisdiction (county or city) code official is the only person with the authority to modify the WA-WUI map. **Keep this in mind during CWPP efforts!** *Should the planning group determine a different approach to identify WUI is needed in the planning area a **separate WUI Planning and Prevention Map** may be developed in a collaborative manner. The WUI Planning and Prevention Map must be labeled clearly as a **planning** map. Documentation in the CWPP must clearly indicate why the WA-WUI was not utilized, what the WUI planning and prevention map is to be used for, and that it is not intended to update WA-WUI—this is to minimize confusion regarding 2 different designations of WUI in a county).*

## Wildland Urban Interface Maps for CWPP

### Types and Purpose

Map Type	Purpose	Geographic Area	Benefits	Frequency of Updates	Created By	Adopted By
<b>WUI Planning and Prevention Map</b>	<p>WUI map developed for fuel reduction project and Fire Prevention planning.</p> <p>Used for CWPPs and other similar planning documents.</p>	<p>Usually at the county level</p> <p>Can include private, state, and federal lands</p>	<p>No legal obligation – not tied to state building codes</p> <p>Can be used to show need for funding in grant applications</p> <p>If federal lands are included in the WUI, federal agencies can apply for categorical exclusion to conduct fuel reduction treatments for community protection</p>	<p>CWPPs are only updated every 10 years (typically), so updates can take time</p>	<p>CWPP planning committee</p>	<p>CWPPs must be approved by local governments (city, county, or tribal), local fire district, and state Forester</p>
<b>WA-WUI is the official DNR map for building code usage</b>	<p>Designates where WUI-related state building code regulations are enforced for all new and large (more than 50%) renovations of existing buildings</p>	<p>All of Washington state</p> <p>Includes all structures in Washington</p> <p>As a statewide map, it does not have the same level of detail for boundaries as a more localized map might</p>	<p>Synchronizes WUI map updates with the building code updates.</p> <p>Each county or jurisdiction has the ability to request updates based on <i>Findings of Fact</i></p>	<p>Map updated every 3 years</p>	<p>WA Dept of Natural Resources</p>	<p>WA State Building Code Council</p>

## Suggested Structure & Methodologies

- 1) County-level CWPPs can be stand-alone documents *or* nested in a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan as the wildfire chapter or part of the wildfire chapter. In either case, **minimum requirements set forth by HFRA must be met.** A CWPP should be updated every 5 years.
  - a) Efforts in local jurisdictions should aim to consolidate planning efforts as appropriate to move towards a 5-year update cycle on CWPPs—as a result many local jurisdictions are moving towards ‘housing’ the CWPP in the County HMP so as to simplify and consolidate planning efforts with other natural hazard mitigation planning.
- 2) A collaborative approach is required. Establish a core team and/or steering committee made up of key Federal, State, and Local agencies, Tribal Governments, and partners, stakeholders, and other interested parties.
- 3) County level plans begin with an overall high-level assessment and description of wildfire risk in the county. A county-level base map that identifies locally determined values at risk, key infrastructure, communities (*or* neighborhoods *or* populated areas), protection capabilities, and potential risk-reduction activity areas is crucial. WA State has a recently developed the state-level [WUI map](#) (WA-WUI) that can be used to identify WUI areas within a county.
- 4) Further breakdown of the county into zones (e.g. Fire Districts is a good place to start) and conducting an exercise to assess risk and identify mitigation actions in each zone is an acceptable process.
  - a) Identify risk at a more detailed/neighborhood scale
  - b) Identify mitigation strategies that address identified risk. *Create and prioritize a project list and provide recommendations to reduce structural ignitability.*
    - i) Reference/connect projects to WA State’s [10-Year Wildfire Strategic Plan](#), [20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan](#) (Central & Eastern WA), [2020 WA State Forest Action Plan](#)
    - ii) Using the National Cohesive Strategy pillars to identify and categorize projects will help connect those projects to larger goals.
      - (1) Restore and maintain landscapes

### Reducing Structural Ignitability and Creating Ignition-Resistant WA Communities

*“A home that does not ignite is a home that does not burn.”<sup>1</sup>*

Scientific research suggests strongly that the primary cause of home ignitions during wildfire events are firebrands or ember showers landing on ignitable materials on or adjacent to structures and subsequently causing structure ignition and often total destruction. Therefore, if structures and their immediate surroundings are ignition-resistant, there is a greater likelihood that they will survive a wildfire event.

WADNR supports two programs that aim to reduce structural ignitability and empower home and community members to take action towards the creation of ignition-resistant communities across the Washington Landscape.

<sup>1</sup>Jack Cohen, Retired USFS Research Physical Scientist.



- (a) All hands, all lands approach.
  - (b) Landscape level hazardous fuels treatments
- (2) Safe and effective fire response
  - (a) Identify needs for fire response
    - (i) Equipment, Personnel, Training, etc.
  - (b) Potential Control Lines (PCLs)
- (3) Fire adapted communities (*to address structural ignitability*)
  - (a) Use [Wildfire Ready Neighbors](#), [Firewise USA® Program](#), [Fire Adapted Communities](#) framework tools, neighborhood-level wildfire risk assessments and mitigation strategies
  - (b) **Any project listed in a current approved Firewise USA® Action plan or other approved community mitigation plan can be *incorporated into current CWPPs or HMPs*. \*\*Use the following language in your CWPP or HMP to ‘future-proof’ your plan. “Approved Firewise USA® Action Plans or other approved community wildfire mitigation plans, regardless of their status at the time of writing, are incorporated into this plan. Action or mitigation plans for communities that are drafted after this plan is adopted will be considered a part of this plan, regardless of their adoption date and will be incorporated into this plan at the next scheduled update.”**
- 5) Post-fire recovery resources or plan
- 6) Finalize CWPP or HMP Wildfire Section or Chapter
  - a) Conduct public engagement opportunities as needed and finalize
  - b) Provide final plan to WADNR Community Resilience Coordinator for review and State Forester prep
  - c) Collect local signatures
  - d) State Forester signs

## Resources

### Funding Opportunities (subject to change as new information becomes available)

- [Community Wildfire Defense Grant | WA - DNR](#)
- [America the Beautiful Challenge | NFWF](#)
- [Title III FAQs | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
- [Landscape Scale Restoration Competitive Grant](#)
- [Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant](#)
- [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities](#)
- [Assistance to Firefighters Grants \(AFG\) + Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response \(SAFER\)](#)

### Creating CWPPs

- Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan Handbook  
<https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/documents/resources/communities/cwpphandbook.pdf>
- IAFC CWPP Leaders Guide - <https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/community-wildfire-protection-plan-leaders-guide>
- FEMA-Creating a CWPP  
[https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/creating\\_a\\_cwpp.pdf](https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/creating_a_cwpp.pdf)
- Fire Department Guide to Preparing a CWPP  
<https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/community-wildfire-protection-plan-leaders-guide>

- WA EMD Integrating a CWPP into an HMP  
<https://mil.wa.gov/asset/5ba4211239e1e>

### **Tools for Identifying Risk and Prioritizing Mitigation Strategies**

- Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network FAC Pathways Tool  
[FAC Pathways Tool | Fire Adapted Communities \(fireadaptednetwork.org\)](#)
- Wildfire Risk to Communities Portal  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/wildfirerisk>

### **Research and Learning on CWPPs**

- Webinar on CWPPs in Colorado  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAa1JD7F7ZQ&list=PLouV2TmaJ7o8mHqYr8lmjTGXIMfdT2Q10>
- Database of CWPPs from around the country  
<https://fireadapted.org/cwpp-database/>
- Engaging socially vulnerable populations in CWPPs  
[https://foreststewardsguild.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/socially\\_vulnerable\\_pop\\_in\\_CWPP.pdf](https://foreststewardsguild.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/socially_vulnerable_pop_in_CWPP.pdf)
- Tips & Tools for Reaching Limited English Proficient Communities in Emergency Preparedness, Response, Recovery  
<https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/885391/download>
- Emergency Preparedness & Individuals with Disabilities  
<https://fireadaptednetwork.org/re-visiting-community-wildfire-protection-plans/>
- Missoula County Montana CWPP  
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=29b21eb849db408c8b36960ff3cb3e6>
- Santa Fe New Mexico CWPP  
<https://swcagis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=905f8d03aa2b4438bb631bc6f30c33b8>
- Lessons learned from Incorporating a CWPP into an NHMP  
<https://www.nacdnet.org/2020/08/13/conservation-districts-helping-to-update-cwpps/>

### **Evaluating CWPPs**

- Evaluating a CWPP (Oregon)  
<https://www.oregon.gov/ODF/Documents/Fire/CWPPPEvalGuide.pdf>