

# COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE

## MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS



Per Colorado Senate Bill 09-001, following is a description of the revised minimum standards and guidelines that counties should consider when developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs). The Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 required the Colorado State Forest Service to establish minimum standards for the development of CWPPs in Colorado.

### **I. Plan Participants**

- A. Planning should involve a core group that includes a representative from the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), local government, and the local fire authority. These representatives must agree that the CWPP is viable, complete, and realistic in terms of implementation. The CWPP must meet the minimum requirements of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, as well as CSFS minimum standards.
- B. In addition to the above representatives, the core group should include community members and relevant local, state, and federal land management agencies and organizations, or their chosen representatives.
- C. The plan must exhibit diverse collaboration with emphasis on involvement of community members/representatives.
- D. Early in the planning process, it is imperative to engage community members, community representatives, and other interested, non-governmental stakeholders, and keep them engaged throughout the entire process. Interested non-governmental stakeholders must be regularly and actively involved in identifying community values to be protected, defining their wildland-urban interface area, identifying fuels treatment project areas and methods, and priorities for action.
- E. Community involvement and participation can be documented through meeting minutes, meeting rosters, or community surveys that clearly document meeting results and the number of participants.

### **II. Plan Components**

- A. Community Wildfire Protection Plans must include:
  - 1. A definition of the community's wildland-urban interface (WUI) outlined on a map with an accompanying narrative.
  - 2. Identification of adjacent landowners (land that touches the community's external boundary).
  - 3. A community risk analysis that considers, at a minimum, fuel hazards, risk of wildfire occurrence, and community values (i.e. watershed, wildlife habitat, and infrastructure) to be protected – both in the immediate vicinity and the surrounding zone where potential fire spread poses a realistic threat. Consider recent large fire behavior and fire spread in this discussion.

4. A discussion of the community's *preparedness* to respond to wildland fire.
  5. Recommendation of methods to reduce structural ignitability.
  6. An implementation plan that includes:
    - Identification of fuels treatment projects. For each project, identify or describe:
      - The type of treatment recommended (examples include fuelbreaks, thinning, pruning, prescribed burning, etc.)
      - Suggested or preferred method of treatment (examples include using hand crews to thin and pile slash; mastication; machine-piling slash; roller-chopping slash; commercial timber harvest; etc.)
    - A project area map that illustrates all proposed treatments and exhibits close approximations of the boundaries of each project.
    - A narrative or table that details the relative priority of each project. Fuels treatment priorities should include both landscape-scale and localized (within the community) treatments.
- B. Consider using the following publications as reference materials when developing a CWPP. These publications can be found at: <http://csfs.colostate.edu/pages/community-wf-protection-planning.html>
- Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan – Handbook
  - Leaders Guide for Developing a CWPP
  - Community Wildfire Protection Plan Evaluation Guide
  - Community Guide to Preparing & Implementing a CWPP

### III. Level of Specificity

- A. A CWPP may be developed for any level of community (examples include a homeowners' association, mountain town, county, or fire protection district). Large-scale plans (for example, county or fire protection district) can be used as an umbrella to assist individual communities in the development of a CWPP. An appendix listing all communities within the planning area must be included in large-scale plans.
- B. In order to qualify as an approved CWPP, these large- or broad-scale plans must identify landscape-scale fuels treatment projects (examples include fuelbreaks and cross-boundary treatment opportunities) for all communities within the project area. Include a map(s) that details project locations and approximates project boundaries. Also include a narrative or table that details the type of project and preferred or suggested implementation methods. These projects must reflect collaborative input from a variety of stakeholders.
- C. Communities represented in a large-scale plan that wish to receive credit for having an approved CWPP must:
  - Identify and prioritize fuels treatments within the community
  - Develop an implementation plan specific to that community
 Treatments must be supported by stakeholders, including representatives from the community (examples include a homeowners' association board, Firewise Committee, city council). A community-specific CWPP may be completed during the development of the large-scale plan or at a later date. If a community chooses not to complete a community-level plan during the

development of the large-scale plan, a note must be made in the implementation or action plan indicating that follow-up is needed.

- D. Information contained in the plan should be at a level of specificity appropriate for the size of the community that is being addressed.
- E. The resulting document should be implementable, which means adequate detail about project-level design, layout, and marking is provided to allow work to begin, and the plan is supported by those who will put it into action.

#### **IV. Adapting Existing Plans and Combining Related Plans**

- A. If a community has an existing plan that already meets the majority of the CWPP criteria listed above, the community must re-engage to adapt the plan so that it meets the remainder of the criteria. Plan adaptations must be collaborative, as described in (1) above and include stakeholder representation. This is particularly important if the adaptation involves establishing fuels treatment priorities.
- B. A county or large-scale CWPP that was completed and approved by August 5, 2009, is considered to be in compliance with CSFS minimum standards and Senate Bill 09-001 until the plan is revised.
- C. While county-level plans may be used as umbrella plans for smaller communities, each community should develop an effectively scaled Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

#### **V. Approved CWPP**

- A. The Colorado State Forest Service will only accept CWPPs that contain the signatures of all core group members, including local fire department(s), local government(s), and the CSFS District Forester or his/her representative. Please note that CSFS personnel are *not* permitted to sign plans that do not clearly meet CWPP minimum standards.
- B. After an approved CWPP has been submitted to the CSFS State Office, it will be posted on the CSFS website unless otherwise instructed.