

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS



GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW

Community Wildfire Protection Plans are authorized and defined in Title I of the *Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA)* passed by Congress on November 21, 2003 and signed into law by President Bush on December 3, 2003.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act places renewed emphasis on community planning by extending a variety of benefits to communities with a wildfire protection plan in place. Critical among these benefits is the option of establishing a localized definition and boundary for the wildland-urban interface (WUI) and the oppor-

tunity to help shape fuels treatment priorities for surrounding federal and non-federal lands.

The CWPP, as described in the Act, brings together diverse local interests to discuss their mutual concerns for public safety, community sustainability and natural resources. It offers a positive, solution-oriented environment in which to address challenges such as: local firefighting capability, the need for defensible space around homes and subdivisions, and where and how to prioritize land management – on both federal and non-federal land.



WHO

- ▶ Community wildfire protection planning should be led by local interests with support from state and federal agencies and non-governmental stakeholders.

- ▶ The HFRA requires that, at a minimum, the local government, local fire authority, and a state forestry representative agree on the plan. The HFRA also requires that the plan be developed through meaningful collaboration with a wide variety of local organizations and interest groups.



- ▶ Federal land managers should contribute specialized natural resource knowledge and technical expertise to the planning process, particularly in the areas of GIS and mapping, vegetation management, assessment of values and risks and funding strategies.

WHAT

- ▶ A Community Wildfire Protection Plan is a written and agreed upon document that identifies how a community will reduce its risk from wildland fire.

- ▶ The plan should address wildfire response capability and protection of homes and other structures, as well as identify and prioritize areas of federal and non-federal land where fuels reduction is needed to reduce threats to the community or its critical infrastructure.

Other values at risk should be identified, such as watersheds, open space, wildlife habitat, etc.)



- ▶ The plan should also include specific steps for implementing the community's recommendations.

WHEN

- ▶ NOW is a good time to start working on a Community Wildfire Protection Plan if your community is in an area at risk for large-scale or high-intensity wildfire. The process will generally take from six months to a year depending on the complexity of a community's situation, the partners involved and/or the resources available to put the plan together.

WHERE

- ▶ A Community Wildfire Protection Plan should emphasize the wildland-urban interface where people, structures and other community values are most likely to be negatively impacted by wildfire.



- ▶ This does not mean communities are limited to considering populated areas. The HFRA suggests that communities develop an interface definition and boundary that suits their unique environment.

- ▶ Depending on the nature of the community, priorities for fuel treatment may include critical watersheds, public water and power facilities, key habitat areas, important recreation sites or other elements of community infrastructure.

WHY

- ▶ A CWPP allows a community to take the lead in and set priorities for its own protection.
- ▶ A CWPP also brings together diverse local interests to develop strategies for improving public safety, community protection and natural resource management.
- ▶ The HFRA gives communities with a CWPP the opportunity to have greater influence over the location and type of land management treatments that occur on federal lands surrounding their community.



- ▶ The HFRA also gives communities the opportunity to define their own wildland-urban interface. Federal agencies are currently directed to spend at least 50 percent of their fuel hazard reduction dollars on projects in the interface.

HOW

- ▶ Several national organizations worked together to develop a publication titled *Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities*. This publication outlines an eight step process for developing an effective Community Wildfire Protection Plan as described in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

▶ **Step One:** Establish a core group of local leaders with interest in and commitment to the development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.



▶ **Step Two:** Engage federal and state land managers and enlist their technical assistance, support and participation.



▶ **Step Three:** Contact and seek active involvement from diverse stakeholders that may have an interest in identifying where and how community protection activities occur.



▶ **Step Four:** Create a working map of the community, including populated areas, land ownerships, and vegetative conditions.

▶ **Step Five:** Conduct a community risk assessment that looks at local wildfire response capability, fuel hazards, risks of wildfire occurrence, and homes, businesses and other community values at risk.



► **Step Six:** Identify fuels treatment priorities and methods on federal and non-federal land and describe ways that homeowners can reduce their own risks through Firewise building and landscaping.



► **Step Seven:** Develop an implementation plan and strategy for assessing the overall plan's effectiveness.

► **Step Eight:** Finalize and share the plan with the larger community.

For More Information

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