

Acknowledgements

Cohesive Wildfire Strategy and Secure Rural Schools Act Title II funding supported the revision of the Wallowa County CWPP.

A special thank you to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan Steering Committee who dedicated their time and effort to this project while continuing to carry out the duties of their everyday jobs.

Recognition also goes to the many citizens of Wallowa County and to local, state, and federal government organizations that assisted in this planning effort by providing historical and technical information for the project.

Signature Page

The Wallowa County Wildfire Protection Plan provides a framework for assessing the current wildland urban interface wildfire risks, multiagency firefighting resource response shortfalls, and community preparedness levels using both best available data and local knowledge. The plan identifies methods of reducing human ignitions, large fire potential and mitigating wildfire risks through implementation of the three Cohesive Wildfire Strategy elements of creating fire adapted communities, restoring resilient landscapes and improving wild fire response.

The Wallowa County Board of Commissioners approved this plan and its contents with agreement from local wildland firefighting agencies, Rural Fire Districts, and the City's structural fire protection services. The plan contents should be revisited annually and projects may be revised and updated as necessary. All recipients are requested to advise Wallowa County Emergency Services of any changes that might result in its improvement or increase its usefulness.

Susan Roberts, Wallowa County Commissioner

Todd Nash, Wallowa County Commissioner

Paul Castilleja, Wallowa County Commissioner

Paul Karvoski, Wallowa County Fire Defense Board Chief & Emergency Manager

Joe Hessel, District Forester, Northeast Oregon District, Oregon Dept. of Forestry

I. Introduction

Plan Overview and Development

The Wallowa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was updated to be consistent with changing federal, state, and local level policies, and to meet the needs of changing county demographics, such as population, economics, expanding wildland-urban interface, recreational interests, stakeholder concerns, and fire protection concerns.

Data from numerous sources was used to prepare the plan. The Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Wallowa County is the result of detailed analyses, professional contribution, collaboration and wildfire risk assessments. Contributed information was analyzed with the intent to reduce the potential for wildfires that threaten people, structures, infrastructure, and values in Wallowa County. Because of the different sources and data reference periods, the transition between data sets is not always fluid and there are occasional gaps in data collection. Where relevant, these gaps are identified and all sources are cited.

The county's goal is to provide the best protection for those living in and near wildland-urban interfaces where private and public lands intersect. This CWPP also expands risk assessment to include middle ground landscapes beyond the homes to restore forest resiliency on both sides of the public/private divide. It is also the intent of this plan to identify the roles and responsibilities of all those that represent Wallowa County including, but not limited to, county, state, and federal agencies, cooperators, and private land owners. It is the county's desire to advance in wildfire risk mitigation while focusing on three key overall goals of fire-adapted communities, resilient landscapes, and appropriate wildfire response.

The CWPP emphasizes ongoing development of robust relationships between all agencies, local landowners and communities to prepare and protect lands from devastating wildfires. It recognizes shared responsibility toward fire prevention as well as preparing communities and preserving local values in the event of wildfire.

In February of 2016 the CWPP steering committee began meeting to initiate the revision of Wallowa County's CWPP. Subsequent meetings (*see Chapter V, Community Participation*) were held to establish a county wildfire mission (this included developing goals, objectives, and evaluation process for the county's wildfire risks), identify and prioritize communities at risk; organize community workshops; provide guidance on plan content and organization; and prioritize risk reduction projects.

Plan Compliance

The Wallowa County Commissioners, with cooperation and input from the Community Wildfire Protection Plan Steering Committee, endorse this plan. These representatives mutually agree to the final contents of the plan. The plan is not regulatory and does not create or place mandates or requirements on individual jurisdictions. This plan does not bypass the individual rules and procedures that govern the participating agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Wildfire on the landscape is common, particularly in fire-prone ecosystems. With steady increases in home dwellings in forested areas, fires in the wildland-urban interface are also becoming commonplace with unfavorable results. Understanding what, where, and why to apply fire protection measures allows fire managers the flexibility to assist homeowners in an all-inclusive approach of shared responsibilities. Although some actions are voluntary, agencies must comply with existing management direction.

Since the 2006 CWPP was written, several concerns have arisen to cause fire management at all levels to reconsider fire in and near wildland-urban areas. As a result, new approaches are being used to preserve landscape aesthetics, sustain site productivity, increase forest health, and expand defensible space. High growth in homes near forest areas has further raised the financial stakes in the event of a wildland fire. Recognizing the need to get all landowners involved in conducting management activities on their property, the CWPP promotes collectively reducing risks and helping keep fire budgets and fees low (PNW 2010).

This plan attempts to comply with local, state, and federal direction in meeting the needs of a CWPP and incorporating current information when assessing communities and landscapes at risk. The role of the plan is to serve as a working document to coordinate fire and land managers and their efforts in Wallowa County. It is the intent of this document to guide both private landowners and agency managers in meeting the CWPP goals and objectives while incorporating reference to several guiding documents. This community wildfire protection plan has been prepared in compliance using local, state and federal direction as directorial information.

National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (CWS), April 2014. The CWS provides guidelines that can be tailored to meet local and regional needs. Priorities in the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy include safe and effective fire response to wildfires, vegetation and fuels management, engaging homeowners and communities to be proactive prior to a wildfire, and emphasis on programs and activities designed to meet local needs in an effort to prevent human caused ignitions. The three goals of the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy include: restore and maintain landscapes, develop fire-adapted communities, and improve wildfire

response preparedness. It also emphasizes communication and collaboration to keep people informed and involve all partners to maintain dialog in the community.

The 2009, Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

This policy directs federal fire directors to work collaboratively with state, local, tribal fire managers, members of the public, and nongovernment organizations to foster better understanding and support for the complexity of wildland fire management. It also directs the federal fire directors to revise or develop accountability standards, performance measures, and tracking systems to assess if resource and protection objectives are met during the course of management on all wildland fires.

Oregon Senate Bill 360 (The Act of 1997)

This act enlists the aid of all property owners to achieve the goal of converting fire-susceptible urban and suburban properties into less volatile zones where firefighters may more safely and effectively defend homes from wildfires. The law requires property owners in identified forestland-urban interface areas to reduce excess vegetation, which may fuel a fire, around structures and along driveways. In some cases, it is also necessary to create fuel breaks along property lines and roadsides. (For more information, <http://www.oregon.gov/odf/pages/fire/sb360/sb360.aspx>)

Healthy Forests Restoration Act, 2003. This act requires at that the following three entities must mutually agree to the final content of the CWPP: local government (counties or cities); local fire department(s) or representation of a county's structural agencies; and state entity responsible for forest management (Oregon Department of Forestry). The act is designed to achieve several goals, including:

- 1) Reducing wildfire risk to communities, municipal water supplies, and other at-risk Federal land through a collaborative process of planning, prioritizing, and implementing hazardous fuel reduction projects.
- 2) Authorizing grant programs to improve the commercial value of forest biomass (which would otherwise contribute to the risk of catastrophic fire or insect or disease infestation) for producing electric energy, useful heat, transportation fuel, and petroleum-based product substitutes, and for other commercial purposes.
- 3) Enhancing efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape.
- 4) Enhancing forest ecosystem components.

The incentive for communities to engage in comprehensive forest planning and prioritization was given new momentum with the enactment of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) in 2003. The language in HFRA provides maximum flexibility for communities to determine the substance and detail of

their plans and the procedures they use to develop them. HFRA emphasizes the need for federal agencies to work collaboratively with communities in developing hazardous fuels reduction projects and developing measures to reduce structure ignitability. The act also places priority on treatment areas identified by communities themselves in a community fire plan.

The NE Oregon Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2014.

The natural hazards mitigation plan is intended to assist Northeast Oregon reduce the impacts from natural hazards by identifying resources, information, and strategies for risk reduction. It recognizes the increase in residential development in the interface areas and the need to provide mitigation actions to reduce the impact of wildfire through the county's CWPP.

Federal Register, 2001.

This provides an update to the initial list of urban-wildland interface communities in the vicinity of federal lands that are at high risk from wildfire, published in the Federal Register on January 4, 2001. It is important to note that the urban-wildland interface is not limited to communities in the vicinity of Federal land. Many states have submitted revised community lists that include all interface communities in their State, regardless of their relationship to Federal land.

Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Overview, United States Department of Agriculture.

To meet the daunting challenges ahead, the FY 2017 President's Budget for the Forest Service focuses its efforts in three key areas: restoring and sustaining our Nation's forests and grasslands by creating resilient landscapes (including mitigation of wildfire risks), bringing benefits to the public through Forest Service management activities and infrastructure investments and through public use of our national forests and grasslands in order to build thriving communities, and apply knowledge globally. The FY2017 Budget supports the 2009 Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act along with the three goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. This CWPP is included in the Northern Blue Mountain Cohesive Strategy Pilot Project.

Oregon Administrative Rules Chapter 477, *Fire Protection of Forests and Vegetation*. ORS 477.025 recognizes that the forestland-urban interface in Oregon varies by condition, situation, fire hazard and risk. Different forestland-urban interface fire protection problems exist across the state because of this variability, and these different problems necessitate varied fire prevention and protection practices. In order to give recognition to such differences and their effect on the accomplishment of the public policy stated in ORS 477.023 (Fire protection system), certain classifications of the forestland-urban interface within the State of Oregon are established by ORS 477.027 (Rules for classification of lands), and the Oregon Department of Forestry, Division 44, Criteria for Determination of Wildfire Hazard Zones.

Plan Endorsement and Development

The CWPP revision is being led by Wallowa County, with the assistance of several local, state, and federal fire management agencies coming together as the CWPP steering committee. The steering committee full-time members include representatives from the Oregon Department of Forestry, Local Rural Fire Departments, Wallowa County Emergency Services, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, private landowners as well as a member of the local Blue Mountain Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Team. The Wildfire Protection Plan Steering Committee endorses this plan.

The Wallowa County Commissioners, with cooperation and input from the Community, Cooperators, and Fire Management Agencies, agree to produce a document that will provide future guidance in fire prevention, protection, and risk reduction. These representatives mutually agree to the final contents of the plan. The plan is not regulatory and does not create or place mandates or requirements on individual jurisdictions. This plan does not bypass the individual rules and procedures that govern the participating agencies, organizations and individuals. This plan acknowledges existing rules and regulations and makes recommendations to improve public and fire fighter safety, emergency fire response, and landscape and ecosystem resiliency in a fire prone environment.

Through increased knowledge of wildfire prevention and mitigation in a fire-prone region, the methods outlined in the CWPP will seek to create fire-resilient landscapes – healthy stands of timber and underbrush – which provide the beauty and solitude people seek when living and recreating in the forest. This plan recognizes the economic importance of fire protection of rangeland, forests and communities as well as the economic importance of jobs, products, and new opportunities through fire risk mitigation measures.

Summary

The project steering committee began meeting in February 2016 to revise the 2006 Wallowa County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The CWPP revision is designed to accomplish a number of tasks including:

- incorporate and meet new policies
- update changes to local Wildland Urban Interface boundaries and at risk communities
- review the need to update the CWPP mission
- reinforce goals and objectives to be consistent with the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy
- develop a fire risk assessment utilizing best available data
- identify and prioritize geographic areas and communities

- strengthen all agencies and community collaboration encouraging involvement through organized community workshops
- maintain oversight and guidance on plan content and organization
- prioritize risk reduction projects and incorporate new wildfire mitigation tool options
- establish priority areas for the WUI Zone, Communities at Risk and the County as a whole.
- In the county, collectively work together to identify mitigation action items designed to reduce wildfire risks.

Plan design is focused on better serving the communities in improved wildfire assessment and protection, incorporating new community members in the process, evaluating economic opportunities, and increasing local competitiveness for fire mitigation and protection funding sources.

Data used in this Plan is denoted and referenced in the bibliography.

The planning committee, made up of collaborating partners, is responsible for implementing this project and includes:

Paul Karvoski	Wallowa County Emergency Services	Co-chair
Matt Howard	Oregon Department of Forestry	Co-chair
Jenny Reinhardt	Wallowa Resources	member
Nathan Goodrich	Wallowa Fire Zone FMO (FS)	member
Jason Lyman	Wallowa Fire Zone AFMO (FS)	member
Joby Sciarrino	Umatilla National Forest	member
Mark Jacques	Oregon Department of Forestry	member
Heather Melville	Landowner Constituent	member
Scott English	BLM	member
Nils Christoffersen	Wallowa Resources	member

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