

II. Mission, Goals and Objectives

Mission Statement

Wallowa County, the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Wallowa County Fire and Emergency Services, the USDA Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, and community members are dedicated to implementing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) utilizing the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy (CWS) as a strategic and operational foundation.

The county's first priority is the protection and safety of community members and firefighters during all phases of wildfire response. Through the creation of the CWPP the county has crafted a plan to successfully meet the challenges of wildland-urban interface protection. This CWPP identifies fire risk mitigation strategies to accomplish a multitude of issues facing the county including:

- Improving safety through advancing wildfire response capabilities.
- Providing community education, outreach, and partnerships that progress toward living in a fire dependent environment.
- Creating opportunities to advance landscape resiliency through vegetation and fuels manipulation.

The Wallowa County CWPP stresses the need to promote a fire resilient landscape, fire-adapted communities, and improve wildfire response while putting safety in the forefront.

Wallowa County and partnering agencies have a mission;

“To assist in the coordination of wildland fire, structural agency resources and communities through education and implementation to promote fire risk mitigation, fire threat reduction, and fire prevention methods, while endorsing healthy resilient landscapes for the future.”

National Strategy

Recent decades show an upsurge of citizens moving into wildland urban areas accompanied by an increase in large wildfires exhibiting extreme fire behavior. This trend has gained the attention of landowners, interest groups, and representatives from Federal, State, and Local agencies. These fires pose safety risks to fire suppression and emergency resources as well as the local populace. Rising expenses, including an increase in annual fire suppression costs and monetary and environmental loss to communities in terms of property and landscapes have triggered a Congressional mandate for action (CWS 2014).

In 2009 the "Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act of

2009" (FLAME Act of 2009) was created. The FLAME Act of 2009 directed the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to work together to develop a report for Congress that would provide a cohesive wildfire management strategy. In April of 2014, "The National Strategy," The Final Phase in the Development of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (CWS), was completed. The CWS identifies four priority guidelines and three strategic goals under a national vision for wildland fire management. In designing Wallowa County's CWPP emphasis was given to the national priorities and goals within the CWS.

The four guidelines in the CWS establish priorities for agencies working through the challenges of establishing procedures and planning activities. The primary emphasis is on safe and effective response to wildfire. The plan and resulting actions must acknowledge the importance of being prepared for wildfire response in both structural protection and wildfire prevention. These guidelines will be tailored to meet the local needs of Wallowa County.

- 1) Safe response to an incident must maximize advanced preparedness for full effectiveness of initial response (CWS 2014).
- 2) Fuels and vegetation management, the most challenging priority, includes the analysis, design, and prioritization of treatments. Guidance should include strategic placement of fuels treatment, increasing the use of all approaches to further advance toward resilient forests and rangelands, and leveraging the use of wildland fire to meet resource objectives (CWS 2014).
- 3) Designing programs focused on preparedness through working with homeowners and communities in proactive approaches prior to wildfires (CWS 2014). Homeowner and community involvement is essential for successful landscape preparation in advance of potential wildfires.
- 4) Identification of geographical areas that take into consideration broad-scale fuels management; programs related to homes, communities, and values at risk; activities designed to meet the needs of the local population and strengthen efforts to prevent human-caused ignitions (CWS 2014).

Using these four guidelines while keeping safe and effective wildfire response in mind, the CWS outlines three primary goals to consider when developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

- Restore and maintain landscapes
- Fire-adapted communities
- Wildfire response (CWS 2014)

Wallowa County acknowledges the importance of these goals by incorporating them into the goals of this CWPP.

Wildfire suppression will continue to be a priority mission. There is a need for preparation in advance of wildfires through agencies' and landowners' proactive actions toward structure composition and landscape scheme, adjacent vegetation treatments, and infrastructure design. With safety and proactive measure in mind the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy's vision is to:

"Safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a Nation, live with wildland fire."

It is important to recognize that in high fire prone areas fires will start, fires will burn, and some fires will become large in nature. However, being prepared for these fires will improve how fire managers, landowners, and ecosystems respond to the wildfire event.

Goals and Objectives

Wildland fires do not distinguish between property lines of ownership or land management agencies, they burn where and when conditions are favorable. National guidance allows local areas to take a prudent but broad approach when addressing the three priority goals, with the highest priority being safe and effective response to wildfires (CWS 2014). With this in mind, a larger-scale approach to reduce fire threat and increase protection opportunities was considered appropriate. Recognizing immediate threats to communities as the most important issue to address, landscapes with significant deviation from pre-fire suppression conditions create additional challenges to protection by contributing to increased fire intensities and unprecedented fire behavior. (See Fire Regime Condition Class, Figure VII – 2 and Appendix B)

In order to meet a broad-scale approach, an expansion of the analysis area is needed to provide a "middle ground" treatment (CWS 2014). This provides new opportunities for the implementation of strategically placed fuels treatments to interrupt fire spread prior to reaching a community. For this reason individual Wildland Urban Interface WUI areas have been dissolved into an all-encompassing WUI Zone to better address landscape fire risks. The wildland-urban interface zone (WUIZ) is,

"An area strategically identified that provide effective wildfire defense for communities, infrastructure, and other values at risk that meet or intermingle with wildland fuels and offer opportunities for broadened mitigation measures. These measures are designed to interrupt wildfire spread and modify wildfire behavior in order to protect social, economic, and environmental interests".

The goals and objectives of this plan are designed with the CWS in mind. Objectives were initially framed by the plan committee with gradual refinement using input obtained during community workshops.

Using these goals as the foundation, the Wallowa County CWPP planning committee designed county-specific goals pertinent to the local area that incorporate the best available science as well as local knowledge and experience.

Consistent with the highest priority of the CWS, Wallowa County also considers life and property the utmost priority.

Through local geographic assessments using a multitude of venues and meetings county wide issues and mitigation measures were identified. These mitigation measures were then placed under the most applicable of the three goals.

Mitigation is the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters (NWCG 2014). Wallowa County CWPP identifies:

“Mitigation is an effort that reduces loss of life, property, infrastructure, and natural resources through a variety of tools and actions.”

Using the three goals of the CWS, the CWPP committee has listed below in order of priority, opportunities to move the landscape and communities closer to desired conditions. The CWPP recognizes that restoring historical conditions is neither practical nor desirable in some locations. Land management objectives and community values will help determine the degree to which wildfires and fuels management can be tolerated.

Fire-adapted communities, wildfire response, and landscape restoration and maintenance are not stand-alone goals. *In order for one goal to be achieved, results are necessary in the other two.* Through landscape restoration and maintenance, wildfire behavior will be altered, allowing for a higher probability of success in wildfire response. In order to achieve landscape restoration it is imperative that communities, landowners, and fire managers share ownership in planning and treatment implementation across boundaries.

Wildfire Response

Goal: All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient response to wildland fire.

Existing Efforts

Large wildfires in the western states continue to pose significant challenges to fire management agencies authorized with protecting lives, property, and natural resources. Increasing growth in the number of housing units appearing in forested areas is complicating the efforts put forth by fire management resources.

Wildfire response takes into consideration fires of all causes, scale, and size. From a national perspective, large fires often pose the primary challenges regarding suppression response, causing issues to be centered on surrounding large, long-duration wildfires (CWS 2014). Locally, the likelihood of fire starts and origin of ignition source play an important role in committing and prioritizing fire management resource responses.

Human-caused fires have the same potential of becoming large scale based on environmental conditions, but because they are typically a single source event there is a higher possibility of fire suppression efforts being successful.

Multiple fire starts occur when dry summer thunderstorms travel across NE Oregon counties leaving numerous fire starts in their wake, causing fire managers to prioritize both fire suppression resources and fire starts. These storms require regional, state, and local fire authorities to evaluate priorities for “initial attack” with focus on fires that pose the greatest threat to life, resources, and property.

One of the worst situations occurred in 1989 when Wallowa County experienced a thunderstorm that left approximately 98 ignitions on the landscape between July 26th and July 31st. This was followed by another thunderstorm in August that added an additional 33 ignitions between the 10th and 13th. Unfortunately, weather also knows no boundaries; prior to reaching Wallowa County the July storm had ignited approximately 93 fires on the Baker and La Grande Fire Zones according to local data. These multiple ignitions events continue to occur creating a drawdown in fire suppression resources and a need for prioritizing. Preparedness in resource capabilities, communities, and landscapes will better help fire managers during the decision making process. It will also assist suppression resources when responding to and suppressing ignitions.

The 2006 Wallowa County CWPP identified its third goals as: Reducing wildfire risk to local communities, watersheds and other at-risk lands through a broad-based collaborative process that continues to improve pre-suppression planning in the event of a wildfire (WC CWPP 2006). Since 2006, there have been

ongoing efforts to address several wildfire response issues, of which include: 1) Increase Wallowa County wildfire response capacity by acquiring and updating newer equipment needs. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Forest Service, local rural fire departments have obtained several pieces of equipment. 2) The county's co-op prevention program has higher multi-protection agencies participating in the school and community programs, but loss of funding may jeopardize the program. 3) Efforts are being made to build upon rural fire department training needs, wildland fire qualifications, and to increase opportunities for a coordinated approach.

Opportunities for Improvement

There is increasing need for investment in firefighting capacity at the local level. Capacity from all entities with fire response responsibilities must be commensurate with the workload need and risks posed by wildfire, which in many areas is increasing.

This is compounded by the finite amount of fire protection resources. Vast expanses of the West have less than one fire station per 100 square miles. This leads to extended response times in rural areas—areas often characterized by Federal ownership, steep slopes, beetle-killed trees, and poor road access (CWS 2014).

Wildfire movement is without borders moving across boundaries regardless of landownership. For this reason there is increasing need for an all hands-all lands approach to fire suppression with supporting MOU's in order to facilitate the most effective response. State and rural fire departments are often the first defense against a fire starting in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) while State and Federal fire personnel are most often first to respond to areas beyond the communities into the middle ground locations. It is important that local responders be efficient and swift in containing wildfires to reduce potential impacts to the public.

Improving upon a combined effort approach to fire response provides many long term benefits:

- It improves training through programs designed to meet rural fire department needs. It provides options to use locally based trainers and creates a cooperative interagency support venue between structure and wildland fire training standards.
- Investment in the fully trained firefighting workforce provides well-qualified firefighters on the ground during mitigation projects.
- Maximizes funding resources when addressing specific needs of rural fire departments. This leads to results in interagency compatibility of technology, communication networks, common terminology, and response protocols.
- Improvements for interagency protection and suppression response

capabilities. Through increased interagency coordination and advances in fire preparedness long term improvements of all wildland firefighting efforts will occur that continue to increase the overall initial attack success.

Fire agency's capabilities must be appropriate to meet the fire ignition volume and risks posed by wildfire, which in many areas is on the rise. Using the Cohesive Strategy wildfire response goal, Wallowa County has highlighted several areas of improvements that would move the area toward an improved wildfire response workforce.

Objectives:

It is important to increase the protection of life, property, and natural resources through improved emergency **wildfire response**. In order for safe wildfire response we must reduce risk to firefighters and the public through fire management activities (CWS 2014). Unless otherwise stated an annual review of the proposed objectives is needed to insure they are in alignment with the goal of fire response. Appendix L provides forms to assess the validity of the objectives during the annual CWPP committee meeting. Wallowa County's new wildfire response objectives are consistent with the following 2006 CWPP objectives: 2, 4, 5, and 6. Objectives identified under the current goal of Wildfire Response include:

- a. Identify local equipment and training needs on an annual basis with emphasis in promoting rural capabilities.
- b. Promote cooperation and relationships among agencies, organizations, jurisdictions, and communities through a multiple of venues including public meetings, simulations, agreements, boots on the ground, pilot projects, and field trips.
- c. Improve interagency and community communications during all phases of wildfire including: before, during, and after emergency situations.
- d. Improve pre-suppression planning strategies among all agencies with protection responsibilities.
- e. Prevent human caused ignitions through education by increasing fire prevention awareness (CWS 2014).
- f. Design strategies where human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property (CWS 2014).
- g. Improve awareness of the WUI homeowners' responsibilities in being prepared for wildfire.
- h. Improve response capabilities for both structural and wildland fire agencies to meet local community protection needs.

Fire Adapted Communities

Goal: Strive toward an environment where: *Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.*

Existing Efforts

Technological advancements and declining household size coupled with the desire for privacy have motivated homeowners to relocate from metropolitan areas to more rural settings. Wildland-urban interface areas have seen dramatic population increases, escalating the wildfire problems due to new residents, many of which may have little or no experience with wildfire on the landscape.

During the time span from 1940 to 2000 the number of housing units for WUI areas more than tripled (R.B. Hammer et al. 2009). Over the past 50 years there have been 220 million acres identified as WUI in the United States, with populations exceeding 120 million people residing in 50 million housing units. This has created a growth rate of 300% in the WUI, more than the general population growth rate for the same time period (IAWF 2013).

Residents knowledge and understanding of wildfire risk is essential to public involvement in mitigating wildfire and responses during a wildfire event. This public knowledge is often a result of education or personal experience with and about wildfires. Educating communities on all aspects of wildfire including how to prepare for, what environmental conditions influence the occurrence and behavior of a wildfire, and how they can assist when an evacuation occurs will provide them with the ability to understand and cope with most wildfire incidents. Taking into account in all stages of a wildfire (preparation in advance, during a fire, after a wildfire has occurred) provides community members with the ability to cope particularly during and after a wildfire.

Motivations for community action are often driven by an understanding of firefighting resource capabilities, the various attributes of risk that contribute to wildfire behavior, or their personal experience with wildfire such as having been evacuated or knowing someone that has, loss or damage to properties, even the feeling that the threat is imminent can change ones perception.

Several of Wallowa County 2006 CWPP goals will continue to be promoted through the new fire-adapted community goal. These original goals have promoted a number of opportunities for county residents to increase wildfire awareness and preparedness. The 2006 CWPP Wallowa County introduced programs such as FIREWISE, Living with Fire, and Fire Prevention School Programs, I'm Concerned, Cost-Share Grant Programs, and other workshops to the communities in an effort to increase public awareness and responsibility.

Although few in numbers some residents in the county have initiated actions to increase chances for successful fire response in and around their homes.

Defensible space and home protection measures have occurred to varying extents in many of the wildland urban interface communities in Wallowa County. These measures include treatments such as surface fuels reduction, stand density reduction, defensible space clearing and increasing the distance of the crown base height above the surface vegetation. A map of treatment accomplishments near communities is provided in Chapter X.

Wallowa County's fire prone ecosystem underscores the need for creative approaches for communities to work with fire managers and share responsibility for protection of life and property. Understanding that community is not limited to homeowners but is all inclusive toward people, businesses, infrastructure, agencies and government officials, and interest groups is the first step toward fire adapted communities. With firefighter and public lives as the highest priority it is important for community members to take action in wildfire preparedness well in advance of a fire incident. Fire managers in Wallowa County are reliant on local residents to assist in meeting the fire adapted community goal.

Preparation through actions cannot occur until education of wildfire risk and wildfire preparation precedes it. Fundamentals in education defining fire adapted communities is key to the success of getting the public involved in wildfire defense efforts, reducing post fire effects both in and out of the WUI Zone and Communities at Risk (CAR) areas, as well as possible situations communities could experience.

Education and understanding of the potential for emotional impacts for both responders and residents can prepare involved parties with skills to communicate, act, and cope in high stress situations such as wildland fires.

Opportunities for Improvement

It is the desire of the county to use this CWS goal as the foundation for further promoting wildfire education, preparation, and prevention. Using collaboration as a tool for education and knowledge sharing can catalyze follow-through toward implementation in which property owners share responsibility in saving lives and mitigating fire effects. Through fire-adapted communities, fire emergency resources can partner with community members and cooperators in ensuring long-term sustainability of their investments and efforts.

Collaborative partnerships between emergency resources, members of the public, and cooperators to ensure long-term protection of life and property and sustainability of investments is key in creating fire-adapted communities.

Understanding that becoming a fire adapted community is a process that includes building characteristics such as the ones listed below will increase public acceptance of their role as a partner. A fire-adapted community should have the following characteristics (FAC 2014):

- It is in or near a fire-adapted ecosystem, often associated with high fire occurrences.
- It has adequate local fire suppression capacity to meet most community protection needs.
- Its structures and landscaping are designed, constructed, retrofitted and maintained in a manner that is ignition resistant.
- It has local codes [building, planning, zoning, and fire prevention codes] that require ignition-resistant home design and building materials.
- Fuels on land near and inside the community are treated and maintained for safety and easy suppression
- It has and uses a community wildfire protection plan and continues to implement the plan into the future
- It has built other safety features such as buffers between fuels and the community; safe designated evacuation routes; and safe zones in the community when evacuation is not advisable (FAC 2014).

Additionally, Wallowa County believes a fire-adapted community should also include:

- A program and prevention coordinator who's primary position would be designed to work with both agencies and communities in areas such as education, fire prevention, emergencies, and tracking CWPP accomplishments.
- Mutual understanding between communities and fire manager on concepts relating to risks, potential results of mitigation efforts, and potential outcomes post wildfire.
- Provide a clear distinction between protection priorities and opportunities prior, during and post wildfire.
- Operate under common terminology and understanding of living in fire dependent environments and know how proactive actions can set a course of living with fire.
- Understand missions and limitations of firefighting resources, making wildfire mitigation a tool for suppression resources.

Although the term “fire-adapted communities” was established in 2014, Wallowa County efforts since its 2006 CWPP have worked towards meeting fire-adapted communities through a combined effort of community members and agencies across landownership. New strategies in meeting this goal are part of our CWPP revision in hopes of accelerating the pace and scale of accomplishments.

Objectives

It is Wallowa County's goal to develop **fire-adapted communities** in both the Communities at Risk and the WUI Zone areas by coordinating risk reduction strategies and treating of hazardous fuels using a collaborative landscape approach. The intent of this plan is to improve the ability of ecosystems and communities to respond to natural events that have the potential for producing

increased risk of a wildfire and design strategies where human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property (CWS 2014):

- a. Identify and share data and use a common set of base information for risk assessment, concepts of “defensible space” and fire-adapted communities.
- b. Work with communities to educate and provide knowledge of wildfire conditions by sharing the analysis results of risk assessment and use common terminology at all levels.
- c. Create and maintain partnerships among agencies and citizens through education forums, information sharing, and an all hands-all lands treatment approach.
- d. Provide opportunities for science, community, and local knowledge input on analysis results, as one means of information verification.
- e. Utilize fire threat, effects, and risks to help prioritize geographical areas in the WUI Zone of the CWPP as well as determine recommended management actions within the Communities at Risk.
- f. Identify economic opportunities to supply forest product needs, ranging from biomass to higher valued products (CWS 2014, USDA 2015). Make efforts to utilize biomass material whenever appropriate. Utilize fuel reduction material where suitable and cost-effective. (WC CWPP 2006)
- g. Identify economic opportunities to offset costs during treatments and to supply local areas with forest products, ranging from biomass to higher valued material (CWS 2014).
- h. Maintain and improve our forest products and manufacturing infrastructure by supplying material during appropriate protection strategy activities to preserve local ability to conduct restoration activities
- i. Develop a process for monitoring the needs for maintenance of treated areas overtime, in order to preserve the benefits of forest health already achieved (USDA 2004 -HFRA 2003, revisions 2014). Schedule periodic maintenance of treatment areas based on HFRA Section 102, (g) regulations.
- j. Develop wildfire mitigation strategies that take into account protection of community infrastructure and values such as municipal watersheds, cultural assets, view sheds, parks, transportation and utility corridors (CWS 2014). Include FIREWISE, Ready-Set-Go, etc.
- k. Encourage investments in ecological restoration and outdoor recreation that result in job opportunities (USDA 2014).
- l. Design treatments based on ecosystems health, landowner input, highest potential for wildfire protection success combined with ecosystem benefits where appropriate, and increased funding opportunities.
- m. Identify opportunities for across-boundary funding sources to increase pace and scale of planning and implementation.
- n. Jointly educate and prepare fire management agencies and public members in terms of wildfire protocols and the potential social and personal reactions to all phases of wildfire.

To promote consistency and common standards, it is important to design mitigation measures with a county-wide approach that still allows flexibility of application at the local district and municipalities. Achieving full effects of Fire-Adapted Communities will require corresponding attention by community members along with fire management efforts to ensure successful wildfire preparedness and protection.

Restore and Maintain Landscapes – Resiliency

Goal: Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.

Existing Efforts

Resilient landscapes are often defined as having the ability to sustain, resist, and recover from disturbance. Creating fire-adapted natural communities is part of ecological restoration. Ecological restoration includes: restoring healthy, resilient ecosystems capable of withstanding stresses and disturbances, including those associated with climate change (Tidwell 2011).

Landscape resiliency is essential in promoting defensible strategy options for fire suppression resources, sustainable healthy ecosystems in fire prone areas, and long-term reduced costs of doing business. One of the purposes of the CWPP is the prioritization and alignment of landscape investments and fire suppression resource utilization with the intent to reduce risks to life, property, and ecosystems over time.

The CWPP's primary focus is wildfire disturbance. Wallowa County is a high fire frequent area based on the West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment (WWRA), the CWS, and fire history studies conducted locally. Emily Heyerdahl (see Appendix B) estimated median fire return intervals of large fires (1000 – 4999 acres) to be 23, 25, and 11 years in her study plots surrounding Wallowa County. These were considered conservative estimates due to plot size, tree bark thickness and number of trees sampled. Kathleen Maruoka estimated, in her study of 15 plots in and around Wallowa County, to have mean fire return intervals as low as 9.9 years up to 30.8 years depending on the plot location.

The CWS recognizes Wallowa County as predominately having historical fire history falling within a fire regime group of I, II, and III, with the area predominantly a fire regime I. Fire regime I is identified as a relatively high frequency of fires averaging 35 years or less between fire events and includes fire-adapted forests and rangeland types (CWS 2014). Historically, fire regime I burned with low-severity resulting in post fire conditions of less than 25 percent of the dominant overstory vegetation experiencing mortality, with some areas experiencing mixed-severity with potential to replace up to 75 percent of the

overstory (CWS 2014). Large fires were frequent prior to suppression, but historically these fires often benefited the ecosystems and resulted in retention of the overstory on the landscape. Fire predominately burned on the surface of the forest floor with an occasional stand sustaining mortality.

Wallowa County's CWPP recognizes that fire is a frequent visitor of our local forests and management approaches should be taken with community and landscape resiliency in mind. Undertakings of treatments for protection of community and landscape have occurred on both private and public lands. These treatment locations are identified in Chapter X.

Opportunities for Improvement

National, regional, and local management objectives will be part of the guiding principles in fuels and vegetation management. Developing a broader landscape approach provides a higher degree of flexibility for treatment locations and type, with the ability to extend beyond community boundaries into the "middle ground" areas. This model begins to address the large landscape-scale changes needed to alter wildfire behavior, improve landscape resiliency, minimize wildfire loss, and ensure protection of life and properties (CWS 2014). Focusing investments in areas where multiple objectives can be achieved provides the maximum benefit of funding.

Under the 2006 CWPP individual WUI areas apply for and receive funds. These dollars could not be distributed toward multiple locations. This resulted in multiple applications for revenue for each separate geographic location even though the management objectives and the priority levels may be the same. Competing for funds between geographic areas reduces opportunities for landscape applications, results in duplication of efforts and missed opportunities.

Analysis of a broad-scale WUI zone approach eliminates the need for funding to be concentrated in a single location, allowing for geographically prioritizing large-scale areas. This provides fire managers with the ability to apply multiple treatments concurrently, utilizing one financial source, in several areas of the WUI zone.

It is the intent of the new CWPP to consider larger landscape scale management, restoration, and fuels treatment projects that promote fire mitigation across jurisdictional and ownership boundaries. This revision eliminates small, isolated Wildland Urban Interface parcels and recognizes an all-inclusive "WUI Zone" that takes into consideration areas outside of the "communities and residential developed areas" to include the landscape between communities and the more distant wildlands. Given the number and size of wildfires, the West needs large landscape-scale changes in vegetative structure and fuel loadings to significantly alter wildfire behavior, reduce wildfire losses, ensure firefighter and public safety, and improve landscape resiliency (CWS 2014). Opportunities for treatment

should not be limited to strictly WUI Zone acres but should be proactive in inclusion of all areas in Wallowa County. Expansion outside the WUI Zone is prudent when there is a likelihood achieving multiple goals and objectives of this plan or the expansion is a more economical approach.

One of the tasks put forth by the Board of Forestry in the Northern Blue Mountain Cohesive Strategy 2013 is to encourage large scale management, including restoration and fuels treatment projects, that embrace sustainability by recognizing the social, environmental and economic benefits derived through applying the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy on the ground across all ownerships.

The resilient landscape goal provides opportunity for Wallowa County to:

- Create sustainable ecosystems through hazardous fuels management to reduce the extent, severity, and intensities of wildfire in the county, with urgency given to priorities within the WUI Zone areas and CAR.
- Alter fire behavior characteristics through manipulation of fuel and vegetation by strategically placing treatment areas and utilizing new and innovative tools.
- Promote local economic opportunities while addressing forest fuel, forest health conditions, and debris removal needs.
- Develop a reasonable process of funding distribution where CAR, WUI Zones, and other geographic areas meet criteria regarding prioritization, condition, and need for treatment.

Active management of public and private land holdings is important, including harvesting and thinning operations to reduce hazardous fuels in and around communities and in the middle ground (CWS 2014). Through the acknowledgment of a larger WUI Zone, agencies and communities can provide complementary and supportive actions that promote landscape scale management.

Objectives

Wallowa County strives to restore and maintain landscapes through creating ecosystems that are sustainable and resilient to disturbance. It is important when evaluating local ecological conditions with human needs and interaction to find a balance for managing wildfire for ecological resource objectives (CWS 2014). The county recognizes the value in restoring the functions and processes characteristic of healthier, more resistant ecosystems. Creative approaches can be used to achieve desired results.

- a. Develop opportunities for increasing community understanding of how resilient landscapes benefit communities through sustainable multiple-use management of the national forests and grassland (FS_2015). This includes but is not limited to sustainability of forest products, aesthetics,

- opportunities, and ecological systems.
- b. Identify economic opportunities to supply forest product needs, ranging from biomass to more highly valued products (CWS 2014, USDA 2015). Make efforts to provide accurate information on biomass material availability. Utilize fuel reduction material where suitable and cost-effective.
 - c. Develop a process for monitoring the needs for maintenance of treated areas overtime in order to preserve the benefits of forest health already achieved (HFRA 2003, revisions 2014). All lands should be evaluated when considering maintenance of investments.
 - d. Increase and identify opportunities for economic expansion in forest and grassland-dependent communities (CWS 2014). Invest in ecological restoration and outdoor recreation that result in job opportunities (FS 2015).
 - e. Focus initially on areas that show the highest wildfire risk to both watersheds and communities. Develop economically-viable treatments that provide return revenue in order to accomplish fuels reduction at a landscape scale and to reduce overall fire risk in the County.
 - f. Design treatments based on ecosystems health, landowner input, and highest potential for wildfire protection success, combined with ecosystem benefits where appropriate, and increased funding opportunities.
 - g. Identify opportunities for across-boundary funding sources to increase pace and scale of planning and implementation. Recognize that pace and scale must increase in order to effectively protect communities and landscapes.
 - h. Improve efficiency in planning timber sales and stewardship contracts to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration and management. (Tidwell, 2015)
 - i. Develop new approaches for allocation of monies within the WUI Zones. Eliminate funding application to one location and allow for allocation of dollars to multiple areas that meet funding request criteria.
 - j. Encourage revenue-producing (i.e. commercial timber harvest) projects that, in turn, can help support increased restoration and forest management activities while providing some economic benefits to our local communities (Northern Blue Mountain Cohesive Strategy {NBMCS} 2013).
 - k. Promote increased utilization of the “Good Neighbor Policy” and Stewardship contracting authority to accomplish forest management and restoration activities (NBMCS 2013).
 - l. Integrate with local forest collaborative groups to capitalize on mutual efforts that support the intent of landscape treatments and fire risk mitigations. Identify conditions where fire is placed within a broader vision with multiple jurisdictions of responsibility.

Communication and Collaboration

Northern Blue Mountain Cohesive Strategy Goal: *Ensure the coordinated implementation of the Cohesive Strategy among all stakeholders and partners in the Pilot Project Area.*

Although fire managers play a significant role in addressing wildland fire in terms of management, operations, and Wildland Urban Interface areas, it requires people working together toward a common mission and mutual understanding of what it means to live in fire-dependent ecosystems. The importance of collaboration throughout the Cohesive Strategy effort, of hearing all the voices, and involving all the partners cannot be overemphasized (CWS 2014).

Existing Collaboration

During the 2006 CWPP development a series of meetings were held to inform citizens about the progress of the CWPP development. Topics included discussion of the risk assessment involved in determining high hazard areas around the county, discussion of Wallowa County Emergency Services operations related to wildfire response, and involvement of citizens in defining wildland-urban interface boundaries using hazard, risk, and values that may be affected by threat of wildfire (Wallowa County CWPP 2005).

Since the 2006 CWPP, several collaboration efforts have led to a variety of accomplishments including cross boundary projects, acquisition of fire response equipment, training improvements, and community education. Projects were developed in coordination with local residents and agencies to begin creating defensible space and improving fire response capabilities. A number of private landowners have acquired fire mitigation funding for their properties with the assistance from state and federal agencies.

Collaboration between federal and local rural fire departments has provided opportunities to create surplus equipment agreements to acquire excess fire equipment from federal surplus.

Additional collaboration groups have evolved that would complement the CWPP concepts including the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative group, Umatilla Forest Collaborative and the Northern Blue Mountain Cohesive Strategy group (NBMCS). The Wallowa-Whitman Forest Collaborative group mission is, *“To improve the social, economic, and ecological resiliency of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and local communities through collaboration by a diverse group of stakeholders.”* This mission is consistent with the CWPP’s commitment in meeting the Cohesive Strategy’s three goals.

The NBMCS is a pilot project tiered off the National Cohesive Wildfire Strategy with identified goals and actions that support the CWS. The Blue Mountain pilot

project contains a description of actions and tasks that are necessary for implementing a successful Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (a.k.a. Cohesive Strategy) in the Pilot Project area (NBMCS 2013). One example is that during public meetings, the CWPP committee educates and informs the stakeholders/partners in the Pilot project area on the Cohesive Strategy (NBMCS 2013). Organized meetings with the rural fire chiefs, local cooperators, and members of the public have all been designed for this purpose.

Opportunities for Improvement

In meeting the goals and desired conditions within the CWPP, Wallowa County is also able to support the Forest Collaborative mission of social, economic, and ecological resiliency through it's "all hands-all lands" (cross boundary) projects. Coordination with the Forest Collaborative provides an opportunity for project recognition and diverse support; potential increased funding, project creativity and design, while improving increased awareness of fire risks in Wallowa County.

Emphasis is also being placed on creating and maintaining lasting partnerships among agencies and populaces. Agency activities include, but are not limited to, local, state, tribal, and Federal agencies showing support for one another through wildfire response, engagement in collaborative planning and decision-making processes that take into account all lands and recognize the interdependence and statutory responsibilities among jurisdictions (CWS 2014).

The CWPP is a key platform to which fire managers, cooperators, and community members can align roles and responsibilities to promote organized approaches in fire management across all jurisdictions. Since the 2006 Wallowa County CWPP fire managers have recognized advancements in wildfire risk assessments, treatment approaches, and science research. Public learning of how this information can be used in developing fire adapted communities will lead to collective actions toward wildfire protection.

Using the WUI Zone model designed for a landscape approach allows expansion beyond the classic communities at risk in Wallowa County and increases opportunities for additional participatory roles that may otherwise not be considered. Through an inclusive approach that addresses a broad range of values at risk of fire such as scattered farm/ranch communities, dwellings, and infrastructure improvements watersheds, communication sites, and critical habitats (CWS 2014), the CWPP creates a holistic representation of landscape mitigations.

Potential partners were identified through CWPP committee discussions and using the three goals of the CWS and action items described in the Northern Blue Mountain Cohesive Strategy with an understanding that *ALL* Wallowa County citizens play an important role in the success of these goals.

Partnerships centered on the following characteristics were of high consideration:

- a. Ability to provide skills and participate in the wildfire assessment and development of the CWPP.
- b. Expertise and capabilities in the implementation of mitigation action items in the CWPP.
- c. Protection capabilities and capacity to provide assistance in suppression and protection efforts.
- d. Key infrastructure areas that may assist with or benefit from efforts to implement actions, prepare for, and respond to wildfires.
- e. Key infrastructures areas that may contribute to potential threats or pose additional safety issues in the event of a wildfire.
- f. Ability to assist the community in pre, during and post wildfire evacuation.
- g. Property owner(s) within identified WUI Zone and CARs are key participants in wildfire protection, acknowledging that all property proprietors within the county play a role in the event of a large wildfire.
- h. Stakeholders with an interest in the CWPP mission.

Development and implementation of a communication process creates an essential link between fire managers and citizens. Emphasis on good public relations will promote and sustain collaboration by producing informed communities, consistent partnerships among stakeholders, and a guide toward future efforts. A transition plan outlining community participation that progresses from development, to implementation, to post-treatments is essential for a successful collaborative effort and informed communities.

Through community outreach, essential information was compiled on structures, roads, and water resources throughout the WUI Zone. Community involvement is crucial for successful wildfire planning. County citizens are the best source of information when developing planning opportunities toward public safety and mitigations of wildfire risks. Outreach within the community encourages and supports a continuous, rolling, and collaborative dialog among stakeholders and across regions to enhance shared understanding, roles, mutual trust, and willingness to pool resources and take joint actions (CWS 2014).

Education and community outreach were a primary focus when creating this community fire protection plan. The CWPP efforts include fostering widespread collaboration and consistent support of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. One priority is to create and maintain partnerships among agencies and citizens by combining efforts in developing a range of ideas and actions designed for wildfire protection and ecosystem health. Through these efforts the following can be accomplished:

- a. Use the CWPP as a coordinated resource tool, educational piece, and building block or protection efforts.
- b. Create strategies that make an effort to hear all voices and involve all partners; this is vital for success (CWS 2014).

- c. Build upon fire prevention programs that focus on education and human caused ignitions.
Identify funding mechanism and improve landowner assistance through various grant sources.
- d. Coordinate communication and education efforts to provide consistent and comprehensive messages.
- e. Implement CWPP action items within WUI Zone areas. Motivate individual community members and key community interests to take positive action (BMCWS 2013).
- f. Provide CWS's vision, goals, and national direction to increase knowledge and understanding of guiding principles, core values, and national priorities (CWS 2014).
- g. Build an interagency approach to implement Firewise in at risk fire communities.
- h. Work to educate and assist residents in at-risk fire communities in meeting their individual and collective responsibilities of preparing their homes and properties for the possibility of fire (BMCWS 2013).
- i. Explore opportunities for Fire Adapted Community demonstration sites as a Pilot Project to use as an educational tool.

This approach is in alignment with the CWS concepts to improve and expand communications of diverse groups within communities to ensure best science and proven professional practices are used. Diverse groups include scientists, program managers, specialists, and stakeholders (CWS 2014).

Funding and Economic Assistance

Overview

Successful fire suppression over the last eight decades has created landscape conditions that would have historically been treated by natural fire disturbance. Overstocked stands have subsequently created increasing suppression difficulty, which also increases costs of doing business. This, in combination with an upsurge of new home disbursement in and near forested areas has driven up the cost of doing business on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, *suppression* costs are associated with a wildfire that is already actively burning, thereby removing opportunities toward pre-fire preparation for risk reduction. The cost of fire suppression has grown from 13 percent of the U.S. Forest Service agency's budget just 10 years ago to more than 40 percent in 2014 (USFS, 2014). Recent studies have found a positive correlation between firefighting expenditures and the presence of housing and private lands (Gebert and others 2007, Liang and others 2008). Average annual fire suppression expenditures by the U.S. Forest Service alone totaled \$580 million from 1991 to 2000, and more than doubled to \$1.2 billion annually from 2001 to 2010 (USDA Forest Service 2011c). The National Association of State Foresters (NASF)

conducted a biannual survey of State Forestry agencies on wildfire protection, prevention, and suppression (including Federal funding expended by State agencies), and found more than \$1.6 billion dollars was spent annually; more than doubling the amount from 2000 to 2010 (NASF 2010). Also, local governments are estimated to average close to \$1 billion dollars per year during the 2000s (IAWF 2013). This does not take into account the cost associated with property damage or devaluation, rehabilitation of properties and ecosystems, human health, or impacts to local businesses. Of highest value, where monetary measures cannot compare, is loss of life or injury.

Not only are suppression costs increasing, so too are the number of structures lost per year per decade since 1960. The following graph was recreated from the WUI FACT SHEET issued by the International Association of Wildland Fire (IAWF) in August of 2013. Based on 2012 U.S. Census statistics, approximately 46 million homes are located in WUI, of which 21 million or 46 percent of the existing homes are less than 10 years old (IAWF 2013).

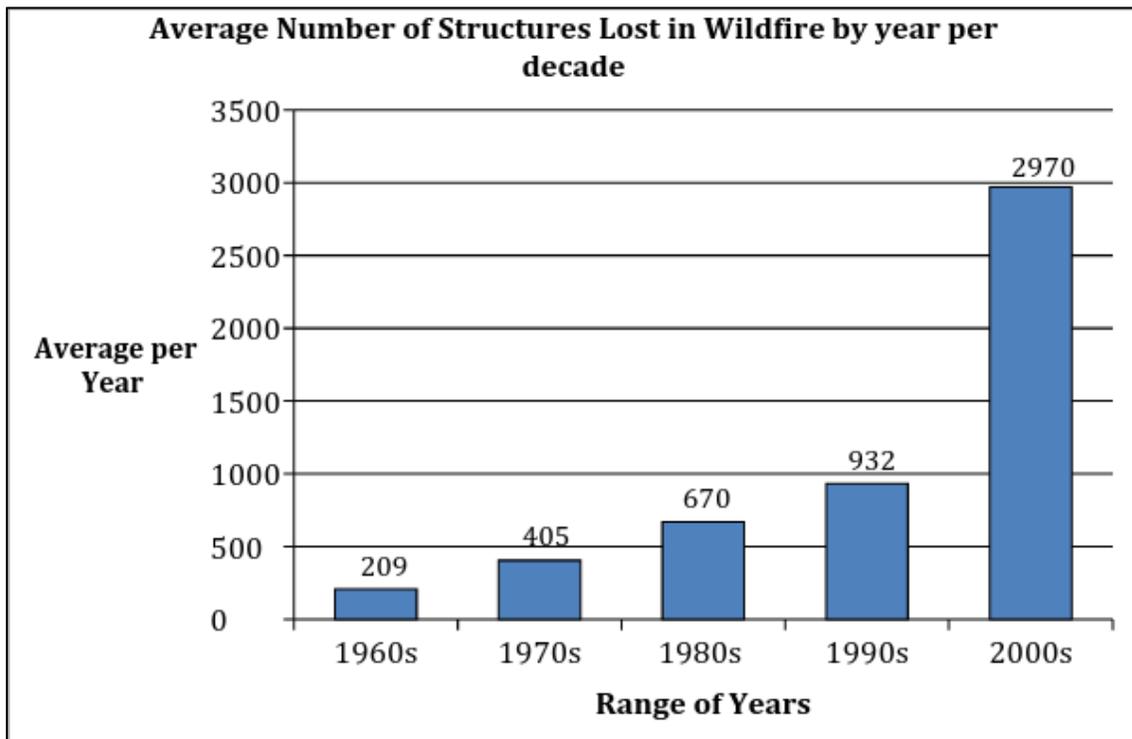


Figure II – 1. Structures Lost by Decade. Graph demonstrates the gradual increase in structure loss until the year 2000 where number of structures lost is 3 times higher than the 1990’s. Data from International Association of Wildland Fire 2013.

The financial and social costs of wildfires demonstrate the need to reduce fire impact on lives and property through prevention and protection methods. Assessment of the short- and long-term economic and environmental consequences from large-scale wildland fires indicates that cost savings can be realized through preparedness and risk reduction. This includes a coordinated effort of planning for fire protection and implementing activities among local,

state, and federal agencies, the private sector, and community organizations.

Recent fire seasons bring the wildland interface problem and the problem of overabundant dense forest fuels to the forefront. The forest fuels issue is a major and continuing problem that has received national attention. Work is underway to reduce fuels in WUI areas by way of community involvement and funding from the *National Fire Plan* and the goals of the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy. National Fire Plan goals are to:

- Ensure sufficient firefighting resources for the future.
- Rehabilitate and restore fire-damaged and fire-adaptive ecosystems.
- Reduce fuels (combustible forest materials) in forests and rangelands at risk, especially near communities.
- Work with local residents to reduce fire risk and improve fire protection.

As with many programs, funding is critical to success. Funding sources are not always straightforward; knowledge of mechanisms to acquire revenue increases the likelihood of participation and program success. Potential for cost savings can be achieved through coordinated efforts in prevention, preparedness, and risk reduction.

Community Assistance grants and other grant opportunities to aid in achieving these goals are available through federal, state, local, and private grants as well as grants offered through the National Fire Plan (NFP) and Cohesive Wildfire Strategy. Efforts toward these goals represent a substantial amount of work, and their ultimate success will depend on involved landowners, agencies, and organizations working in concert. The CWS recognizes that western landscapes are generally more vast, steep, and limited-access. For this reason, the CWS recommends landscape scale changes are needed in vegetative structure and fuel loadings to significantly alter wildfire behavior, reduce wildfire losses, ensure firefighter safety, and improve landscape resiliency (CWS 2014). No agency or group working alone can achieve the CWS and the NFP's goals.

Applying funds on the ground within the WUI Zone and CARs in advance of a wildfire event is anticipated to reduce costs of suppression and loss of properties when a fire event happens. Practices such as harvesting and thinning, prescribed burning (where appropriate), and fuel reduction throughout the identified areas are key to mitigating wildland fire threat, fire effects, and fire risk. Vigorous cross-boundary management on both public and private land holdings is crucial to addressing the interdependence and statutory responsibilities among jurisdictions.

Opportunities for Improvement

It is the desire of the CWPP to provide resource funding mechanisms in order to apply prevention, protection, response efforts on the landscape both pre and post wildland fire events. Grant and funding mechanisms are listed in Appendix I, identifying what avenues are available to access revenue in addressing

mitigations tiered toward the plans goals. Collective participation is imperative for acquisition of revenue.

In a survey of Colorado homeowners examining willingness to pay for prescribed fire, thinning, and fire suppression, Kaval et al. (2006) found support for reducing fuels now, and showed that those who had conducted defensible space activities were more willing to pay for thinning on public lands (Kaval and Loomis 2008).

In Oregon, all land that is zoned Forest Resource by the state is automatically subject to wildfire mitigation requirements to protect adjacent property. In addition, because mapped wildfire areas are often done at a general level and may contain errors, many communities require that a site-specific wildfire analysis be done for proposed projects in a mapped area to make sure that wildfire measures are, in fact, necessary and justified (NFPA 2013).

The CWPP is designed to accomplish a wildfire analysis of Wallowa County. The Oregon Legislature boosted national forest restoration, allocating \$2.88 million in state lottery funds to accelerate projects in eastern Oregon (Andersen 2014). This allows for implementation of restoration projects with “boots on the ground” by local forest collaborative groups working together on complex forestry issues. Additionally, it has enabled the U.S. Forest Service a number of opportunities for acquiring funds to accelerated thinning and restoration projects for various reasons, including fire risk reduction (Andersen 2014).

Oregon continues to be proactive in emergency preparedness and wildfire mitigation efforts. As part of the movement toward cross-boundary treatments, several mechanisms have been made available in an attempt to support and work collaboratively with communities including activities that promote wildfire risk reduction.

Oregon is home to the HB 2050 Wildfire Protection Act that is designed to control and equally distribute costs in Oregon’s wildfire protection system, which combines state and landowner resources to protect forest and communities (ODF 2013). This legislation is designed to increase capacity to extinguish fires rapidly, before they become large and costly (Oregon.gov 2014).

Oregon Senator Ron Wyden’s office has made available *A Guide to Federal Grants*, which provides details regarding grant names, purpose and description, eligibility, web site, contacts and any matching funds requirements (Appendix I). Specific grants within the Public Safety section are designed to assist firefighting in communities.

Wyden Amendment (16 U.S.C. 1011a) allows the Forest Service and BLM to enter into cooperative agreements with landowners for the protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and other resources on public or private lands, as long as the agreement benefits the fish, wildlife, and other

resources on national forest and BLM lands within the watershed (GAO 2017)

Good Neighbor Authority (2014 Farm Bill) (16 U.S.C 2113a) that authorizes the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to enter into “good neighbor” agreements with state governors, under which the federal agencies and the states can carry out similar and complementary forest, rangeland, and watershed restoration services, including fuel reduction projects, on both federal and nonfederal lands (GAO 2017)

The Grants.gov Program Management Office offers numerous federal funding opportunities in a centralized location. The site is designed to provide a common website for federal agencies to post discretionary funding opportunities and for grantees to find and apply to them (Grants.gov 2014). This site allows for easy search criteria to be used to identify grants with specific purposes. This avenue of grants awards more than \$500 billion dollars annually, centralizing more than 1000 grant programs across all 26 federal grant-making agencies.

Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (Pub. L. No 95-313). This authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to provide financial, technical, educational, and related assistance to state foresters or equivalent state officials to carry out activities such as protecting forest lands from damage caused by fire (GAO 2017).

Cost-Share Grant Programs through National Fire Plan

ODF provides homeowners within Wallowa County a free home site inspection. After the inspection, technical advice is shared with the homeowner as to what can be done to lessen the structural ignitability rating of the home. The amount and type of vegetation to be removed varies depending on the amount of survivable space needed to protect the home. This could entail a substantial cost to the homeowner; however there may be grant funds available to share in the cost of the project. (See Appendix I Funding Mechanisms)

Funding is highly competitive across the counties and states. This CWPP is intended to provide increased leverage by addressing multiple fire issues and concerns through a highly collaborative process. Issues and opportunities outlined in the following chapters are developed with this approach in mind.

During the development of this plan, several collaborative meetings occurred including: a fire management meeting with rural fire chiefs, a simulation with local cooperators could either contribute to successful outcomes or posed additional concerns during wildfire, community wildfire survey of homeowners, public meeting with homeowners in the Lostine CAR, the stock growers committee, and other interested members of the public. The workshops allowed the steering committee an opportunity to discuss the plan concepts, completion timeline, the risk assessment, values threatened, and any additional concerns related to emergency services and fire agency response. Meetings were held primarily in

Enterprise and Lostine. Discussion topics included the importance of the planning effort, the local risk assessment and emergency operations related to wildfire events, formulation and rationale of WUI Zone, CARs, and potential projects (see Chapter V for Community Workshop Summaries).

Summary

Wallowa County is dedicated to developing a CWPP that addresses the concerns of the National Fire Plan and embraces the new Cohesive Wildfire Strategy's three goals of fire response, fire-adapted communities, and restoring and maintaining local landscapes. Through committed, coordinated efforts with fire agencies, cooperators, and communities the county strives to educate on fire response, prevention, and risk mitigation.

Recognizing that fire knows no boundaries, the Wallowa County CWPP strives to create a broad-scale approach when addressing the counties wildland fire conditions. Through an "all hands-all lands" stance, joint efforts of landowners will provide much needed improved forest conditions; the aim is to intercept wildfire spread by slowing forward progress, altering fire behavior, and generating increased opportunities for suppression success. Living in a fire-prone environment requires an understanding of inherent risks, fire dependent ecosystems, and types of actions landowners can take in fire mitigation efforts.

Current efforts are designed to meet desired future conditions such as:

- Increased response capacity of local fire management resources through improved training, equipment, and facilities.
- Developing fire-adapted communities through public awareness and involvement supports the cross boundary approach.
- Having common missions and terminology to aid both the public and fire management agencies in understanding the desired results for fire risk mitigation.
- Promote resilient landscapes that can withstand and recover from wildfires.

When living in a landscape dependent on fire disturbance, it must be recognized that creating resilient landscapes is key to sustaining healthy ecosystems while reducing long term costs of doing business. Historical fires burned through the forests of Eastern Oregon creating an area prone to low fire severity with occasional mixed severity results.

Collaboration is essential to achieving the mission and goals of this document. These proposed communication efforts build upon existing methods to improve not only social facets but also to recognize the importance of community economics and ecological functions. Creating and maintaining lasting partnerships makes success of the CWPP goals a likely outcome.

Meetings designed to hear all voices and consider all options create a sense of ownership toward goal attainment. Collaboration and combined efforts on the ground increase opportunities to obtain funding; many funding mechanisms today often inquire about collaborative efforts occurring on adjacent lands. Partnerships in mitigation measures increase the probability of awarded monies, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful fire suppression efforts.

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