



University of Nevada
Cooperative Extension

SP-13-14



How to Complete a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Nevada Communities

CWPP BACKGROUND

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) describes the wildfire hazards and mitigation measures for a community. Completing and implementing a CWPP is an important means for residents of Nevada's wildfire-prone areas to address the wildfire threat. CWPPs are authorized and defined in Title I of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act passed by Congress in November 2003, and signed into law by President Bush. According to Congress, the purpose of a CWPP is to "reduce wildfire risk to communities, municipal water supplies, and other at-risk Federal land through a collaborative process of planning, prioritizing, and implementing hazardous fuels reduction projects."¹ CWPPs offer residents the opportunity to take a prominent role in reducing the wildfire threat to their communities and provide guidance for becoming a Fire Adapted Community. A CWPP should be developed with active community involvement where government agencies are partners in the process. It should be a community plan, not a government agency plan. The success of CWPPs is "attributed to the fact that the CWPP process permits communities to develop plans to fit local, social, and ecological contexts, at a scale where they can make something happen."²

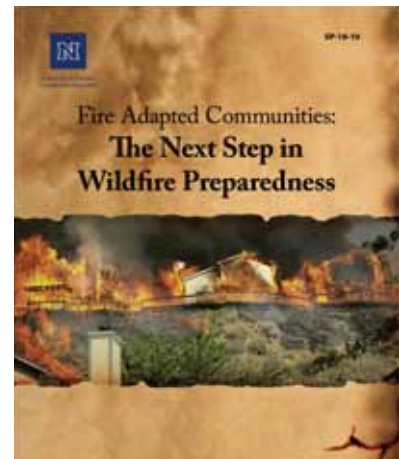
Key Points About CWPPs³

- Though CWPPs are generally developed by local government with assistance from state and federal agencies and other interested partners, community members concerned about the wildfire threat are encouraged to initiate the process.
- There is no prescribed format to which a CWPP must conform, which means a community can take a variety of approaches to planning. Further, the plans may be either complex or simple, depending on the objectives and desires of the community.
- CWPPs should effectively address local forest and range conditions, values-at-risk and priorities for action.

Requirements for a CWPP

There are three requirements for a CWPP:⁴

- Collaboration. A CWPP must be collaboratively developed. Local and state officials must meaningfully involve nongovernmental stakeholders and federal agencies that manage land in the vicinity of the community.



Fire Adapted Community:

A community located in a fire-prone area that requires little assistance from firefighters during a wildfire. Residents of these communities accept responsibility for living in a high fire-hazard area. They possess the knowledge and skills to:

- Prepare their homes and property to survive.
- Evacuate early, safely and effectively.
- Survive, if trapped.

Click on the image to view this publication.

¹ <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-108hr1904enr/pdf/BILLS-108hr1904enr.pdf>

² http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_p046/rmrs_p046_613_624.pdf

³ <http://www.stateforesters.org/files/CWPPBriefingPaper.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.stateforesters.org/files/CWPPBriefingPaper.pdf>

- **Prioritized Fuel Reduction.** A CWPP must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel-reduction treatments on both federal and nonfederal land and recommend the types and methods of treatment that, if completed, would reduce the risk to the community.
- **Treatment of Structural Ignitability.** A CWPP must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the plan area.

Further, the final CWPP must be approved via signature from:

- A representative of the applicable local government;
- The chief of the local fire department/district; and
- The state forester/fire warden.



Reducing the structural ignitability of houses, such as replacing wood shake roofs and removing pine needles, is a CWPP objective.

Benefits of a CWPP

The benefits of preparing and implementing a CWPP include:

- The opportunity to increase community capacity by working collaboratively. The CWPP process has proven effective at:⁵
 - Building leadership in communities and organizations.
 - Strengthening relationships among agencies.
 - Providing visibility for organizations and individuals.
 - Gaining access to networks and participating in coordinated efforts.
 - Enhancing stewardship and community buy-in for projects.
 - Facilitating social learning.
 - Producing successful projects that spawn other projects.
 - Creating a sense of hope and trust.
- The CWPP process allows communities the chance to form relationships with the fire department, other emergency responders and resource management agencies tasked with hazardous fuels reduction.
- The opportunity to establish a locally appropriate definition and boundary for the wildland-urban interface. In the absence of a CWPP, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act limits the wildland-urban interface to within one-half mile of a community's boundary or within 1½ miles when mitigating circumstances exist, such as sustained steep slopes or geographic features aiding in creating a fire break. However, fuels treatments can occur along evacuation routes regardless of their distance from the community.⁶
- Fuel-reduction projects that are identified in a CWPP are to receive priority for funding and implementation by federal agencies.
- National Environmental Policy Act procedures for federal agencies implementing fuel-reduction projects identified in a CWPP can be expedited. If a federal agency is planning a fuel-reduction project to implement a recommendation in a CWPP that lies within the interface and is located no farther than 1½ miles from the community boundary, the federal agency does not need to analyze any other alternatives.
- The U. S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are to spend not less than 50 percent of the funds allocated for hazardous fuel-reduction projects in the interface, as defined in a CWPP.



CWPPs can identify community-level projects, such as establishing a biomass collection site to drop off unwanted flammable vegetation.



Building effective working relationships between agencies and the public is an important by-product of the CWPP process.

⁵ http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_p046/rmrs_p046_613_624.pdf

⁶ <http://www.stateforesters.org/sites/default/files/publication-documents/cwpphandbook.pdf>

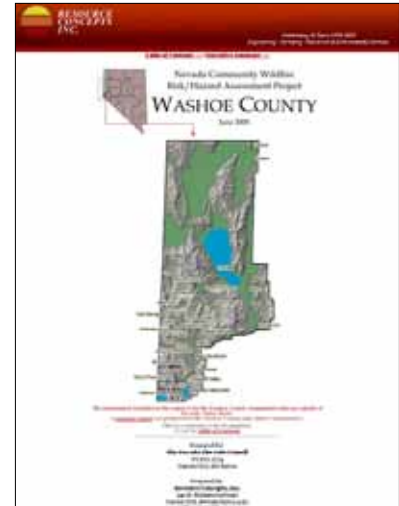
- When allocating federal funds and grant dollars for fuel-reduction projects on nonfederal lands, federal and state agencies such as the Nevada Division of Forestry should, to the maximum extent practicable, give priority to communities that have adopted CWPPs.

Previous County Wildfire Hazard Assessments

In 2004 and 2005, communities located in Nevada’s wildland-urban interface were assessed in terms of their wildfire risk and hazard. Specifically, the assessments:

- Described wildfire hazards present in each community.
- Identified firefighting equipment and infrastructure needs.
- Presented maps of fuel hazards in high and extreme fire-hazard communities.
- Proposed risk and hazard mitigation projects.

While these reports provided useful information, they sometimes addressed large areas that encompassed multiple communities on a broad scale and did not always involve community stakeholders as required by the Healthy Forests Restoration Act. In addition, conditions have changed in some areas. For example, in some communities wildfire has changed fuel types; community fuelbreaks have been constructed; overgrown vegetation has significantly compromised residential defensible space; and/or a number of other changes have occurred that require updating of the hazard assessment. This initial assessment, however, can provide useful information for the development of a CWPP.



The Community Wildfire Risk/Hazard Assessments provide useful information for communities beginning the CWPP process.

Click on the image to view the assessment for your county/community.

HOW BEGIN THE CWPP PROCESS

Who to Contact to Get Started

Contact University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s Living With Fire Program or the representative of your local fire department/district for help beginning the CWPP process.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

Living With Fire Program
 4955 Energy Way
 Reno, NV 89502
 775-784-4848
<http://www.livingwithfire.info>

Establishing a Planning Group

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act does not designate a lead agency for the development and implementation of CWPPs. This flexibility allows leadership in the CWPP process to originate from a variety of entities, including homeowners, homeowners association board members, the local fire department/district and the Nevada Division of Forestry. The key is to involve the important stakeholders in the community's wildfire-threat issue. It is particularly important to involve landowners and representatives of land-owning groups whose property contains wildfire fuels within the project area.

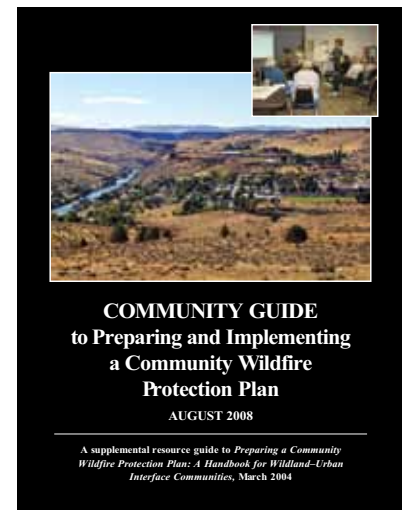
The initial step for developing a CWPP should be formation of a core group with representation from local government, local fire authorities and the Nevada Division of Forestry. Together, community representatives and these three entities form the core group responsible for the development of a CWPP. However, ultimately it is the local Fire Chief, local government representative and the State Forester who approve the plan.

Once convened, the core group should identify the important CWPP stakeholders and invite them to serve on the planning committee. The federal agency interim field guide for the Act encourages federal agencies to partner in the CWPP process "to the extent that a community desires, within budgetary constraints."⁷ In some areas, they will also be responsible for implementing the priorities established in the resulting CWPP.

Acquiring input from a variety of interests will help ensure that the final document reflects the highest priorities of the community. It will also help to facilitate timely implementation of recommended projects. Some of the entities you may want to include on the planning committee are:

- Representatives from every entity responsible for managing fuels in the CWPP area (homeowners, homeowners association, local government, etc.).
- City Council members or County Commissioners.
- University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.
- Nevada Department of Transportation.
- County Emergency Management.
- Local water company representative.
- Local power company representative.

Although the conveners of the CWPP process play a major role in identifying and involving stakeholders in the process, as the scale and objectives of the CWPP are defined, additional stakeholders should be encouraged to participate.



This publication is a good resource as you assemble a core group. It discusses the elements of good collaboration and how to secure and maintain stakeholder involvement. *Click on the image to view this publication.*

⁷ http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_p046/rmrs_p046_613_624.pdf

COMPLETING THE CWPP TEMPLATE

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension has developed a digital template to simplify the process and guide the planning group through the preparation of a CWPP. (See <http://www.livingwithfire.info/cwpp>.) The template outline and key features are as follows:

Cover Page

- Features an option to upload a cover image of the community.
- Requests entry of the community name.

CWPP Certification

- Provides name and title entries for the State Forester, a representative of local government and Chief of the local fire department/protection district.
- Requires signatures from these three entities to signify mutual agreement with the contents of the CWPP.

Planning Group Members

- Requests entry of contact information for each planning group member.

CWPP Purpose and Goals

- Requests an opening statement reflecting the purpose behind the CWPP and any relevant history or shared concerns that brought this group together.
- Provides examples of CWPP objectives from which the planning group can choose or allows them to enter their own objectives.

Community Description

- Requests a description of the community and suggests topics, such as location, land ownership, demographics, community assets and other elements.
- Features an option to upload community location and land-ownership maps.

Community Wildfire Risk and Hazard Assessment

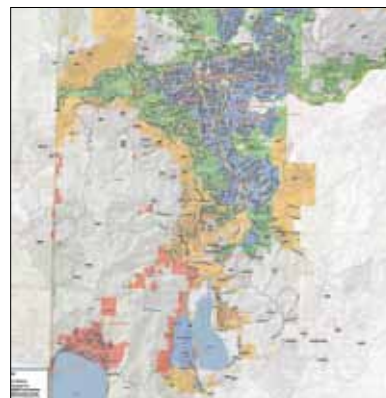
- Requests a description of the wildfire risk and degree of hazard for the area within and surrounding the community.
- Features an interactive wildfire-hazard assessment form (Appendix A of the template).

CWPP Projects and Activities

- Provides entries for prioritized fuel-treatment projects and activities that will reduce structural ignitions.
- Features an option to upload a map that shows the location of fuel-treatment projects.

CWPP Monitoring and Evaluation

- Requests the planning group specify how often they will meet to evaluate the progress toward implementing the plan.



Check with your county Geographic Information System department about the availability of wildfire-hazard rating maps.

Factors such as community design, existing building materials, defensible space and fire behavior are looked at when assessing a community's wildfire hazards.

Click on the image to enlarge.

FACTORS		RATING	FACTORS		RATING
IGNITION RISK ASSESSMENT			HAZARD ASSESSMENT		
SUMMARY RISK			SUMMARY RISK		
CONTROLLING RISK FACTORS			CONTROLLING RISK FACTORS		
History of lightning strikes		Low	Wildfire Urban Interface Condition		Critical
Community activities			Number of homes		High
High level of motor/recreational activities			Proximity to roads		Adequate
Understory provides receptive fuel bed for ignition			Accessibility		Adequate
Thick brush & trees provide receptive fuel bed for ignition			Non-combustible roofs		Inadequate
Impromptly maintained powerline corridors			Wildfire interface		Inadequate
High fuel loads			Wildfire ignition risk		Moderate
History of fire ignitions			CONSTRUCTION INTERFERENCES		
Urban burning & equipment use		High	Non-combustible roof		Adequate
			Non-combustible decks, etc.		Adequate
			DEFENSIBLE SPACE		
			Defensible space		High Density
			Fire behavior		Moderate
			Fuel		Low
			Slope		Flat
			Aspect		Low
			SUPPRESSION CAPABILITIES		
			Available water source		Adequate
			Fire protection		Adequate
			Primary fire protection service		EPF/FP
			Supports fire protection service		EPF/FP
			Additional support		IRM
			ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION		
			Existing Fire Safe Council Chapter		No

Color Coding Key for Significant Contributing Factors

Problem areas that can probably be modified

Problem areas that can possibly be modified

Problem areas that cannot likely be modified

©2012 Interagency Agreement entered into by the State of Nevada and the State of California. This document is the property of the State of Nevada and the State of California. It is loaned to the community for use in the development of a Wildfire Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Plan for the community. It is not to be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the State of Nevada and the State of California. All rights reserved.

The overview identifies inadequacies in a community's wildfire preparedness and also identifies wildfire-threat factors a community is unable to change.

Click on the image to enlarge.

WHO COMPLETES THE CWPP TEMPLATE?

As part of the CWPP process, the planning group should assign an individual or committee the job of completing the CWPP template. If in the course of completing the template the core group has any technical difficulties, please contact University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Living With Fire Program. Also, if the planning group encounters a question it cannot answer, that may be a good time to invite a person with the answer to become involved in the CWPP planning process.

FINALIZE AND SUBMIT THE CWPP

When the group has reached agreement on the CWPP's contents and recommendations, submit the document to the local Fire Chief, a representative of the local government, and the State Forester for their approval and signatures.

APPENDIX

Documents and reports

- [Fire Adapted Communities: The Next Step in Wildfire Preparedness](#)
- [Nevada Community Wildfire Risk/Hazard Assessment Project](#)

Helpful templates and planning documents

- [A Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) (California Fire Alliance)
- [A Guidance Document for Developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans](#)
- [Community Guide to Preparing and Implementing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#)
- [Community Wildfire Protection Plans](#)
- [Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#)

Other risk/hazard assessment scoring systems

- [Home Wildfire Hazard Assessment](#) (Missouri Department of Conservation)
- [Wildfire Hazard Severity Rating Checklist for Arizona Homes and Communities](#) (Arizona Cooperative Extension)

Typical issues and responses to the problem

- Lack of community education on the wildfire threat
 - Visit [LivingWithFire.info](#) for wildfire-preparedness information and free publications
 - [Contact](#) the Living With Fire Program to arrange for a wildfire-preparedness presentation in your community.
- Poor defensible space in the community
 - Review [defensible space recommendations](#)
 - Read about [Factors Affecting Property Owner Decisions About Defensible Space](#)
- Structures in the community are not constructed or maintained to resist ignition
 - Review [built environment recommendations](#)
 - Consider using [Wildland Urban Interface \(WUI\) Products](#) approved for use in California
- Lack of funding for mitigation projects
 - Consider applying for a [State Fire Assistance Program](#) grant, which are issued annually

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

How to Complete a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Nevada Communities was prepared by Ed Smith, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, with assistance from Sonya Sistare. Graphic design and illustration services provided by Larry Barclay. The original publication was funded by the Nevada Division of Forestry and USDA Forest Service in cooperation with University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.

For more information about this publication, contact the Living With Fire Program at 775-784-4848.

Cover photograph courtesy of the Boise Fire Department.

SP-13-14

Copyright © 2013, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, modified, published, transmitted, used, displayed, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher and authoring agency.

The University of Nevada, Reno is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, creed, national origin, veteran status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or genetic information in any program or activity it operates. The University of Nevada employs only United States citizens and aliens lawfully authorized to work in the United States.

THE FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES PROJECT IS SPONSORED BY:



The Fire Adapted Communities Project is part of the Living With Fire Program and works in a complementary and collaborative fashion with the Ready, Set, Go! Program.

For more information, visit www.LivingWithFire.info.

Living With Fire
