



University of Nevada  
Cooperative Extension



# **How to Complete a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Washoe County 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 Washoe County'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."<sup>1</sup> CWPPs offer residents of Washoe County the opportunity to take a prominent role in reducing the wildfire threat to their communities and provides 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."<sup>2</sup>

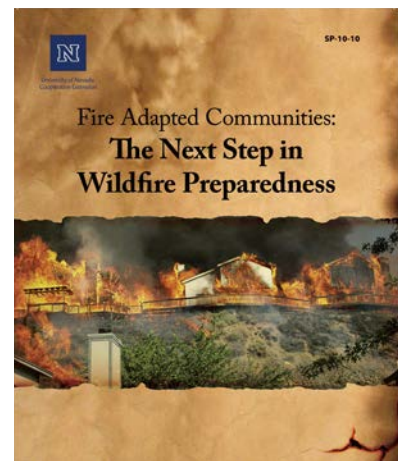
### Key Points About CWPPs<sup>3</sup>

- 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:<sup>4</sup>

- 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.*

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

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs\\_other/rmrs\\_2011\\_jakes\\_p001.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs_other/rmrs_2011_jakes_p001.pdf)

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

<sup>4</sup> <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:<sup>5</sup>
  - 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.<sup>6</sup>
- 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 USDA 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.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs\\_p046/rmrs\\_p046\\_613\\_624.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_p046/rmrs_p046_613_624.pdf)

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

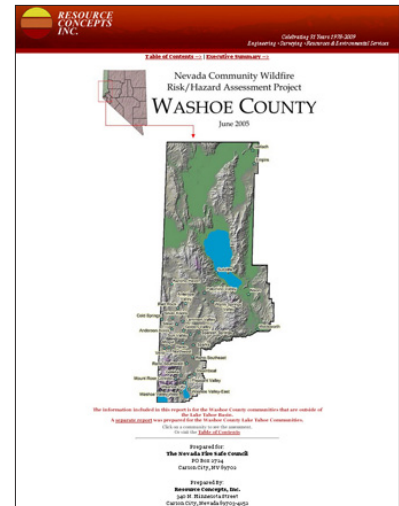
- When allocating federal funds and grant dollars for fuel-reduction projects on nonfederal lands, federal and state agencies such as the Nevada Division of Forestry should, to the maximum extent practicable, give priority to communities that have adopted CWPPs.

## Previous Washoe County Wildfire Hazard Assessments

In 2004, communities located in Washoe County's wildland-urban interface were assessed in terms of their wildfire risk and hazard. Specifically, the assessment:

- 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.

The assessment was revised and supplemented in 2006 by Washoe County. (See [http://www.washoecounty.us/mgrsoff/fire-services/risk\\_hazard\\_assessment\\_communities.html](http://www.washoecounty.us/mgrsoff/fire-services/risk_hazard_assessment_communities.html).) 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 Washoe County Community Wildfire Risk/Hazard Assessment provides useful information for communities beginning the CWPP process.

*Click on the image to view the assessment.*

## HOW TO 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 identified below 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>

#### City of Reno Fire Department

Jeff Donahue, Fire Marshal  
P.O. Box 1900  
Reno, NV 89505  
775-334-4626  
[donahuej@reno.gov](mailto:donahuej@reno.gov)  
<http://reno.gov/index.aspx?page=189>

#### North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District

Mark Regan, Assistant Fire Marshal  
866 Oriole Way  
Incline Village, NV 89451  
775-833-8107  
[mregan@nltfpd.net](mailto:mregan@nltfpd.net)  
<http://www.nltfpd.net/>

#### Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District

Amy Ray, Fire Marshal  
Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District  
1001 E. Ninth St.  
Reno, NV 89520  
Office: 775-326-6000  
Cell: 775-313-1592  
[aray@tmfpd.us](mailto:aray@tmfpd.us)

#### Sparks Fire Department

Robert King, Fire Marshal  
1605 Victorian Ave.  
Sparks, NV 89431  
775-353-2261  
[bking@cityofsparks.us](mailto:bking@cityofsparks.us)  
<http://cityofsparks.us/departments/fire-department>

## 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.

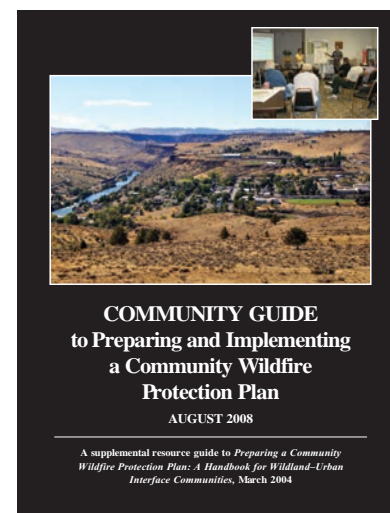
The initial step for developing a CWPP should be formation of a core group with representation from local government (City of Reno, City of Sparks or Washoe County), local fire authorities (City of Reno Fire Department, North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, Sparks Fire Department, Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District or a volunteer fire department), 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, Chairman of the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners 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 Act encourages federal agencies to partner in the CWPP process "to the extent that a community desires, within budgetary constraints."<sup>7</sup> 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 Washoe County Commissioners.
- University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Washoe County office.
- Nevada Department of Transportation.
- Washoe County Emergency Management.
- Truckee Meadows Water Authority.
- NV Energy.

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.*

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs\\_other/rmrs\\_2011\\_jakes\\_p001.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs_other/rmrs_2011_jakes_p001.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, the Chairman of the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners and the 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

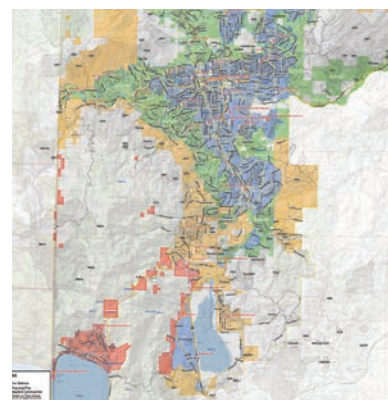
- Requests a description of the wildfire risk and degree of hazard for the area within and surrounding the community.
- Features an interactive wildfire-hazard assessment form (Appendix A of the template).

### 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.



This map shows the wildfire-hazard rating for Washoe County communities and properties.

*Click on the image to go to the Washoe County mapping site.*

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.*

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, Chairman of the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners and the State Forester for their approval and signatures.

## APPENDIX

### Washoe County-specific documents and reports

- [Fire Adapted Communities: The Next Step in Wildfire Preparedness](#)
- [Fire Hazard Map](#)
- [Nevada Community Wildfire Risk/Hazard Assessment Project](#) report for Washoe County
- Supplementing the [Nevada Community Wildfire Assessment Project](#) for Washoe County

### Other 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](#) for Washoe County
  - 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](#) for Washoe County
  - 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

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

Cover photograph shows the aftermath of the Caughlin Fire that burned through Reno's Ridgeview subdivision. Photo courtesy of University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.

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For more information, visit [www.LivingWithFire.info](http://www.LivingWithFire.info).