

History of Community Wildfire Protection Plans:

January 2003 Congress implemented the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). This program was to identify and analyze Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) for the potential to support wildland fire and assist communities at risk from catastrophic Wildland fires by providing assistance for activities that include assessment and planning, mitigation activities, community and homeowner education, hazardous fuels reduction, monitoring, and maintenance, training, and equipment purchases. Efforts to minimize the disastrous effects of wildfire in Cochise County have been underway for many years; these efforts have resulted in communities within Cochise County developing their own approaches to preparing for Wildland fire. Developing a county wide CWPP was initiated in 2011 to bolster the efforts of large communities and incorporate smaller communities into a larger plan. This county program will bring together Federal, State, County, and local partners to maximize efforts to prepare private property and adjoining public lands to allow fire to play its natural role in ecosystems without devastating effects on life and property. Cochise County has been identified as an “at risk” community.

Based on the available BLM grant, *the purpose of this project is to support Cochise County in their efforts to create and implement a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Creating and implementing a CWPP will help Cochise County identify areas of Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and specific concerns associated with those areas. Goal is to reduce the risk and impact of wildfire on communities through protection planning, hazardous fuels reduction, maintenance and monitoring, mitigation and education activities.*

First Steps: A consultant will be hired to complete the plan and these are the appropriate 9 steps with the first round of funding:

1. Coordinate with County to form decision making body responsible for the development of the plan (responsible parties from various County areas)
2. Involve Federal agencies to identify local representatives responsible for management of public lands within the community. We have National Forest, Military Installations, State Land etc.
3. Engage interested parties and identify planning zones – initiate collaborative process and define boundaries of each area
4. Identify communities at risk within the county– prioritize according to degree of risk; besides areas at risk for fire consider low income persons, elderly, etc who might need additional assistance.
5. Establish communities at risk base maps. Defines land ownership of areas and major community values (ie recreation areas, etc) Identify significant infrastructure.

6. Develop risk assessment for each community at risk. Determine wild land fuel hazards, risk of occurrence, community values threatened by fire and response and suppression capabilities. Maps showing vegetation types associated with fire behavior. Determine local preparedness and fire fighting capability. Identify evacuation and emergency response corridors.
7. Establish Community Hazard reduction priorities and recommendations to reduce structural ignitibility. Education and outreach and ensures recommendations are not contradictory to local, state or federal land management or development plans. Incorporates planning requirements of all jurisdictions.
8. Develop action plan and assessment. Identifies roles and responsibilities funding needs and timelines for implementing recommendations.
9. Final plan presented for adoption.

Cost of consultant to develop plan (based on one unsolicited submittal):

\$65,700 Consultant (have not sent out RFP yet – could be lower?)
 20,000 BLM Federal Grant contribution (1st round)
 14,500 Az State Fire Contribution (estimated at this time)

\$\$34,102 Balance required for County contribution (could be met through other partners or contributions and possibly inkind time to manage grant). All of these stakeholders have a vested interest in the plan:

- US Forest Service
- AZ GFD
- US Fish Wildlife
- Nature Conservancy
- National Parks Service
- State Parks (Kartchner and Tombstone Courthouse)
- Border Patrol
- Ft. Huachuca
- Dept of Defense (Davis Monthan AFB)
- Railroads
- Utilities (TEP, APS, SW Gas, Sulphur Springs, and Water Co.'s)
- Apache Powder / Nitrogen Plant
- Mining Companies (Freeport McMoRan)
- Fire Districts (25 in the County)
- Colleges (Cochise College and U of A)
- Homeowner associations
- Larger ranches/wineries/farms
- Chamber of Commerces
- Technology Companies (towers in area – Verizon, AT/T, Cox, Cable One)

- Local gov't areas who were considering developing a plan could contribute and be included in this plan (although they most likely would be included regardless since it is County wide)
- Private or corporate donations (ie Stan Greer Millworks and other local businesses who have a vested interest)

Pros:

- HFRA provides for community-based decision making and empowers local governments to determine the boundaries of the WUI that surround their community. We know our County better than anyone else. Single entity responsible for facilitating the collaborate process needed to implement action recommendations.
 - This plan allows every jurisdiction in the County to benefit. They can each work with State Land agencies on projects to improve their own wildland interface. Previously only a couple of jurisdictions derived this benefit because they have plans.
 - Do we want to take the lead to develop the resources to mitigate future fires? If we develop the County wide plan we have insight and review of other local plans. This is important to share resources and also not duplicate effort and have one master plan goal in mind.
 - While our interest is County wide, others may have more localized interests that are not beneficial long term or County wide.
 - Recognize that while the costs of restoring lands are high, the costs of inaction are catastrophic.
- Healthy forest and living areas - demanded by local citizens and expected by visitors. As communities continue to expand into adjacent wild lands more citizens and property becomes at risk.
- Benefit to the County is to end up with the plan and maps detailing what areas are most in jeopardy. Gives information for forest thinning and type of vegetation. Gives insight to resources available to fight fires and who is responsible for what in an emergency. Provides info on emergency corridors and access and ensures one common goal. Provides for additional long term planning and development. Provides community outreach and educational information opportunity. Without this plan in place, it jeopardizes future grant funding opportunities.
- Those who survive disaster are those most prepared and informed.

Cons:

- Might risk losing other funding opportunities by not having a CWPP – ie BLM has \$100,000 in possible funds total. Other agencies, state entities, and private stakeholders could provide future funding if available.
- If plan is not created, we lose the opportunity to discover vegetation mitigation assessment in our area. This includes hazardous fuels reduction and educational

opportunities for land owners:

Example: Every year during fire season the State of Arizona is asked to defend why they don't thin forests and protect more land. Having this plan in place ensures we can help monitor our own area and demand possible State/Federal assistance or at least be in a better position to protect our own interests.

- Are we negligent for not providing a Plan?

16 Community Wildfire Protection Plans in Arizona. Most completed 2004-2007:

In Cochise County:

Bisbee

Palominas Fire District – San Pedro River corridor between Border and Hereford

Cascabel

Portal – discussion stage: waiting to see what larger cities would do first

San Pedro - in development stages

Chiricahua Headquarters - based out of NM with a plan in place

Other Areas in Arizona:

Sitgreaves National Forest

Mt. Lemmon

Apache National Forest (7 communities)

Rim Country (88 defined communities)

Flagstaff (7 areas)

Williams

Tusayan Area

Sonita Elgin

Arivaca Sasabe

LaPaz Desert Communities

LaPaz River Communities

Yavapai Communities

Graham/Greenlee Counties

In development stage:

Mohave County

Central Navajo County

Yuma County

Blue Ridge (Coconino Cty)

Oracle

Link to Arizona State Forestry Division to review existing Plans:

http://www.azsf.az.gov/fire_managment/communities_at_risk/default.asp#ccwpp