



Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Guide





Acknowledgments

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Guide is part of the California CWPP Toolkit. The California CWPP Toolkit was co-developed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) - Office of the State Fire Marshal's Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division, Community Wildfire Planning Center (CWPC), Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) Learning Network, and California Fire Safe Council. Funding for this project was provided by CAL FIRE's Fire Prevention Program as part of the California Climate Investments Program.

This resource is part of the [California CWPP Toolkit](#), a free online resource that contains a comprehensive guide, customizable template, best practices, and additional resources to help communities develop and implement CWPPs.

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Acronyms

BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CWPC	Community Wildfire Planning Center
CWPM	Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
FAC	Fire Adapted Community
FHSZ	Fire Hazard Severity Zone
FRA	Federal Responsibility Area
FRAP	Fire and Resource Assessment Program
FSR	Fire Safe Regulations
GIS	Geographic Information System
HFRA	Healthy Forests Restoration Act
HVRA	Highly Valued Resource and Asset
LRA	Local Responsibility Area
OSFM	Office of the State Fire Marshal
SIZ	Structure Ignition Zone
SRA	State Responsibility Area
USFS	United States Forest Service
VHFHSZ	Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone
WUI	Wildland-Urban Interface



Overview of CWPPs

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are collaboratively developed plans focused on reducing wildfire risk to identified community values within a defined planning area. They serve as an important vehicle for assessing local wildfire hazard and risk, coordinating wildfire risk reduction activities, and providing a mechanism for project funding and implementation.

CWPPs were first defined in the [Healthy Forests Restoration Act \(HFRA\) of 2003](#); this landmark legislation provided communities with an opportunity to influence where and how federal agencies implement fuel reduction projects on federal lands and how additional federal funds may be distributed for projects on nonfederal lands. Under HFRA, communities that adopted a CWPP were given priority to federally funded hazardous fuel reduction projects that protect at-risk communities or watersheds.

HFRA outlines a minimum set of requirements for CWPPs focused on collaboration, prioritized fuel reduction, treatment of structural ignitability, and a final approval process. Many states, including California, have further clarified and expanded these minimum requirements to help meet statewide wildfire risk reduction goals and achieve a consistent standard.

About This Guide

The CWPP Guide is intended to help any community (jurisdiction, district, or geographic area) and associated organizations, agencies, and interested parties in California successfully prepare and implement a CWPP. This guide provides:

- Direction on the CWPP development process, including how to form a collaborative working group, the CWPP approval and submission process, and other plan development considerations
- Information on required and recommended plan content, including potential data resources
- Tips for CWPP implementation, updates, and maintenance

This guide is part of the [California CWPP Toolkit](#). The California CWPP Toolkit provides a suite of tools including this guide, an optional CWPP template, best practices based on community examples from across California, additional resources for public outreach and engagement, funding opportunities, and more. Applicable toolkit resources are noted throughout this guide to help readers explore further information.

“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.”

~ Alan Lakei



How to Use This Guide

Information in this guide is presented in a logical sequence of plan development, implementation, and maintenance, although some activities may occur simultaneously or on different time cycles. Readers that are new to CWPPs are strongly encouraged to start at the beginning of this guide. Others who have already developed a CWPP may use this guide in a manner that is most beneficial for their process.

CWPP Requirements and Recommendations

CWPP requirements in California are established through federal legislation (HFRA) and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) as the state forestry agency with authority for CWPP approval. Table 1 provides a summary of CWPP requirements and recommendations. These requirements apply to any CWPP that will be submitted to CAL FIRE (and other entities) for approval. Recommendations are suggestions only and are intended to improve CWPP outcomes. Communities should check with local jurisdictional authorities for any additional requirements that may pertain to local CWPPs.

CWPP Template

Communities are not required to prepare their CWPPs in a specific format. However, the California CWPP Toolkit includes an optional [CWPP Template](#) that is customizable. This resource is for any community interested in using a pre-formatted document that meets the minimum requirements established by HFRA and CAL FIRE.

New vs. Updated CWPPs

This guide is intended to offer relevant information for any community in the process of embarking on a new CWPP, major update (a CWPP that undergoes significant updates and changes to content such that it must be approved again by the required signatories), or minor updates and maintenance of plans.

CWPP Plan Design and Layout

This guide is generally directed toward creating a standalone CWPP plan in a traditional plan layout and format (i.e. a single downloadable plan document). However, users can adapt the information in this guide to fit their plan formatting needs.



TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CWPP REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Topic	Requirement	Recommendation
CWPP Planning Process		
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form a collaborative CWPP working group that includes a representative from the local government, local fire authority, and CAL FIRE (Local CAL FIRE Unit Chief, CAL FIRE Contract County Fire Chief, or their designee). Collaborate with other stakeholders to incorporate their input throughout the plan development process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align collaborative efforts with additional community outreach and engagement for maximum benefit.
Initial Scoping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a scoping exercise to identify important CWPP planning considerations, including the geographic area, purpose, schedule, formats and distribution methods.
Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with federal agencies that are applicable to the CWPP planning area. Identify and engage with additional stakeholders (local experts and interested parties) to build partnerships and inform plan contents and priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider convening additional advisory councils to oversee or inform the planning process and its contents.
Community Outreach and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct community outreach and engagement activities to provide opportunities for the public to provide input and feedback into plan contents and priorities. Document activities in the final CWPP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Match the type and quantity of public engagement activities with the CWPP planning area. Review the CWPP Outreach and Engagement Workbook for strategies and resources.
Plan Review and Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the final CWPP to the applicable representatives from the local government, local fire department, and CAL FIRE (Local CAL FIRE Unit Chief, CAL FIRE Contract County Fire Chief, or their designee) for their review and approval of final plan contents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with these entities throughout the planning process so they understand the final plan contents.
Plan Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit the final approved CWPP to the Local CAL FIRE Unit Chief or Contract County Fire Chief (or their designee) and to OSFM's Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division (email: prefireplanning@fire.ca.gov) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable.



TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CWPP REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Topic	Requirement	Recommendation
CWPP Contents		
Structure and Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with the optional CWPP Toolkit template to guide content development. Check with local authorities to identify any local CWPP requirements for templates.
Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a plan cover with the name and final approval or adoption date of the CWPP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include additional information such as illustrations, logos. Check for any requirements to add language on the cover page or elsewhere that identifies funding sources.
Signature Page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a scanned final signature page with signatures from local representative, fire chief, authorized CAL FIRE representative (Local CAL FIRE Unit Chief or a CAL FIRE Contract County Fire Chief, or their designee). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include additional signatories based on the CWPP working group and local approval process.
Additional Front Matter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the navigability and user-friendliness of the plan by including a table of contents, acknowledgements, contact information, list of tables and figures, acronyms, and other front matter. Adapt any information to online formats.
Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a high-level summary of the plan contents to help readers quickly understand key points and takeaways.
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an introduction to orient readers to the plan's contents and structure.
Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a set of goals and objectives to articulate the plan's intended outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the goals and objectives as the guideposts for creating plan actions.
Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify lead agencies / organizations' roles and responsibilities associated with the CWPP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modify information based on whether the roles are associated with plan development or implementation.
Applicable Plans and Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and review local, state, and federal plans and regulations to help inform CWPP content development, actions, and implementation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake plan and regulatory reviews early in the CWPP development process to avoid duplication and align content.



TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CWPP REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Topic	Requirement	Recommendation
<i>CWPP Contents</i>		
Planning Area and Community Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the CWPP planning area showing boundaries on a map. Provide information about the planning area to inform understanding and decision making, including population, land ownership, fire environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide additional information, such as land use and development patterns, socioeconomic characteristics and vulnerable populations. Reference and align content with relevant plans, such as the General Plan, CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plan, and Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Adjust the level of detail to align with the scale and goals of the CWPP.
Fire Protection Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify FRA/ SRA / LRA and fire protection districts for legal and financial responsibility of wildfire prevention and response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide additional information (which may differ based on the community location), such as: fire district service areas, levels of service, fire planning areas or units. Reference CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plans if applicable to planning area.
Wildland-Urban Interface Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and map the local WUI. Identify structure density and Intermix / Interface WUI distinctions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use WUI data available from CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP); note that the WUI layer may not cover every area.
Assessment of Wildfire Hazard and Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess wildfire hazard within the CWPP planning area. Identify highly valued resources and assets (HVRAs): structures, critical infrastructure, cultural and natural resources (critical habitat, watersheds, timber, etc.). Assess wildfire risk to identified WUI community(ies) and identified values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the most updated data available from CAL FIRE's website for SRA and the local jurisdiction for the LRA. Include other factors such as tree mortality data, if available and current. Use additional FRAP datasets and information from the Regional Resource Kits on the California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force website, if available. Include additional HVRAs identified by the community.



TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CWPP REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Topic	Requirement	Recommendation
CWPP Contents		
Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an action plan that summarizes prioritized actions, lead / responsible agencies, timeframe for implementation, required resources, metrics for tracking. • Include a minimum set of actions to address fuel treatments and structural ignitability measures (see below). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider additional details to enhance the action plan, such as connections with other plans, partner agencies to support implementation, and other potential resources.
Landscape Management/ Prioritized Hazardous Fuel Reduction Treatments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the hazard assessment and risk assessment outcomes as a starting point. • Consider and collaborate on alignment between CWPP and CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plans.
Ignitability Measures for Structures and Critical Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify measures that communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures and critical infrastructure for both new and existing development in the CWPP planning area. • Reference applicable state requirements (e.g., Fire Safe Regulations, Defensible Space, Building Code). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include parcel-level assessment data where available.
Wildfire Response and Suppression Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an assessment of wildfire response and suppression capabilities within the fire services and provide or reference emergency operations center capabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include response capabilities for additional support, such as emergency social services, post-disaster recovery, evacuation, utilities, and public works.
Additional Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore other actions that help meet the CWPP goals and objectives, such as public health, evacuation planning, post-disaster recovery.
Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include supplemental information not contained in the main body of the plan, such as documentation of community outreach and engagement, wildfire analyses.



TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CWPP REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Topic	Requirement	Recommendation
<i>CWPP Implementation</i>		
Plan Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a CWPP coordination team for overseeing and tracking plan implementation.
Partnerships and Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify or expand public outreach, partnerships and engagement to align with project implementation.
Annual Review and Progress Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the plan current through annual reviews of the action plan. • Create and share progress reports on status of the CWPP action plan.
Plan Maintenance and Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required by CAL FIRE but may be required by other grantmaking agencies or funders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider factors that require a CWPP update, such as the influence of major events, changes to the planning area, alignment with other plan cycles, inaccurate content, or outdated signatories.



CWPP Planning Process

The CWPP planning process is equally as important as the final plan product(s). The CWPP planning process entails forming a collaborative working group, engaging with a diverse group of stakeholders, setting a solid foundation for project management, considering initial scoping questions, and following final CWPP approval and submission requirements. Some of these process elements occur at the beginning of plan development, throughout plan development, or at key points along the way. It's helpful to understand the elements in advance to set up the CWPP on the best footing from the start.

Collaboration

A CWPP must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives and local fire authorities, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties. While communities retain broad discretion on what form the collaborative process takes, required signatories must agree on the final plan contents and approve it. As a result, it's important to integrate collaboration from the outset to ensure that CWPP goals and priorities meet the needs of multiple parties that have an interest in wildfire risk reduction and support the final plan.

Importance of Collaboration

Collaboration is essential for any CWPP that seeks final approval from state and local agencies. The importance of collaboration for long-term success of CWPPs cannot be overstated. Collaboration builds and strengthens relationships among those engaged in plan development, and bolsters partnerships necessary for implementation. Collaboration helps overcome challenges associated with the complexities of wildfire risk reduction activities that are multi-faceted. Collaboration can also bring different perspectives to the table early in the plan development process to avoid pitfalls later. Incorporating this approach early and often can help deliver improved results with lasting impact.

Three entities that must collaborate on CWPPs in California:

- **Applicable local government:** a representative of the local elected governing body, or local authority having jurisdiction
- **Local fire department:** Fire chief representing the local fire department(s)
- **State entity responsible for forest management:** Local CAL FIRE Unit Chief, CAL FIRE Contract County Fire Chief, or their designee (as a designated representative of the CAL FIRE Director/Fire Chief)

Forming a collaborative CWPP working group (or similar committee) at the outset serves as a core team to guide the entire planning and development process. This group must include a representative from the local government, local fire authority, and CAL FIRE (as the state agency responsible for forest management). Consult the Unit Chief of the nearest CAL FIRE Administrative Unit or Contract County Fire Chief for their input on who to designate as the appropriate representative to include on the CWPP working group. Note that CAL FIRE is also serving as the state entity responsible for forest management and should be engaged in the CWPP collaborative process regardless of whether a community is in the State Responsibility Area (SRA) or Local Responsibility Area (LRA).



CWPP PLANNING PROCESS

In addition, communities that are adjacent to a federal land management agency should make every effort to include their representation in the collaborative process as part of their core working group. Federal agency partners bring critical expertise and input to the CWPP planning process. In cases where agency partners are not able or willing to participate, communities are encouraged to document efforts made toward collaboration and outreach.

For additional tips, resources, and strategies on working groups, refer to the California CWPP Toolkit best practices [Create Diverse and Multidisciplinary CWPP Working Groups](#) and [Provide County-Level Leadership for CWPP Development and Implementation](#).

Project Management Protocols

Early in the process, it's important for the CWPP working group to establish project management protocols to align expectations, clarify reporting, and increase internal and external communication. These protocols will be shaped in part by whether a consultant is engaged to lead the CWPP or whether the plan is being developed in-house. In either scenario, recommendations for successful project management include:

- **Assign a CWPP working group coordinator.** Designating a coordinator role creates a primary point of contact for all CWPP inquiries, establishes accountability, facilitates effective communication, and drives coordination. The coordinator role could be assigned to one person, such as a designated CWPP Coordinator staff position, or rolled into an existing job.
- **Clarify reporting procedures.** Clarify whether and who the CWPP working group reports to, such as a County Board of Supervisors or City Council, and any expectations around CWPP updates (such as quarterly attendance at meetings to provide updates). Also review any grant requirements (if applicable) to schedule interim and final reports and identify the type of information that will be requested for ongoing tracking.
- **Conduct ongoing internal communication.** Set up regular CWPP working group meetings to maintain ongoing communication. Recommended intervals are either biweekly or monthly, at a minimum. Ensure there is also a secure project platform available for sharing and storing project data, information, and files.
- **Establish a project tracking system and schedule.** Set up a project tracking system to track CWPP progress and create a schedule with key milestones and deliverables associated with the different phases and tasks (e.g., CWPP kickoff, research and data gathering, content development, plan review, stakeholder outreach, public engagement, final review, adoption, and monitoring).
- **Identify the consultant role, if applicable.** When a consultant is engaged to lead the CWPP, they will also have project management tools. Refer to the resource [Considerations for Working with a CWPP Consultant](#) for additional strategies and tips.
- **Consider specialized facilitation skills.** In addition to, or as part of, engaging consulting services, consider using a professional facilitator during the project management process for both internal working group meetings and external meetings with stakeholders. A trained facilitator can help establish meeting agendas with clear objectives, keep meetings on track, and manage conflict or difficult discussions that arise during the project.



CWPP PLANNING PROCESS

Initial Scoping

Investing upfront time to determine CWPP planning needs and goals informs a realistic scope of work and project schedule. While answers may evolve over the course of the planning process, this provides a helpful starting point. These guidance questions can also be used to identify who needs to be part of the CWPP working group or considered throughout the stakeholder engagement process. General guidance questions may include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

Purpose and Scope

- **Is this a new CWPP?**
 - Consider the primary purpose of developing a new CWPP. For many communities, developing a CWPP is a way to access future funding, but scoping provides a critical opportunity to consider a broader range of the plan's goals to support wildfire risk reduction.
 - Consider the intended geographic area of the new CWPP. If the CWPP planning area will cover multiple jurisdictions / districts, consider which jurisdictions should be engaged, which jurisdictions already have their own CWPP, and how this CWPP will relate to those plans. If the CWPP planning area is focused on one jurisdiction, consider if there are unincorporated communities that need to be included in this CWPP.
- **Is this an update to an existing CWPP?**
 - Consider if this will be a full or partial update. To help determine if the CWPP requires a full update, consider how much in the community's landscape and built environment has changed since the last plan, and whether the original CWPP goals and content are still accurate. Also consider who was previously engaged in the CWPP and whether roles and responsibilities should be updated.

Scale

- **Is this a single jurisdiction (municipality, town, district) or a multi-jurisdictional CWPP (such as a regional approach with multiple communities or a county with multiple unincorporated communities and/or incorporated jurisdictions)?**
 - Consider a CWPP structure that provides the general data and information in the body of the plan and add annexes for each community to focus on unique planning priorities and challenges. Depending on the scale, wildfire hazard and risk information may also need to be more detailed for each community.

Funding Sources and Capacity

- **Are funding sources already in place to complete the entire CWPP?**
 - Consider any restrictions, reporting requirements, or timelines associated with funding sources.
- **What is the internal capacity of the CWPP working group to undertake this effort?**
 - Consider any specialized skills or expertise that may require or benefit from using a consultant, such as the development of a wildfire hazard and risk assessment, stakeholder facilitation, data collection, technical writing, or public engagement.



CWPP PLANNING PROCESS

Initial Scoping

Schedule

- **What is the overall desired timeframe to complete the CWPP?**
 - Consider if the timeframe is realistic, whether it factors in any reporting requirements (such as expectations from local government), and whether it incorporates sufficient time for potential schedule changes or impacts.
- **What other plans have, or will have, a relationship to this CWPP (such as other CWPPs, the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, and General Plan Safety Element)?**
 - Consider upcoming update cycles and whether this information alters the CWPP schedule for better alignment.
- **Are there any other pressing community issues going on that would distract stakeholders and the public from undertaking a CWPP?**
 - Consider if there are any other major planning or regulatory updates scheduled that may require elected officials' attention and divert time and resources away from the CWPP.
- **Are there other considerations that could alter the project schedule?**
 - Consider other events that could occur during the CWPP, such as a wildfire or other significant disaster, and the impacts on a schedule. For example, key working group members from the fire department or CAL FIRE might be unavailable during busy times. When seeking participation in meetings or requesting input, build in additional buffer time for an inclusive participatory process.

Outcomes

- **What does a successful CWPP outcome look like?**
 - Consider potential metrics that can be used to measure the success of the action plan, such as: acres treated, percentage of structures with defensible space and/or hardened homes, investments in staff/organizational capacity, efficiencies in emergency response and evacuation planning times, reduction in damage / structure loss trends over time, increased investments in local per capita spending on hazard mitigation projects, community participation and engagement in activities, and wildfire educational website and social media visitor traffic.
- **Are there any other potential challenges that would affect the planning process?**
 - Consider any previous CWPP efforts or other similar planning efforts that may have resulted in unanticipated conflict and whether those issues have been resolved or may occur again.



CWPP PLANNING PROCESS

Initial Scoping

Plan Formats, Accessibility, and Distribution Strategies

- **Will interim drafts and the final CWPP be available through a website, in print form, or both?**
 - Consider whether a new website will be required or if there is an existing location available that meets the information technology capabilities, hosting, and other services necessary. For print and online materials, consider how to comply with accessibility requirements for different audience.
- **Will there be additional CWPP materials available in addition to the final plan?**
 - Consider whether other information can aid the CWPP outreach process and final plan distribution. For example, some communities create a story map, videos, or other interactive visual materials from the CWPP.
- **Who is responsible for the plan's long-term maintenance?**
 - Consider the type of resources that will be required for successfully sharing and maintaining the plan, such as Geographic Information System (GIS) capabilities, long-term web hosting, maintenance of plan content and website materials or links.

Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement

Depending on the geographic applicability of the plan, the CWPP process must engage and consult with relevant representatives from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to begin sharing perspectives, priorities, and other information relevant to the planning process. A CWPP is legally applicable to federal lands only if they are managed by the USFS or the BLM; other federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA]) may also be engaged in planning efforts, but those agencies are not bound by the provisions of HFRA.¹

The CWPP working group should formulate a list of additional stakeholders that may serve as local experts or interested parties throughout the CWPP process. Local experts and interested parties bring expertise and perspectives that inform content development and project prioritization planning. Consider a broad range of federal, state, and local agencies and groups during this process. These groups can be formalized into an advisory committee or organization may be less formal.

Local experts are typically agencies, organizations, and local experts directly involved in planning, fire, forestry, fuels management, and emergency management, such as state and federal land management agencies, local governments, tribes, and fire departments or protection districts. These groups may provide information and feedback based on relevant expertise.

¹"Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan – A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities" – March 2004. Accessible at: <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/documents/resources/communities/cwpphandbook.pdf>



CWPP PLANNING PROCESS

Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement

Interested parties are typically organizations and individuals having a broader interest in planning and fire, such as landowners, homeowners' associations, neighborhood groups, watershed groups, land trusts, real estate professionals, developers, and builders. Depending on the local context, some groups may want to be directly engaged while others may only wish to be informed of the CWPP development process and invited to public engagement opportunities.

See Appendix A for an example worksheet to identify potential CWPP working group members, federal agencies, local experts, and interested parties. Once stakeholders (local experts and interested parties) are identified, create an outreach and engagement plan. See the section below for more details.

Community Outreach and Engagement

A CWPP is intended to reflect community values and interests. As a result, it's critical that the community is engaged in the planning process in meaningful ways. Community outreach and engagement provide many benefits, including: relationship-building among stakeholders and community members; fostering diverse perspectives to help inform planning needs and activities; expanding educational opportunities as the community learns about wildfire together; and increasing opportunities to build capacity through engagement and recruitment of local volunteers.

CWPPs are required to document how public outreach and engagement occurred during the development of a CWPP prior to its final approval. Documentation can be included as a section within the CWPP or as an appendix, and should include information that describes the following:

- who was engaged during the CWPP development process (names of organizations, groups, HOAs)
- the type of engagement that occurred (such as open houses, meetings, listening sessions, workshops, surveys, online informational methods)
- associated dates or timeframes of engagement within the planning process
- any additional information that is helpful to documenting how public outreach and engagement occurred and important findings that helped shaped the CWPP process (including key survey results, summaries of public meetings, story map visitors, or other activity logs)

Refer to the [CWPP Outreach and Engagement Workbook](#) and best practice [Engage Whole Communities Equitably Through Public Participation](#) for additional information and strategies.



CWPP PLANNING PROCESS

Plan Review and Approval

The final CWPP must be reviewed and approved by authorized representatives from the following entities:

- **Applicable local government:** a representative of the local elected governing body, or local authority having jurisdiction
- **Local fire department:** Fire chief representing the local fire department(s)
- **State entity responsible for forest management:** Local CAL FIRE Unit Chief, CAL FIRE Contract County Fire Chief, or their designee (as a designated representative of the CAL FIRE Director/Fire Chief)

Because representatives for these entities are part of the collaborative working group, final review and approval is intended to be seamless. Minimum documentation for final plan approval is a signature page.

Plan Submission

Submit the final approved CWPP to the Local CAL FIRE Unit Chief or Contract County Fire Chief (or their designee) and to OSFM's Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division (email: prefireplanning@fire.ca.gov)



CWPP Contents

This section provides information on the type of content that is either required or recommended for inclusion in any CWPP that will be reviewed and approved by CAL FIRE as the state entity responsible for signing a CWPP. Each subsection contains an explanation of the minimum requirement or recommendation and guidance on content development. Developing content for the CWPP should continue to integrate input from working group collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and public outreach to incorporate local knowledge and expertise.

Structure and Organization

An optional [CWPP Template](#) is provided as a resource for communities when preparing a CWPP. The template aligns with the required and recommended content in this section. However, the structure and organization of a CWPP will vary depending on several factors, including the geographic size of the planning area, number of communities in the planning area, level of complexity of the WUI, scope of topics addressed in the plan, whether the CWPP is part of other plans (e.g., Local Hazard Mitigation Plan), and other formatting and layout preferences. As a result, there is no set minimum or maximum length that indicates what makes a CWPP most effective. Considerations when organizing the CWPP may also depend on the scale and geographic scope of the planning area, as noted in the Initial Scoping section.

As technology and communications evolve, CWPPs have also taken on new formats to help share technical information with a variety of audiences. Some communities have moved away from traditional plan formats and now provide CWPPs online in the form of hubs, story maps, or portals that allow readers the ability to explore content, track updates, or monitor projects. Although the CWPP Template provides a more traditional approach to a plan format, communities are encouraged to consider the best approach for audience accessibility, plan maintenance, and other needs.

Cover Page

A cover page is required to include the name and date of the CWPP. The date is typically expressed as the month and year of when the CWPP was officially approved or adopted. A cover page may also include graphics, illustrations, or representative images of the community, and the names and logos of CWPP preparer(s) or those organizations and agencies associated with final signatories and partners (if applicable). The cover page (or elsewhere in the document) may need to include funder logos or other acknowledgments, depending on any grant requirements.

Signature Page

A signature page is required for inclusion in the final CWPP. This page must provide the names and signatures of authorized representatives that have approved the final plan. At a minimum, these must include a representative from the applicable local government, local fire department, and state entity responsible for forest management (i.e. CAL FIRE). Information on the signature page should include a signature line, printed name of the signatory, printed name of the signatory's agency/organization and corresponding title, and date of signature. Additional signatories may be added that reflect other working group members or approval agencies.



CWPP CONTENTS

Additional Front Matter

Additional front matter at the beginning of a CWPP (before the plan's main technical content) typically includes table of contents, acknowledgements, contact information, list of tables and figures, and list of acronyms. Some of these components may need to be adapted to different plan formats.

Table of Contents / Navigation Page

A formatted table of contents is recommended for easy navigation across the document. In online formats, the table of contents should be hyperlinked to each section. The table of contents should include any appendices unless listed separately.

Acknowledgments

An acknowledgments section is recommended to give credit to partners, stakeholders, and interested parties that participated in the CWPP process. This may include any acknowledgments to plan funding sources and associated language.

Contact Information

Contact information is recommended to include in case readers have questions about the CWPP. The listed contact is typically the CWPP project manager, other local CWPP contact, or project website for CWPP information. Consider using a general email address in case names and specific email addresses change over the course of the CWPP cycle. Contact information can be included on another page, such as the Acknowledgments page.

List of Tables and Figures

A list of tables and figures with hyperlinks is recommended to make the plan easier to navigate.

List of Acronyms

A list of acronyms is recommended to provide an easy reference for any readers less familiar with common acronyms and other terms used in the CWPP.



CWPP CONTENTS

Executive Summary

An executive summary is recommended to provide readers with a high-level synopsis of the CWPP's contents that are most essential for readers to know. Information typically included in an Executive Summary recaps the main points from the following topics:

- Purpose and goals of the plan
- Summary of the plan's history
- Major stakeholders and overview of plan development
- Summary of wildfire hazard and risk assessment outcomes, such as key geographic areas that are most at risk
- Summary of prioritized actions and critical needs associated with implementation
- Other information that helps readers quickly understand the main points of the plan

Introduction

An introduction is recommended to help orient readers to the document in terms of its purpose, contents, and structure. Depending on how the plan is organized, the Introduction may be a short list of topics or expanded to include other information. Suggested content in the Introduction includes:

- A dedicated section to confirm that the CWPP has met the minimum plan requirements
- List of CWPP goals and objectives
- Overview of whether this plan is a new CWPP or is an update to a previous version (if an update, include a brief explanation on what has been updated)

Goals and Objectives

A set of goals and objectives is required to articulate the CWPP's intended outcomes. Goals are high-level, aspirational statements that set the general direction of the plan and reflect desired outcomes and intentions of the community in terms of the plan's overall topic. Objectives help achieve goals by breaking them down into achievable components. When possible, objectives should be measurable and time-specific and may include other quantitative elements to support monitoring and progress reporting. Together, goals and objectives act as guideposts for the development of future CWPP actions, which are the most specific and detailed (see section on Action Plan). It's helpful to include goals and objectives at the beginning of the plan to establish the overall direction and intent.



CWPP CONTENTS

Roles and Responsibilities

Identification of the CWPP working group and any advisory councils or committees is required to understand who holds primary responsibility for plan development and implementation. This information should include details such as the member's name, title, affiliation (e.g., agency or organization), and if they serve a specific role, such as CWPP project lead. This information may be included in its own section or integrated within another part of the plan. Note that these roles may differ between plan development and implementation. This information can be captured in multiple sections, such as the Executive Summary, Introduction, and/or the Action Plan.

Applicable Plans and Regulations

An overview of applicable local, state, and federal plans and regulations is required to show the relationship between the CWPP and other relevant information, such as policies, actions, ordinances, and legislation. Identifying applicable plans and regulations should occur early in the CWPP development process to avoid potential duplication, leverage any existing data or material, understand any constraints within the existing regulatory context, and inform content and decision making. See Appendix B for applicable plans and regulations to consider; refer to the California CWPP Toolkit's best practice [Align the CWPP with Other Plans for Maximum Impact](#) for more strategies and tips.

Tips for Creating CWPP Maps

Maps (printed or digital) are powerful visual tools that provide spatial representations of an area to communicate key concepts and information. Maps are a critical component of CWPPs for spatial identification of the planning area boundaries, WUI, wildfire hazard and risk, and other local conditions and characteristics.

Maps are easiest to interpret when they are simple and clear. Maps that are included within the CWPP are typically a static display for the reader's reference and must include a map title, legend, scale, north arrow, labels, citations, figure numbers and an explanatory caption.

Depending on the chosen software, digital maps can offer a much more dynamic experience with the ability to allow the user to change scale (zoom) and select layers, as well as other features. Digital maps can also be created to allow the user to create their own maps with the ability to select layers, download metadata, or even add data. Digital online maps can also be effective when included in public outreach materials, such as on webpages, or in story maps.



CWPP CONTENTS

Planning Area / Community Information

Identification and a description of the CWPP planning area is required to define the plan's geographic applicability and provide other relevant information for decision making. The planning area must include a map that identifies the planning area boundaries. All applicable unincorporated communities, municipalities, towns, districts, tribal areas, or other identified areas that are included within the planning area boundary should also be identified. For example, if the CWPP aligns with the jurisdictional boundaries of a county and includes unincorporated communities, the map would show the county boundary and unincorporated communities.

The planning area description must also include information on population (total number of residents within the planning area), land ownership, and the general fire environment (topography, vegetation, elevation range, fire history, and significant natural area features including critical habitat, watersheds, vegetation health, natural resource/recreation use. (Note that critical infrastructure is included in the discussion on wildfire risk assessments.)

Other community information that is recommended to include:

- Significant land features, rivers, and characteristics that shape terrain
- Land use and development patterns
- Significant industry (mining, forestry, oil and gas)
- Socioeconomic characteristics

See Table 1 for a summary of required and recommended community information to be included in the CWPP. Information may be in the main body of CWPP plan or in separate annexes for individual communities. The level of detail may depend on the scale of CWPP. For example, larger geographic areas may delineate the plan into smaller planning areas, subunits, or communities. It's helpful to reference other plans where relevant, or when additional information is available, such as the General Plan, CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plan, and Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.



TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Community Information	Relevance to CWPP	Suggested Data Resources
Planning Area Boundaries (required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines the entire geographic area of the plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAL FIRE FRAP: Land Ownership and Administration
Planning Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details the planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California Wildfire & Forest Resilience: Regional Resource Kits helps regional partners plan, prioritize and monitor projects
Population (required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information on the total number of people living in the planning area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Census Bureau; General Plan Housing Element
Land Ownership (required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information on land ownership for action planning and decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAL FIRE FRAP: Land Ownership and Administration; General Plan Land Use Element
Fire Environment (required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information on significant land features and natural areas, topography, vegetation, fire history (including ignition data), and other features that contribute to understand the local area and influences on fire behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAL FIRE FRAP: Natural Resources: Assessment, Management, and Planning; Local Hazard Mitigation Plan; CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plan
Land Use and Development Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information related to how and where the current land use and future growth may occur to inform WUI planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Plan Land Use Element and Housing Element
Socioeconomic Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides information related to populations within the planning area for additional considerations, such as vulnerable populations and tourists/visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Plan Housing Element; Local Hazard Mitigation Plan; SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities and CalEnviroScreen Data



CWPP CONTENTS

Fire Protection Areas

A CWPP must identify information related to fire protection and responsibility within the designated planning area. This information is helpful to understand who has the authority and responsibility to conduct certain mitigation, response, suppression, and other activities.

Information must include the applicable information:

- Fire district service areas
- Responsibility areas (federal, state, local)
- CAL FIRE unit(s)

Fire protection area(s) maps and data can be found on CAL FIRE's [FRAP Program website GIS Mapping and Data Analytics](#).

Fire District Service Areas

These are typically referred to as fire protection districts. Fire protection districts are the legal boundaries in which a given fire service is responsible for providing fire response. The fire service responsible for providing fire protection may be under the administration of an incorporated municipality, a county, or a non-profit organization, typically with board of directors oversight. These fire services may be staffed by full-time paid firefighters, volunteers, or paid on-call firefighters, or a combination of paid and volunteer. Structure fire response is provided as the core service, with the individual administration of these services determining additional levels of service, such as response to medical, car accidents, or other rescue calls, and administrative responsibilities, such as life safety inspections, or code enforcement.

Responsibility Areas

There are three designated wildland fire responsibility areas in California: Federal Responsibility Area (FRA), State Responsibility Area (SRA) and Local Responsibility Area (LRA). In straightforward terms, these responsibility areas describe who is legally and financially responsible for wildland fire prevention and protection.

- **Federal Responsibility Areas** are areas on federal land and are the legal responsibility of federal agencies, such as the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, BIA and BLM.
- **State Responsibility Areas** are areas in the state where the State of California has financial responsibility for wildland fire protection as defined in Public Resources Code § 4127. For example, CAL FIRE does not have responsibility for densely populated areas, incorporated cities, agricultural lands, or lands administered by the federal government. SRA designations undergo a thorough five-year review cycle, as well as annual updates for incorporations/annexations, error fixes, and ownership changes (automatic changes that do not require Board of Forestry and Fire Protection approval).
- **Local Responsibility Areas** are incorporated cities, urban regions, agriculture lands, and portions of the desert where the local government is responsible for wildfire protection. This is typically provided by city fire departments, fire protection districts, and counties.



CWPP CONTENTS

CAL FIRE Units

For administrative purposes, California is delineated into 21 CAL FIRE Administrative Units and six Contract Counties. The boundaries of the CAL FIRE Unit typically align with an individual county, or the boundaries of “grouped” counties. Each CAL FIRE Unit is overseen by a Unit Chief or Contract County Fire Chief and communicates their fuel reduction priorities through a Unit Fire Plan. [Unit Fire Plans](#) (updated annually) are created based on the overarching guidance in the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection’s [2018 Strategic Fire Plan for California](#). The 2018 Strategic Fire Plan is focused on fire prevention and suppression activities to protect lives, property, and ecosystems.

Unit Fire Plans help reduce the risk of wildfires by analyzing a specific area in terms of historical fire information, current situational factors (weather, wildland fuels, assets at risk, level of service provided) and future activities including prevention efforts, education, enforcement, fuel treatments, and staffing needs. Unit Fire Plans are excellent sources of information to consult during the development of CWPPs. During the CWPP plan alignment process, consider reviewing the local Unit Fire Plans for identifying opportunities where project goals can support one another.

Wildland-Urban Interface Identification

Identification and a description of the WUI is required to determine the type of local WUI conditions that exist within the CWPP planning area. In general, the WUI can be described as:

Any developed area where conditions affecting the combustibility of vegetation, and structures or infrastructure (built fuels), allow for the ignition and spread of fire through the combined fuels.

The WUI is typically spatially or geographically defined and presented in a map format. This helps local planners, fire officials, and other stakeholders in identifying what types of community assets are located within the WUI and what activities are necessary to address the threat of wildfire occurring in the WUI. Applying this concept to

create a spatial boundary on the WUI can be challenging, but necessary. Typical WUI map development incorporates structure density, to account for the full spectrum of the WUI “continuum” spanning from wildland to the urban development densities (Figure 1).

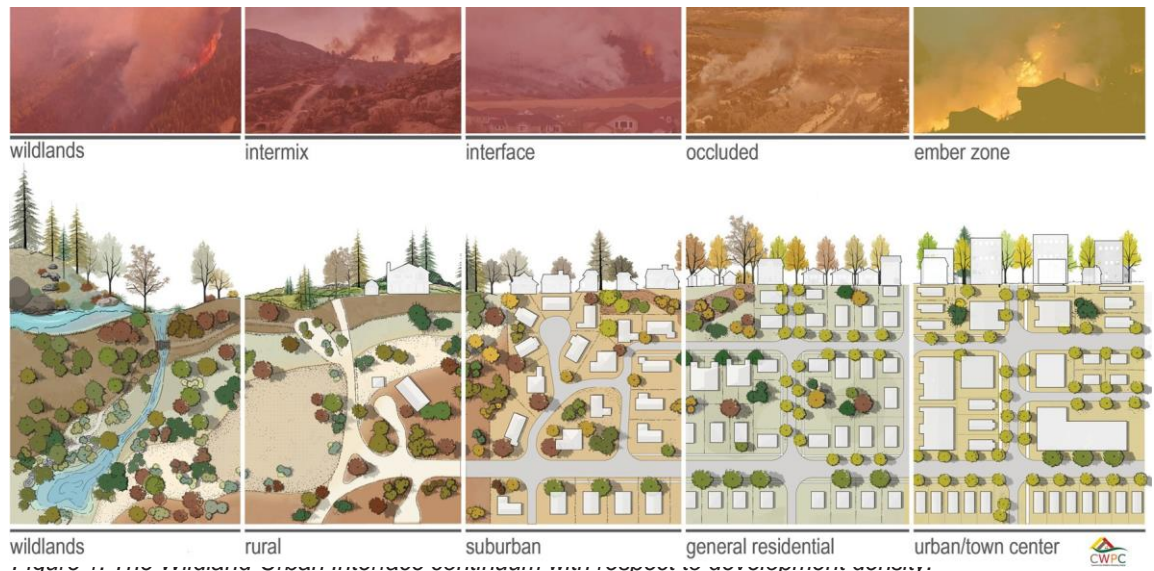


Figure 1. The Wildland-Urban Interface Continuum, with respect to development density.





CWPP CONTENTS

Two primary classifications are used to spatially define the WUI: intermix and interface.

- An **Intermix WUI** is where development, such as structures, is interspersed or scattered throughout wildland vegetation. An intermix WUI is often found in rural, ex-urban, or large-lot suburban developments.
- An **Interface WUI** is where development, such as structures, is grouped near areas with wildland fuels. There is a clear line of demarcation between development and vegetation, which may appear as an abrupt edge between a highly urbanized or suburban neighborhood and a wildland area—for example, when development borders public lands or when urban growth boundaries are in place.

It is becoming more common that WUI maps include some attempt to identify and display the expected distance of ember travel into an Interface WUI area, which is identified as the **Ember Zone**. Although most wildfire behavior and modeling experts understand that it is extremely difficult to model and spatially represent potential ember travel distances without using specific weather and burning conditions (i.e. an actual fire), it is understood that structure and infrastructure loss to embers well ahead of a wildfire are far too significant to ignore. Many of these Ember Zone areas are based on a broad understanding of the typical ember travel distances determined from research reference, or fire behavior subject matter expert observations and recommendations.

In some cases, WUI maps will also further identify islands of wildland fuels, defined as the **Occluded WUI**, which are found in areas such as community parks, open space, greenbelts, greenways or other natural areas within otherwise urban environment (Interface WUI) developments.

Communities can have a combination of WUI areas within close proximity. Any type of WUI poses a challenge when local conditions—such as flammable vegetation, combustible housing materials, weather patterns, or topography—allow for wildfire to spread through development. It's critical to analyze the spatial patterns of the WUI with an understanding of the different ways in which wildfire may threaten a community, how to mitigate wildfire conditions to reduce their potential impacts, and how land use planning decisions affect wildfire response and public safety. Ultimately, determining the extent of the WUI provides the scope of the values and engagement that the CWPP should cover.

Basic WUI maps and data are readily available through the CAL FIRE FRAP program and can be easily integrated into a CWPP. Keep in mind that these maps and data were developed at the state level, do not cover the entire state, and did not benefit from extensive "ground-truthing." As a result, and depending on the scale of the CWPP, local accuracy may vary. Therefore, it may be useful for local jurisdictions that have the resources to develop a more locally applicable spatial definition of the WUI that incorporates available structure location and density information.

See the [CAL FIRE FRAP GIS Mapping and Data Analytics website](#) for additional WUI information and data resources.



CWPP CONTENTS

Assessment of Wildfire Hazard and Wildfire Risk

Although the terms “wildfire hazard” and “wildfire risk” are sometimes used interchangeably or combined to create the term “wildfire hazard risk”, it is important to understand the difference between these two terms and use them appropriately in the community wildfire planning context.

Wildfire Hazard

Wildfire hazard describes the likelihood of a wildland fire occurring and the potential intensity at which it will occur. The wildfire hazard must be determined to provide further decision-support for driving actions in the CWPP. The wildfire hazard assessment can be undertaken before or after defining the WUI, but it may be useful to determine the wildfire hazard prior to spatially defining the WUI so it can be used as a tool to help inform the WUI area delineation.

The [CAL FIRE FRAP Wildfire Hazard Potential map](#) and [Fire Hazard Severity Zone \(FHSZ\) map](#) should be used as the starting point for the CWPP wildfire hazard assessment. For the purposes of the FRAP maps, wildfire hazard potential is synonymous with wildfire hazard. Table 2 describes the primary differences and similarities between Wildfire Hazard Potential map and the FRAP FHSZ map.

Table 2: Comparison Between FRAP Wildfire Hazard Potential and FHSZ Maps	
Wildfire Hazard Potential Map	Fire Hazard Severity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays the wildfire hazard based on likelihood and intensity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays the wildfire hazard based on likelihood and intensity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delineates a wildfire hazard continuum into five categories (low, moderate, high, very high, extreme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delineates the wildfire hazard continuum into three categories (moderate, high, very high)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not incorporate, and is not influenced by administrative, responsibility, or land ownership boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporates and is influenced by administrative, responsibility, or land ownership boundaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No link to state regulatory requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly linked to state regulatory requirements



CWPP CONTENTS

Wildfire Risk

Wildfire risk includes wildfire hazard (likelihood and intensity) with the addition of the factors that contribute to the susceptibility of a community, or the impact wildfire will have on Highly Valued Resources and Assets (HVRAs). The concept of wildfire risk is best described using the wildfire risk triangle, which combines the likelihood of ignitions and the intensity of the fire (the components of wildfire hazard) with the susceptibility of the built environment (Figure 2).

Factors that contribute to the susceptibility component of the wildfire risk assessment may include the following:

- Population demographics
- Public safety
- Ember transport modeling
- Structure and infrastructure susceptibility, including critical infrastructure
- Natural resource values and susceptibility
- Watershed vulnerability
- Socioeconomic values

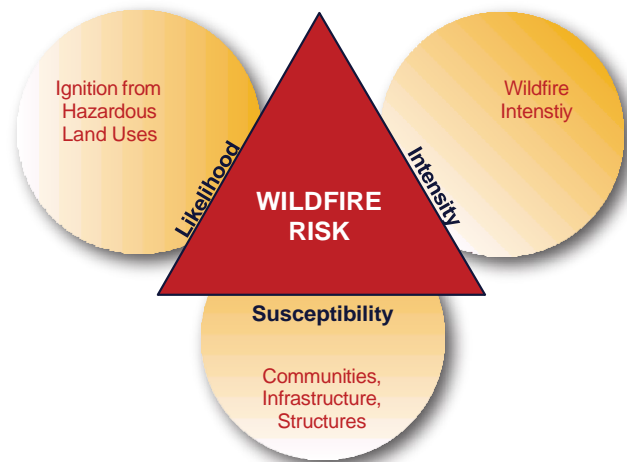


Figure 2. The wildfire risk triangle combining the inputs of wildfire hazard with susceptibility factors to determine wildfire risk. Image credit: CWPC

Wildfire Risk Assessment Process

As CAL FIRE does not offer risk assessment mapping, it is up to the community to undertake the risk assessment process. Wildfire risk assessments can be as complex (and costly) or as simple (and relatively inexpensive) as determined by the community. The following steps are typical and suggested to be undertaken by a community to assess wildfire risk. This process and the outcomes must be documented in the CWPP, preferably (but not necessarily) with maps.

1. **Wildfire Hazard Mapping** – This is an important first step for a wildfire risk assessment to build upon. The wildfire hazard mapping offers a simple surrogate for ranked exposure to wildfire in any given area of the community that a value might be exposed to.
2. **Identify High Level Wildfire Protection Priorities** – This step is an important step to drive the high-level focus of what is important to the community. CAL FIRE wildfire protection priorities are:
 - Life
 - Property
 - Natural Resources

A community should identify more specific priorities that fall into these high-level categories.



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3. **Values at Risk Identification** – A CWPP must identify the values at risk within the planning area and prioritize these values based on an objective methodology. These values at risk are often referred to as HVRAs when evaluating them as part of the risk assessment process. This can be accomplished through structured and facilitated community stakeholder meetings at which the community stakeholder group identifies specific values within the broader categories (above) that are important to the community. The values at risk that must be identified are structures, critical infrastructure (facilities for maintaining essential community public health and safety, economic, social, or cultural functions), watersheds, and cultural and natural resources (e.g., critical species and habitat, recreation values, timber). Additional values at risk that a community may wish to identify historical sites, or facilities and sites that are important to the community identity or socio-economic function.
4. **Values at Risk (HVRA) Vulnerability Ranking** – Once the HVRAs are identified, they must be ranked in terms of their vulnerability to wildfire. This can range from a highly technical and complex approach to a simple “grass roots” approach—or somewhere along this spectrum. If the community has the resources and capacity to do so, this process can be undertaken at the highest complexity through the implementation of individual values, vulnerability data collection, and analysis by subject matter experts (such as the incorporation of Structure Ignition Zone assessment data or watershed impact assessment data). At the simplest level, vulnerability ranking for each identified HVRA may be undertaken by community stakeholders, and based on the perceived impact that losing each of the values will have on the community. In the end, a ranked scale from the greatest vulnerability to the least vulnerability for each asset should be the outcome.
5. **Final Risk Ranking** – The final step to determining the risk ranking is to combine the vulnerability rankings with the wildfire hazard, or “exposure”. This should result in a conceptual final ranked scale where, for example, the highest fire hazard, combined with the highest vulnerability score, results in the highest wildfire risk, and continuing along the gradient to eventually where the lowest wildfire hazard combined with the lowest vulnerability score results in the lowest wildfire risk.

Communicating Wildfire Risk

The ideal tool for displaying community wildfire risk is in the form of a risk map. However, depending on the complexity, the risk mapping process can involve the use of specialized expertise and can be costly. At its simplest form, a community’s risk can be communicated in a table, similar to the example in Table 3.



TABLE 3: EXAMPLE OF A COMMUNITY HVRA PRIORITIZATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT TABLE

HVRA	Weight	Sub-Category Weight	Combined Weight	Wildfire Threat Impact					
				Extreme	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	
Wildfire Threat Impact beneficial impact (-1 least beneficial to -5 most beneficial) 0 - no impact negative impact (1 least negative impact to 5 most negative impact)									
Human Life	60		600	10	9	8	7	6	
	Critical Facilities	40		5	5	5	5	5	
	Evacuation Routes	60		5	4	3	2	1	
Property	25		250	5	5	5	3.8	2.5	
	Residential Properties	30		5	5	5	4	3	
	Commercial Properties	20		5	5	5	5	5	
	Critical Infrastructure	40		5	5	5	3	1	
	Non-Critical Infrastructure	10		5	5	5	3	1	
Natural Resources	15		150	5	4.5	.8	-3.8	-4.2	
	Watersheds	40		5	5	5	-1	-1	
	Critical Habitat/Species	25		5	5	1	-4	-5	
	Non-Critical Habitat/Species	10		5	5	1	-4	-5	
	Critical Ecosystem/Forest Health	15		5	4	-2	-5	-5	
	Non-Critical Ecosystem/Forest Health	10		5	4	-2	-5	-5	



CWPP CONTENTS

Action Plan

A CWPP Action Plan is required to integrate information and findings from the plan (e.g., wildfire hazard and risk assessment) with specific implementing projects, programs, or other mechanisms to help achieve the goals and objectives. The Action Plan must include specific actions pertaining to:

- Landscape management and prioritized fuel reduction treatments
- Reducing structural ignitability (for structures and critical infrastructure)
- Any other actions related to hazard and risk reduction within the planning area that help achieve the plan's goals and objectives

Essential planning details for each action must include lead agencies responsible for each action, timeframe for implementation, type of resources needed, and metrics for tracking progress and outcomes. Other information can also be added, such as connections with other plans, potential resources, and suggested partner agencies and stakeholders to collaborate with and support implementation. See Appendix C for an example Action Plan.

Landscape Management / Prioritized Hazardous Fuel Reduction Treatments

Landscape-scale vegetation management and hazardous fuel treatments are key in addressing the reduction of vulnerability to many HVRAs. Therefore, the CWPP must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more HVRAs. Fuel treatment priorities are also identified in the CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plans. To determine the prioritization and appropriate types and methods of treatment, the community should work with the Local CAL FIRE Unit staff, Contract County staff, and other appropriate stakeholders (if applicable) to review the HVRA list, vulnerabilities and locations, along with the response strategies, and other factors, such as vegetation health, topography and access to determine the locations and prioritization of hazardous fuel treatments. These locations, treatment types, and methods and prioritizations must be documented in the CWPP.

Ignitability Measures for Structures and Critical Infrastructure

Addressing the ignitability of structures and critical infrastructure are required components of a CWPP.

Structures

The CWPP must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan. Both existing development and new development must be addressed. Although the CWPP is not a regulatory document, the CWPP can serve as a working plan to coordinate the adoption and implementation of both required actions (primarily for new development), and voluntary actions (primarily for existing development).

New Development

The State of California has minimum requirements for new development that must be applied in the SRA and some LRAs under specified conditions. These requirements include:



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California Fire Safe Regulations

The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection adopts Fire Safe Regulations (FSRs) as a minimum standard of wildfire protection requirements that are in effect in the SRA and LRA Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ). These regulations can also be used as a minimum requirement for application beyond the LRA VHFHSZ. For example, Article 5 Building Siting, Setbacks, and Fuel Modifications includes minimum requirements for building siting and setbacks intended to reduce structure ignitability. Other articles address minimum requirements for water supply, ingress and egress, and signage.

California WUI Building Code Requirements

The building code regulates the construction and design of buildings. In 2007, the California adopted minimum building code regulations for defined WUI areas, FHSZs, and the SRA. These standards are found in several different parts within the California Building Standards Code. The most commonly known section for WUI requirements is Part 2: California Building Code Chapter 7A Materials and Construction Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure¹. Other parts of the code that address WUI requirements are:

- Chapter 15 Roof Assemblies and Rooftop Structures
- Part 2.5 – California Residential Code
- Part 9 – California Fire Code
- Part 12 – California Referenced Standards Code

The California Building Code WUI requirements currently apply to new buildings located in the SRA and LRA VHFHSZ or an area designated as WUI by enforcing agency. For ease of reference, there is a WUI Listed Products Handbook available from the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) that provides a list of different approved products and assemblies for use in the WUI.

Defensible Space

Defensible space is required in the SRA by Public Resources Code § 4291 and the LRA by Government Code § 51182 for the VHFHSZ. Local jurisdictions have the option to require defensible space through adoption of a local ordinance. Assembly Bill 3074, passed into law in 2020, requires the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop a regulation for a new ember-resistant zone (Zone 0) within zero to five feet of the home.

Existing Development

The structural ignitability of existing development can be managed through a combination of required defensible space inspections, building code requirements (for exterior renovations and retrofits), and voluntary parcel-level assessments.

¹ Proposed regulatory actions in California may change where wildland laws and regulations are located. Anticipated changes could take effect in January 2025. Check with the OSFM for updated information.



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Parcel-Level Assessments

Individual parcel-level assessments can help complete the risk triangle by expanding on the minimum defensible space requirements and providing definitive data to the susceptibility component. These assessments focus on assessing the susceptibility characteristics of each structure and the immediate surroundings (100 feet), otherwise defined as the Structure Ignition Zone (SIZ). To address the susceptibility component of the risk triangle, comprehensive parcel-level assessments that include the entire SIZ should be conducted for both existing and new development.

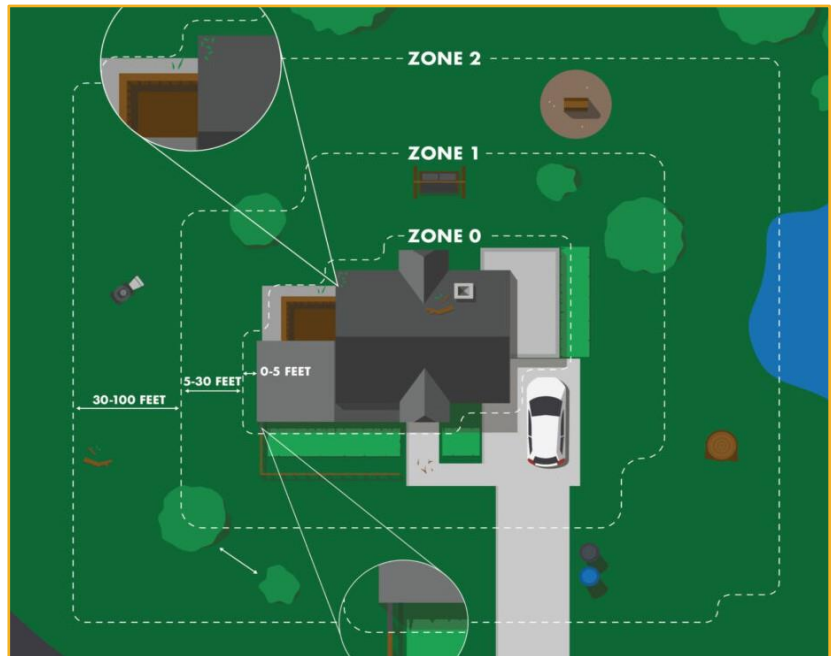


Figure 3. An illustration of the defensible space distance requirements <https://readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/defensible-space/> Image credit: CAL FIRE

Critical Infrastructure

In addition to individual parcel structure ignitability measures, the CWPP must address the reduction of structural ignitability to critical infrastructure. Critical infrastructure is identified during the values at risk assessment process for maintaining essential community public health and safety, economic, social, or cultural functions. Measures for critical infrastructure are based on the same principles of defensible space and the SIZ as applied to these facilities.

Wildfire Response and Suppression Capabilities

An assessment of the community's wildfire response and suppression capabilities is an important step in ensuring the current resources, organization, and strategies are appropriate for the expected wildfire impingements, and if not, what requires improvement. At a minimum, the wildfire response and suppression capability assessment must include fire agency response capabilities and emergency operations center capabilities. The assessment should also include:

- Emergency social services support capabilities
- Post fire recovery support capabilities
- Evacuation support capabilities
- Other response support (utilities, public works, etc.)

This information may be available in CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plans, Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, Utility Wildfire Mitigation Plans, and other documents. Ideally, the relevant information in these plans should be aligned with the CWPP.



CWPP CONTENTS

Additional Actions

Communities are encouraged to consider a range of other actions to achieve the CWPP goals and objectives. For example, many CWPPs also address evacuation planning, post-disaster recovery and public health concerns. This is particularly useful when these topics are not addressed in other plans or when the CWPP can supplement implementation of other plans. For example, when policies in the General Plan call for wildfire risk reduction activities, CWPP actions can help achieve these policies by adding them as specific and measurable actions in the Action Plan.

Appendices

Include any supplementation information not contained in the main body of the plan, such as documentation of community outreach and engagement, methodology of the hazard and risk assessment, and additional analyses or baseline data. Depending on how the CWPP is structured, appendices can provide more details for individual communities within the planning area.



CWPP Implementation

Once the CWPP is adopted, the process shifts from planning to implementation. Because implementation occurs over a multi-year period, it requires commitment, resources, and flexibility to successfully maintain partnerships and move projects forward. This section highlights major considerations for CWPP implementation. Also refer to the CWPP Toolkit's best practice [Employ Robust CWPP Project Implementation and Tracking Methods](#) for additional strategies, tips, and resources.

“When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don’t adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.”

~ Confucius

Plan Management

Similar to the CWPP development phase, it’s critical to have a dedicated CWPP coordinator role or working group to initiate project implementation, manage and track progress, and sustain momentum. This phase is also an opportunity to determine if any roles and responsibilities of the CWPP working group should be adjusted to incorporate different needs during project implementation, such as new or different areas of expertise or shifting job duties.

Partnerships and Outreach

As project implementation begins, this is an important time to expand public outreach, partnerships, and engagement. For example, project implementation may require engaging new stakeholders to access additional resources or local knowledge. As project details get scoped, focused public outreach will also be important to work with local community groups and residents that may be directly affected by a new project (e.g., fuel treatment). Refer to the [CWPP Outreach and Engagement Workbook](#).

Phased Implementation

Many CWPP action plans will require a multi-year, phased approach to implementation due to the complexity and resources required to initiate and complete actions, such as landscape-scale fuel treatments, capacity building and training programs, or adoption of new regulations. Although priorities are identified in the CWPP Action Plan, creating a work plan that reflects actions phased over time with interim milestones (for year one, two, three, five, ten, etc.) will make implementation more achievable. A phased approach also provides the opportunity to re-evaluate progress and make any necessary adjustments during plan implementation.



CWPP IMPLEMENTATION

Annual Review and Progress Reports

Annual CWPP reviews and regular project tracking actions (e.g., monthly, quarterly) is helpful to measure progress, report on successes, or identify priority projects that need additional support. Annual reviews should consider how CWPP implementation aligns with goals and objectives to ensure priorities are being met, and project tracking should be tied to the CWPP Action Plan. Establishing project metrics will vary based on the project, but examples include:

- Acres treated (number, location, effectiveness, changes in wildfire hazard)
- Percentage of structures with defensible space and/or hardened homes
- Increased investments in staff/organizational capacity for program implementation
- Efficiencies in emergency response and evacuation planning times
- Reduction in numbers of human-caused wildfires
- Reduction in damages / structure loss trends over time
- Increased investments in local per capita spending on hazard mitigation projects
- Community participation and engagement in wildfire risk reduction activities
- Wildfire mitigation program campaign launches
- Wildfire educational website and social media visitor traffic



CWPP IMPLEMENTATION

Plan Maintenance and Updates

Maintaining a CWPP through updates keeps content relevant and can better position a community for ongoing funding opportunities. However, local jurisdictions may have their own update cycles. Factors to consider for determining when to update a CWPP include:

- **Content:** Are the CWPP goals and objectives still relevant, and if so, does the information in the plan support these goals and objectives?
- **Scale:** Are there changes to the scale of the plan that should alter the planning area?
- **Influence of major events:** Has a major wildfire or other natural disaster occurred that has impacted the community and potentially altered local wildfire hazard?
- **Changes in the WUI:** Has the community experienced new development in the WUI that may change its wildfire risk?
- **New collaborators and partners:** Would a plan update help facilitate engagement with new partners that may have emerged since the plan was last adopted or updated?
- **Funding opportunities:** Are there federal, state, or other program funding opportunities that require the CWPP to be updated to remain current within a certain timeframe (e.g., updated in the last ten years)?
- **Alignment with other plan cycles:** Does the CWPP update cycle align with other plan timeframes, such as the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan or General Plan Safety Element, for increased efficiencies?
- **Signatories:** Have previous approval authorities and signatories changed where the plan would benefit from updated signatures to showcase local leadership support and plan buy-in?



APPENDIX A: CWPP WORKING GROUP MEMBERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

This example worksheet helps identify potential CWPP working group members, federal agencies, local experts, and interested parties. Note that not all listed agencies and organizations may be applicable.

Agency / Organization	Primary Contact	Alternate Contact	Role
<i>Federal Government</i>			
U.S. Forest Service			
Bureau of Indian Affairs			
Bureau of Land Management			
National Parks			
US Fish and Wildlife			
<i>State / Tribal Governments</i>			
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection			
California Department of Transportation			
California Office of Emergency Services			
California Air Resources Board			
University of California Cooperative Extension			
Tribal Nations			
<i>Local Jurisdiction Departments</i>			
Planning / Building Department			
Fire Department / Fire Protection Districts			
Public Works Department			
Geographic Information Systems Department			
Local Elected Officials			
Emergency Services			
Sheriff's Office			
Elected Officials / other Local Leadership			
<i>Local Fire / Forestry and Natural Resource Groups</i>			
Fire Safe Councils			
Forest Management Groups			
Firewise Community Leaders			
Resource Conservation Districts or Land Trusts			
Watershed Council / Collaboratives			
Prescribed Burn Associations			



APPENDIX A: CWPP WORKING GROUP MEMBERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Agency / Organization	Primary Contact	Alternate Contact	Role
<i>Critical Infrastructure Companies or Districts</i>			
Electric / Power Utilities			
Water Utility Districts			
Air Quality Management District			
<i>Other Organizations</i>			
Homeowner Associations			
Non-governmental Organizations			
Volunteer Organizations			
Other Special Districts and Councils			



APPENDIX B: APPLICABLE PLANS AND REGULATIONS

This appendix provides typical federal, state, and local plans and regulations to review to inform the CWPP planning process and content development. This list may not reflect all applicable local plans and regulations or any updated versions. State legislation should also be regularly reviewed for changes that affect CWPP planning and regulatory considerations.

Resource Title (and applicable sections)
Federal
Healthy Forests Restoration Act
Disaster Mitigation Act (Stafford Act)
National Fire Plan
National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy
Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission Report
State
2018 Strategic Fire Plan for California (Board of Forestry and Fire Protection)
California’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan (2021)
California State Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)
Public Resources Code Division 4. Forests, Forestry and Range and Forage Lands
California Code of Regulations Title 14. Natural Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division 1.5 Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Title 24. Building Standards Code <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 2 – California Building Code (Chapter 7A) • Part 2.5 – California Residential Code • Part 9 – California Fire Code Part 12 – California Referenced Standards Code
California Government Code Title 5. Local Agencies Title 7. Planning and Land Use
California Health and Safety Code Division 12. Fires and Fire Protection
California Environmental Quality Act
Local
General Plan
Municipal Code
Multi-Jurisdictional or Local Hazard Mitigation Plan
Local Coastal Program
Utility Wildfire Mitigation Plan
Emergency Management Plan
CAL FIRE Unit Fire Plan
Community / Urban Forestry Plan
Local CWPPs
Evacuation Plan



APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE CWPP ACTION PLAN TABLE

Community Wildfire Protection Action Plan Table						
Action	Lead(s)	Priority	Timeframe	Resources Required	Metric for Success	Notes
GOAL 1 (example): Reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfires						
<i>Objective 1.1 (example): Develop interagency response capability that is effective in responding to expected fire incidents</i>						
1. Action (example) Sign Resource Agreements	Agencies, Fire Protection District(s)	High	Desired Date of Completion	• Resource 1 • Resource 2	Agreement(s) signed	
2. Action						
3. Action						
<i>Objective 1.2:</i>						
4. Action						
5. Action						
6. Action						
7. Action						
GOAL 2 (example): Reduce structure losses from wildfires						
<i>Objective 2.1 (example): Retrofit all structures to comply with current wildfire construction standards</i>						
8. Action (example) Establish a WUI Retrofit Campaign	Local Fire Safe Council	High	Desired Date of Completion	• Resource 1 • Resource 2	Number of Homes Engaged in Program	
9. Action						
10. Action						
GOAL 3:						
<i>Objective</i>						
11. Action						
12. Action						
13. Action						
GOAL 4:						
<i>Objective</i>						
14. Action						
15. Action						
16. Action						