

Community Wildfire Protection Plan Development Process for Santa Barbara County

The purpose of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is to identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend current best practices as to the types and methods of treatment on land that will protect one or more at-risk communities. Additionally, CWPPs recommend measures to reduce structural ignitability. CWPPs are collaborative agreements, developed by at-risk communities in consultation with various interested parties and agreed to by the appropriate local government, fire department and the State Forester. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 encourages the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to give consideration to the priorities established by the local community as they develop and implement forest management and hazardous fuel reduction.

CWPPs help make communities safer through identifying, educating and managing fire risk in the wildland-urban interface (WUI.) Given the environmental importance of the WUI, the process of developing a CWPP is a critical opportunity to cooperatively identify potential areas for fuel reduction, recommend “best practices” for fuel reduction treatments and to reduce structural ignitability. Any recommendation for fuel reduction treatment may be modified, or even not implemented at all, depending on a number of factors, including environmental review and the availability of funding.

Developing a CWPP does not commit the at-risk community or the County of Santa Barbara to carrying out, funding or issuing a permit any specific fuel reduction action. All legally required environmental review and permitting would be necessary prior to beginning any fuel reduction treatment. CEQA does exempt from environmental review any fuel management activities with 30 feet, or in some cases 100 feet, of structures to reduce the volume of flammable vegetation, provided that it will not cause the taking of endangered, rare or threatened plants or animals or result in significant erosion or sedimentation of surface waters.

Since CWPPs are valuable agreements that recommend methods of fuel reduction and are cooperatively developed, the County of Santa Barbara seeks to assist those unincorporated areas of the County that wish to develop their own CWPP. The following steps by step guide creates a framework that will guide community groups, associations and neighbors toward creation of a CWPP that can be approved by the County’s Board of Supervisors, Fire Chief and the State Forester.

STEP 1: CONVENE CWPP DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Purpose:

Gathering the right people to collaborate on the development of a CWPP is an essential first step. Including people that are at-risk to wildland fire or that will be impacted by the implementation of the CWPP starts opening lines of communication and cooperation that will lead to a better CWPP.

Process:

Identify individuals and/or groups most at-risk or impacted by the CWPP, invite their active participation and educate them on the purpose and goals of developing a CWPP.

Actions:

- Create a list of individuals and/or groups that would benefit from identifying, prioritizing and recommending hazardous fuel reduction and structural ignitability reduction methods or types.
- Create a list of individuals and/or groups that would or could be impacted by identifying, prioritizing and recommending hazardous fuel reduction and structural ignitability reduction methods or types.
- Seek guidance from the County's CWPP Working Group by contacting the County Executive Office at 805-568-3400.
- Invite participants to an initial meeting to:
 - Learn about the purpose, development process and benefits of creating a CWPP.
 - Consider their involvement in the CWPP Development Process.
 - Commit to participate in the next steps of the CWPP Development Process.

Resources:

- [*Community Guide to Preparing and Implementing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan*](#)
- [*Community Wildfire Protection Plan - Leaders Guide*](#)
- County of Santa Barbara CWPP Working Group Members
 - Chief Executive Officer or designee (Overall Lead)
 - County Fire Chief/ Fire Vegetation Management Captain
 - State Forester
 - Planning and Development staff

STEP 2: CWPP DEVELOPMENT TEAM INVOLVES APPLICABLE FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES

Purpose:

Working with the Federal and State agencies is critical given the long borders between Los Padres National Forest and other government owned lands and our privately owned land in the WUI. Coordination and cooperation between public and private land owners is critical to the success of all CWPPs.

Process:

Identify applicable Federal and State agencies that border or have natural resource management responsibility.

Actions:

- Contact applicable Federal and State agencies by phone.
- Let them know the area being considered for the CWPP.
- Ask them for any guidance or direction about agency future plans, activities or concerns for the area being considered for the CWPP.
- Invite their participation in discussions or review of CWPP drafts.
- Leave them with contact information for the CWPP Development Team if the agencies have additional information that should be considered for the CWPP.

Resources:

Agency	Representative	Contact Number
United States Forest Service US Department of the Interior Los Padres National Forest		
Bureau of Indian Affairs US Department of the Interior Chumash lands		
Bureau of Reclamation US Department of the Interior Lake Cachuma		

United States Air Force US Department of Defense Vandenberg Air Force Base		
Bureau of Land Management US Department of the Interior		
Fish and Wildlife Service US Department of the Interior e.g. endangered species, migratory birds		
CA State Forester		
CA Department of Parks & Recreation		
CA Department of Fish and Game		
CA Department of Transportation		
SBC Office of Emergency Services		
SBC Department of Public Works		
Adjoining cities or counties		
Special districts:		

STEP 3: CWPP DEVELOPMENT TEAM ENGAGES INTERESTED PARTIES

Purpose:

Working with other interested parties is essential to building support for the CWPP. Coordination and cooperation between the CWPP Development Team and interested community based organizations ought to begin very early in the process to create an open and transparent process that builds trust and improves the quality of the CWPP.

Process:

Identify who should be involved and develop an interested parties list, determine a contact person for each group and collect contact information, explain roles and responsibilities and anticipated level of engagement, provide estimated project schedule.

Actions:

- Contact other interested parties by phone.
- Let them know the area being considered for the CWPP.
- Ask them for any guidance or direction about plans, activities or concerns for the area being considered for the CWPP.
- Invite their participation in discussions or review of CWPP drafts.
- Leave them with contact information for the CWPP Development Team if the organizations have additional information that should be considered for the CWPP.
- List contact and invitation dates and times in the CWPP.

Resources:

Agency	Representative(s)	Contact Number
SB Firesafe Council		
Environmental Organizations e.g. Environmental Defense Council, Urban Creeks Council, Forest Watch		
Recreation organizations		
Resource advisory Committees		
Utility companies		
Landowners		
Homeowner Associations		
Cultural Resource Groups		
Public at large		

Others:		

STEP 4: ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY BASE MAP AND BOUNDARY AREA

Purpose:

Determining precisely the area to be covered by the CWPP helps the CWPP Development Team focus their attention on the specific resources that are at risk and require protection in the CWPP.

Process:

Identify a geographic area of focus with clear boundaries and the resources that are at-risk.

Actions:

- Map should identify:
 - Inhabited areas at risk for wildfire,
 - Infrastructure:-major public roads, water supply and major power or communication lines that could be at risk,
 - Designation of WUI Zone, and
 - Community resources: recreation and scenic areas, historical and cultural resources, critical and environmentally sensitive habitat.
- Inform government agencies and interested parties of the CWPP Base Map and boundaries.
- Natural or man-made barriers (e.g. highways, ridgelines, creeks, etc.) have been used to define boundaries of CWPP Base Maps.

- Make sure the CWPP Development Team understands the planning areas and the specific areas of concern.
- Attach base map to final CWPP.

Resources:

[Santa Barbara County Geographic Information System \(GIS\) website](#)

STEP 5: DEVELOP A COMMUNITY RISK ASSESSMENT

Purpose:

Gather information and identify areas for hazardous fuel reduction that contribute to the risk of previously identified inhabited areas and community resources at risk.

Process:

Use subject matter experts and other resources to gather information about hazards, risk of fire occurrence, home/businesses and essential infrastructure that are at risk and the local preparedness capability.

Actions:

- Develop Risk List:
 - Inhabited areas at risk for wildfire,
 - Infrastructure:-major public roads, water supply and major power or communication lines that could be at risk, and
 - Community resources including, but not limited to recreation and scenic areas, historical and cultural resources, critical and environmentally sensitive habitat.
- For each item in the Risk List, identify fuel hazard, risk of wild fire occurrence, ignitability, firefighting capability and overall risk.
- Risks can be assessed as:
 - High – Very likely to be hazardous, occur, ignite or be defended,
 - Medium – May be hazardous, occur, ignite or be defended, or
 - Low – Very unlikely to be hazardous, occur, ignite or be defended.
- Factors contributing to risk may include past fire history, weather conditions including wind corridors, water supply, building design and materials in structures, critical habitats as well as other considerations.
- Develop overall Community Value Priority List which factors in the resource, area or structures risk in relationship to the value to the community. It may

be important to identify why something is valuable to clarify its priority, particularly if it isn't easily evident to others.

- Community Value can be assessed as:
 - High – Very valuable or unable to be easily replaced or restored,
 - Medium – More or less valuable or could be replaced or restored, or
 - Low – Not valuable or could easily be replaced or restored.
- Add Risk List and Community Value Priority List to the CWPP
- Add any supportive narrative to explain any changes to assessment standards or value factors that might need additional information to the CWPP.

STEP 6: RECOMMEND COMMUNITY HAZARD REDUCTION PRIORITIES AND MEASURES TO REDUCE STRUCTURAL IGNITABILITY

Purpose:

Based on the community risk assessment prioritization, recommendations for the type and method of treatment are identified.

Process:

Using the CWPP Base Map and the community risk assessment the CWPP Development Team identifies, prioritizes and recommends fuel reduction, structural protection and fire response best practices. All recommendations should clearly indicate the relationship to reducing community wildfire risks.

Actions:

- Use a group consensus process to identify and recommend best practices that prevent, mitigate and prepare for risks and hazards.
- Using a similar process, prioritize the hazard reduction measures
- Priorities can be assessed as:
 - High – Very important due to risk or community value,
 - Medium – Moderately important due to risk or community value, or
 - Low – Minor importance due to risk or community value.
- Seek the guidance and direction of subject matter experts such as fire fighters, environmental organizations and/or others that may provide valuable expertise to the recommendation and prioritization process.
- Document the relationship between the recommended best practices and the risk reduction intended.

- Add the list of recommended and prioritized fuel reduction and structural protection best practices to the CWPP.

STEP 7: DEVELOP DRAFT PLAN

Purpose:

Begin writing the CWPP for consideration by interested parties and eventual approval

Process:

Assemble the written CWPP by pulling together the CWPP Base Map and the lists of:

- CWPP Development Team members.
- All contacted agencies, interested parties and stakeholders.
- Community risks and value assessments.
- Community recommended and prioritized risk reduction and structural protection best practices.

Actions:

- Develop a brief statement of the purpose of this CWPP and the intent to follow environmental review and permitting requirements when appropriate.
- Develop a table of all CWPP Development Team members.
- Develop a table of all federal, state and local jurisdictions you contacted, listing who was contacted, when they were contacted and outlining what they contributed to the CWPP.
- Develop a table of all interested parties and stakeholders you contacted, listing who was contacted, when they were contacted and outlining what they contributed to the CWPP.
- Include the CWPP Base Map and the list of boundaries inhabited areas that are at risk and any critical infrastructure or community resources.
- Develop a table that identifies and prioritizes the hazards, risk of occurrence, ignitability and preparedness of inhabited areas, structure, infrastructure or community resources.
- Develop a table that identifies and prioritizes community or cultural value of inhabited areas, structure, infrastructure or community resources.
- Develop a table that identifies, prioritizes and recommends fuel reduction, structural protection and fire response best practices. All recommendations should clearly indicate the relationship to reducing community wildfire risks.

- Develop and include a list of conservation recommendations which could be considered to reduce incidental environmental impacts of fuel management projects.
- Add any supportive narrative to explain any changes to assessment standards or value factors that might need additional information to the CWPP.
- Add a timeline for evaluating the progress and results of the CWPP.
- Share draft with all governmental and interested parties with whom you have been in contact. Solicit feedback, suggestions and comments.
- Incorporate suggestions into a final CWPP draft document.

STEP 8: FINALIZE AND SUBMIT THE COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN DRAFT

Purpose:

Approval by the County of Santa Barbara, County Fire Chief and the State Forester, as well as the approval of any other applicable jurisdiction or fire chief, provides recognition of the CWPP recommendations and its development in line with the County's CWPP Development Process.

Process:

Submit to the County Executive Office a final draft and signature page ready for adoption by the Board of Supervisors.

Actions:

- Call the County Executive Office at 805-568-3400 for the name and contact information for the CWPP Coordinator.
- Provide one copy of the final CWPP to the County CWPP Coordinator for review by the CWPP Working Group. Allow about four weeks for review and docketing for adoption by the Board of Supervisors.
- Following the review of the CWPP by the CWPP Working Group, the CWPP Coordinator will place the CWPP approval on the Board of Supervisor's agenda and inform the CWPP Development Team of the hearing date.
- Attend the Board of Supervisors meeting.
- Present the approved CWPP to all government agencies and interested parties contacted throughout the CWPP Development Process.
- Celebrate your success.