

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 provides the impetus for wildfire risk assessment and planning at the county and community level specifically identifying “Wildland Urban Interface Communities Within the Vicinity of Federal Lands That are at High Risk From Wildfire” (H.R. 1904-3 Sec. 101, (1) (A) (i)). HFRA refers to this level of planning as Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). The CWPP allows a community to evaluate its current situation with regards to wildfire risk and to devise ways to reduce risk for protection of human welfare and other important economic, social or ecological values. The CWPP may address issues such as community wildfire risk, structure flammability, hazardous fuels and non-fuels mitigation, community values, community preparedness, and emergency procedures. The Cooperating Group provides oversight to the development and implementation of the CWPP in Grant County.

The primary focus of the Grant County CWPP is the numerous improvements and homes that occur throughout the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). A significant portion of Grant County consists of “Intermix Communities” where structures are scattered throughout the wildland area with no clear line of demarcation and wildland fuels are continuous within and outside of the developed area. The county has been divided into nine different zones for purposes of this wildfire plan. Human life and welfare are values at risk to wildfire because of the buildup of hazardous fuels around communities and structures, poor emergency vehicle ingress and egress, lack of communications, inadequately trained and/or equipped fire suppression authorities, or complete absence of structural fire suppression authorities. Throughout the county there are scattered small communities and ranches with no structural fire protection because they are outside an organized fire district. Other economic values at risk include businesses, timberland, farmland, ranchland, hunting and other recreational land, historic and cultural sites, and critical infrastructure.

Wildland fire is a common occurrence in Grant County and lightning causes the large majority of those fires. Several wildland fire fighting agencies are present in the county and are very effective at putting out fires rapidly. However, the demographics of Grant County continue to shift and while the net population dropped between the 2000 and the 2010 census takings, the number of structures in the WUI has increased. As structures and improvements in the WUI increase so does the cost of fire fighting since protecting improvements from wildfire is more costly. The increasing number of residences in the WUI are often retirement homes. At the same time family wage jobs in the county are declining further shifting the demographics toward an older population. The number of volunteers for emergency services is declining.

Natural resource management policy and changing ecological conditions have interacted in ways that have resulted in hazardous fuel situations throughout Grant County. These hazardous fuel conditions are the result of historic fire suppression policy, juniper invasion into sagebrush, grasslands and timberlands, changing climatic patterns, and lack forest management activity on federal lands. The large accumulation of fuels has made most areas in the county very vulnerable to potentially catastrophic wildfire with the resulting loss of important economic, social and ecological values.

A variety of fuels around communities, ranches, and structures create problems for fire protection including but not limited to ponderosa pine and juniper forests, sagebrush, grasslands, and weed fields. Many of these fuels, such as dried grass, sagebrush and weeds, are highly flammable, burn rapidly, and resist control. A coordinated effort among all fire authorities and private landowners in the county is needed to manage hazardous fuels and reduce the risk of wildfire.

Currently, wildfire suppression authorities in the Grant County include the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), the United States Forest Service (USFS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Prairie City Rural Fire Department, the John Day Rural Fire Department, the Mt. Vernon Rural Fire Department, and the Monument Rural Fire Department. Mutual Aid Agreements exist among the fire authorities for mutual aid and support in the event of a wildfire incident. However, each fire authority operates under regulations that dictate their specific area of responsibility.

Public outreach for the CWPP revision consisted of several articles in *The Blue Mountain Eagle*, a series of public meeting held around the county from March through August 2012, and a mailing to absentee landowners explaining the CWPP. The meetings and the mailing consisted of a survey, information on community wildfire planning, and information on the importance of community input in developing the revised plan.

The level of risk and hazard to individual homes will be assessed in the future in conjunction with the implementation of the Firewise Communities program. This evaluation will consist of rating attributes such as means of access, surrounding vegetation (fuels), presence of defensible space, topography, roofing and other construction materials, available fire protection, and placement of utilities.

Based on the interviews with the Coordinating Group, fire authority officials, field observations, and public meetings the following recommendations and mitigation actions are proposed to reduce their risk of wildfire on a county wide basis:

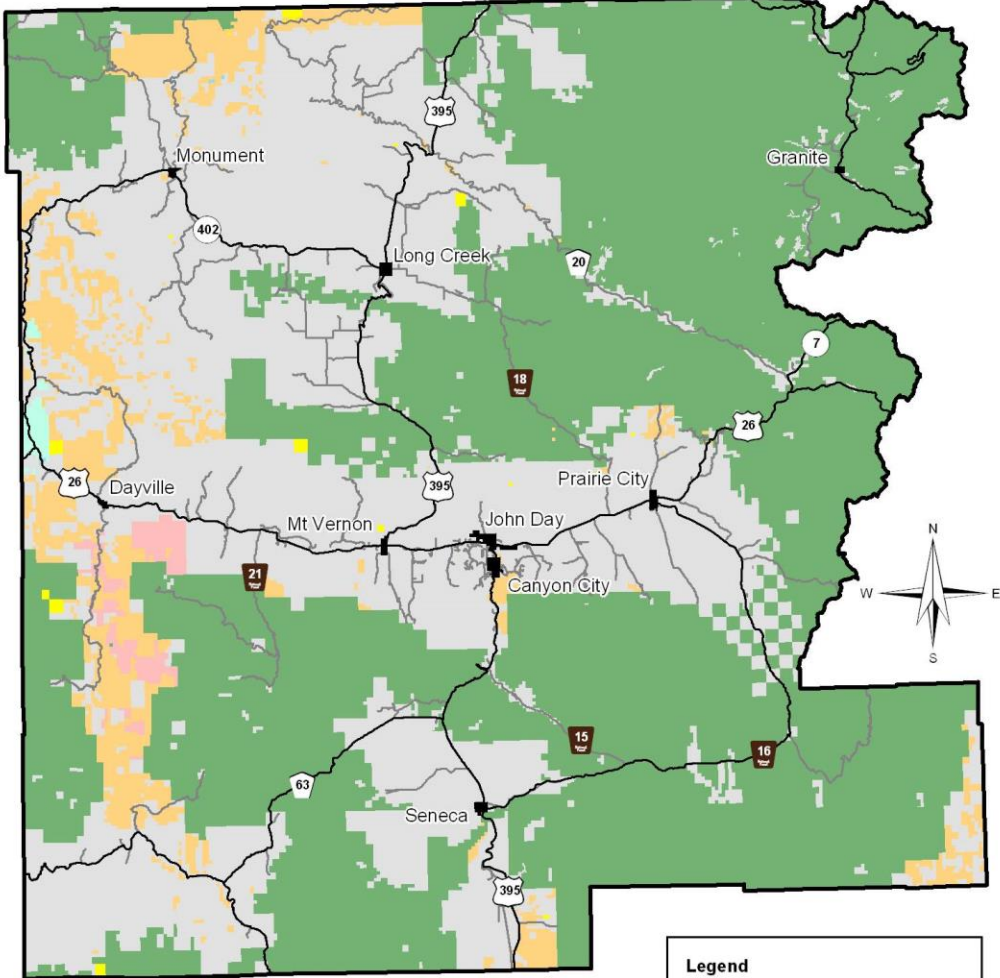
- Assign a wildfire coordinator to manage the CWPP
- Implement *Firewise Communities USA* program in Grant County
- Integrate Firewise building practices into Grant County building standards in the WUI
- Consider adoption of SB-360 classification standards across the county
- Encourage outlying communities to participate in basic wildland fire fighting training courses annually
- Implement a county wide GIS system to manage this CWPP
- Actively seek opportunities for establishment of cell towers in remote areas without cell coverage such as Granite, Dale, Ritter, Monument and Austin
- Require latitude and longitude on land use plans and building permits outside of municipal areas
- Improve coordination and documentation between the various emergency response agencies and systems in the county

- Work closely with USFS and BLM officials to create fuel breaks next to private lands and to minimize hazardous fuels on federal lands
- Increase water sources around county
- Complete a road hazard assessment to address and identify potential problems for evacuation and fire apparatus response during a wildfire situation and actively seek opportunities to implement improvements to rural roads
- Develop County strategy under this CWPP that utilizes a three pronged approach in WUI areas by blending 1) fuels treatment, 2) emergency management, and 3) fire prevention
- Increase outreach and education efforts to all county landowners
- Seek cost efficient methods and outlets for disposal of fuels generated from hazardous fuels reduction projects
- Identify needs and assist with fulfillment of those needs for local fire districts

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

Grant County

Project Area



1 inch = 10 miles



Grant Soil and Water Conservation District
 721 South Canyon Boulevard John Day, Oregon 97845
 Phone: (541) 575-0135 Fax: (541) 575-0948
Serving the Citizens of Grant County for over 50 Years!

Legend

Landownership

- United States Forest Service
- Private
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- State of Oregon

December 12, 2012

GLOSSARY

Biomass: quantity of biological matter of one or more species present on a unit area.

Condition Class: qualitative measure of degree of departure from historical ecosystem components such as species composition, structural stage, stand age, canopy closure, and fuel loadings.

Conflagration Act: state legal authority established as a civil defense measure to mobilize structural fire suppression resources for massive urban fires. It was first used in 1951 to coordinate aid to an explosion and fire in downtown Roseburg. The Act was not invoked again until 1972, when a wildland fire in Yamhill County threatened homes in what is now known as the wildland-urban interface. The Conflagration Act must be authorized by the Governor. The Act includes authorization for OSFM to assign firefighting forces and equipment beyond mutual aid agreements. It also designates reimbursement for aid to those departments participating.

Consequence: values at-risk from a fire occurring in a specific geographic location.

Community at-risk: (in Grant County) a group of homes or other structures with basic infrastructure (such as shared transportation routes) and services within or near federal land.

Defensible Space: the zone, typically a width of 30 feet or more, between an improved property and a potential wildfire where the combustibles have been removed or modified. It is recommended, depending on slope and fuels surrounding the home, that radius of defensible space could be closer to 100 feet.

Fire Adapted Communities: The Fire Adapted Community uses tools, supported by federal and state agencies, to prepare its homes, neighborhoods, businesses, infrastructure, natural areas, and surrounding landscape for wildfire. It's up to homeowners and the local jurisdiction to take the necessary actions.

Fire regime: qualitative measure describing the degree of departure from historical fire regimes, where fire frequency has deviated from normal intervals.

Flame length: the distance measured from the tip of the flame to the middle of the flaming zone at base of the fire. It is measured on a slant when the flames are tilted due to effects of wind and slope.

Fuel: non-decomposed material, living or dead, derived from herbaceous plants.

Fuel Break: an area, strategically located for fighting anticipated fires, where the native vegetation has been permanently modified or replaced so that fires

burning into it can be more easily controlled. Fuel breaks divide fire-prone areas into smaller areas for easier fire control and to provide access for fire fighting.

Fuel Hazard: a fuel complex defined by kind, arrangement, volume, condition, and location that forms a special threat of ignition or of suppression difficulty.

Fuel Loading: the volume of fuel in a given area generally expressed in tons per acre.

Fuel Model: a simulated fuel complex for which all fuel descriptors required by the mathematical fire spread model have been supplied.

Fuel Reduction: the planned manipulation of living or dead forest fuels for forest management and other land-use objectives.

Green Space: see Defensible Space.

Hazard (as it relates to wildfire): hazardous conditions like fuel, topography, weather, etc. that contributes to fire spread.

Home Ignition Zone:

Initial Attack: the actions taken by the first resources to arrive at a wildfire to protect lives and property, and prevent further extension of the fire.

Ladder fuel: fuels that provide vertical continuity allowing fire to carry from surface fuels into the crowns of trees or shrubs with relative ease.

Mutual Aid Agreement: agreement in place between wildland and structural fire protection agencies that allows for either fire protection agency to help the other in a wildfire event.

Prescribed Fire: the controlled application of fire to wildland fuels in either their natural or modified state, under such conditions of weather, fuel moisture, soil moisture, etc. as allow the fire to be confined to a predetermined area and at the same time to produce the intensity of heat and rate of spread required to further certain planned objectives of silviculture, wildlife management, grazing, hazard reduction, etc. The intention is to employ fire scientifically so as to realize maximum net benefits with minimum damage and at acceptable cost.

Rate of Spread: the relative activity of a fire in extending its horizontal dimensions. It is expressed as rate of increase of the total perimeter of the fire; or as rate of forward-spread of the fire front; or as rate of increase in area, depending on the intended use of the information. Usually its (forward) rate of spread is expressed in chains or acres per hour.

Risk (as it relates to wildfire): the likelihood of a fire occurring.

Roof Class: can be either A, B, C, or non-rated. Roof class is a determination of flame resistance. Class A is rated for more flame resistant building materials than Class C.

Seral: of, like, or pertaining to the development of like ecological communities.

Silviculture: manipulation of forest vegetation to accomplish a specified set of objectives; controlling forest establishment, composition, and growth.

Structural Fire Protection: The protection of a structure from interior and exterior fire ignition sources. This fire protection service is normally provided by municipal fire departments, with trained and equipped personnel. In northeastern Oregon, rural and volunteer fire departments are relied upon heavily to also provide this type of protection. After life safety, the agency's priority is to keep the fire from leaving the structure of origin and to protect the structure from an advancing wildland fire. (The equipment and training required to conduct structural fire protection is not normally provided to the wildland firefighter.) Various taxing authorities fund this service.

Structural Ignitability: a term that relates cause of a home igniting during a wildfire to building materials. Cause could be attributed to the building materials used for the home or the amount of combustible materials around the home.

Structural Vulnerability: a term that relates factors contributing to how and why a home is vulnerable to wildfire. Examples of factors that contribute to vulnerability are type of access to the home, ladder fuels and vegetation with the landscape of a home, and whether or not fire protection is available.

Survivable Space: see Defensible Space.

Triage (as it relates to structures in a wildfire event): the sorting and prioritizing of structures requiring protection from wildfire based upon an educated assessment designed to maximize the number of structures saved.

Wildland Fire Protection: the protection of natural resources and watersheds from damage by wildland fires. State and Federal forestry or land management agencies normally provide wildland fire protection with trained and equipped personnel. The structural firefighter may also be trained and equipped to aid the wildland agency in a wildland fire event. Various taxing authorities and fees fund this service.

Wildland Fire Use: is the management of naturally ignited wildland fires to achieve forest health and resource management objectives.

Wildland-Urban Interface: (in Grant County) an area that surrounds a

community or values of a community, including that community's infrastructure or water source, and may extend 1 1/2 miles or more beyond that community. The boundary of a wildland-urban interface area depends on topographic and geographic features that could influence wildfire, the location of an effective fuelbreak, or Condition Class 3 lands.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FEPP	Federal Excess Personal Property
FERC	Federal Emergency Regulatory Commission
FRCC	Fire Regime Condition Class
GIS	Geographic Information System
HFRA	Healthy Forests Restoration Act
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
NPS	National Park Service
ODF	Oregon Department of Forestry
USFS	US Forest Service
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
WFU	Wildland Fire Use
WUI	Wildland Urban Interface/Intermix