

Missoula County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

Frequently Asked Questions

Missoula County adopted its first Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in 2005. Since that time many changes have occurred across the county, including new housing and roads, fires on the landscape, and forest fuel treatments near communities. These changes can affect the way a community plans for fire and have prompted the need to update the CWPP. This document answers common questions about CWPPs and Missoula County's CWPP update process.

What is a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)?

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a community-based plan focused on identifying and addressing the local threat of wildfire. The CWPP determines what is at risk and provides a roadmap of clear actions for the community to address the risk.

CWPPs have been a national standard of practice since 2003 when the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) was signed into law. CWPPs must meet three minimum requirements:

- Show collaboration between local and state agencies, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties;
- Identify and prioritize fuel treatments to reduce hazardous fuel areas;
- Recommend strategies to reduce the ignitability of structures.

Are all CWPPs implemented at the same scale?

No, CWPPs can be effectively implemented at many different scales –neighborhood, fire district, town, city, and county. CWPPs can also “overlap” in their boundaries, and different scales can help address unique concerns. For example, neighborhood CWPPs often contain more detail related to a residential area than a countywide CWPP. If multiple CWPPs exist, they should be designed to complement and strengthen the objectives of other CWPPs’ jurisdictions and scales.

What are the benefits of a CWPP for Missoula County?

CWPPs have economic, social, and environmental benefits, including:

- Reducing the direct and indirect social, economic, and environmental costs of wildfire;
- Coordinating wildfire risk reduction with other community values and priorities;
- Influencing where federal agencies (USFS, BLM) prioritize fuel treatments;
- Bringing together diverse interests to tackle local wildfire challenges and opportunities;
- Identifying potential resources and funding for mitigation activities;
- Increasing community awareness and engagement in risk reduction.

What will the Missoula County CWPP update include?

The updated CWPP will include a new risk assessment, an updated action table based on local priorities, and updated content about wildfire history and community development. The update is organized around three themes: resilient landscapes, fire-adapted communities, and improved response and suppression. All three themes are required to coordinate an effective countywide approach to wildfire.

What is not included in the Missoula County CWPP?

The Missoula County CWPP does not include information that is provided elsewhere through other agency planning efforts. For example, the CWPP:

- will not provide tactical wildfire response strategies and detailed emergency management plans for neighborhood evacuation routes;
- will not focus on specific vegetation management strategies or prescriptions;
- is intended to guide the community in moving forward by providing actions, such as potential regulatory changes, but is not a regulatory document in itself.

When will it be completed?

The Missoula County CWPP update is scheduled for completion in early 2018. Once adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, the real work begins! Stakeholders will use the plan to guide future wildfire planning and mitigation actions. For example, land managers will utilize the risk assessment to inform future forest fuel treatments and land use planning decisions. Residents may also choose to take further action to identify risk reduction activities on their properties and within their neighborhoods.

Who is involved, and how can I participate in the CWPP update?

To date, many local, state and federal agencies have been engaged in the update process, including: Frenchtown Fire Department, Missoula Rural Fire District, Missoula Fire Department, Missoula County Community & Planning Services, Missoula County Emergency Management, Montana Department of Natural Resources, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. The CWPP update is being provided to Missoula County through the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire program grant.

Members of the public are encouraged to provide input to county officials through a formal public comment process that will begin following at a future public meeting where the final draft of the updated CWPP will be presented. A 30 day public comment period will gather comment from interested public to be reviewed and considered by county officials prior to final adoption. Information on the public review process, as well as links to the plan, will be posted on Missoula County's Office of Emergency Management website:

<https://www.missoulacounty.us/government/public-safety/office-of-emergency-management>