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Introduction

1.1 The Purpose

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a strategic plan that identifies specific wildland fire risks facing communities and neighborhoods and provides prioritized mitigation recommendations designed to reduce those risks. Once the CWPP is certified and adopted, it is the community's responsibility to move forward and implement the action items and maintain the currency of the Plan's content. Implementation may require further planning at the project level, acquisition of funds, continued collaboration with public agencies, or simply motivating homeowner associations (HOA), property owner associations (POA), and individual homeowners

Community Wildfire Protection Plans are authorized and defined in Title I of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) passed by Congress on November 21, 2003 and signed into law by President Bush on December 3, 2003.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act places renewed emphasis on community planning by extending a variety of benefits to communities with a wildfire protection plan in place. Critical among these benefits is the option of establishing a localized definition and boundary for the wildland-urban interface (WUI) and the opportunity to help shape fuels treatment priorities for surrounding federal and non-federal lands.

The CWPP, as described in the Act, brings together diverse local interests to discuss their mutual concerns for public safety, community sustainability and natural resources. It offers a positive, solution-oriented environment in which to address challenges such as: local firefighting capability, the need for defensible space around homes and subdivisions, and where and how to prioritize land management – on both federal and non-federal land (Community Wildfire Protection Plans; Guidelines for Implementation, CSFS, No date).

The implementation of effective wildfire mitigation is a dynamic process. The characteristics of forests and interface communities are constantly changing. Flexibility is designed into the CWPP implementation process in order to accommodate this changing landscape. Regular plan maintenance and annual updates can document these changes and highlight progress.

1.2 The Need

Wildfire is a naturally occurring and important component of the Montane and Subalpine ecosystems that dominate much of CCC, Colorado. These pine forests, rangelands, and grasslands common to the western United States (US) are characterized as “fire-dependent” ecosystems that have evolved over thousands of years to be resilient to wildfire occurrence, and in the case of some species, dependent on wildfire to maintain stand health or even trigger reproduction.

Since the early 20th century land and forest management practices for these same regions were designed around a simple protocol, “Prevent Wildfires.” While originally intended to protect human settlement and forest resources, the practice of fire exclusion proved to be short-sighted. Naturally occurring fuels have accumulated to hazardous levels and historically diverse vegetation profiles have become dominated by more aggressive species affecting landscape scale ecosystems. These dense, weakened, and homogeneous stands are much more susceptible to widespread insect and pathogen infestations, as well as catastrophic scale wildfires.

Colorado’s record-setting growth has precipitated a significant population shift into these same forested regions that are at highest risk for catastrophic wildfire. With the county’s population nearly tripling since 1960, there are more structures, residents, and supporting infrastructure in fire-prone areas than ever before, directly impacting human welfare and compromising the safety of firefighters and emergency responders that serve the county.

CCC is situated in the heart of Colorado’s Redzone interface (Figure 1). These are high hazard areas aggregated from hazard, risk and values data through a Geographical Information System (GIS) by the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). In addition, all of the named communities within the county have been identified in the Federal Register as “Interface Communities within the Vicinity of Federal Lands that are at High Risk from Wildfire” (Federal Register: January 4, 2001, [Volume 66, Number 3]).

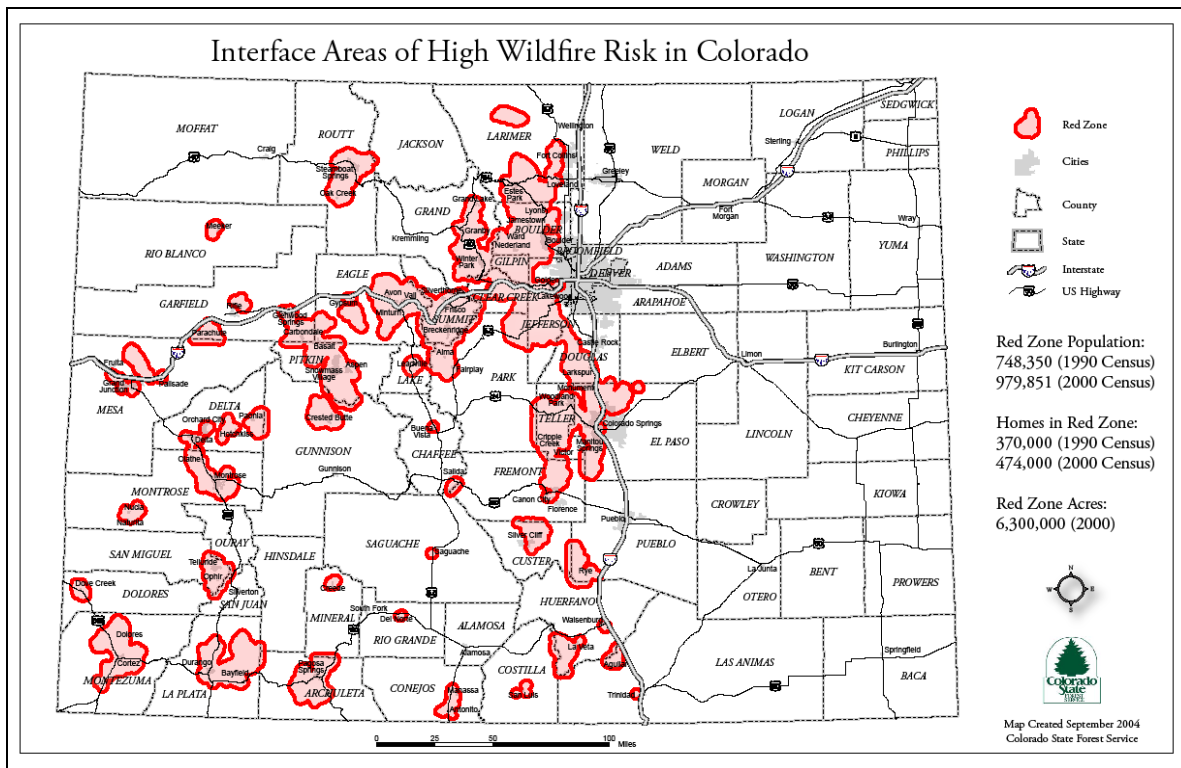


Figure 1. Colorado’s Redzone Interface

The communities, neighborhoods, and subdivisions of CCC are surrounded by public lands that are largely undeveloped and a source of vegetative fuels and wildfire risk potential. Residents of the county have demonstrated awareness of these risks, as well as the need to develop comprehensive wildfire protection plans and take action across multiple scales, from the individual home and subdivision to adjoining public lands under county, state, and federal management. The energy, input, and guidance from local residents have played an essential role in the development of this CWPP.

1.3 Project Goals and Objectives

Wildfire is a natural process within the forests, shrublands, and grasslands of CCC. While the risk of wildfire cannot be eliminated, definitive measures can be taken to mitigate the impact of catastrophic wildfire by reducing the fire behavior potential in areas at highest risk. The goals of this assessment are to create a collaborative environment to:

- Improve safety and welfare of residents and emergency personnel;
- Provide mitigation strategies that most effectively reduce the risk of wildfire loss to residential structures, infrastructure, and other community values at risk; and
- Recommend mitigation measures that contribute to the conservation of headwater watershed resources and other natural and economic assets.

Objectives to reach these goals include:

- Facilitate community education concerning wildfire potential, mitigation effectiveness, and community ownership of the CWPP recommendations and action plans;
- Engage affected stakeholders;
- Identify and group communities and values at risk into individual WUIs that represent common hazard factors;
- Conduct a standardized community survey for each WUI that quantifies values and hazards affecting each;
- Establish an approximate level of risk for each WUI based on community survey results;
- Conduct a scientifically based fire behavior analysis of the entire assessment area;
- Identify, prioritize, and facilitate wildfire mitigation treatments at the county level;
- Ensure that local efforts collaborate and coordinate with federal, state, and other related regional efforts; and
- Promote an improved level of emergency response.

1.4 The CWPP Process

The HFRA designed the CWPP to incorporate a flexible process that can accommodate a wide variety of community needs. This CWPP is tailored to meet specific goals identified by the Core Team, following the standardized steps for developing a CWPP as outlined in *Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities*, (Society of American Foresters 2004) and the *Colorado State Forest Service Minimum Standards for Community Wildfire Protection Plans*, (CSFS 2004). Table 1 outlines the CWPP development process.

Table 1. CWPP Development Process

Step	Task	Explanation
One	Convene Decision Makers	Form a Core Team made up of representatives from local governments, fire authorities, and the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS).
Two	Involve Federal Agencies	Engage local representatives of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and other land management agencies as appropriate.
Three	Engage Interested Parties	Contact and encourage participation from a broad range of interested organizations and stakeholders.
Four	Establish a Community Base Map	Develop a base map of the county that provides a better understanding of communities, critical infrastructure, and forest/open space at risk.
Five	Develop a Community Risk Assessment	Develop a risk assessment that considers fuel hazards, community and commercial infrastructure, resources, and preparedness capability. Rate the level of risk and incorporate into the base map as appropriate.

Step	Task	Explanation
Six	Establish Community Priorities and Recommendations	Use the risk assessment and base map to facilitate a collaborative public discussion that prioritizes fuel treatments and non-fuel mitigation practices to reduce fire risk and structural ignitability.
Seven	Develop an Action Plan and Assessment Strategy	Develop a detailed implementation strategy and a monitoring plan that will ensure long-term success.
Eight	Finalize the CWPP	Finalize the county CWPP and communicate the results to interested parties and stakeholders.

The initial step the development of the CCC CWPP is to organize an operating group that serves as the core decision-making team (Table 2). This team consists of representatives from local government, local fire authorities/districts, and the CSFS. Together, these three entities form the decision-making team responsible for the development of a CWPP as described in the HFRA. The core team members must mutually agree on the plan’s final contents. The core team should collaborate closely with relevant affected land management agencies and active community and homeowners association (HOA) stakeholders. Collaboration between agencies and communities is an important CWPP component because it promotes sharing of perspectives, plans, priorities, and other information that are useful to the planning process. Together these entities guide the development of the CWPP as described in the HFRA.

Table 2. CCC CWPP Core Team Members

Team Member	Organization	Contact
Kathleen Gaubatz	Director, Clear Creek County Office of Emergency Management	303-679-2320
Allen Gallamore	District Ranger, Colorado State Forest Service	303-279-9757 x 302
Kelly Babeon	Chief, Clear Creek Fire Authority (CCFA)	303-674-3145

As a majority holder of managed lands within the region, activities of the USFS play a critical role in directing forest management and treatment in the county. HFRA directs the CWPP core team to consult with agency representatives throughout the planning process.

The CCC CWPP also has many critical stakeholders that are directly contributing to the development of the Plan. Details are provided in Section 4.3, Stakeholder Collaboration.

As a strategic plan, the real success of any CWPP hinges on effective and long-term implementation of the identified objectives. The CWPP planning and development process must include efforts to build a stakeholder group that serves as an implementation team and will oversee the execution of prioritized recommendations and maintain the plan as the characteristics of the WUI change over time. Specific projects may be undertaken by individual HOAs/POAs, while larger-scale treatments may require collaboration between multiple HOAs/POAs, local

government, and public land management agencies. Original CWPP Core Team representatives may, but are not required to assist in the implementation of the CWPP action plan. Continued public meetings are recommended as a means to generate additional support and maintain momentum.

A successful CWPP utilizes relevant geographic information (e.g., GIS data) to develop a community base map. Comprehensive risk assessment is conducted at the neighborhood or community level to determine relative levels of wildfire risk to better address hazard treatment prioritization. A standardized survey methodology is utilized to create an community-based rating benchmark for comparative future assessments and project evaluations.

CWPP fuel treatment recommendations derived from this analysis were prioritized through an open and collaborative effort with the Core Team and stakeholders. Prioritized treatments target wildfire hazard reduction in the WUI communities and neighborhoods, including structural ignitability and critical supporting infrastructure. An action plan guides treatment implementation for high-priority projects over the span of several years.

The finalized CWPP represents a strategic plan with Core Team consensus that provides prioritized wildfire hazard reduction treatment projects, preferred treatment methods, a base map of the WUI, defensible space recommendations, and other information relevant to the scope of the project.

1.5 Policy Framework

This CWPP is not a legal document. There is no legal requirement to implement the recommendations herein. Actions on public lands will be subject to federal, state, and county policies and procedures such as adherence to the HFRA and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Action on private land may require compliance with county land use codes, building codes, and local covenants.

There are several federal legislative acts that set policy and provide guidance to the development of the CWPP for CCC:

- HFRA (2003) – Federal legislation that promotes healthy forest and open space management, hazardous fuels reduction on federal land, community wildfire protection planning, and biomass energy production;
- National Fire Plan and 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (2001) – Interagency plans that focus on firefighting coordination, firefighter safety, post-fire rehabilitation, hazardous fuels reduction, community assistance, and accountability; and
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Mitigation Act (2000) – Provides criteria for state and local multiple-hazard and mitigation planning.

The CSFS is a valuable resource that provides education and guidance to communities and individual landowners concerned with the threat of wildfire, as well as forest resource management in the WUI. Clear Creek Fire Authority, Clear Creek Sheriff's Office Marmot

Wildfire Crew and Evergreen Fire/Rescue are other excellent resources for wildfire mitigation guidance within CCC.

The CCC Annual Operating Plan (AOP) provides intergovernmental mutual aid agreements between local fire districts within the county and includes the CSFS and USFS as well as neighboring local agencies. These plans provide emergency response infrastructure for any large incident support. (<http://www.co.clear-creek.co.us/Depts/OEM/CC%20EOP.htm>)

1.5.1 USFS Policy

The appropriate environmental analysis and documentation through the NEPA process for fuel treatments on USFS lands needs to be completed prior to any ground disturbing activities occurring. Private land owners that own land adjacent to USFS lands may not conduct defensible space treatments on the National Forest lands without USFS permission and the NEPA process being completed. The NEPA process can take up to a year to complete once a project location has been identified. Individual areas identified within the CWPP are not being planned for defensible space treatments at this time. A completed CWPP does not authorize anyone to do work on USFS lands. The recommendations identified in the CWPP will assist the USFS in prioritizing treatment locations and in completing the appropriate environmental analysis process and document.

The recreation residences on the Clear Creek Ranger District of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests will have a NEPA, completed by September 2008, for defensible space treatments within the lots of each tract. The permit holder is responsible for completing this work and protecting the recreation residence cabin from wildfire risk. No treatments should occur without USFS permission. Recreation residence home permittees are not eligible to apply for grant money to do defensible space on the lots where their cabin is located. Federal grant money cannot be used to treat fuels on Federal lands. It is intended to be used on private lands (USFS, Boulder Ranger District, 2007).

1.6 County Mitigation Support, Permitting Requirements and Resources

The single-most effective tool any community has in its arsenal to reduce the threat of wildfire are motivated homeowners who take action to reduce the ignitability of their homes and mitigate hazardous fuels to create an effective defensible space in and around where they live. There are no county regulations or state mandates that require action from current homeowners unless building an addition (400 square feet) or new outbuilding. It comes down to individual action.

In support of voluntary fuels reduction on private property, the county's Site Development Department is initiating a Volunteer Defensible Space program through the WUI Fuels Reduction Program. The program grant money, received through the CSFS, can be used to assist in reducing hazardous fuels on private property through the following:

- Monetary compensation for performing volunteer defensible space on your property.
- Providing a free slash disposal program at the county's Transfer Station. It will be free to dispose of slash at the Transfer Station from May 1, 2008 through September 30, 2008.

- The county also has a 6-inch Vermeer wood chipper for participation in the Fuels Reduction Program. The wood chipper is also available for rent by citizens in CCC if they are not required to perform defensible space on their property for building purposes.

More details concerning this opportunity can be obtained through the CCC Site Development Department (303-679-2421).

Should a property change ownership, insurance companies typically require adequate mitigation prior to insuring the home. This may involve defensible space improvements and/or roofing upgrades to replace flammable shingles.

Should property or home improvements involve the county permitting process, the County's Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Plan Building Code amendment (1995) provides a framework for required improvements that directly address the importance of reducing wildfire hazards around each home.

The Defensible Space Plan will be developed by the Site Development Inspector and is explained in detail in the Department's information packet. The Site Development Inspector will also determine, at the time of the homeowner's driveway permit site visit, whether the Wildfire Hazard Point System Agreement will be required. The Building Department is then notified and the Agreement is initiated and mailed to the property owner, or to the general contractor to be completed and later submitted with the building permit documents (Clear Creek County Site Development Department).

1.7 Forest Improvement District House Bill 07-1168

The State of Colorado's Forest Improvement District law (House Bill 07-1168, which was created during the 2007 legislative session, allows for a special overlay district to be created for wildland fire mitigation. The counties of Clear Creek, Jefferson, Gilpin, and northeast Park may develop a special district to assist the counties and fire districts to meet the goals outlined within these and other CWPPs. The improvement district's objectives will be to provide a funding base for managing mitigation projects, developing grant applications for the individual communities, developing specific mitigation plans not outlined within this document, providing a contracting process for mitigation work and providing staffing/equipment for mitigation projects.