

Multnomah Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update to Kickoff December 12

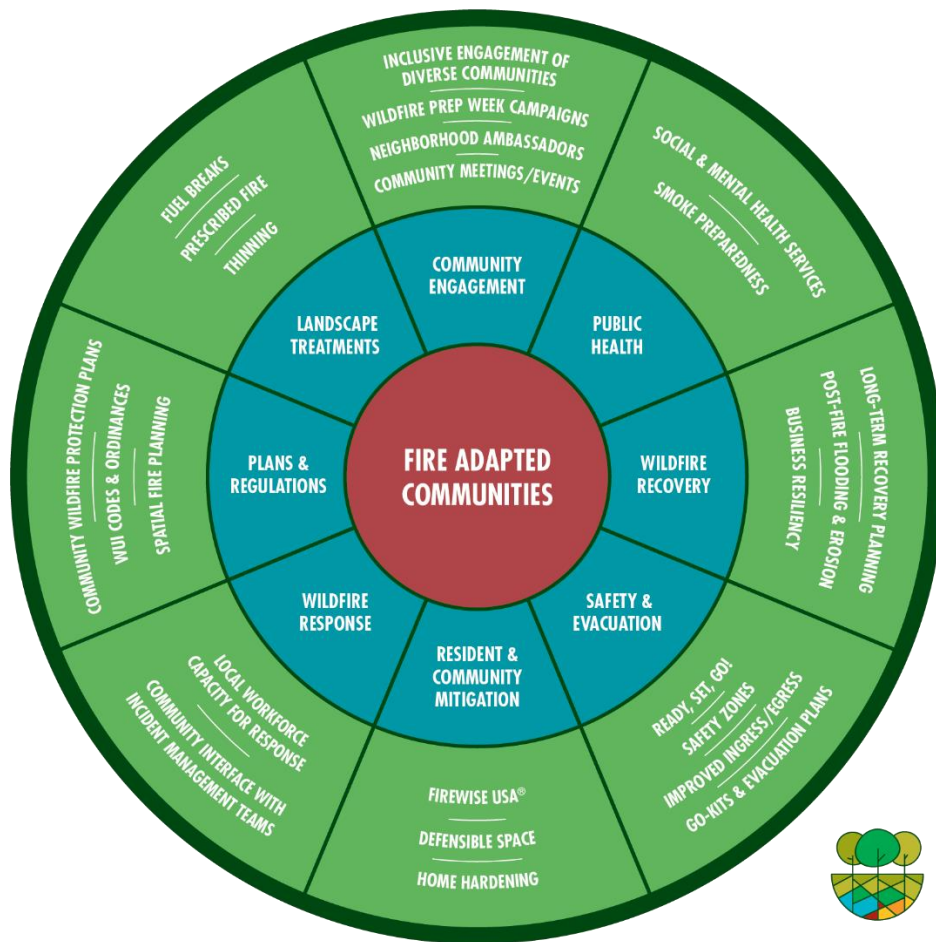
A kickoff meeting will be held on December 12, 2019 to start the process of revising the 2011 Multnomah County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The CWPP is a mitigation plan with the goal of reducing impacts from future wildfires to the community at large. It is not an operational plan, but rather focuses on prioritizing short and long-term strategies to protect life, property, and the environment and improve the county's resilience to inevitable future wildfires. These prioritized strategies can be used to access grants and mobilize local resources more effectively and efficiently.

The Eagle Creek Fire started September 2, 2017 and served as a tragic example and a stark warning of the risks Multnomah County faces from wildland fire. Eagle Creek burned nearly 50,000 acres in Hood River and Multnomah Counties, required extensive evacuation, closed transportation routes, devastated popular recreational and natural areas, and covered Multnomah County in thick smoke.

Devastating fires across Oregon and the west have shown just how destructive wildfire can be even in built environments. The Camp Fire in 2018 devastated an urbanized environment in Northern California, killing at least 85 people and destroying over 18,000 structures. In Southern California, the Thomas Fire of 2017 showed the potential severity of secondary post-fire impacts when heavy rain hit fire-scarred slopes and caused mudflows that killed 21 people. Wildfire smoke from fires across the west have already been a common summer public health concern in Multnomah County, and it is possible that death associated with exposure to wildfire particulate smoke could more than double in the United States over the next century (American Geophysical Union).

Warming climate trends are expected to significantly increase the risk of wildfire in Multnomah County in coming years. Vegetation dried out by longer, hotter summers and reduced snowpack could lead to more frequent and more severe fires, and longer stretches of summer days with unhealthy air. Increased development in our growing metropolitan area could lead to more residents living in or near Wildland-Urban Interface areas (WUIs).

The CWPP is a plan defined under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003. Over time, it has become a key local tool for defining wildfire risk and vulnerability in a comprehensive way. The following diagram, from the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, shows the variety of approaches commonly used to reduce future wildfire impacts. The CWPP is shown in one wedge, under Plans & Regulations, but is also the primary document for defining and prioritizing most of the strategies shown throughout the diagram.



Multnomah County Emergency Management has received a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMPG) grant to conduct this planning work, as part of FEMA’s Eagle Creek Fire recovery funding. The grant will partially fund planning and plan-writing, with the goal being a completed, revised plan by mid-2021. It is expected that risk analysis, planning meetings, and public engagement will occur throughout 2020 and into early 2021.

The plan will seek to synthesize the input of numerous local, state, and federal stakeholders to determine collaborative mitigation actions with broad support across the whole spectrum of wildfire impacts. Robust public input will also be sought to ensure a thoughtful and equitable plan. Any questions or interest in participation can be directed to David Lentzner, Multnomah County Emergency Management at david.lentzner@multco.us or 503-988-7563.