

2024 Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) - Kickoff Meeting

January 31, 2024

Commissioners Hearing Room

Session 1: 9:00am – 10:30am

Purpose and Overview:

The Okanogan Conservation District hosted the official 2024 CWPP Kickoff Meeting where various partners involved with wildfire preparedness in Okanogan County were invited to attend to learn about the CWPP process and collaborate on efforts throughout the year.

The meeting was offered as a hybrid option and 48 people attended; 32 attended in person and 16 attended remotely.

More than 100 partners were invited to attend. The meeting was announced in advance and directly sent to those who were identified as being a potential partner on the CWPP planning team, in the capacity of the smaller core planning committee, or as a part of the larger general partner group.

This included the 13 incorporated cities and towns in Okanogan County, local, state, and federal agencies, and land managers (USFS Methow, USFS Tonasket, WADNR, WDFW, BLM), HOA's, fire districts, tribal government representatives, Okanogan Public Health, Okanogan Long-Term Recovery, and other local organizations.

The discussion was led by Eli Loftis of Okanogan Conservation District. Emmy Engle, Dylan Streeter, Taylor George, and Craig Nelson (remote) were in attendance as well. We discussed the goals, needs, and action steps for updating the Okanogan County CWPP, a tentative timeline for tasks and events to occur in 2024, and held a discussion period for partner comments and feedback on the process as proposed.

Agenda Items:

9:00 – 9:20 Introductions and overview

Welcome, those in attendance went around the room to introduce themselves and who they were representing. Online attendees also introduced themselves. After navigating some technical difficulties, we navigated through the PowerPoint presentation slides (adapted by the Okanogan Conservation District from a resource shared by the Ember Alliance out of Boulder Colorado).

(Slides 2-3) We overviewed the fire maps dating back from 1985–2013 showing previously burned areas. Another map showed data from 2013–current where an additional 1.1 million acres has burnt. Noting that the importance isn't just the areas that have burned in Okanogan County but especially a concern for the areas that haven't burnt yet, as well as burn scars that

will burn over again. Also, showing a visual representation to further express the need for this 2024 update to the CWPP.

(Slides 4 & 5) Discussed the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003. Described the CWPP as both a process and a plan that documents the collaborative efforts of stakeholders working to prepare for wildfire and prioritize actionable mitigation steps that can occur within 5-10 years.

(Slides 6 & 7) Expressed that a CWPP is NOT a legally binding document, it is a plan. It is NOT a funding source, but it is important to have an active CWPP to receive grants from federal and state sources if an emergency occurs. Shared the components of a CWPP, what is required, recommended, and optional. Required components include wildfire risk assessment, a landscape-scale risk reduction plan, and structure ignition risk reduction plan, however, these components are not clearly defined. We also plan to include many of the recommended and optional components as well.

(Slides 8-9) This road map visualizes how we intend to work through this CWPP process. However, this should be more of a straight road as these steps are overlapping and happening at the same time due to our accelerated timeline. CWPP updates typically take 10-12 months or more, and we are aiming for 6-8 months with a goal of having a draft of the plan ready for public and partner comment in May and submitted to the Okanogan County Commissioner's by June.

9:20 – 10:00 CWPP status, goals, and tentative plans for 2024

(Slides 10-13) We are currently at step one, community, and partner engagement. Part of this is working to gather a variety of partners that will be a part of the general and core planning committees. Who should be a partner? Well, if you're here, you are one. The 3 tiers of partner groups are tiered in this way to smoothly run through the planning process, while we are working with so many people and on this accelerated timeline, we just can't have too many decision makers in tier one. However, we are keeping this process open and transparent to welcome general partner/public comment and feedback at any time throughout this process. The CWPP has to have a tremendous amount of community engagement to be successful.

The tiers are made up of the public, and we are working to gathering needs and concerns, and provide frequent updates on this process. The broader general group includes all other partners involved, including HOA managers, fire districts, and other organizations and groups. The core team is made up of mostly government entities, those responsible to the voters and who have an obligation for civil service. The core team will be heavily engaged in this process, meeting 2x per month, taking feedback and comments to make decisions during this process.

QUESTIONS – one clarification was added, that while all the fire districts are not in the core group, we have 3 representatives that were selected in a fire chief meeting to serve on the core planning committee as representatives for fire districts. We also had a meeting with the OK

County Commissioner's where one commissioner and an alternate were selected to represent the core team as well.

(Slides 15-19) Hazard and risk analysis, Dylan is responsible for GIS and mapping, we will be reaching out to other agencies along the way to gather layers and other GIS related resources, for more inclusive maps. For the on-the-ground risk assessments, that is something that we do a lot of already that Conservation District, as well as WA DNR. There are a lot of experts in the room and represented on the core team, when it comes to fire behavior and knowledge.

Prioritization and Implementation, there are a lot of interests and values that need to be addressed, and all are valid. Everyone has different priorities as a landowner and land manager, as a team, we'll have to find a way to prioritize all of these values while also making sure we have realistic expectations for what will happen here locally with wildfires. When it comes to generating the action document, this is something we are working on as we go. We are building this aircraft as it is taking off, so to speak, we need to make sure we do our due diligence as citizens of Okanogan County.

The 2024 process timeline, this is our tentative timeline for this process. January, here we are on January 31st, having the partner kick-off meeting. Core planning sessions will begin and continue to occur through the remainder of this process into June. March and April are when we will be holding community meetings. We are aiming to divide the county into 5 sections - north, central, south, west, and east. We have tentative location ideas but these details still need to be decided by the core group. At the end of this process, we will have a final partner/public meeting to share the document draft, once public comment is incorporated, we will share this with the Okanogan County Commissioner's which will then be sent off for approval by the WADNR/Washington State Forester to be submitted to FEMA. At this time, we are hoping to have this submitted by June but if it takes more time, we will keep working as we won't rush through the process.

NO QUESTIONS

(Slides 21-24) Status update, we are working along this community engagement timeline. We won't necessarily do all these things, but we have held this kick-off meeting, we've had news releases throughout social media channels and in an article by Marcy Stamper of Methow Valley News. We also started the community survey already, in which 700 responses have been received to date. This survey was not meant to be nitty gritty specific at this time; it was intended to remain broad and applicable to a general audience to get as many responses as possible and get the feedback needed. We have translated this survey to Spanish as well and are working to share that. 17% of Okanogan County's population speaks Spanish, and we have an obligation to serve those folks as much as anyone else.

(Slides 25-28) We've gathered some initial survey results, these are just from a few of the questions and aren't finalized yet but give us an idea of where people are at, at this time. 70%

of residents self-identified as full-time, the other 30% included some full-time residents who were also business owners, only owned businesses in the area, or were seasonal/part-time residents. (Slide 25) Most people understood their risk of wildfire, there was a slight drop when it came to what they can do to reduce wildfire hazard. With one specifically strongly disagreeing, hopefully we can reach out to them to get them the resources they need and want. (Slide 27) This was an interesting perception, where most people strongly agreed or agreed with controlled prescribed burning but there were less who strongly agreed/agreed when it came to pile burning.

(Slide 28) The highest concern among respondents was receiving timely and accurate information about the incident, 475 very concerned, 47 moderately concerned, 55 only slightly concerned, 19 not concerned. The second highest concern is loss of insurance coverage due to wildfire risk, 495 very concerned, numbers were not provided for other categories.

10:00 – 10:25 Discussion, questions, & comments

Online attendee stated, they have a background in law and have connections with insurance stakeholders. He has been in contact with them over this issue and has already had many insurance stakeholders reach out to him, and they expressed great excitement in wanting to be involved.

In-person attendee asked, is there a possibility of creating one email to streamline information coming in and what needs to go out?

Eli Loftis of Okanogan CD responded, “great idea, Okanogan CD will work on that.”

In-person attendee asked, are there any other questions built into the survey that clarify the questions about receiving timely information, if someone said they are not concerned, that could mean they don't care or they are not concerned because they already get timely information, so is there anything to clarify?

Eli responded, “no there were not, this survey was meant to be general broad questions, however, there was a comment section for individuals to leave specific details and comments within that section of the survey.”

In-person attendee asked, in the future are we going to have other surveys going out? **Eli responded**, “yes there will be other surveys sent out, we will also keep pushing the survey that is out now.”

Emmy Engle also responded, “there was a section where individuals put in where they were getting their information specifically, if that was a Facebook group, county alerts, etc., and that gives us a little more insight as well. With some of these concerns of ‘having more specifics,’ these are things we can bring up and dive into further at the community meetings as well.”

Partners were also encouraged to attend those public meetings as they come to their area this spring, as the public may have questions to ask and we hope to have as many people there as

possible, and as a part of the process, also to encourage public attendance.

In-person attendee asked, you have been working with the fire districts, what about directly with the cities?

Eli responded, “we have some representatives on the committee already, and have invited the 13 incorporated cities and towns to take part in this process, and we will keep working on them.”

In-person attendee asked, we have talked about funding for federal and state, but what about private landowners? It makes sense to do this in a very cohesive manner, having all these state and federal lands well taken care of, then to only have these plots of private land throughout that aren't doesn't seem cohesive.

Eli responded, “that is an excellent question and that will take a lot more work than just the governmental side of things. We have smaller grant programs for landowners to receive fire recovery funding. I don't have a great answer on how to work that out at this time, but we will continue to try.”

Emmy Engle also added, “Also, later down the line in the planning sessions, when it comes to prioritization and implementation, will be the time for all partners to map out what resources are available to meet the expressed needs and proposed projects, and that will help to identify and bridge those gaps.”

ADDITIONAL CALL FOR QUESTIONS – With none, Eli stated, “well since we have you all in the room now, after hearing this, is there anything you disagree with or anything that in your mind just isn't going to work?”

WADNR added, well I'll just add that in reference to the 2nd slide of your presentation, when we look at that as fire managers we look at that data as actual acres treated, and I am actually more worried about the areas that hadn't burned yet because especially when you get into sagebrush, so looking at that, the areas that haven't burned are the areas we really want to focus our effort because on the muckamuck fire we were able to stop it at the tripod burn, it was 15 years between tripod and muckamuck and it still was not affected as others. On the treatments that are being done and the resources for DNR, these are being focused on private ground. For state land and forests, we are not doing near as many treatments out there as we have wanted to because of that we are using service forestry. But we have dumped a ton of our money and resources into the private landscape, where there are a few micro grants out there for landowners, where we can get in with private landowners in critical landscapes to create barriers you can get into other pots of funding.

10:25 – 10:30 Next steps

We have a lot of stakeholders involved, going forward, we are going to have to find a way to ensure that our language is refined and coherent across all of these different spectrums in order to make sure this document is a useful document for everyone in this room and also to the public.

This document will address the work being done on federal state lands, Wenatchee national forest, Colville National Forest, BLM, etc., but there will be a significant portion of this that will focus on the needs and the actions that are able to be implemented on private lands through Okanogan CD, DNR forestry, and various other programs.

Core member asked, one thing we haven't discussed is the map for the WUI, and how we are going to implement that, are we talking about all DNR forest land, etc.?

Eli responded, "we are hopping a bit ahead of our time, WUI is planned for session 2."

Online attendee asked, I want to make sure the core group has representation across all fire districts, it sounds to me like the fire districts won't be involved on the core group?

Eli responded, "no, all fire districts are involved in the core group."

In-person attendee asked, are you going to treat the county as a whole, is the plan going to encompass the whole county and then subcategory of fee land on the reservation?

Eli asked, "in terms of the WUI? Yes, looking at that map, I know it's zoned differently because it is the reservation."

(Technical difficulties) "If we could get our actual WUI map to pull up for you all, you would see we have made no differentiation between tribal land and fee land when it comes to that definition."

Online attendee added, we see in our community a lot that we have renters in here that we don't even know, so we can't notify them in state of emergency. We send out a broadcast to our people but not necessarily the renters on the property, working on getting that. But what I was asking is when we send out this info, someone should let people know that they are responsible for their renters as well. They need to be a part of this process.

No more questions or comments, we thank you all for your time today and being here, in person or remotely, and we look forward to continuing this process with you.

10:30 – 10:40 Session 1 adjourned. 10 minute break, and resolved technical difficulties.

CWPP KICK-OFF MEETING SIGN – IN SHEET

Wednesday, January 30, 2024 9AM – 12 Noon

Commissioner's Hearing Room

| Name | Title | Agency Representing | Phone | E-Mail |
|----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|--|
| BEN ALLING | FIRE CHIEF | COULLEE DAM ^{FIRE} | 509-633-0663 | NONE |
| David L. Finch | Fire Chief | Okan. Dist #2 | 509-723-5284 | finch |
| Zac Claassen | Fire Chief | Concouilly | | |
| Brad Armstrong | " " | OKanogah | | |
| PATTI NORDBY | | FAMV | 509-946-3546 | nordby.pat@gmail.com |
| RITA KENNY | | WINTHROP PE | 509-429-1428 | vitak.wms@gmail.com |
| Jessica Blake | Clerk | City of Okanogah | 509.322.3158 | cityclerk@okanogahcity.com |
| Emily Warn | Firewise Coordinator | Buttermilk Firewise | Twisp 509-4974600 | emilywarn@outlook.com |
| Will Knowlton | Community Resilience | DNK Community | 360-972-4222 | William.Knowlton@dnr.wa.gov |
| Shawn Plank | W2 Foods | Cohille NF | (509) 486-5150 | shawn.plank@usda.gov |
| Travis Baker | FMO | Colville NF | (509) 560-3834 | travis.baker@usda.gov |
| Rachel McClure | | | 509 386 6353 | mcclurebrand@gmail.com Rachel.mcclure@ |
| BRANDON TROYER | LAND OPS MGR. WDFW | WDFW | 509 429 2624 | Brandon.Troyer@DFW.WA.Gov |

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| Name | Title | Agency Representing | Phone | E-Mail |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| JEREMY PATRICK | Fire Chief | Okan. Co. Fire #3 City of Omak | 509-846-5337 | fire51@omakcity.com |
| BRANDON TROYER | LAND OPS. mgr. | WDFW | 509-429-2624 | Brandon.Troyer@DFW.WA.GOV |
| Patti Cockfield | Chilwist Valley Firewise | | 509 922-5427 | ppcockfield@gmail.com |
| Ben Eddings | Fire Prevention officer | USFS | 509-670-2304 | benjamin.eddings@usda.gov |
| Jessica Farmer | Disaster Preparedness Mitigation Resilience Lead | CLTRG | 509-846-5101 | jessicaocdem@gmail.com |
| Nick Christoph | RDW Superintendent | OKPUD | 509-422-8435 | Nickc@OKPUD.org |
| Tim Love | Firestaff | DNR | 509-563-9367 | tim.love@dnr.wa.gov |
| Steve Young | Firestaff | DNR | 509-429-0147 | steve.young@dnr.wa.gov |
| Aaron Coe | FMO Highlands | DNR | 509-675-0030 | Aaron.Coe@dnr.wa.gov |
| Skyler Goodrich | Service Forester | DNR | 509-322-6610 | Skyler.Goodrich@dnr.wa.gov |
| Blayne Harvey | Service Forester | DNR | 509-675-0430 | Blayne.Harvey@dnr.wa.gov |
| Whitney Machado | Fire management specialist | BLM | 509-221-9284 | wmachado@BLM.gov |
| Sam Halvorsen | Service Forester | DNR | 690-3361 | sam.halvorsen@dnr.wa.gov |

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| Name | Title | Agency Representing | Phone | E-Mail |
|-----------------|-------|---------------------|-------|--------|
| Lori Caswell | | OK County | | |
| Maurice Goodall | | OK County | | |
| Taylor George | | OK CD | | |
| Emily Engle | | OK CD | | |
| Jim Neal | | BOCC | | |
| Dylan Streeter | | OCB | | |
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Online Attendees:

Alishia Orloff

Anna Jones

Myron Boles - (DNR)

Jarett Cook - (DNR)

Craig Nelson

Hans Smith - Mayor of Twisp

Judy Arbogast

Karen Mulcahy - Sun Mtn Ranch

Mel Sorensen - Wolf Creek HOA

Pete Soderquist

Rocklynn Culp - City Planner, Winthrop

Rusty Stamps

Liz - Health District

(509) 978-9813 - Colville Tribes Fire Dept.

Cody Acord

Ike C. - Mt. Tolman