

Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

Public Meeting - West OK County

Winthrop Barn Auditorium

03/28/2024 | 5pm-7pm

5:00 – 5:30 Welcome, Introductions, & CWPP Overview

Will Knowlton with Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WADNR) and Maurice Goodall with Okanogan County Emergency Management welcomed everyone to the fourth of five CWPP community meetings take place across the county. We opened with ground rules, meetings goals, and the proposed meeting structure. There were over 110 people in attendance.

The CWPP partners in attendance included various agencies such as the Okanogan Conservation, Okanogan County Emergency Management, OK County Long Term Recovery Group, USFS-Methow, WADNR, WDFW, Twisp Mayor, Winthrop City Planner, Fire District #6, Okanogan County Electric Co-Op (OCEC), and more.

Will Knowlton continued with the CWPP overview, we looked at a map that showed previously burned areas from 1985-2013 and compared that to another fire map that showed burned areas in just in the last 10 years. The red on the map nearly doubled, concluding that the landscape has drastically over the last 10 years and since 2013, when the CWPP was last updated. Will emphasized the importance of the CWPP and continued the presentation (the full presentation can be found under “CWPP Resources” on the website www.okanogancd.org/cwpp).

Participants were asked how they heard about tonight’s meeting, some had said traditional media sources; flyers, newspaper, and radio, also, social media and via an alert from the OK County Emergency system announcing tonight’s meeting. The group was also asked if they had received an alert a while back regarding the CWPP Resident Questionnaire. A good majority raised their hand to say yes that they had received word of and/or taken the questionnaire. Will Knowlton mentioned that there were over 707 responses and discussed a few of the findings. This included 20% of residents not having an evacuation plan, 70% of residents identifying as full-time residents, top concerns for folks included 450 people who were highly concerned about receiving timely and accurate communication during a wildfire event, and another 420+ people

who were concerned about loss of insurance coverage due to wildfire risk. It was emphasized that if you are not already signed up for OK County Emergency alerts to make sure to do so and tell your neighbors as well. Additional resources available were announced such as free home risk assessments from WADNR and Okanogan CD, and Okanogan County Long Term Recovery Group's map your neighborhood tool and free reflective blue signs. It was mentioned there is a drop box at the sign in table to leave additional comments and feedback that come to mind throughout the meeting.

Emmy Engle with the Okanogan Conservation District announced the participatory activity as everyone received sticky dots to map their values at risk.

5:30 – 6:00 Mapping Activity – Community Values at Risk

Community members and partners all participated in a mapping activity where everyone got three dots to rank their values at risk. Pink dots represented the highest priority, green dots were a mid-priority, and yellow dots were lower priority. Discussions broke out around the tables where six different maps of West Okanogan County were located. These maps were broken down into the NW, NE, CW, CE, SW, and SE quadrants. After everyone had the opportunity to place their dots, the community was asked how they determined their priorities. Going map by map, Jessica Farmer and Maurice Goodall discussed values at risk and asked participants to share why they marked an area as one of their values at risk, how they based that priority, and what barriers stand in the way. A few of the values at risk were as follows:

Mapped Values at Risk:

A priority was Riverside because that is an area where a resident used to live, a lot of downed trees there, heavy fuel load is a fire hazard. When asked what the barriers look like in that area, they mentioned many elders live there and the physical ability to reduce fuel loads. Downtown Omak had a dot to reflect how towns and cities are also vulnerable to fire risk. The recreational area on the Loop was highlighted, the participants would like to see the protected, mentioned that they've seen been pile burning there to help reduce fuels and would like that to continue.

Pateros was mapped to prioritize the access routes to get in and out of the Methow Valley. Beaver Creek at State Route 20 was highlighted, Campbell Lake was identified as a value at risk as a beautiful area and that's near the resident's home. Stehekin area

was highlighted to emphasize protecting the wildlife refuge and beauty of the landscape. USFS put a dot near Nickel Canyon to highlight the fuels treatment work being done there, that there's a drainage with homes in that area. McClure area was highlighted for importance in communication and what can happen when that goes out. The group was asked, how many here have backup power? Most of the room raised their hand. Two participants highlighted that they struggled only being able to place three dots and others in the room agreed.

Finley Canyon, Texas Creek, South Summit Road, and Loop Loop Pass were highlighted. Brewster had a dot to reflect the access concerns trying to get out of the Valley. One participant mentioned the big events that bring tourism into the valley such as the Blue's Festival, and how evacuation becomes an issue with the large density of people and traffic. Further commenting that it only takes one RV to block the road and that "death by traffic jam isn't the ideal for me."

In the French Creek area there were a few concerns about ingress/egress out of the area. Dots in Pateros representing access and asking how we can safely evacuate people if they are in a drainage or in a small development area. In the Black Canyon neighborhood, and near Hunter Mountain Road, there are a lot of elders and only one way in and out. Sinlahekin Valley to highlight the wildlife habitat area there, commenting that we can replace houses but we should remember that wildlife habitat is important too and once it burns it's not as easy to replace. Other concerns in the area for how fast a fire could travel and reach homes.

Cornwell Lake, and the chunk of forest up there is one of the last places that has not been incinerated. Commenting that while it's dense there and maybe bits and pieces could burn, they would like to not see it be incinerated. USFS was brought into the conversation and asked whether they would suppress fire or perform prescribed burn in the wilderness, to which they responded typically no but, in a year, where it's very hot and dry, they would be aware of that and could express efforts to help keep the wilderness from burning.

Out of the six maps, most of the dots were placed near the town of Winthrop, possibly because that's where most of the homes are. Residents were asked why they placed

their dots, why they are concerned, and what barriers they face? One resident was concerned about how most of everything here, especially buildings are wood, and the code in Winthrop state that they are to be built with wood. Community members were concerned about the lack of preparedness efforts such as efforts for defensible space. The local fire district and Winthrop City Planner mentioned barriers such as older aging water system, ingress/egress, and codes which make for vulnerabilities. OK County Emergency Management mentioned the enforcement component to this and stated that once codes are getting people to follow them is an issue in itself.

Wolf Creek was highlighted, a resident mentioned that they live close to the woods and it makes it difficult to get insurance. Commenting that if they were slightly closer along Route 20, they would have been able to get insurance more easily. The community members were asked if anyone here is not under the protection of the Fire District, mostly everyone believed they were. It was mentioned that those in the fire district are covered for structure fires, and WADNR protects areas in the county from fire but does not respond to structural fires. Dots were also near Twisp River, and we were brought back to wood buildings, a resident who works with the local museum shared how they just held a presentation about a historic fire in Winthrop where there were 23 structures that went up in flames, “that is what happens when you have wood buildings,” also, an inadequate water supply, not enough volunteer firefighters, and buildings too close together.

The issue of aging water systems was emphasized. We moved into the discussion of evacuation, that as individuals you have to decide what is best for you and have a plan, also, a contingency plan. One community member asked a question, OCEC can respond to fires near their resources, however, what about the OK PUD who are over the loop, what happens if one of their poles catches fire or power problems occur? Is OCEC or anyone else allowed to assist in that emergency for someone else’s resources? OCEC reassured the group that there are mutual agreements that allow the electrical companies to work together in cases like this and they can help assist in those situations.

It was emphasized that it’s important to discuss with your neighbors as they are moving into the area or if you see wildfire risks. To try to talk with your neighbors to

understand barriers and to help them find resources they need to improve issues. Another issue involved smoke concerns, mentioning that when the air quality is poor, being aware of what we are doing outside for our health but also protecting our inside air with the use of filters and changing those filters periodically.

Participants were asked to leave further comments and concerns in the contact basket if they were not addressed.

6:25 – 6:40 Break

--- During the break, a community member asked how they could go about trying to get a road opened back up near the Twisp Avia development that is was possibly a County road or USFS road. Another person said that the County has to step up to take responsibility, people are moving into the area and have an understanding that all the resources they need are guaranteed and exist for them; water resources, power/electrical, and that they will be protected by fire fighters. We are limited by codes and restrictions that don't always make sense for our situation, or permits won't be given because water can't be guaranteed. ---

6:40 – 7:10 Project Actions in the CWPP

Will Knowlton discussed sample action projects and previous projects that were listed in the 2013 CWPP. The group reviewed a list of 9 action item categories to help brainstorm ideas for projects they would like to see in this CWPP update. Community members had the following project action ideas:

Action items that provide more literature education dispersed to those vacationing in our community specifically along trailheads and campgrounds. A community member followed up to say they are aware of an area that does rentals and has brochures available, that were developed by multiple wildfire partners, to help visitors understand wildfire risk and evacuation/shelter options. Another comment was for a project to have more signage to say things such as "no fires" around many areas. WADNR commented that they have many of these signs but perhaps could have even more and make them more visible. Members in the group agreed, and another community member commented that now-a-days more people are camping in areas that are not designated camp areas so expanding signage to reach those folks as well.

Signage should be expanded that shares rules about when and how to cut wood on forest land but also private lands, making this available at the visitors center or bulletin boards. Another commented, signs help but people don't read them, and it won't work. We need something more, getting out and talking to people and neighbors, but still emphasizing temporary signs when they are needed. Another person mentioned an idea of QR codes, and working with businesses to get those put out where people can scan them and sign up or learn more. That this would bring them to OK County Alerts, and even if they leave the area, they can still continue to get alerts and that it would build general awareness for our area.

Other ideas included getting a Fire Marshall. Someone commented that this position would hit a lot of these categories for CWPP action projects. A community member asked, "We are brainstorming ideas but who actually is going to perform these action items?" Will Knowlton shared that these projects go back to core CWPP planning committee, if the project is already incorporated great and if not we keep looking to see, who can take the lead on this project, and determine if the project can be accomplished and in what timeline. The community members further suggested if we can expand the opportunity for community members to a lead position on projects by asking for community volunteers to perform actions too, churches, community groups, and others. WADNR mentioned a project they will start soon in the Methow, a community ambassador program. More to come on this at a later time. Another person reinforced this, by saying it does mean more when it's not just the government or a neighbor who 'always just does this stuff' to encourage these actions/movements to occur.

Project actions for infrastructure included concerns with roads. The 2013 plan had project objectives to do with road signage that were, "deleted due to lack of funding," this should come back into this updated plan and get done, "like real soon, like now." Others agreed and another person mentioned that they second that. Another community members emphasized that there are projects that were maybe lower-hanging fruits at a time, where roads were closed or may have been gated improperly, and maybe now is that time to readdress that. Also, wondering if USFS still has CWI funds or other funding to help connect French Creek to the Brewster side of things, McFarland Creek that connect Libby Creek, etc., concluding that routes should and maybe could be opened back up? Another community member emphasized, it seems

that vulnerability points, exit routes, and other things like this are naturally very high priorities that would maybe trump anything else.

Another comment suggested that we need more information available and distributed on where and how/criteria to shelter in place. Also, how places can be hardened to make them a viable option to shelter in place. OCLTRG differentiated that 'shelter in place' is different than 'evacuating to a shelter'. OK Emergency Management said that this is hard to do because a lot of the time a plan isn't determined until that moment occurs, and that the County works with Red Cross and tries to get the word out quickly and timely but won't determine a location until other factors are discussed including where the incident management team will need to be, fire behaviors, and what options are then available. They also mentioned that shelters are actually seldom used, why? People look around and notice that no one is really there or decide they will stay with friends or elsewhere instead.

We moved to post-fire and recovery efforts and ideas. Someone mentioned the need for more resources for tree felling and knowing who to help with this practice. Another project being the need for additional resources in the community for people to learn about how to manage an emergency incident including preparing for and knowing how to go without water and electricity. Someone emphasized the importance of public health. It was mentioned that a retired local fire chief from the county just started with public health and it that this will be a good plus for the County. Affordable and available housing for seasonal firefighters. Community outreach and education, having people volunteer to do the action items listed in the CWPP, and it was strongly suggested to find ways that people can really help, and by doing so to learn how to perform actions and the importance of the wildfire mitigation efforts.

The meeting shifted to resources that community members have available. One person mentioned that they have a water source on their property that they own, and want to make that known to USFS and WADNR that it can be used in the event of an emergency. They asked how could they make that known? They were advised to contact the local WADNR FMO or USFS. Someone will direct you to the right place.

Also, a private contractor from Liberty Wildfire announced that they experience excess labor capacity situations, they are there available to fight fires or help with tree felling and more. They are an available resource and available for hire.

Did we miss anything? A member of the community thanked us all for being here and for sharing concerns, concluded with a shared quote mentioning that we should turn our focus to preserving old growth forests and rehabilitating ecosystems that have been largely impacted, this will help create a healthy functional ecosystem that is more resilient and adaptable to the changing world. This quote was moving, and another community member shared on their experience with mental health during wildfire disaster and how they were comforted by the reminder that while it's devastating, the forest will heal (please see the last page for the in-depth quote).

7:10 Adjournment

Will Knowlton concluded by thanking everyone for their time and for sharing concerns. We were running behind on time but briefly discussed the next steps of CWPP, emphasizing to stay tuned for updates on our website at www.okanogancd.org/cwpp and public comment period coming in June. For those who have further questions or comments, these could be added to the basket at the sign-in table.

[We received various comments noting, 1) What is the ecological grounding for this process, where's the understanding of ecological principles, and ecological health? 2) Building codes should require fire resilient materials and methods, we need a fire marshal for the County, and a plan (before and after fire) for helping vulnerable populations, pre-post fire, human & animal populations, 3) housing – county codes don't allow a second residence such as apartments on property, a change could increase housing, 4) Work to develop a system where trees could be thinned at the forest interface, allow/permit fire wood collection to make a fire resistant boundary.

5) (Edelweiss neighborhood) thank you Forest Service for fixing Road 100 giving us secondary access, a patch of forest between upper meadow and Road 100 on FS land is close to the community and needs fuels reduction. For controlled burns, do you consider whether there is an inversion when deciding not to burn (the smoke can be bad), also, people with limited income cannot afford AC and closing up the house due

to smoke with a cheap filter set-up can be extremely warm, 6) Golden Doe Wildlife Area, the goal should be to preserve the high-quality deer winter range, high priority areas to be treated with prescribed fire and mechanical thinning, timing of prescribed fire is important for flashy fuels in the shrub-steppe.

7) I would like the ideas captured from the Feb 25th, 2023 meeting to not be lost, please be sure to incorporate those previous ideas in the CWPP too, protection of the town of Winthrop maybe running fire models could help determine where to prioritize resiliency efforts first, then come back to building codes, and the town itself. 8) Thank you, and education programs for schools about firefighting to encourage people to head towards a career in fire earlier on, 9) More education for the community on the water cycle, forest health, soil health, fungi education, not building homes on top of hills or in riparian areas, wetland health and not turning them into crop fields, more events with this education for all ages, 10) Twisp must be covered by Firewise please, harden the neighborhoods, not logging the Upper Twisp Watershed to save the mature forests, 11) long-term forest health is not being considered adequately in this wildfire emergency.

12) Many fires have generated on public lands and then threaten communities the following should be stressed, mechanical removal of fuel loads in forests, forest management via multiple use and sustain yield of wood products, opening up forest tree canopy in a dry climate, and opening up grazing allotments and utilizing regenerative grazing, 13) provide a more comprehensive suite of forest/fuel treatments including how to prescribe burn on private land, 14) Strategies for non-compliant landowners, in a local HOA there are heavily forested lots owned by folks who never come their property. What incentives are available to help? Barriers could be cost related or physical inability, or simply "I don't care." 15) I hope all stickers (pink, green, yellow from mapping activity) are considered as a major concern. Major concern is saving wildlife habitat vs. homes. We live on a ridge covered with bitterbrush and sagebrush, we continue to struggle to keep a safe area around our home and roadways, the suggested safe space for our home is not adequate for our situation, and how do we compete with these competing interests? 16) Emergency places to go to shelter and informative clusters for specific areas on where to go and how to go.]

Mapping activity:



Meeting at Winthrop Barn:



Shared Quote: Shared by Wren, a local community member.

To create healthy functional ecosystems that are more resilient and adaptable in a changing world, we need to focus on preserving the old growth forests we have left. Focus and rehabilitate the damaged ecological functions of our second growth forests through ecologically sustainable management practices to create a better quality of life for us and all beings. It's possible to rehabilitate large-scale damaged ecosystems. We can choose consciousness and generosity and if we do that we are on the flourishing path. As a father of a 7-year-old, I find it super important that we do our part so that our future generations have a high-quality life.

2024 CWPP – West County Community Meeting

Winthrop Barn Auditorium

Winthrop, WA

March 28th, 2024

Name	Location
Emmy Elyle	OKanogan CD
Jessica Farmer	OCLTRS
Will Kowtko	WA DNR
Zach Ellinger OR/WA BLM	Twisp, WA
ANDRA ARTEMOVA	WINTHROP
Jim MATHESON	WINTHROP
MATT EBERLEIN	WDFW
SHARON COOP	Edelweiss
Colleen Zaker	Wolf creek
BRIAN ROBERT TODRT.	OMAR
MIKE MEGAARD	WINTHROP
RITA KENNY	Winthrop PG/CWPP
Mike Bastian	TWISP
Debbie Rodenkizer	Winthrop
Betty Wagonez	Twisp
JANE WEAGANT	Twisp-
Sumi Levin Dan McHale	Twisp
Narolyn Loren	Winthrop
Chris Rager	Twisp
Wren Superanes	Carlton
Karen Witt	Winthrop

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Winthrop, WA

March 28th, 2024

Name	Location
Kat Heim	Winthrop WA
PAT NORDBY	WINTHROP, WA
Isabelle Spohn	Twisp WA
Sydney Ellis	Winthrop WA
Steve and Linda Colvin	Tonasket
Phelia McNear	Winthrop
JOHN MATTHEWS	WINTHROP
Steve and Mike Megaw	Winthrop
Heather McLean	Winthrop
Jarred Johnson	Winthrop
WAYNE & DONNA BOND	BIG VALLEY
Pat Leigh	Edelweiss
Anton McGready	Twin Lakes
Daniel Montano	WA DNR
Bethany Rentz	Winthrop, WA
John Herst / Diane Johnston	Winthrop WA
Rocklyn Culp	Winthrop
Diane Gordon	Mazama
Michael Koerner	Mazama

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Winthrop Barn Auditorium

Winthrop, WA

March 28th, 2024

Name	Location
BRANDON TROYER	Winthrop
Steve & Jennifer Kieffer	Twisp, WA
Sarah Besklian	WZ WA
Rob Greenwood	Winthrop
Becky Spout	Winthrop
Becky Drenner	Winthrop
Jean + Mark Hulme	Winthrop
Sam Israel	Twisp
Alex FANTSOCK	MAZAMA
LARRY HALL	MAZAMA
Amanda Thiel	Corvallis, OR
Sarena Shapiro	Winthrop, WA
Allen Lebaiv ²	Twisp, WA
Penelope Vann	Twisp, WA
Hans Smits	Twisp, WA
Weidi + Marc Rothmegeles	Winthrop, WA
Mary Lechner	Winthrop, WA

Name	Location
Nancy Kuta, David Caldwell	Mayama
Arlene STAMPER	NW News, Twisp
Martha Kongsgaard	Winthrop, Bendley rows
Petr Goldman	"
Paula Ehlers	Winthrop
Nancy Farr	Winthrop
ANNIE SAUNDERS	TWISP
DAVID LUKAS	Winthrop
Chase Burgett	TWISP
Paula Macknow	Twisp
Dana Golden	Winthrop
Dick Ewing	Winthrop
Tray Bolante Sprauer	Carlton
Bueck Smith	Twisp
Lindsay Lee	Winthrop
Malcolm Lee	Winthrop
Bob Nancy	Winthrop
Saman Brooks	Winthrop
Craig Nelson	Okanogan

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Winthrop, WA

March 28th, 2024

Name	Location
Brian Erickson	WLPOT
Alan Watson	Winthrop
Karen Nichols	Winthrop
Zach Gurney (CCCC)	Winthrop
DAVE KODENHICER	WINTHROP
Mika Sotoa	Twisp
George Schoenfeld	Winthrop
Emily Warn	Twisp
Kelley Sheldon	Winthrop Edelburg
Brian Duchin	Winthrop
Anna Jones	Twisp, WA
Gay Northrup	Winthrop
Ric Bailey	Winthrop
Jess Douglas	Twisp
Jane Ramberg	Twisp