**XII. Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Introduction**

The completion of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) does not automatically result in the reduction of wildfire risk. The CWPP partners need a process for short and long-term strategies to ascertain if the plan is meeting the intended goals within the county. *Identifying important items to monitor, a process for determining accomplishments and a schedule for plan review will help guide the success of this document.*

Coordination of shared monitor responsibilities of agencies and landowners will assist in the already stretched workforce capacity insuring follow through in plan implementation. Identifying areas of expertise needed to successfully evaluate Plan progress can improve reporting follow through. Monitor and evaluation will focus on the most important items that promote the long-term viability of this CWPP and achieving risk reduction goals and objectives.

**Agency Guidance**

Monitoring is called for by several agency policies and plans. The Oregon Department of Forestry and Forest Service National Fire Plan Office, along with 15 other organizations assisted with and reviewed a publication called, *Community Wildfire Protection Plan Evaluation Guide*, that discusses evaluation and monitoring in reference to CWPP plans.

A team of Oregon Department of Forestry subject matter, geographic information and communications specialists in 2010 developed the Oregon’s Forest Action Plan in order to fulfill requirements of the 2008 Farm Bill. Part of this plan is a statewide forest assessment that includes conducting assessments to identify threats and opportunities to address these threats. One of the 6 priorities was Communities at Risk recognizing the coordination with the National Fire Plan as an important aspect of success.

The Cohesive Wildfire Strategy (CWS) has a broader approach yet emphasizing the tracking of priority investments, occurring trends over time that may impact achievement of goals and treatment cost effectiveness and tradeoffs of appropriations for wildland fire programs.

The Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) or the National Cohesive Wildfire Strategy support the development of community wildfire protection plans for reducing wildfire impacts and identifies three areas for CWPP effectiveness; Collaboration, fuels reduction, treatment of structural ignitability. The HFRA, although not specific, discusses monitoring and assessments of CWPP goals and noting changes to Fire Regime Condition Classes. Tracking investments tiered to CWPP goals will provide progress toward meeting the mission of the plan, and reducing wildfire risk.

**Schedule**

This Steering Committee agrees that the Union County CWPP is a living document that is flexible and fluid designed to allow for updates of most current information and changes as they occur at the county, state and federal level. Any updates should be designed to strengthen future implementation of the plan. A plan revisit should occur at least annually and be revised as necessary to ensure the plan objectives are being met and the plan can be revised to evolving threats and address new funding opportunities.

Plan maintenance will be directed by the Union County Emergency Services and coordinated with the plan’s steering committee members, core groups who agreed to be standing committee members will assist with monitoring and evaluation. *Proposed plan maintenance will be set annually and will consist of a plan review of mitigation and action items, plan progress toward goals and objectives, with plan revisions as necessary.*

Annual strategies and recommendations will be necessary as various projects, tasks are accomplished. This is important when at-risk areas see changes in fire threat, fire effects, and fire risk ratings particularly when addressing new and emerging threats. Any additional Union County changes that could influence meeting the CWPP goals and objectives should also be noted.

**Monitoring**

It is important to have an effective process for evaluating how well CWPP goals and objectives have been addressed to adequately update the plan. Identifying a collaborative environment where project partners can conduct assessments, collect pertinent data, and provide reports of findings will help move toward an efficient CWPP process.

Difficulties in monitoring are recognized within this plan but are essential for plan success. Funding and available staff to complete the monitoring is not always available. Combining and coordination opportunities during field visits, or education forums can avoid duplication of efforts. Creating simple questionnaires for public surveys can also help gain insight on progress on the ground and made available during education forums.

This plan focuses on monitoring the key areas that influence the success or failure of meeting wildfire risk mitigation and the link to the CWPP goals and objectives. Several areas of monitoring should be conducted to evaluate implementation effectiveness.

Goals and objectives of the plan provide the foundation for a county wide effort in mitigating wildfire risk. Success stories where mitigation actions effectively meet one of the goals of the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy is noteworthy of an update. **Specific items that warrant monitoring and updates include:**

* Tracking accomplishments with relevance to the goals: lessons learned, benefits, obstacles, pilot projects, costs
* Approaches taken to meet the identified mitigation action items and the degree which it was implemented
* Addendums of any new mitigation action items that may emerge
* Agreements old and new; rational for modifications made; Areas of no agreement where one is needed (example: Forest Service and Rural Fire Departments).
* Maintenance of investments including: CWPP plan, mitigations actions, previously accomplished treatments
* Changes in community participation and CWPP committee members
* Public input, meetings, workshops, education forums, media outlets
* Collaboration efforts that both enhance or restrict opportunities

Broader items to monitor should include:

* New local, state, and federal policies/programs that support or impede the CWPP process
* Funding source prospects available
* Collaborative efforts between community members, other plans, and agencies.

Utilizing the mitigation action items identified in Chapter VIII will assist the CWPP committee in focusing on identified key topics with the flexibility of making changes as needed.

Continued public collaboration on the Union County Wildfire Protection Plan is necessary to meet identified needs while accomplishing the plan’s mission. Maintaining close coordination with the updates of the NE Oregon Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan will be beneficial to avoid duplicating efforts and implementing a smooth process in the event of a fire emergency.

Additional areas of monitoring that should occur include, whenever appropriate: fuels/vegetation treatments to modify fire behavior, ecological impact monitoring, infrastructure changes, population shifts – growth, equipment modifications/upgrades, fire support efforts (water sources), qualifications/training, job markets changes, structure vulnerability, agreements, pace and scale, smoke emissions, fire regime condition class, codes and standards, communications, and fire personnel, new constructions, land use changes, and extreme wildfire risk fluctuations.

*Along with the evaluation of the CWPP include success stories, implementation, collaboration, and cross boundary efforts that promote the plan goals as well as obstacles that hinder success.* Providing these scenarios develops a depth of educational opportunities to improve implementation efforts, fire programs and plans in the future.

*The CWPP includes a list of mitigation measures with corresponding action items in Chapter VIII. Reviewing these items, identifying percent completed, obstacles to completion, partners, and next steps can provide clear progress through completion.*

**Evaluation**

Multiple monitoring forms are available to provide easy examination of CWPP implementation efforts. The Community Wildfire Protection Plan Evaluation Guide offers a number of optional approaches and forms to assist communities in monitoring and evaluating their CWPP. This guide provides a number of options under the framework for conducting a CWPP evaluation with six evaluation elements: 1. Partnership and Collaboration; 2. Risk Assessment; 3. Fuels Reduction; 4. Reducing Structural Vulnerability; 5. Education and Outreach; 6. Emergency Management (OSU 2008).

Union County has adopted these six elements with some modifications to address local conditions. Elements for evaluation were identified corresponding to the three CWS goals and objectives of this plan. Union County forms in Appendix L are offered as options for record keeping to record actions as they occur and to identify changes during plan reviews. Annual assessment of the identified projects is very important to determine whether progress is being made or adjustments are needed.

Monitoring of the CWPP progress should occur at regular intervals. Monitoring sources used for updating the plan can vary particularly when changes occur through other forums such as the Northeast Oregon Hazard Plan, Forest Collaboration Projects, public meetings, or emergency management outcomes during fire season. These efforts may compliment or delay the objectives outlined in this CWPP plan and should be acknowledged.

On an annual basis, the standing steering committee members will assess each identified project using these units of measure to determine progress. This plan does not serve as a means of bypassing the individual processes and regulations of the participating agencies. Each project must adhere to any pertinent local, state and federal rules or guidelines in determining the point of project implementation. The plan is a coordinating document for forest and community projects related to fire protection, education and outreach, information development, collaborative efforts, fuels treatment and fire risk mitigation. It is however worthy of noting if any policies or rules impede the counties ability to successfully implement this plan or create additional risks to life and property.

Copies of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan are available at the Union County Emergency Services Office, at the Oregon Department of Forestry Office in La Grande, Wallowa-Whitman National Forest headquarters in La Grande, in Union County public libraries. It will also be available both electronically and via the Union County and ODF websites. The websites will provide citizens an opportunity to send comments or questions regarding the plan, benefits of plan, and difficulties encountered.

**Summary**

The CWPP document is designed as a living document that is expected to change as situations/conditions of the county change. The fire risk in Union County is not constant but is continually being modified by management and nature. These modifications can be complementary or detrimental to the goals of this plan.

Agency policies and rules provide some direction in follow-up monitoring of the changes in community threats, investments, and CWPP implementation of its goals. Through the tracking of funds and projects future CWPP planning can be built upon the successes and failures of implementation.

It is important for the CWPP committee to periodically meet to record and discuss changes in fire threat, fire effects, and fire risk. It should be recorded how these changes impact the three goals of this plan.

The mitigation action items in Chapter VIII listed under the three goals is an ideal starting point for items to monitor. Tracking of accomplishments, additional mitigation action items, agreement changes, community participation, are a few of the areas to review. Accomplishments may occur through other forums or plans and should be recorded when they benefit or obstruct meeting the CWPP goals.

Annual meetings of the standing steering committee members can provide an assessment of project progress. Because the plan is a fluid document the committee should make necessary amendments when addressing county changes that may impact the ability to achieve the goals of wildfire response, fire-adapted communities, or restore and maintain landscapes.

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