Subject: Union County Community Wildfire Protection Plan December 18, 2014

All Rural County Fire Chiefs,

Union County fire protection agencies are in the process of revising the 2005 CWPP. The update is a collaborative effort by a core group of following participants: Union County Emergency Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla Fire Management, Bureau of Land Management, La Grande Rural Fire. The updates are intended to meet changing conditions in several arenas including on the ground environmental conditions, new guidance and policy direction, continued shifting demographics of the area, and technological advances.

The CWPP core group has begun assessing the County utilizing the most current data available through the West Wide Assessment, a recently completed assessment of 17 western states and local existing data. We invite and hope to see you at our meetings when we begin working with the WUI(s) within your jurisdiction area.

It is our intention to collectively work with all rural fire departments and their community members through partnership in developing the CWPP. Through this partnership a holistic approach toward community fire protection is the desired outcome. Using the new National Cohesive Wildfire Strategy as a planned approach, we have incorporated its three key goals as our foundation for achieving the new CWPP.

1. Fire-Adapted Communities take into consideration of how human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property. Included in this goal is the education of community members on the considerations of home protection, ingress/egress, Ready Set Go, their role in the three phases of wildfire: pre-fire preparation, during the fire, post fire and recognizing the role of fire in ecosystem development. This goal also includes opportunities to evaluate the current infrastructure and identify obstacles, deficiencies, or opportunities for protecting life and property.
2. Wildfire Response is a means of building an all jurisdictional participation in making and implementing safe, effective, and efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions. The CWPP group is currently identifying a number of threats and risks issues within Union County and further narrowing down any additional issues to each WUI area. This goal is anticipated to further substantiate the need for any additional improvements to assist in wildfire response including geographic pre-positioning of suppression needs (ie: water sources, communications), ecological treatments, and capability shortages (ie: training, equipment, etc.)
3. Restore and Maintain Landscape is designed to recognize fire-related disturbances from an ecological stand point of fire resiliency and an expansion of fire protection consideration to include all jurisdictions by promoting a landscape level approach. Developing a program that actively manages the land to make it more resilient to disturbance, in accordance to management objectives and to expand treatment opportunities to include middle ground and beyond that will assist in altering potential for extreme fire severities. This will provide the foundation for building a platform toward living with fire for both communities and ecosystems.

It is our hope that through these three goals that you as Fire Chiefs can begin to consider what and where improvements are needed, shortfalls exist, and opportunities for new innovative ideas can occur. We encourage you to go approach your needs and recommendation on the premise that,

 “In a perfect world with unlimited finances, what would you need to protect life (firefighter and public) and property in the WUIs within your jurisdiction?”

We have provided you with an attached map of the WUI areas and their intersections with your protection jurisdiction (see attached map) as well as a list of areas to consider, in an attempt to help get you started, but it by no means is limited to this list.

Treatment options – maintenance, worst condition areas

Equipment needs

Communication - radios, phones, computers.

Access – roads, bridges, easements, response times

Infrastructure

Prevention – Education, media, other outlets

Unprotected Lands

Water sources

Thank you for your time and we look forward to you input and participation in our upcoming meetings in January, 2015.

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