Subject: Union County Community Wildfire Protection Plan December 22, 2014

All Union County Rural 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 the following participants: Union County Emergency Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests, Bureau of Land Management, and Union County Fire Defense Board. 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. In addition, the update will reflect accomplishments that have occurred since the 2005 version.

The CWPP core group has begun assessing the County utilizing the most current data available through the West Wide Risk Assessment, a recently completed assessment of 17 western states and local existing data.

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 the 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 approach your needs and recommendation on the premise that,

“In a perfect world with available finances, what needs to be done to better 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 topics to consider, in an attempt to help get you started, but it by no means is limited to this list.

Fuel treatment options – where it is needed, worst condition areas, maintenance

Equipment needs – the right type, number, and location

Communication - radios, phones, computers.

Access – roads, bridges, easements, response times

Infrastructure – strategic water source development, hydrants, substations

Prevention – education, media, other outlets

Training – the right type

Unprotected Lands – adjacent lands lacking structural protection

Two attachments accompany this letter for your use:

1. A map displaying any changes to WUI boundaries with each rural protection area overlaying those WUIs.
2. A list of specific issues that could potentially impact or enhance your ability to respond to, plan for, or provide protection during a wildfire. This list is not all encompassing, therefor you are encouraged to provide additional thoughts, ideas, or needs that may not be mentioned, specific to you area.

As follow-up to this letter we would like to invite you to attend the Fire Defense Board Meeting on January 22, 2015, 6:00 PM, at the La Grande Fire Station. The meeting is designed to provide a good fundamental understanding of the CWPP’s revision process and gain your input specific to the rural protection areas. If you are interested in submitting your specific input in advance of the meeting, please feel free to send them to Joe Hessel or JB Brock, emails provided below.

We would also like to invite you to additional CWPP meetings scheduled through the beginning of 2015 that will correspond to individual WUIs. You will be notified in advance when those WUIs affecting your protection area are on the agenda. We look forward to your input.

Thank you for your time.

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