

Integrating Community Wildfire Protection Plans and Natural Hazards Mitigation Plans

Introduction

Both Natural Hazards Mitigation Plans (NHMP) and Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) benefit communities striving to reduce risk to natural hazards. Though CWPPs are focused on the wildfire hazard and NHMPs address multiple natural hazards, their process and content requirements are very similar. As a result, many communities have chosen to integrate. This document highlights the benefits, identifies relevant enabling policy, and showcases methods for integration.

Benefits

There are a number of benefits to integrating CWPPs into NHMPs. Primarily, these benefits are fully realized when the two planning processes are unified and not separated.

1. **Funding Plan Development:** A community that updates a CWPP while updating the NHMP may be eligible to use a FEMA mitigation planning grant to update significant portions of a CWPP, providing a savings to the local communities. In addition, federal funding of CWPPs is becoming more difficult to obtain, which is why using FEMA mitigation planning grants becomes a great resource.
2. **Grant Eligibility:** As a result of the two plans being integrated and on the same timeline, jurisdictions that participated in the plan development maintain eligibility for both National Fire Plan funds and FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grants.
3. **Collaboration Opportunities:** A key element in both NHMP and CWPP planning should be the meaningful discussion they promote among community members regarding mitigation, fire protection, and forest management practices. The opportunity to integrate the plans ensures that all jurisdictions, organizations, and individuals who are championing mitigation are collaborating. For example, the jurisdictions can either create a larger mitigation committee to address all hazards or have a smaller mitigation committee with a wildfire subject matter sub-committee to ensure that all local mitigation experts are part of the dialogue.
4. **Streamlined Planning Process:** Combining the planning processes for both plans allows group to avoid duplication of efforts when creating committees, conducting risk assessments and identifying strategies. The singular process allows for streamlined scheduling and messaging can be aligned as a result of a single planning process.
5. **Improved Hazard Risk Assessments:** CWPPs focus on the wildfire hazard. Wildfires are not isolated hazards and can increase the risk to future debris floods, flooding, or erosion. Since the NHMPs focus on all natural hazards and their interdependencies, the integration of plans benefits with an enriched discussion and analysis on all the natural hazards impacting the local jurisdiction or tribe.
6. **Leveraging Resources:** Since NHMPs are generally at a larger scale (County or City) and CWPPs are sometimes at a smaller scale (neighborhood or fire district), the opportunity to leverage resources throughout a jurisdiction increases through the NHMP development/maintenance process. Neighborhood groups that want to enact change to city or county policy may have a difficult time when

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developing neighborhood level plans. Integrating with the city or county’s mitigation plan provides the opportunity to work with staff that could influence change. In addition, counties that develop plans may not consider the neighborhood level needs, thus incorporating neighborhood groups provides an opportunity to understand homeowner issues.

7. **Coordinated Plan Updates:** NHMPs are required to be updated every 5 years. CWPP project lists are required to be reviewed each year, but the planning process/development does not have a timeline. Integrating the CWPP with the NHMP means the CWPP will be updated within the past 5 years (or the life of the plan). According to FEMA regulations, a CWPP that was done in 2007 cannot be used for a plan being updated in 2014 since the CWPP was not updated in the past 5 years.

Integration Scenarios

Communities that decide to integrate their CWPP with a NHMP have options to consider. There is no one way to integrate, and each option has its strengths and challenges.

Option 1: Incorporate entire CWPP into NHMP

Communities can develop a stand-alone CWPP and include the plan as either a separate volume or chapter in the NHMP.

Option 2: Use sections of the CWPP in the NHMP

The CWPP Base Map and Risk Assessment may become your NHMP Wildfire Hazard Profile. CWPP Priorities and Action Plan would be incorporated into the goals, and actions of the NHMP’s Mitigation Strategy.

Option 3: Develop a Single, Unified Plan

Chart a project course that meets both CWPP and NHMP process and content requirements. Integrate the CWPP content throughout the NHMP; do not maintain a separate CWPP. State forestry agency staff would review and sign a statement identifying those portions of the NHMP that serve as the community’s CWPP.

Policies and Procedures

Natural Hazards Mitigation Plans	Community Wildfire Protection Plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishes eligibility for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) ▪ Requires Tribal, State, and local governments to submit plan to FEMA for review • Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 201.6 or 201.7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publishes requirements for approval of a local or Tribal mitigation plan • FEMA administers the Mitigation Planning Program • FEMA works with State Emergency Management in delivery of guidance, technical assistance, training, and plan reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Established eligibility and provided prioritization for National Fire Plan funds ▪ Requires communities to submit a plan to State Forestry Agencies for approval ▪ FLAME Act updated some of the language in 2009 • CWPP Guidance was created by a collaborative group including local, state, and federal agencies and individuals from across the United States but left to state to further clarify and define the process for the each state • States review and provide direct support to local communities on development and submittal of CWPPs

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Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans

States, tribes and local governments must have a current, FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 93-288), as amended by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, provides the legal basis for undertaking a risk-based approach to reducing injury, loss of life, and property damage from natural hazards through mitigation planning.

The requirements and procedures for mitigation planning are found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at Title 44, Chapter 1, Part 201 (44 CFR Part 201).

FEMA manages the Hazard Mitigation Planning Program. The Program provides guidance, training, and technical assistance, including review of all NHMPs for Agency approval. FEMA coordinates its work through state emergency management agencies.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 provided communities with a tremendous opportunity to influence where and how federal agencies implement fuel reduction projects on federal lands. This landmark legislation includes the first meaningful statutory incentives for the US Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to consider the priorities of local communities as they develop and implement forest management and hazardous fuel reduction projects.

For a community to take full advantage of this opportunity, it must first prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Community Wildfire Protection Plans can take a variety of forms, and may address wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, structure protection, or all of these.

CWPPs are reviewed by state forestry agency staff.

Planning Requirements Integration Matrix

The matrix on the following pages provide a general description of the planning requirements for NHMPs and CWPPs with recommendations on how to integrate the two processes. It is understood that CWPPs do not have specific planning requirements, but suggested guidance.

Planning Team /Stakeholder Involvement/ Public Outreach

Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan	Community Wildfire Protection Plan	Integration Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the Plan <u>document the planning process</u>, including how it was prepared and who was involved in the process for each jurisdiction? 2. Does the Plan <u>document an opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities</u>, agencies that have the authority to regulate development as well as other interests to be involved in the planning process? 3. Does the Plan <u>document how the public was involved</u> in the planning process during the drafting stage? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Convene Decision Makers</u> – Local Government, Local Fire Departments, State Forestry Agency, Indian Tribes, etc. 2. <u>Involve Federal Agencies</u> – U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, etc. 3. <u>Engage Interested Parties</u> – Neighborhood Associations, Community Groups, others with interest in forest management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve natural resource managers, floodplain managers, seismologists, elected officials, community planning, public works, wildfire specialists on the planning team. • Involve stakeholders from Communities at Risk (CAR) in the NHMP planning process. • Involve USFS, BLM, BIA, state forestry agencies, local fire agencies, and other forestry stakeholders to Steering Committee. • Reach out to high-priority CAR’s to educate them on their risk and mitigation opportunities.

Risk Assessment

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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the Plan include a description of the type, location, and extent of <u>all natural hazards</u> that can affect each jurisdiction(s)? 2. Does the Plan include <u>information on previous occurrences</u> of hazard events and on the <u>probability of future hazard events</u> for each jurisdiction? 3. Is there a <u>description of each identified hazard’s impact on the community</u> as well as an overall summary of the community’s vulnerability for each jurisdiction? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a Community Base Map – Identify inhabited areas at risk, critical human infrastructure, designate wildland fire-urban interface, identify Communities at Risk. 2. Develop a Community Risk Assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Evaluate Fuel Hazards b) Risk of Wildfire Occurrence c) Homes, Business, Essential Infrastructure at Risk d) Other Community Values at Risk e) Local Preparedness, Firefighting Capability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate detailed wildfire risk assessments into NHMP. • Consider climate change impacts for all natural hazards using consistent sources. • Consider post-fire effects of flooding, debris flows, and mud flows. • Use State West Wide Regional Assessment Data output for inhabited areas, the WUI, and Communities at Risk (CAR). • Refine State Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) designation with local data/knowledge.

Mitigation Strategy

Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan	Community Wildfire Protection Plan	Integration Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the plan <u>document each jurisdiction’s existing authorities, policies, programs and resources</u> and its ability to expand on and improve these existing policies and programs? 2. Does the Plan <u>include goals</u> to reduce/avoid long-term vulnerabilities to the identified hazards? 3. Does the Plan <u>identify and analyze a comprehensive range of specific mitigation actions</u> and projects for each jurisdiction being considered to reduce the effects of hazards, with emphasis on new and existing buildings and infrastructure? 4. Does the Plan contain an action plan that describes how the actions identified will be prioritized (including cost benefit review), implemented, and administered by each jurisdiction? 5. Does the plan describe how planning elements will be incorporated into local planning mechanisms? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish Fuels Reduction Priorities, Recommendations to Reduce Structural Ignitability, ID Local Response Capability Needs – Establish whether projects protect community/infrastructure or other community values. 2. Develop Action Plan and Assessment Strategy – Identify agencies responsible for implementation, timeline, funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include an action plan for each Community at Risk (CAR) to help create more Fire Adapted Communities. • Ensure specific fuels reduction projects are identified in the plan. • Wildfire strategies should address fuel treatments and education, but also policy recommendations and infrastructure retrofits. • Review overall community capabilities (policy, administrative, technical, financial) to implement projects. • Describe how wildfire and other hazards may be incorporated into comprehensive plans, transportation plans, capital improvement plans, codes and other regulations.

Maintenance / Other

Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan	Community Wildfire Protection Plan	Integration Opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there a <u>description of the method and schedule</u> for keeping the plan current (monitoring, evaluating and updating the mitigation plan within a <u>5-year cycle</u>)? 2. Was the plan revised to reflect changes in development? 3. Was the plan revised to reflect progress in local mitigation efforts? 4. Was the plan adopted by the elected officials for all participating jurisdictions? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan must be adopted by county commissioners and local . 2. No requirement to have an updated planning process and plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the plan every 5 years. • Committee should meet at least annually to discuss. • Committee should meet after a significant natural hazard impacts the community. • Plan updates are used to reflect on changes in development and impact on wildfire vulnerability. • Plan updates are used to track progress in wildfire mitigation efforts.

Next Steps

1. Lead CWPP and NHMP conveners should contact each other
 - a. Recognize current efforts
 - b. Discuss strengths and weaknesses to integration
2. Review current CWPP and NHMP plan and planning processes to decide the best course for integration
 - a. Consider current geographic scale of each plan
 - b. Consider funding sources for developing plans
 - c. Consider current update process
 - d. Consider planning team members
3. Reach out to the state lead for CWPP and NHMPs
 - a. NHMP: State Emergency Management – State Hazard Mitigation Officer
 - b. CWPP: State Natural Resource or Forestry Agency
 - c. These agencies will want to decide how to work together in terms of plan development and review

Resources

The following are resources available in the development of Natural Hazards Mitigation Plans or Community Wildfire Protection Plans

Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

- Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide and Tool: <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4859>
- Local Mitigation Planning Handbook: <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=7209>

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

- Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities: <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/communities/documents/cwpphandbook.pdf>
- Community Guide to Preparing and Implementing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/communities/documents/CWPP_Report_Aug2008.pdf

Contact

For more information on this resource, please contact Brett Holt, FEMA Region 10 Mitigation Planning Program Manager at brett.holt@fema.dhs.gov.