

Board of Supervisors
Work Session Executive Summary Sheet
July 8, 2014

Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are developed in response to the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2013. This Act calls for Federal, State and local stakeholders to collaborate for the purpose of identifying priority areas within a wildland-urban interface (WUI) that are considered a high risk for wildfires. For the purposes of the Cochise County CWPP, a working group of stakeholders and wildland experts met on a regular basis to identify and agree on high-risk areas in the county. Once these high risk areas are identified, the CWPP planning group then recommended response enhancement and fuel reduction projects, goals, and methods to help mitigate the risk in these areas. The CWPP does not mandate any action nor does it have any regulatory or statutory authority. It is only a planning tool that provides hazard assessment and mitigation recommendations to address the hazards. Adoption of the plan allows jurisdictions to use the CWPP as a platform for identifying wildfire mitigation project priorities and pursuing wildfire mitigation grants.

Background

In mid-2013 Cochise County received \$34,500 in grant funding from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Arizona State Forestry Division, to develop a county-wide CWPP. Logan Simpson Design, Inc. was chosen as the consultant to lead the CWPP development process. A team of approximately 30 stakeholders met regularly from October 2013 through April 2014 to develop the plan. After several revisions and comment periods (both public and interagency), the plan was finalized in May 2014 and is ready for jurisdictional adoption. August 1 has been set as the deadline for CWPP adoption.

Key Features of the CWPP

- The Core Team analyzed approximately 3,980,000 acres of federal, state, and private lands for potential risk of wildland fire and identified 52 communities composed of 700,765 acres within 38 separate community WUIs at potential risk from catastrophic wildland fire within Cochise County
- Vegetative and geographic conditions were identified and evaluated as part of the risk analysis.
- Current firefighting and mitigation capabilities were evaluated
- Based on risk assessments and evaluation, recommendations were made to address county wildfire hazard mitigation gaps.
- As this is a living document, it was agreed that annual CWPP reviews will be done to update the plan as necessary.

- Adopting jurisdictions can use the CWPP as a platform for local mitigation planning and grant procurement.

Cochise County Burn Restriction Ordinance

Wildfire is the chief natural hazard in southeast Arizona. It is not unusual for Cochise County to have the highest seasonal wildfire threat in the State. Federal, state, and local entities typically place restrictions on outside open burning during times of high wildfire threats to help reduce the danger to persons, animals and property. The proposed county burn restriction ordinance is intended to restrict the use of outdoor open flames during times of extreme wildfire danger in unincorporated Cochise County. The ordinance covers unincorporated Cochise County where no other fire jurisdiction exists. Where other fire ordinances and/or jurisdictions exist, those would take precedence. Implementation of the ordinance follows the recommendations of the Southeast Zone, Arizona Fire Restriction Committee. This committee meets regularly during wildfire season to set standard restrictions for State and Federal lands. A copy of the committee's fire restriction decision checklist is attached. The ordinance has been vetted by the County Attorney and District Forester.

Background

Currently most fire departments and municipalities as well as all Federal and State parks within Cochise County have some sort of open burning ordinance in place to restrict most types of open burning during times of high wildfire hazard. However unincorporated property within Cochise County not within the jurisdiction of a fire district has no means to restrict open burning during these dangerous periods.

Key Features

- Rather than arbitrary criteria, this ordinance's restrictions are automatically implemented based on the implementation of similar restrictions by professional forestry personnel who are part of the Southeast Zone, Arizona Fire Restriction Committee.
- The BOS retains authority under the ordinance to grant variances due to special circumstance.
- The BOS retains authority to implement or rescind restrictions based on special circumstances.
- Flexibility in enforcement of the ordinance, however it places on the violator, liability for all costs and damages related to a fire.
- Exemptions for certain outdoor fires.

County Emergency Personnel Policy

This policy would enable County Administration to alter the work schedule, duties and location of employees to meet the needs of the County to respond to a large-scale emergency that threatens county residents or the county's ability to provide essential services. The policy has been vetted by HR and the County Attorney.

Background

It is the mission of Cochise County to provide for the safety of its staff and the citizens of Cochise County, as well as to ensure continuity of essential services in those situations declared a State of Emergency by the Board of Supervisors or during an incident deemed to be of significant impact to the County as determined by the County Administrator or his/her designee. Due to the nature of Cochise County being a public service organization, it is expected that employees be available to respond to the needs of citizens during such situations. These emergencies may include, but are not limited to: natural disasters, public health emergencies, critical public infrastructure failure, COOP activation or any large-scale event that stresses the resources of County government.

Key Features

- The plan provides flexibility in using County personnel to meet the needs of a large-scale emergency.
- The plan can be implemented quickly to address no-notice emergencies
- While expecting personnel cooperation during an emergency, the plan provides for exceptions due to special circumstances.
- This policy will complement the County's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

County Emergency Operations Center

An Emergency Operation Center (EOC) is a facility designed to support response operations during a large-scale event. The EOC *is not* typically used as a command center that directs response operations, although it can support this type of operation for internal County Government-specific emergencies such as COOP activation. The typical purposes of an EOC are to:

- Collect intelligence regarding an event and keep all stakeholders up-to-date (or on the same page) regarding the overall situation.
- Watches weather and news media affecting the incident
- Help fulfill resource requests, not readily available to local responders
- Arrange for shelter, transportation, and feeding of displaced individuals
- Support a phone center

- Support a joint information system (public information)

Basically, an EOC stays at the “20,000-foot level” monitoring and supporting large-scale events. Event triggering an EOC opening could include a large wildfire, flooding, industrial emergency (hazmat release), public health emergency or other large incident requiring significant county support.

Key Features of the EOC

- Protected interior room on full generator power backup
- Expandable workspace
- Access to BOS and other large meeting rooms for media briefings, etc.
- Full IT support
- Multiple monitors for displaying status boards
- Multiple computer work stations, maintained by County IT
- Multiple phone lines, expandable as needed
- Full radio connectivity to local and state agencies
- Cell phone booster to support multiple carriers.
- Ample parking, kitchen, restroom, and breakout facilities
- During non-activation periods, all hardware can support and enhance the IT training facility capabilities.

Emergency Notification System

In June, the County contracted with Inspiron Logistics for their Wireless Emergency Notification System (WENS). This web-based system can be used to instantly send emergency notification messages to specified residents based on location or groups. It can be activated from any device capable of accessing the internet. WENS is capable of sending voice messages to home or cell phones and text to email or SMS accounts. Besides notifying county residents, WENS can be used for County employee notifications such as campus closings or other urgent/emergency messaging. While no emergency notification system is 100% full-proof, WENS is a powerful tool for county-wide emergency communication.

Key Features

- Voice Calls- WENS Voice is a component that allows us to instantly send hundreds or even thousands of interactive phone calls to cell phones, work phones, home phones, answering machines and voicemail through the WENS interface.
- SMS/Email/Pager- WENS is based primarily on text messaging and uses true text messaging technology (SMS). In addition, WENS communicates through e-mail, paging and voice mediums. In many manmade and natural disaster situations text messaging has been proven to be the most reliable in times of network congestion.

- NOAA/NWS Integration- WENS is fully integrated with NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). This feature allows for automated weather notifications to all subscribers; including tornados, thunderstorms, flooding and all notification issued through NOAA
- GIS Mapping- The GIS (Google Earth) Mapping component allows administrators to define specific areas through radius and polygon functionality to alert both one-time, spontaneous alerts as well as prepared (canned) messages.
- The system can allow municipalities to administer emergency contacts within their jurisdiction