

A banner with a background image of a wooden cabin in a forest. The text "COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS" is written in white capital letters across the top. Below it, a green horizontal bar contains the text "Enhancing Collaboration & Building Community Capacity" in white.

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS

Enhancing Collaboration & Building Community Capacity

Quick-Guide #12: The Diverse Benefits of CWPPs

Communities and agencies enter into the Community Wildfire Protection Planning (CWPP) process anticipating certain benefits and outcomes. The two most anticipated outcomes were reducing the overall risk of wildfire and increased access to funding. However, the CWPP process resulted in a number of unanticipated benefits to many communities, agencies, and individuals involved. Below we describe examples of anticipated and unanticipated benefits. More detail on two of these benefits, developing new capacities and building a learning community can be found in Quick Guide 14 and Quick Guide 13.

Reducing wildfire risk and access to funding

One of the expected benefits of a CWPP included reducing wildfire risk through fuels management and infrastructural improvements.

Examples:

- ⇒ In Auburn Lake Trails, California, we were told that “*Something was actually getting done*” — fuels management around homes, fuels management on association land, shaded fuel breaks, and improved street/house signage.
- ⇒ For the High Knob Owner’s Association in Front Royal, Virginia, the CWPP enabled the association to trim back vegetation from roads, widen cul-de-sacs, host a community fuel cleanup day, and obtain 911 number signs for many homes in the development.
- ⇒ In Barnes and Drummond, Wisconsin, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest conducted a fuels treatment and thinning project adjacent to the town of Drummond, and removed downed fuel from a wind storm.

We often heard that communities developed a CWPP because they felt that in the future federal funding, in particular, would depend on a CWPP being in place. Several communities offered examples of how the CWPP process had helped them access different funding sources for fuels reduction.

Examples:

- ⇒ In Harris Park, Colorado, the local fire authority worked out an arrangement with the Colorado State Forest Service where they applied for a 50/50 matching grant. The fire authority provided the in-kind match by performing the labor and treated private land in one of the high-risk subdivisions.
- ⇒ In Post Mountain, California, a great benefit was the Watershed Research Training Center (WRTC) joining with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to become a Fire Learning Network Project. “*It really helps us get some other resources and do some coordination across bounds like this.*”
- ⇒ In 2005 Josephine County, Oregon, received \$500,000 in funding from the National Fire Plan and completed 500 acres of hazardous fuels reduction projects in three communities. The county also received additional funding from Title II of the Rural Secure Schools Act to fund defensible space for low-income and elderly or disabled citizens in the county.

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OUTCOMES

Improved community capacity

We frequently heard about the social benefits of developing a CWPP, in fact social benefits were the most frequently cited benefits of the CWPP process. One of the strongest benefits seen across multiple case study sites was new or improved relationships that resulted from the CWPP process, either between agencies, or within a community. As one CWPP participant said: “...just to show that it could be done, and we could communicate as a group, and you could take agencies that have different focuses, bring them together and everybody come through it okay. I think that it proved that there's a great working relationship in this part of the world.”

In many communities, CWPP participants gained a greater understanding of each others' interests and increased knowledge of wildfire and wildfire management, forming 'knowledge communities.' In Harris Park, Colorado, community members who interacted with the fire department or Colorado State Forest Service are now able to speak knowledgeably about forest ecology and fire defense. At the same time, agency representatives speak with an understanding of community values and concerns.

CWPPs created potential to reach other community goals, and we heard about several different communities who were able to reach additional goals because of capacities created during the CWPP process. In Grizzly Flats, California, the community capacity that resulted from developing the CWPP allowed the community to move forward with plans to build a community center.



CWPPs led to a common goal and common message that community members and/or involved agencies could agree upon. In some CWPPs, one of the main benefits for all the participants was an agreement on actions that need to be taken together. “I think having the agencies come together and realize that Taylor is a vulnerable area...and that they are now all working together to protect it.”

An increased awareness of the wildfire problem was identified by several communities as a benefit of the

CWPP process. CWPP participants in western states gained a greater understanding of wildfire risk and how to mitigate it. They know that the agency and fire authority players can provide resources and access to funding to assist them; they understand how to implement defensible space, and what thinning entails; and they know how to help the fire authorities help themselves. All of this knowledge creates an increased capacity to protect their values from wildfire. In the Eastern U.S cases, where the perceived fire risk is lower, one of the most important benefits was understanding that there *was* a wildfire problem. Participants in the CWPP process in Lake County, Colorado, used their new knowledge and awareness of wildfire risk to spread the word to other communities that were not involved in the Lake County process.

