

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS

Enhancing Collaboration & Building Community Capacity

Quick-Guide #2: Existing Leadership / Prior Cooperation

Since the Health Forest Restoration Act, which establishes CWPPs as a planning activity, does not explicitly designate formal leadership for plan development, there is an **opportunity for multiple sources of leadership and multiple organizations** to get involved in CWPP development. All individuals and organizations can play a leadership role in terms of **mobilizing community participants and support**, and **gaining access to external resources**, such as technical information, GIS technology, financial assistance, and organizational support.

Local leadership can **lend legitimacy to the CWPP process** and **make the CWPP meaningful to community residents and agencies alike**. A local leader has to have **time, organizational skills, knowledge/understanding of participants, and be able to bring people together to define and focus on shared goals**. In well-organized communities, **start with the formal leadership in place**, such as a mayor, county commissioner, fire chief, church leader or property owner association president, to accomplish objectives. In communities with less existing organization or capacity, informal leadership tends to be more important than formal leadership. In unorganized communities, **identify and recruit local “opinion leaders”** who are known to be well-respected in the community as a member of the CWPP core team. **You don’t want to run the risk of alienating local leaders so reach out to them early in the CWPP process and invite them to participate at the start**. This may take several months of relationship building.

Examples:

- ◆ Local homeowners’ association leadership in the East Portal subdivision of Estes Park, Colorado was extremely critical in forming relationships with agency and fire authority players, providing access to local social networks, and assisting in gaining local support through field tours and work days. These individuals donated considerable time and energy because they saw value in the CWPP.
- ◆ In the Josephine County, Oregon CWPP, a combination of a visionary individuals with knowledge of county, a quiet facilitator with experience in federal agency, and an outside contractor with knowledge of fire planning moved the process along. Individuals from outside the community were seen as neutral parties in a conflict-ridden arena.
- ◆ In High Knob, VA the association business manager had a history of organizing communities and used those skills to begin the CWPP process. Her first step was to identify homeowners with specific relevant skills.

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Different leaders in CWPP development can provide different assets to the process, from the overarching vision, to organizing meetings and technical work, and facilitate communications and information sharing among CWPP participants. Multiple leaders can be useful in a CWPP process by bringing **different strengths and styles, ties to different networks, and can support or relieve one another.**

Examples of the variety of roles that multiple leaders can play in one CWPP process are found in East Portal, Colorado:

- ◆ **The US Forest Service** district planner provided GIS mapping, wildfire hazard assessment info, information regarding federal policies, and the ability to coordinate fuels treatments
- ◆ **The National Park Service liaison** provided information regarding forest ecology and forest thinning techniques, as well as the willingness to coordinate treatments where their policies would allow
- ◆ **The district manager for the Colorado State Forest Service** provided information regarding forest ecology, fire behavior, and mitigation techniques, as well as access to grants and the ability to coordinate contractors; CSFS also conducted property site assessments
- ◆ The **Larimer County Wildfire Mitigation Specialist** provided information regarding mitigation techniques, conducted property site assessments, and gave access to grants as well as county mitigation crews
- ◆ The **local fire authority representative** provided information regarding mitigation techniques and wildfire preparedness and response, provided a meeting place, and conducted property site assessments
- ◆ **Active community residents** provided local knowledge and values, and assisted in sharing information with their communities through the use of local networks; they also helped gain local support

