

# **JFS Project Notes**

## **Preliminary Pilot Case Findings--2005**

### **(Colorado, Oregon, Minnesota)**

#### **Focus:**

In preparation for the conduct of the ten case studies of collaboration in CWPP's, in 2005 the research team undertook field work with three communities in Colorado, Oregon, and Minnesota. These pilot study efforts were intended to clarify and strengthen both the research model and methods of inquiry for the subsequent primary case studies.

As a result of the pilot investigations, the team identified five key themes. Keep in mind that some of the pilot cases were among communities that had formulated their protection plans under National Fire Plan standards, rather than under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA).

#### **Key Themes:**

##### ***1. Community Wildfire Protection Plans are conceived at different scales.***

They are coordinated by federal, state and county agency staff, consultants, and community leaders. Most CWPP's are developed at the county level as strategic plans across agencies although some include community-level plans. The main purpose of CWPP's is for government agencies to coordinate efforts to identify high fire risk areas and prioritize areas for mitigation, suppression, and emergency preparedness management. CWPP's typically do not have spatially identified and prioritized projects and proposed treatments, although there are some exceptions.

- Is there an appropriate scale? Do planning, implementation and monitoring best occur at different scales?
- What have experiences been in terms of challenges and opportunities working across scales?

##### ***2. Problem framing shapes the planning process and collaboration.***

A "problem frame" is defined as narrative about what the issue is, the key elements of the issue to pay attention to, the motivations of the parties involved, and the potential outcomes if the issue is resolved in a certain way. The ways in which problems are framed sets in motion many critical facets of planning and decision-making, including who is included, what is data and information is elicited and used, and what options are considered in the decision process. Wildfire in and around communities can be defined by many different problem frames.

- Who defines the problem frame can affect who else might become involved in a collaborative planning process and the type of collaborative process.
- Wildfires are often described in terms of a threat to life and property, thereby emphasizing the need to protect homes, evacuation planning, and getting fire trucks and personnel to the fire.

- Wildfires are also described in terms of a threat to watersheds, wildlife habitat, aesthetics, and environmental sustainability in general, thereby emphasizing the need to initiate an integrated resource management strategy.

### ***3. CWPP's rely on many intermediaries.***

Home Owners Associations, county and municipal planning staff, fire protection district chiefs, and private contractors to pull together residents, community meetings, and data. Private contractors (circuit riders) play an important role as coordinators for some plans; their impact on the process and outcome is unclear.

- Municipalities, counties, State and Federal forestry agencies received NFP grants to do fuel reduction and preparedness planning. The location of planning was opportunistic – municipalities and counties with existing capacity and human resources were more likely to complete community-level plans.
- Federal and state forestry managers, environmental groups, county land use planners, and some community members are typical stakeholders who engage with the problem framing and engage in a planning process.

***4. CWPP's are the new kid on a block already crowded by various wildfire mitigation planning efforts.*** Existing community- or county-level wildfire mitigation plans and processes are being adapted and molded to fit CWPP requirements. There is no consistent scale, strategy or format of these earlier plans. Most of these mitigation plans were developed pre-HFRA through resources provided by the National Fire Plan.

- CWPP's are late-comers on to the community wildfire mitigation and preparedness scene. Many municipal, county, and fire protection district officials have already engaged community residents in identifying and prioritizing wildfire hazard mitigation strategies. Getting involved in CWPP's may be seen as a redundant participation activity for community residents. On the other hand, some communities are not as organized and may need strategies to motivate, involve, and support members of these communities.
- What capacities are necessary to successfully design collaborative processes and feasible projects?

### ***5. Collaboration with a broad array of stakeholders at the local level is still to come.***

CWPP's under HFRA require collaborative planning, which can be defined as the pooling of insights, experiences, and/or resources by two or more stakeholders to address a set of problems they can not solve individually. In most cases, there has been collaboration across jurisdictions and among agency representatives with observed benefits. County representatives and/or fire chiefs often participate as an important local voice. But collaboration with communities and within local communities (municipalities, grassroots, and homeowner groups) has rarely happened within the CWPP process. As CWPPs move from strategic plans to joint projects on the ground, they will confront a wildfire preparedness landscape of previously organized communities as well as unorganized communities. Collaboration with communities is still to come.

- Broad community participation in CWPP development has been largely absent, and is conducted through proxies, such as a local fire protection district, city officials, or county officials. Community engagement in CWPPs is basically in the form of enhanced public relations, communications, and education strategies after CWPP has been developed – not necessarily “collaboration.”
- Within agencies and across agencies folks involved in the CWPP have seen the benefits of “being on the same page” and “speaking with one voice” about wildfire preparedness. But these strategic plans at a county or regional scale have yet to take the next step -- linking to municipal or local planning and preparedness activities. We anticipate new collaboration and capacity challenges as the CWPP strategic plans are used in specific, municipal or grassroots level projects.

### **Future Research Guidance:**

These five themes have played a significant role in developing the research questions for use with the ten case study community wildfire protection plans during 2006. Additional information is available on the development of the research questions under **Project Notes-Research Protocol Development**.

### **Contact Persons:**

Additional information on the pilot case themes can be obtained from the following project research team members:

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