

Community Wildfire Protection Plans: The Great Lakes States Experience

March 18, 2008
Best Western Claridge Motor Inn
Rhinelander, Wisconsin

The Great Lakes Community Wildfire Protection Plans Workshop is part of the **Community Wildfire Protection Plans: Enhancing collaboration and building community capacity** project funded by the Joint Fire Science Program, or JFS (<http://www.firescience.gov>). The goal of this project is to understand the factors that influence effective collaboration in community wildfire protection plan (CWPP) development. Case study research was conducted on CWPP development in thirteen communities in California, Colorado, Florida, Montana, Minnesota, Oregon, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The team is composed of researchers from Colorado State University, University of Minnesota, Southern Oregon University, the USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station, and the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station. A full project description and case study profiles are available at <http://jfsp.fortlewis.edu/>.

A key element of the JFS project is knowledge transfer. On March 18th, 2008 the JFS team collaborated with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to facilitate the third of several knowledge transfer workshops to share some of these “lessons learned” about the contexts, processes and outcomes of collaboration. The primary goal of the workshop was to share experience of other communities who have developed and implemented CWPPs regarding assessing needs, understanding context, and other suggestions/lesson learned from our case studies about the CWPP planning process.

The workshop brought together twenty-two participants from local, state, and federal agencies in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin to share lessons from the JFS case studies and facilitate dialogue on how to strengthen CWPP efforts. The following proceedings provide a summary of the presentations and participant discussion. The meeting began with introductions of the JFS team and the meeting participants. This was followed with presentations and group discussions of each of the three themes stated above. The Narrative from the presentations and PowerPoint slides can be found at <http://jfsp.fortlewis.edu>.

Objectives and Expected Outcomes

The principal objectives of the workshop included,

- Evaluation of the benefits of CWPPs and what they can do for us
- Sharing experiences of other communities who have developed and implemented CWPPs regarding assessing needs, understanding context, and other suggestions/lesson learned from our case studies about the CWPP planning process
- Evaluating the value of a communications network among folks in Great Lakes working on CWPPs
- Clarifying state-based next steps for CWPPs

Expected outcomes of the workshop included,

- Ability to communicate benefits of CWPPs
- Increased knowledge/capacity to plan CWPPs
- Increased access to information and people involved in Great Lakes and US CWPP work
- Sense that participants could call/email someone else when they have a question
- Access to new contacts across scales
- Increase access to tools/information for training

Pre-Workshop Homework

Prior to the workshop, the research team asked participants to complete a series of homework questions in order to help researchers and the facilitator better understand participant expectations and experiences. The questions also helped familiarize participants with the types of issues that would be discussed during the workshop. The research team used the results to tailor their presentations to better meet the needs of participants. The facilitator used the results to help guide group discussions.

Introductions

The workshop began with roundtable introductions, where each participant introduced themselves and provided an overview of their CWPP experiences, successes and challenges.

Key Successes and Challenges

Successes

- Improved intergovernmental coordination and communication. Strengthening of bonds between agencies and local government.
- Got communities focused on their issues

- Communities are remaining focused on implementation (Barnes-Drummond example) Transition in players brought new ideas into the process (new elected officials)
- In Cook County, MN there was a core group already in place after the blowdown. Because of the CWPP process, they already had decision makers in place.
- Plans are successful in Minnesota because there are retired homeowners/planners who want to stay active. Have local expertise to facilitate planning and implementation.
- In Wisconsin, the Regional Planning Commissions are a neutral asset that can bring up hard questions.
- Communities are taking ownership in their planning process.

Challenges

- Getting the local community on board during planning and implementation.
- Answering the questions where do we start? & How do we do this? (planning scope and scale)
- Persuading people that there is a need and a benefit
- Overcoming attitudes! Wildfires are a “western” problem)– not here
- Plan implementation - when key players leave the area and new players come in (i.e. board transition)
- Coordination and communication, when many entities are involved
- Added workloads for communities and agencies, time commitment
- Need to have the right people involved in the planning process
- Overcoming apathy, the feeling that this is just another mandate
- There has to be incentive for local communities
- Keeping the communities interested and involved
- Time and money
- Establishing roles and responsibilities (planning and implementation)
- Convincing the communities that this is their CWPP
- There is a struggle with where to start – in Minnesota they started at a county level because that is where decision makers are.
- Multi-jurisdictional planning (is it bottom up or top down?)
- Getting participation from residents
- Determining factors for scale
- Keeping it manageable
- Data acquisition. GIS /mapping are important at every meeting!
- Money for implementation projects

Presentations

"Potential Benefits and Outcomes of CWPP's"

(Presentation by **Dr. Kristen Nelson**, Associate Professor, Department of Forest Resources - University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN)

Key Presentation Highlights

- Overview of the JFS-CWPP project, including key goals and accomplishments, partners and outcomes
- Overview of the collaborative KT (knowledge transfer) approach this project is using
- 13 CWPP study cases and CWPP benefits realized from each

Social

New and/or strengthened relationships
Increased understanding of each other's interests
Agreement on actions that need to be taken together
Common goal and common message
Social learning about each other
Creates potential to reach other community goals

Knowledge

Awareness of the wildfire issue
Community capacity building - social, economic, political
Knowledge spreads to other communities

Natural system and Infrastructure

Fuel management and infrastructural improvements
Improved protection and safety for the community

Financial

New resources used for uncontested projects

Presentation Discussion and Participant Responses

Which of these benefits would help you (or have helped you) in meeting your expectations in developing CWPP's in your communities?

- In working with 3 model communities in Michigan, each time we were able to hit one and two, social and knowledge but we had a problem with was getting to the last 2 (natural system and infrastructure, financial).
- The biggest challenge is getting the locals to take this and do it themselves.
- Need to have a coordinator and facilitator, someone to call people together and keep the process going.
- Who has jurisdiction seems to be a driving factor. If there is no driving agency that is ultimately responsible for the plan, then it just falls to the wayside.
- What has worked in MN and Cook County is that the county has taken the lead. Every month they have a CWPP implementation group meeting and then right after that they have Firewise committee meeting.
- Establishing a formalized committee early on in process will be a benefit.

- A lot of people we bring to the table are uncompensated volunteers. If there was a mechanism in this whole system to offer payment to those people that are volunteering, would we have better participation?
- (Cook County, Minnesota) We also told the counties that your people coming to these meetings qualify as in-kind match dollars against those grants and then they see that it may be an hour of my time but it's another \$20 towards those grant dollars to get the mitigation done and they kept track of that really well
- (Cook County, Minnesota) Our plan is to have an umbrella screening committee to do the strategic planning and find the money. And then by project and area, create an Implementation Committee.
- It's something that needs to be brought up regularly or it's going to be shelved.
- Keep the homeowners interested and involved.
- Keeping the process (implementation) going at the local level. Piggy-backing implementation meetings with regular monthly meetings keep them engaged.

What are the benefits people in your community will respond to? Which are most important?

- Knowledge and public awareness. Communities realize they have wildfire issues and they want to see something done about them
- Social benefits are critical
- New and strengthened relationships (both internal and external)
- Improved inter-agency communication
- Communities may only want to participate if there are financial incentives such as infrastructure improvements, or other tangible results (i.e. new brush truck, dry hydrants, fuel breaks)

"Key Factors that Influence the Collaborative Process"

(Presentation by **Stephanie Grayzeck**, Research Fellow, Department of Forest Resources - University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN)

Key Presentation Highlights

- Important themes (scale, leadership, intermediaries, networks, other capacities)

Small Group Breakout Exercise

As part of the morning session, workshop participants were divided into 3 groups. Each group had a balanced mix of participants from different geographic areas and with varying CWPP experience. Each small group was assigned a facilitator and was presented with a discussion question. Responses were recorded by facilitators on flip-charts.

Small Group Question

Which of the factors just presented do you believe is the most influential in your situation (scale, leadership, intermediaries, networks, other capacities), or are there other factors that are going to be influential?

| Green Group | Yellow group | Orange group |
|---|--|---|
| L. Larkin M. Hanson M. Jensen M. Lucas S. Jones J. Galloway J. Keenan | W. Glesener D. Laux J. Grant D. Landeau J. Saunders D. Lawrence | L. Himanga B. Thompson P. Kollmeyer J. Ackerman A. Pierce D. Palek P. Lee H. Skjerven A. Harrison |

Green Group

Framing

- ◆ Sets stage for who is involved
- ◆ Initial vision to set benchmarks
- ◆ Enables other factors, varies by scale – if issue is properly framed – get buy in.
- ◆ Frame = vision, folks can latch onto should tell me I have a problem and a possibility to solve the problem

Leadership

- ◆ Leadership can also set the frame
- ◆ For St. Louis County & Superior NF, both needed to be there – goes back to framing
- ◆ Leadership also ties closely to the scale you work at

Networks

- ◆ Important when you begin – also strengthen and create others
- ◆ Can move beyond geographic scale of a CWPP
- ◆ Provide resources, pull info from different agencies
- ◆ Gets you through political hurdles

Other factors

- ◆ Assessing existing codes, zoning and ordinances
- ◆ Tying to insurance companies? How do we bring them in?
- ◆ Enforcement of ordinances, etc. Ties back to scale issues, who is the enforcer? – It's important to involve that entity.
- ◆ Seasonal/rental properties, – time meetings to reach broader audience.
- ◆ Understanding of Community problem
- ◆ Access to financial resources, WI Hazard Mitigation, MN – Firewise \$, Rural Fire assistance, FEMA
- ◆ Prioritizing/identifying the Communities-at-risk (CAR) for where to start
 - In WI – CAR identification is done @ town scale, ends up being CWPP scale
 - In MN – counties with CWPP's contain multiple CARs
- ◆ Importance of checking local knowledge of on the ground info
- ◆ Keeping in mind the overall goal of the plan – mitigating the risk

Yellow Group

Leadership

- ◆ Critical key players at the table
- ◆ Need to have “big picture”
- ◆ Leadership can define effective scale
- ◆ Bringing resources into the process
- Examples –
 - ◆ Cook County – meetings
 - ◆ Being sensitive and listening to the players
 - ◆ Pre-work helps

Scale

- ◆ Could determine leadership
- ◆ Manageability
- ◆ Jurisdictional responsibility might determine scale
- ◆ Availability of funds
- ◆ Landscape characteristics
- ◆ Assessment of risks and values
- ◆ Geographic Size – any project, jurisdictional authority
- ◆ Statewide (need to prioritize)

Intermediary

- ◆ Foster trust – level the playing field
- ◆ Sharing the responsibility
- ◆ Facilitate the process
- ◆ Bridging the communication gap
- ◆ Communities do not have time and/or resources
- ◆ Keeping on track – focus on end product
- ◆ Need to look at project objectively
- ◆ Exposure to other plans and processes

Framing

- ◆ Set the priorities
- ◆ Develop objectives
- ◆ Influenced by the other factors
- ◆ Dependant on/determines local buy-in
- ◆ Clarify rational objectives – “the why”

Networking

- ◆ By products of the process
- ◆ Build trust
- ◆ Long-lasting effects
- ◆ Help in finding resources
- ◆ Essential to the process
- ◆ Need to have the right players (decision makers)
- ◆ Broad understanding of the players
- ◆ Facilitators communication
- ◆ Day to day working relationships

- ◆ Interagency relationships

All Issues

- ◆ Order is more important (in the process)
- ◆ Balance in influence – all are important
- ◆ Varying influence based on communities

Orange Group

Scale

- ◆ MN – St. Louis – All Communities at risk, covered the whole county
- ◆ WI – Municipal = CWPP
- ◆ Towns are high risk
- ◆ Where do you start?

Framing

- ◆ Agency – fuel red votes
- ◆ Local – safety, public education
- ◆ MI – Forest Service, want CWPP = \$ or treatment
- ◆ State - ??
- ◆ How responsive is National Forest to follow CWPP?
- ◆ Networks:
 - NI – “vanilla” suppression, Industrial Timber, Lake Association
 - MI – County emergency management
- ◆ Issues:
 - Seasonal = challenge to involvement
 - Turnover in political participants
 - Need to be “critics”, access to process

Additional Discussion

- ◆ Funding drives doing CWPP's
- ◆ FS support send minutes by email/website
- ◆ CWPP: challenging when there isn't public lands = maybe smaller scale
- ◆ Prior events
- ◆ Overtime the people at the table change = review
- ◆ More become interested with projects on the ground

"CWPP components—What have plans looked like?"

(Presentation by **Dr. Sam Burns**, Research Director, Office of Community Services
Fort Lewis College, Durango, CO)

- Strategic requirements of CWPP's based on HFRA
- Typical major components of CWPP's
- Collaborative influences on CWPP components

Presentation Discussion and Participant Responses

In terms of content, what have you found in looking at CWPP's?

- A lot of variability in content and components
- Plans range from short to long (40 page – 200 page) and from simple to complex

In your opinion, are there benefits to doing it one way or another? (Mercedes vs. Yugo analogy)

- Depends on how much you are trying to accomplish
- Higher end documents were more technical, we wanted a document that the community could open up and easily understand
- Community wanted their plan in "plain English" technical terms taken out
- No so technical so everyone in community can open and understand – make it "readable"
- Complexity, plan needs to reflect the needs of the end users

Which factors drive the decision to do it one way or the other?

- Time and Money!
- Priority – something doing for someone else to something we are doing together
- Agency folks need to be good stewards of our knowledge and how these plans are created. Communities may not be fully aware of, or understand the benefits of doing it one way or the other. Techniques we bring to the table will be the one that they go with.
- The community has to take control of the plan once it's created, it's their plan. They need to be capable of using and maintaining it.
- Plan can be updated as needed; it can grow with the community. As you revisit it you can add to it and improve it. After using the plan, the community can see what they need to do to improve it to better serve their needs.
- Having the framework in place is critical
- At 1st didn't need a lot of maps; as process progressed, plan become larger and was customized and detailed to their needs. The plan started taking shape and creating enthusiasm.

Looking at the plan components, what are the challenges and difficulties you foresee, or have experienced in piecing these together?

- Risk assessment – how will it shake out in the end when everyone has a CWPP but nobody follows the same format? We're all just making it up as we go.
- Important to have consistency in bordering projects (community boundaries)
- Personal issues and intergovernmental coordination
- Risk is a social conception of value. Coming together around “what is a value” and “what is a risk”. Political process.
- Value is not just associated with human development, but also wildlife, ecological, etc.
- A template is needed if there is going to be a standard way of allocating funds.
- Data acquisition
- Time is a challenge
- Getting local buy-in
- No such thing as a bare bones plan!

Afternoon Small Group Session

In the afternoon session, workshop participants were again divided into 3 groups. In this exercise, participants were assigned to groups based on geographic area in which they work. Each small group was assigned a facilitator and was presented with two discussion questions. Responses were recorded by facilitators on flip-charts. Each group was asked to identify existing networks and resources available to support CWPP development in their state and to identify any perceived gaps that currently exist.

| Minnesota Group | Michigan group | Wisconsin group |
|--|---|---|
| L. Himanga W. Glesener L. Larkin B. Thompson P. Lee J. Keenan | P. Kollmeyer M. Hanson M. Jensen D. Laux | J. Grant M. Lucas J. Ackerman S. Jones D. Landeau A. Pierce D. Palek J. Galloway H. Skjerven A. Harrison J. Saunders D. Lawrence |

Minnesota

Existing Networks and Resources

- ◆ Already know each other - MNICS/MIFC, local, federal, state, tribal
- ◆ DNR/Volunteer Fire Department connections are strong
- ◆ Ties to JFS project and the U of M through Lake County CWPP
- ◆ Firewise reps from DNR involved in plans (3 Regional specialists)
- ◆ Superior County Commissioner was important for Cook & St. Louis County
- ◆ NE regional fire plan

- ◆ Some grant processes have been regionalized – level the playing field
- ◆ Large land mass has forced local, state, feds to have good GIS data and info
- ◆ Large fires in 2006-2007– tested the process, encouraged participation, heightened awareness of multiple agencies, different resources were brought in
- ◆ Coordination of and large amount of prescribed burning

Gaps

- ◆ Lack of fire department associations for every county – mutual aid agreements
- ◆ Time and resources of VFD's
- ◆ Emergency Management is not consistent in all counties – “framework” for EM would be helpful
- ◆ Communication – among people, building relationships takes time
- ◆ Amount of time it takes to get people involved – lag time to get a plan in place, reach people
- ◆ Communication systems could be improved/coordinated better

Solutions

- ◆ Smaller plans for counties, that are tied to LEO Plans (Local Emergency Operation Plans)
- ◆ Forest Service – having dedicated staff, current staff doesn't have time, computer savvy GIS
- ◆ Sharing plan drafts electronically is still a difficulty – files are too big
- ◆ J Maps will provide more regional assessments, GIS based
- ◆ RPC's in MN? No, act more as corporations/consultants

Needs

- ◆ Implementation coordinator
- ◆ Formal and defined implementation process
- ◆ Coordination and tracking – who will do this?

Michigan

Existing Networks and Resources

- ◆ Have very little right now
- ◆ Some networking between VFDs and paid FD
- ◆ Local Government: Planning Commission
- ◆ Extension: 35% - “pledge” time to work on CWPPs
- ◆ DNR – 1 full time position, 6 regional (10% time) to work on CWPPs
- ◆ Oct 1st 2008: funding to facilitate CWPPs (3 year funding)
- ◆ 1 year – Identify communities at risk
- ◆ 2 year – Hire expertise to support CWPP work
- ◆ Forest Service and DNR and Extension need to work together
- ◆ WI/MI Community Border CWPP is beginning
- ◆ Similar plans in process

- Township – Oscota
- County – Lake

Wisconsin

Existing Networks and Resources

- ◆ Availability of contractors & agencies to assist in plan development
- ◆ Grant Money, and other funding sources are available(as of now)
- ◆ Existing Intermediaries (i.e. Regional Planning Commissions-RPC's)
- ◆ NGO's – Fire Departments, Town & County Associations, Lake Association, other citizens groups
- ◆ High level of Intergovernmental Cooperation
- ◆ Local fire departments
- ◆ Fed, State, County Agencies
- ◆ Existing Plans
- ◆ Publicly Available data and imaging
- ◆ Existing Data – RPC's

Gaps

- ◆ Constant change in policies and regulations
- ◆ Declining funding in the future
- ◆ Getting public involvement in the planning process
- ◆ Scheduling challenges
- ◆ Maintaining momentum
- ◆ “Wishy-Washy” support
- ◆ Need for a statewide information clearinghouse
- ◆ Intergovernmental cooperation
- ◆ Lack of spatial data (Fire regimes, fuel types, etc.)
- ◆ Data compatibility
- ◆ Lack of interest, participation
- ◆ Lack of a structured process for risk assessment

Evaluations and Wrap-up

The meeting concluded with a thank-you to workshop participants from members of the research team. Participants were asked to complete evaluation forms (21 were completed and compiled – evaluation results are included in Appendix B of this document.)

Appendix A: Workshop Participants

| First Name | Last Name | Agency/Affiliation | Email | Phone |
|--------------------|-----------|---|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Larry | Himanga | MN DNR | Larry.Himanga@dnr.state.mn.us | (651) 345-4924 |
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| Jim | Grant | Chequamegon-Nicolet NF | jwgrant@fs.fed.us | (715) 362-1341 |
| Mary | Lucas | Chequamegon-Nicolet NF | mlucas@fs.fed.us | (715) 362-1350 |
| Jolene | Ackerman | WI DNR-WUI Coordinator | Jolene.Ackerman@Wisconsin.gov | (608) 267-7677 |
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| Paul | Lee | St Louis County Sheriff's Office | leep@co.st-louis.mn.us | (218) 625-3960 |
| John | Keenan | Contractor for the St Louis County CWPP | kkeenan1@d.umn.edu | |
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| JFS Team | | | | |
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| Facilitator | | | | |
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Appendix B: Evaluation Results

Twenty-two participants attended the Joint Fire Science Knowledge Transfer Workshop on Community Wildfire Protection Plans: Enhancing Collaboration and Building Community Capacity. The workshop took place on March 18th in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Twenty-one people (95% of workshop participants) completed and returned evaluations. Following is a summary of the results from the evaluation.

1. Were the homework questions helpful to you in preparing for the meeting?

| | | | |
|-------------|------------------|---------|--------------|
| Not Helpful | Somewhat Helpful | Helpful | Very Helpful |
| 2 | 6 | 10 | 2 |

2. Overall, how was the meeting organized and facilitated?

| | | | |
|------|------|-----------|----------------|
| Poor | Fair | Effective | Very Effective |
| 0 | 0 | 5 | 16 |

3. Was the meeting structure and “flow” effective?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
| 21 | 0 |

4. Did the workshop enhance your understanding of,

| | Yes | Somewhat | No |
|--|-----|----------|----|
| Potential benefits and outcomes of CWPP's | 11 | 10 | 0 |
| Key factors that influence the collaborative | 15 | 6 | 0 |
| CWPP components | 15 | 6 | 0 |
| Networks and resources available | 11 | 9 | 1 |

5. In general, what worked best about the meeting?

Networking and Learning

- Hearing from those who have gone ahead of us and have experience.
- Short, compact information sessions.
- The open discussion with other people involved with CWPP's.
- Liked the discussion with participants, especially the ones that have completed their CWPP's.
- The networking with other folks, the introduction to a wide array of resources and contacts.
- Interaction with other states/agencies; lessons learned; sharing of perspectives.
- Collaboration
- I appreciated the time to discuss/review the requirement of CWPP with other states – share concerns and successes.

- Participation woven between whole group, breakouts and presentations.
- Networking opportunity. Chance to hear/see what others (people/areas) are doing for CWPP's.
- Collaboration, lessons learned

Small Group Sessions

- Breakout sessions were a great idea.
- Group discussions
- First breakout session

Overall Workshop

- Very well organized
- Good group mix
- Size and mix of those attending
- Presentation should have been given at the beginning of our CWPP process (better late than never)
- Interaction between facilitators and others
- Facilitation was excellent. Mixing of attendees was good.
- Facilitated breakouts well

6. What did not work so well?

- Location (hotel) was "so-so"
- The room needs windows
- Last breakout
- Would have liked more time for open group discussion

7. Number of respondents who indicated that they are likely to:

| | |
|---|----|
| Share the proceedings from this meeting with other groups | 18 |
| Use tools developed through the Joint Fire Sciences | 14 |

8. Number of respondents who indicated that the following follow-up activities should take place?

| | |
|---|----|
| Email exchanges with information resulting from the meeting | 17 |
|---|----|

| | |
|---|----------|
| <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information posted to the project website• Follow up on implementation of CWPP's and how updates and changes are evolving• Local CWPP conference• Access to other states' resources; examples of plans, etc.• Better state planning | <p>5</p> |
|---|----------|