



Collaboration and Community Wildfire Protection Plans: Key Workshop Topics and Reflections

Introduction

Since 2003, when the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) authorized the development of plans to mitigate and protect against wildfires in the urban interface surrounding communities, there has been considerable attention given to collaborative approaches. Although authorized by HFRA, there is minimal guidance in the legislation about the development of community wildfire protection plans (CWPPs). Even with the development of the initial CWPP Handbook in 2004 (<http://www.safnet.org/policyandpress/cwpp.cfm>), there were numerous questions about what appropriately constitutes a CWPP and how the preparation work could best be accomplished among all the stakeholders.

Nevertheless, over the past five years members and representatives of communities, local governments, fire departments, and public land agencies have “learned from experience” **about how to get started, how to help people work together, and how to complete and implement a plan.** As neighborhood residents, homeowner associations, fire chiefs, emergency management staff, and state and federal land managers have increasingly interacted, numerous ideas and strategies and helpful guidelines have emerged. Some of these lessons have been documented in a new CWPP Handbook (2008) that can be found at: http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/communities/documents/CWPP_Report_Aug2008.pdf.

Whether one is just starting the process of developing a CWPP, seeking to update the current one, or monitoring the accomplishments of previous actions, **the needs and desires for high quality collaboration have been in the forefront of many discussions.** Given the character of wildfire events and the potentially strong impacts on community and ecological assets, the need for all parties in the Wildland-urban interface to work together collectively is all too obvious. **In fact, to work collaboratively is one of the single most important factors to building and sustaining an efficient and productive level of collective protection and mitigation actions with regard to wildfires.**

Collaboration is about coming together to solve a problem.

The topics and reflections presented herein are drawn from the workshops developed cooperatively with several organizations in Oregon, Colorado, and Wisconsin. Please see the full workshop proceedings at: http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/communities/documents/CWPP_Report_Aug2008.pdf.

Beginning the Collaborative CWPP Conversation: Identifying and Building Capacities

A significant observation has been that there is wide diversity in the character and content of almost all of CWPPs. While some of the basic components of written plans are similar, the community context and the ecological conditions of the vast majority of plans create a very high degree of variance among them. This also underscores the very influential, place-based nature of CWPPs, which suggests that on a national scale we should continue to expect wide diversity rather than uniformity among them.

In California, requirements surrounding CWPPs are increasing. However, requirements need to be flexible enough to allow everyone to participate in different ways.

Such diversity also underscores the key principle that *a CWPP should be formed and owned by the community*. Although leadership, resources, and guidance may come from land management agencies, governmental entities, and non-profit organizations among others within a collaborative framework, the nature, characteristics, and involvement of communities are several of the most critical elements of success. The “community ownership principle” strongly suggests a focus on the local context—including the capacities of the community, its values and socio-economic trends, as well as the conditions of the surrounding ecological environment.

Given the need to work within immediate or local contexts, the initial question is often about how to pull people together; how to coalesce the key parties or players into a planning group or team. As these questions are raised several related topics have arisen, which in a variety of ways help us identify and mobilize the capacities of one or more communities:

- 1) What geographic or ecological **scale** should the CWPP address? Some plans have begun at a neighborhood or subdivision level, focusing mainly on the protection of residential structures. Many other plans have worked at a county or municipal scale in order to address a broader range of community assets, such as businesses, hospitals and schools, watersheds, and communication systems. In a variety of ways, plans have been linked from smaller scales to larger ones for strategic purposes, and are sometimes embedded in emergency management plans, or are linked to neighborhood *Firewise* activities.

Key to actual implementation is ownership and getting people to redeem their responsibility at a small scale.

- 2) How might the wildfire problem be defined in ways that encompass the values and perspectives within a given context? Often times the problem is **defined or framed** as one of personal safety and property loss. In other situations, when considering the broader wildland and vegetative landscapes, the focus might include the health or well-being of the ecosystem, the forest, wildlife, scenic backdrops, and the watershed. There also can be important economic concerns in a community with seasonal tourism, or about increasing ways to utilize the biomass being removed during fuel treatments.

No particular frame is a silver bullet.

- 3) What are the important **networks** of people and organizations to involve? Obviously there is an interplay between who becomes involved, who is invited to participate in planning the CWPP, and the scale of the plan and the ways in which the problem is defined. At a basic level one might reach out to networks of public land managers, community leaders and homeowners, and fire officials, but there are also many others to consider, such as recreationalists, ranchers, community planning staff, and real estate and insurance representatives. Since the CWPP is a product of the stakeholders who are invited and become participants, the identification of key networks is a critical factor in both community involvement and ongoing capacity-building.
- 4) In making choices about the involvement of certain networks, there is often a clear need to coalesce the **resources** necessary for putting together a CWPP. Such resources can include local landscape knowledge, technical information about wildfire risks, funding, mapping abilities, political leadership, facilitation and communication assistance, and agency decision-making. The collaborative pooling of these resources will assist the CWPP core team in discovering where the community’s capacities exist and where there are gaps that need filling.

Taken together, these initial efforts to pull people together thorough key networks, to determine the scale of the CWPP, and to define the wildfire problem in an appropriate and inclusive manner will establish numerous early planning steps to work in a collaborative and coordinated fashion. Through mutually combined efforts, a range of social, political, technical, and organizational resources are drawn together to initiate a collaborative CWPP.

The collective experiences of those working to develop CWPPs indicate that many of the following community attributes also support the initiation of collaborative work and therefore should be kept in mind as one looks collaboratively at the local context in order to identify and build community capacities:

- ◆ Sense of community
- ◆ Place attachment and stewardship ethic
- ◆ Collectively held values, norms and vision
 - Public discourse
 - Pooled resources
 - Assessments and monitoring
- ◆ Recognition of mutual circumstances experienced locally
- ◆ Ability to translate commitment into action
- ◆ Access to resources within and beyond the community
- ◆ Diverse networks

We need to consider different definitions of 'capacity' – different levels and scales – because every community and situation is different. Determine what you can accomplish at your scale and start there.

It has also been demonstrated that the investment in collaborative CWPP processes actually increases community capacity in the following ways:

- ◆ Building skills and leadership
- ◆ Strengthening and creating relationships
- ◆ Providing access to networks
- ◆ Raising outside funds and leveraging local dollars
- ◆ Enhancing stewardship and community awareness
- ◆ Social learning among the participants about wildfire
- ◆ Demonstration projects
- ◆ Emergency planning
- ◆ Data bases, maps, etc.
- ◆ Offering new sense of hope, trust and respect
- ◆ Shared responsibility about the wildfire problem and mitigation efforts



Additionally, it has been documented that a number of specific practices have strengthened and enhanced collaboration and the building of community capacities:

- ◆ Consciously use, strengthen and build networks during the planning process which create the capacity for further planning and implementation
- ◆ Once the core group is established, the CWPP circle widens to more diverse networks
- ◆ Involve local leaders as soon as possible and build new leadership in order to have multiple skills, capacities and perspectives
- ◆ Work with regional planners and partners who can support planning, tap new resources, and influence decisions – and help sustain the process
- ◆ Use informal systems, neighborhood networks and social events to bring a community together
- ◆ Recruit community members through multiple information-sharing methods: newsletters, bulletin boards, community meetings, demonstration projects, clean-up days
- ◆ Define the issue where people are (“framing” the issue); for example, life and property safety, forest health, wildlife and watershed, understanding that these frames relate differently at various scales
- ◆ Utilize participatory mapping – “living room” meetings, community picnics, and other gatherings

We had people use map books and large maps for them to mark their areas of value and concern. This is a good way for people to share comments on specific areas and to start discussing treatment options for these areas.

In dialogues with practitioners and program leaders about the importance and utilization of collaboration in CWPPs, many have offered the following reflections:

- ◆ Use education to help the public take ownership.
- ◆ Private landowners need to be an integral part of success on private lands.
- ◆ There is a danger of excluding lower capacity communities.
- ◆ Work to develop a common language. There can be a problem with language; for example -- the word *“risk”* has various meanings.
- ◆ Agency capacity seems to be going down—agencies are often not able to get work done, and can’t keep up with community needs.

Education is the key to sustaining and developing capacity.

The Benefits of a CWPP

Quite often in the initiation and development of a plan, the stakeholders or participants want to have a good understanding of why a CWPP is important. What results might be expected that would encourage the parties to commit their energies and resources to the planning process? What benefits can we expect? CWPP practitioners have reported the following challenges:

- ◆ Getting the local community on board during planning and implementation
- ◆ Keeping the communities interested and involved
- ◆ Persuading people that there is a need and a benefit

Without substantive answers to the basic question of **benefits**, stakeholders who do not work with fire management on a daily basis often cannot specifically see or estimate how wildfire protection planning can help them or their community. They often ask: Is it worth my time and the investment of our neighborhood to reduce a wildfire risk whose magnitude we may not fully grasp?

We began by using the fear tactic: “There are going to be big fires and your house is going to burn if you don’t do a CWPP.” The fear tactic didn’t work. The doom and gloom created a sense of hopelessness in the community that resulted in people planting more trees next to their houses because they figured they were going to lose their house anyway. We changed our strategy by learning what the community values through community assessments and surveys. We found people value the wildlife and the forest as a whole. We were then able to correctly frame the issue and build a sustainable plan. This approach has worked with multiple communities since then.



In some cases, the rationale for involvement in CWPPs has been presented as a threat. That is, we say in essence, “...if you don’t get involved, the next wildfire will devastate your neighborhood.” However, it has been found that “scare tactics” are not very effective in the long run. It is better to focus on understanding and explaining the potential benefits that can accrue to individuals and the community as a whole, such as influencing the priority of fuel reduction projects in the Wildland-urban interface. Indeed, upon examination the benefits of wild fire protection planning are multi-faceted. Observations of actual outcomes within a wide range of communities have noted several types of benefits (see next page):

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
- ◆ Creating potential to reach other community goals

Knowledge:

- ◆ Awareness of the wildfire issue
- ◆ Community capacity-building - social, economic, political
- ◆ Spreading knowledge to other communities

Natural System and Infrastructure:

- ◆ Fuel management and infrastructure improvements
- ◆ Improved protection and safety for the community
- ◆ Increasing attention to forest health
- ◆ Sustaining or building capacity for fuel reduction work (i.e., training, equipment, markets, etc.)

Financial:

- ◆ New resources used for uncontested projects
- ◆ Grants from businesses for community education and outreach

While there are various ways to interpret this array of benefits, at least one observation can be made that participants in CWPP processes obtain considerable social and learning benefits from their participation. *In other words, if building community capacity for coordination, collaboration, and further action is viewed as a strategic outcome, then the very process of developing a CWPP is good way to enhance those strengths, as the following examples illustrate.*

Taylor, Florida: 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.”

Everyone had a positive attitude toward the plan and the fuel break was completed.

High Nob, Virginia: Safety and community relationships

Improved protection and safety for the community

Fostering a sense of community

Relationships created in the CWPP have already helped achieve non-wildfire related objectives

Harris Park, Colorado: Increased understanding of each other’s interests

Community members who interacted with the fire department or Colorado State Forest Service are now able to speak knowledgably about forest ecology and fire defense

Agency members speak with an understanding of community values and concerns

We conducted a values survey in Lake County and the entire Pike San Isabel National Forest. It was very informative for the CWPP because we learned why people choose to live there and the values people place on the forest

Additional Collaborative Aspects Within the Planning Process

Besides the previously discussed context-based topics (that is, the *scale* of the CWPP; how we *frame or define* the aspects of the wildfire problem; the utilization of *specific networks*; and *the gathering of diverse resources*, all of which significantly influence the planning process), there are two other factors that play important roles in the collaborative process. One of these encompasses the many elements and topics about which participants *learn*, including areas such as the values of the community, the way fire influences ecological systems (such as forests, watersheds, and grasslands), and the resourcefulness or preparedness of organizations and agencies to protect against and mitigate catastrophic wildfire.



Learning often begins when the group starts to examine the risk of a wildfire impacting parts of the community and the surrounding forested landscapes. This assessment of risk is an essential component of the CWPP, and it offers many opportunities to bring together a variety of technical, scientific, and fire management understandings, and the knowledge of local and regional residents. Representatives of the land management agencies quite often can bring an in-depth understanding of how wildfire has occurred, including when significant events have happened and the ways the wildfires have behaved given certain vegetation densities, drought, wind directions, etc. Fire management personnel can also describe risk in terms of the accessibility of neighborhoods and key community infrastructure for

A 'knowledge community' is created through pilot programs, community work days and demonstration sites. This motivates community members to become involved.

fire suppression. Community planners can identify patterns of community growth and expansion, as well as critical community and public values such as roads, power, water treatment facilities, communication systems, etc. And, community members can pinpoint landscape and neighborhood areas and locations where wildfire would significantly damage important scenic, recreation or wildlife values, and perhaps where mitigation work is most needed and most implementable.

The basic work of evaluating the risk of wildfire within the Wildland-urban interface from a variety of perspectives creates what might be called a **"learning or knowledge community."** The learning community functions much like other collaborative networks in that participants bring together a variety of technical resources, data, and personal knowledge within a sustainable social group process. Typically, there is also the socially desirable benefit that by being a part of such a group one can learn about wildfire ecology, the surrounding natural resource systems, and the critical social values and preparedness of the whole community, all of which are very valuable experiences of citizenship and civic engagement.

In fact, it has been demonstrated that participants in a learning community not only make an important contribution to the CWPP development process, but feel that they experience considerable personal gain from the shared knowledge. Because there are both social and personal learning benefits, many participants discover that the rewards help sustain their involvement over time, especially into the critical period of implementation of the CWPP. In this sense, it would appear that enhancing the learning experience during the formation of the CWPP will also enhance its sustainability.

The Firewise Council of Southwest Colorado, working with the San Juan Mountains Association, hosts a fire awareness month every May. In addition to demonstrations and field trips, they have created a neighbor-to-neighbor based "fire ambassador" program where ambassadors are trained and share information with other community members. www.southwestcoloradofires.org

A second important aspect of the process is the role of entities that have been called “**intermediary organizations.**” Intermediaries are bridge builders and networkers that have capacities to communicate, assemble resources, and facilitate collaborative involvement across geographic scales and over time. In these roles, an intermediary performs much as we would envision most any individual community leader or networking type organization. By being able to consistently bring people together, integrate internal and external resources, and work at local and regional levels, the intermediary entity (which can be an organization, association, or group of individuals) is able to accumulate a comprehensive set of skills and resources and share them in a sustainable manner, that is, repeatedly in new situations over time.

It is very important to work with the bridge builders in the community.

The importance of intermediaries within the framework of CWPPs results from the variety of key stakeholders who need to participate and contribute, the range of technical and local knowledge that needs to be assembled, and the multi-scale nature of wildfire protection from homeowner and neighborhoods to state and federal land management agencies. While in any particular case a local government, a US Forest Service Unit, a non-profit organization, or a state forestry entity can play this intermediary role, it helps if there is an organization that has traditionally or historically played such a convening or resource-gathering role. In some situations this has been a regional planning commission, a public service outreach department at a college or university, or a collaborative conservation or stewardship coalition. On a large geographic or jurisdictional scale, such as a state, it is advisable to conduct an overall assessment of the “intermediaries” that may already exist. Such an assessment can help determine whether all of the communities or counties within the state can be reached by an intermediary entity, many of which may be able to interface with more than one CWPP development process. Where gaps exist, there could be a greater necessity for the state forestry organization or one of the federal land management agencies to begin the process of community collaboration, if even just to get the ball rolling.

Elements and Linkages of the CWPP

Many participants have noted the variability of content and components in CWPPs. When comparing the sorts of plans being produced, the analogy of the difference between a Mercedes and a Yugo has been utilized. From one perspective, “higher-end documents” are viewed as “more technical,” which is not always what is most useful at the neighborhood or homeowner association (HOA) level. Comments have been made such as, “...we wanted a document that the community could open up and easily understand” or is written in ‘plain English’.” The factors that appear to strongly influence whether a Mercedes or a Yugo will be developed are time and financial and related resources.

What is in a plan should typically be a reflection of what the planning core group wants to accomplish and what the needs of the community are. There also needs to be a balance between these two points in the sense that some members of the core group may seek to achieve more technical or analytical objectives than are seen as practical at a more grassroots level. Caution has been expressed that agency-based participants need to be good stewards of the knowledge and frameworks to be utilized since there will be a tendency to use those techniques that are brought to the table, some of which may call for a higher utilization of more technical resources than are actually needed. The priority should not be on what is done for someone as much as on what is done with someone.

The focus should be on having a framework in place, however basic it might be. Participants have commented that: “CWPP can always 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 in order to better serve their needs.” “Having the framework in place is critical.”



There has also been considerable dialogue about the important and necessary components of a CWPP. Some participants have said, “We’re all just making it up as we go.” Another comment has been, “Risk assessment – how will it shake out in the end when everyone has a CWPP but nobody follows the same format?” Along the same lines are the following thoughts:

- ◆ Risk is a social conception of value. Coming together around “what is a value” and “what is a risk” is a political process.
- ◆ Value is not just associated with human development, but also wildlife, ecology, etc.
- ◆ A template is needed if there is going to be a standard way of allocating funds.

Conversely, there are many voices that point out that utilizing a template, especially a mandatory one, appears to violate the very community-based nature of a CWPP, and could work against the “principle of community ownership.”

After examination of many dozens of CWPPs, developed with a wide diversity of social and ecological contexts, it has been helpful to communicate that there are at least some general components that have emerged as patterns. For methodological reasons, it might be preferable to call these resulting patterns a “framework” rather than a “template,” and to think of it in the spirit of “guidance” rather than as a “mandate.” From this perspective the underlying intent should be to assist all stakeholders to establish a “starting point” rather than “spin their wheels,” thus wasting excessive amounts of time gaining initial momentum.

In the spirit of the “collective learning” that has transpired through the implementation of HFRA, the following “**FRAMEWORK**” is offered drawn from an examination of the general patterns within numerous existing CWPPs.

CWPPs quite often include most if not all of these sections or components:

- ◆ *Introduction/local context/legal regulations and governance authorities*
- ◆ *Community and WUI descriptions*
- ◆ *Community assessments including risk / and response capacities*
- ◆ *Community mitigation strategies / fuels / structures / education / policies*
- ◆ *Action recommendations and implementation / timeframes / resources*
- ◆ *Monitoring plan*
- ◆ *Declaration of agreement and concurrence among the collaborative partners*



The details included in each of these components have varied, depending on the needs of the community. Examples of more specific or detailed elements that have or might be included in the prime components are shown in the chart below:

<p>Introduction/Context/Authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Geographic area descriptions and trends -Relevant wildfire regulations - Federal/State/Local policies -The need for the CWPP planning /coordinating group 	<p>Outline/Overview of the Community and WUI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community attributes -Basic WUI description -A map of the area -Relationship to the larger context/county 	<p>Community Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fire regime and fuel types / ignition risks -Community values and attributes (e.g., housing, business, and public infrastructure, recreation areas, watersheds/wildlife & historic/cultural sites)
<p>Community Mitigation Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action plan and priorities -Projects identified -Treatment approaches -Wildfire prevention / education processes -Defensible space actions to reduce structural ignitability -Land use policies 	<p>Action Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What action, where it will occur, how, how often, who is responsible, and the cost if known (note: usually presented in the form of a spreadsheet) 	<p>Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annually review the action plan to determine progress /status on process and content -Evaluate both the collaboration and the work accomplished
<p>Collaboratively Gain Support and Approval</p>		

It is important to gain support and approval from the state forest service, the fire department, and the local government jurisdiction. CWPPs become irrelevant or unused if they aren’t incorporated into an organization that has staff or a specified point person.

Additionally, there has been some movement to include some local community or subdivision CWPPs within county-level plans or within FEMA all-hazard mitigation plans. Linkages such as these can often result in better coordination among jurisdictional scales and networking among implementation and funding entities. Some communities have found that working upward from a neighborhood level to a county or municipal plan creates significant efficiencies by avoiding repetition and duplication of effort. Linking and embedding various scales of plans can also bring together a variety of technical and human resources that will create a greater sense of common purpose and cohesive action.

Expectations need to be in sync with the scale.

Implementation, Sustainability and Monitoring

One of the growing concerns with CWPPs has been implementation of the mitigation, prevention, and education actions called for in the plans. It is often said that the hope or promise of available funding to accomplish a variety of wildfire protective actions has not been fully realized. For some this has become a significant impediment to getting work done, while for others the lack of financial resources from state and federal governments has led them to develop local solutions in the form of community ordinances mandating vegetation removal, the establishment of collective payment systems that fund biomass clean-up and removal programs, and numerous forms of voluntary vegetation clearing, emergency evacuation signage, and fundraising efforts.

Over time there has been a gradual adjustment in the expectation that there would be a boon in governmental funding available to local communities, counties, and land-management agencies to conduct large amounts of mitigation work. Discussions have even occurred indicating that the original message about ample “external funding being available” may have been incorrectly presented because it has created a false incentive.

If landowners are offered an incentive, is it sending the wrong message?

More recently the dialogue has shifted to a sense of shared responsibility between numerous stakeholders---public land agencies, state and local governments, fire departments, land and subdivision developers, and individual home and property owners. At the same time there is a realization that some amount of public funding is needed in amounts that insure appropriate scales of action in the WUI, and that some elderly and low income members of many communities will need special assistance to participate fully and appropriately.

It can also be noted that the energy and enthusiasm generated among stakeholders in preparing a CWPP can be lost over time, which can have a constraining effect on both implementation and sustaining a long term mitigation strategy.

We need to have discussions regarding responsibility for wildland fire and fuels management. Is it the government's role to prevent wildfire?

Increasingly, key community land agency leaders are realizing that preparing a CWPP is actually only step one, which must lead to a longer time horizon where collective action, enthusiasm, and ownership are often challenging to sustain. Participants have noted that implementation and momentum can be complicated or challenged by changing conditions such as:

- ◆ New and emerging players
- ◆ Shifting priorities for community and agency representatives
- ◆ Re-evaluation of risk criteria to improve the project prioritization process
- ◆ Changing the ecological or jurisdictional scale of plan objectives
- ◆ The need to develop biomass markets
- ◆ A significant wildfire event



On the other hand, it appears that various activities and resources mobilized during the development of the CWPP have significant positive impacts on implementing and sustaining the plan. Among the collaborative steps that can be emphasized and strengthened during the development of the CWPP, which will pay dividends during implementation, are the following:

Multiple Frames: being inclusive about the ways in which the wildfire problem is framed or defined, so that forest health, wildlife, water, and numerous other community values are included along with concerns about human safety and property protection;

Ecological and Jurisdictional Scales: making sure that consideration is given to the scale of CWPPs such that large-scale ecological landscapes are included for strategic mitigation purposes, along with neighborhood and subdivision scales for tactical implementation of home and property owner risk reduction;

Learning or Knowledge Communities: building CWPP development around strong mutual learning processes where technical, scientific, and traditional local knowledge have value and are shared among diverse stakeholders;

Intermediary Organizations: utilizing and strengthening the groups and associations that play the intermediary roles of bringing resources together, networking among diverse participants, and connecting between multiple scales and jurisdictions.

There is a problem when not enough work is done up-front and not enough is known about responsibilities and individual capacities.

The capacity to plan and the capacity to implement are two different things. There is a horizontal component – can you get the whole community involved and can you get the process going; and a vertical component – can you get to the point where you are actually dropping a tree on the ground. You need to have both to get the implementation done.

These collaborative actions and methods not only facilitate the effective formation of the CWPP, they create longer term, cumulative benefits by building ongoing community and organizational capacities for implementation and sustainability. In other words, whatever builds collaborative capacities during plan development ought to be envisioned as *an investment for CWPP implementation* as well as for many other areas of community development and sustainability.

Monitoring of CWPPs is often a topic of discussion. While it is seen as important to success in wildfire mitigation work, it is often challenging for stakeholders to get their arms around. As a formal element, monitoring is understood as necessary, but as in many other natural resource situations, it often does not get the careful attention it deserves. At the very least, many stakeholders understand the need to periodically assess the items identified in the CWPP action plan. If accomplished on an annual basis, monitoring can enable the steering group to evaluate whether fuel reduction projects are being initiated or completed, how many acres are being treated, if gaps are occurring in certain jurisdictions or landscapes, whether neighborhood groups are being mobilized, if resources are being made available effectively and equitably, and if a range of education, volunteer, and policy actions are occurring.

It sometimes feels as if funders are looking to give money based only on quantifiable impacts.

Some discussion has ensued to the effect that CWPP monitoring is focused on tangible outcomes, such as acres treated or the occurrences of various community mitigation events. That is, we are counting what is countable. This is also connected to the sense that funders are most interested in measureable accomplishments, which in turn requires demonstrating success in numerical terms.

There have been related comments that the more collaborative elements of the CWPP development and implementation process are not receiving adequate attention because they are less tangible or less measurable. This is somewhat troubling to some CWPP advocates who understand the vital importance of community participation, networking, collective action, and various indicators of collaboration, and consequently believe that these factors should also be described and monitored.

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.

Another way this is portrayed is that it is difficult to assess change or progress across disciplines; for example, how best to evaluate improvements among or between ecological and social variables. Sometimes this is challenging because social indicators (relationships, networks, and values) are connected to community contexts in different ways than natural biological functions are integrated within or attached to ecosystems. Thus, special care needs to be given to how assessment and monitoring address the linkages between community systems and ecological landscapes.

This has led some participants nevertheless to suggest that the social, or political or cultural aspects of collaboration that contribute to successful CWPP development and implementation (such as community ownership, capacity building, collective action, and shared learning) need to be described in qualitative or narrative fashions. Specifically, comments have been made that **the stories** of collaborative efforts, both successes and failures, need to be told. While there is an understanding that this is time consuming for the participants, and that there are difficulties in aggregating narrative results across community contexts, the importance of monitoring collaboration and its benefits would appear to justify the endeavor.

Otherwise, the end results of building and implementing a community wildfire protection plan will appear to be only the measurable, physical results, thus overlooking critical community development and social capacity building outcomes. In reality, although the social, communal, and cultural development were not specifically envisioned by HFRA as critical outcomes, they may be among the more important with regard to sustainability of any collective, multi-stakeholder efforts, including wildfire mitigation.

When taken as a whole, CWPPs are a collection of many geographic and jurisdictional scales, diverse social and political networks, utilizing a variety of “frames” and learning processes. They contain technical data, local knowledge, community values, and aspirations for wildfire and resource management. To succeed and be implemented over extended time periods they need to be based on community, local government, and land management agency commitments which are often coalesced through intermediary organizations. They need to be practical and viewed as beneficial to multiple parties if they are to gain the support and ownership needed for sustainability. All of this leads most CWPP participants and advocates to strongly emphasize their **collaborative nature**, as well as their **ultimate value as social and community capacity-building**

CWPPs build capacity for a wide range of activities. For example, a snow storm in Colorado marooned ranchers. However, because community members were working together on a CWPP during the storm, they were able to come together for search and rescue. This supports the notion that CWPPs are another form of community development. Community members seem to be getting more out of CWPPs than wildfire mitigation actions.

A series of nineteen Quick Guides on CWPP development topics is available at:
<http://jfsp.fortlewis.edu/QG/QGMain.pdf>.

