

FIRE CAN HAPPEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY...

Elk County in collaboration with municipal, state and federal land management agencies are developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the Elk County rural communities.

What does a Community Wildfire Protection Plan do?

- Identifies areas at risk for wildland fire
- Makes recommendations for hazardous fuels treatments (vegetation thinning)
- Prioritizes areas for wildfire mitigation funding
- Makes recommendations for actions homeowners can take to reduce fire risk

CWPP's came out of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003. This Act provided communities with the opportunity to influence how and where federal agencies implement fuel reduction projects on federal lands and how additional funds may be distributed for projects on non-federal lands. A CWPP is the means through which the public can provide their voice in fuels management planning and fire protection for communities. This CWPP will identify fire hazards and community values at risk in Elk County and provide recommendations to reduce the risk of wildfire to life and property.

The main goals of a CWPP as described in HFRA (2003) are:

- 1) Collaboration- must be developed by local & state government, consulting with federal agencies.
- 2) Prioritized Fuel Reduction- must identify the most at risk areas for treatment of hazardous fuel and recommend actions to protect communities and infrastructure.
- 3) Treatment of Structural Ignitability- must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

- 4) Definition of a WUI– Gives each Core Team of agency stakeholders the ability to define their own wildland urban interface (WUI) area, where homes and structures come into contact with wildland fuels.
- 5) Community Risk Analysis– Using field based or geographic information system methodology the Core Team assesses all hazards and risks associated with wildfire spread throughout the planning area.
- 6) Discussion of fire fighting preparedness– to identify ways to enhance fire response.
- 7) Community Involvement– to ensure that the planning effort incorporates public input and grass root level planning.

The Steps involved in the planning process are:

- 1) Convene decision Makers and form a Core Team –a Core Team has been convened comprised of County and Municipal representatives, local fire departments, state and federal agencies who meet regularly to develop the plan.
- 2) Involve Federal agencies– The Core Team includes technical specialists in fuels and fire management.
- 3) Engage Interested Parties– The CWPP seeks input from you– the public– through public outreach and community surveys.
- 4) Establish a Community Base Map– The Core Team assist in developing baseline data maps of vegetation, fuels, infrastructure, landownership, hydrology and topography to graphically represent resources throughout the planning area.
- 5) Develop a Community Risk Assessment– The CWPP risk assessment is two–fold– 1) it is a geographic information systems (GIS) model that uses fire behavior modeling programs to predict potential flame length, rate of spread and fireline intensity in the planning area given a wildfire start, 2) on–the–ground community assessments are being completed to accurately assess risk and hazard for wildfire in communities across the planning area.
- 6) Establish Community Priorities and Recommendations– Using the public input, the risk assessments and input from agency specialists, the Core Team develop a series of recommendations for each community at risk of wildfire. These include fuels reduction projects, public education and outreach, projects to reduce structural ignitability and ways of enhancing fire response capabilities.

- 7) Develop an Action Plan and Assessment Strategy– All of the recommendations are formulated into Action Plan tables with dates for implementation and responsible agencies. Agencies and communities can then take this plan and seek funding to implement projects. *NOTE: The Action Plan comprises only recommendations for action, no actions included in a CWPP are mandatory on Public or Private land.*
- 8) Finalize Community Wildfire Protection Plan– The Draft CWPP will be made available for public comment in late summer 2017. The final plan will be completed by the end of October 2017.

For questions or more information on the Elk County CWPP please contact the
Project Manager for this project:
Victoria Amato vamato@swca.com

Or Find us on FACEBOOK! Search for: Elk and McKean County CWPPs.