



Center for Watershed and Community Health
Community Capacity and Wildfire Protection Program – Annual Report
April 1, 2003 – March 31, 2004

In April 2003, the Center for Watershed and Community Health (CWCH) received a grant from the Ford Foundation build capacity among the rural poor to reduce their risk from wildfires and to communicate the needs related to wildfire and poverty to public agency officials. CWCH is accomplishing this by helping public and private organizations to increase the access that these communities have to programs and resources to implement wildfire prevention strategies. We are pleased to say that our efforts have been extremely successful so far. In one year, CWCH has formed broad partnerships with public agencies, community-based forestry groups, and local communities and has succeeded in increasing public awareness about the relationship between wildfire policies and programs and rural poverty. Through these efforts, CWCH is actively demonstrating how redirecting resources can result in increased social capacity among poor communities to develop and implement wildfire prevention strategies. We have succeeded in developing a model community fire plan in Josephine County, Oregon, distributing a framework for community fire planning throughout Oregon and Washington, and in increasing awareness about the relationship between wildfire and poverty. Following are CWCH's primary objectives for the Wildfire and Rural Poverty project in 2003-2004:

- **Communication and Public Awareness:** Expand public awareness about the relationship between wildfire policies and programs and rural poverty through communication and outreach.
- **Policies and Programs:** Affect national policies and programs by illustrating gaps in wildfire protection services to rural poor areas.
- **Community Outreach:** Build capacity in rural poor communities to assist them in developing and implementing wildfire protection programs.

Partnerships

CWCH has developed key partnerships with federal and state agencies, and private sector and community groups. State and federal partners include the National Fire Plan Director for Oregon and Washington, Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Departments of Forestry, State Fire Marshal, Emergency Management and Land Conservation and Development. We have also partnered with community and environmental groups, watershed councils, large-scale landowners, and social service organizations.



November 2004, Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan, Education and Outreach Committee Meeting. Photo by Neil Benson.

Project Advisory Committee

- CWCH formed an advisory committee comprised of national and regional organizations to provide project guidance. CWCH has facilitated 4 conference-call meetings to date and continues to conduct quarterly conference calls. Advisory committee members included representatives from:
 - Pinchot Institute for Conservation
 - Forest Trust
 - Communities Committee
 - National Forest Foundation
 - National Network of Forest Practitioners
 - The Lands Council
 - Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
 - Watershed Research and Training Center
 - Region 6 Forest Service, National Fire Plan
- Developed a project web site to help disseminate information on project activities, partners, and provide information on wildfire protection. <http://cwch.uoregon.edu/ccwp/pwch>
- CWCH has produced a regular newsletter, Project Update!, a monthly progress report to keep advisory committee members, project partners other interested people informed of current activities. All Project Updates! are posted at http://cwch.uoregon.edu/CCWP/PWCH/project_updates.htm.

Program Highlights

Framework for Community Fire Plans

CWCH, in collaboration with Region 6 Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management representatives, developed an approach to community fire planning that is inclusive of people with special needs. CWCH documented this approach into a framework that has been disseminated to over 100 community organizations and public agency representatives from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and California since January 2004. This framework can be found at http://cwch.uoregon.edu/CCWP/PWCH/what's_new1.htm.

Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan

CWCH began working as the lead facilitator on the development of the Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan in August 2004. Since that time, the JCIFP has become a model across the Pacific Northwest for its collaborative process, comprehensive risk assessment, and for addressing issues related to poverty and citizens with special needs. Outcomes have included:

- 400 acres of fuels treatment is occurring as a result of the Josephine County Fire Planning efforts. Treatment is occurring in on County parks and forestland in areas adjacent to communities at risk from fire as well as BLM and Forest Service property.
- CWCH has facilitated over 50 meetings in coordination with the Josephine County Fire Plan with public agencies, community organizations and local citizens.
- Development of a project web site as an organizational tool for the Fire Planning Committee and as an educational resource for community members. <http://www.co.josephine.or.us/wildfire/>

- A review of the Josephine County, Oregon fuels reduction to homeowners through a reimbursable, cost-share program. The CWCH review is providing recommendations on how the program can better address the needs of the rural poor unable to match the costs of the program or those with special needs who are unable to complete the work on their own.



Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan Executive Committee Meeting, December 2003, photo by Neil Benson.

Josephine County has the sixth highest incidence of poverty in the state of Oregon, with 15% of the population at or below the Federal Poverty Level.

Over 20% of the population are over the age of 65, and 10% are considered to have special needs. The 2002 Biscuit fire also had lasting impacts on County citizens – the fire burned close to 500,000 acres, cost over 150 million dollars, and threatened many citizens in the County. These figures illustrate the extent to which Josephine County's population are considered to have special needs and at the same, face the same risks to wildfire that exist throughout the County and region.

The plan will help the county become more competitive for federal funding programs such as the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, the National Fire Plan, FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, state programs, and local planning ordinances. The collaboration and time dedicated by citizens, county staff, and interested agencies and organizations alike is in the meantime readying the County to be successful in the implementation of fuels reduction projects, fire prevention education campaigns, and other fire-related programs. The project approach directly involves the county's rural fire protection districts as a way to reach citizens throughout the county.

CWCH is developing strategies to empower poor and isolated communities and increase their capacity to implement fire protection programs and working with Josephine County on a countywide effort to reduce wildfire risk that threatens citizens, the environment, and quality of life within the County. To achieve the objectives described above, there is a focus on involving the County's rural fire protection districts as a way to reach citizens throughout the county. We are building relationships with diverse stakeholders, including social services agencies, volunteer organizations, groups dedicated to promoting economic and community development, and agencies providing services to the rural poor and isolated community. Creating networks can increase provision of services to all citizens, and ensure that underrepresented citizens are equal participants in creating safer, stronger communities. Furthermore, This project is resulting in a high profile model for counties and communities across the West to develop comprehensive, integrated fire plans that address the needs of the rural poor. \

CWCH Publications and Articles on Wildfire and Poverty Issues

- *Natural Hazards Observer*, Volume XXVIII, Number 2, Univ. of Colorado, Boulder (November 2003).
- *Josephine County Board of County Commissioners Quarterly Newsletter* (10/2003, 2/2004, 4/2004).
- *Josephine County Bulletin*, press release on the Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan (September 2003).
- USDA Forest Service/Region 6 (Oregon and Washington), "Stay Tuned," (July 2003).
- *Sunny Wolf Community Response Team Newsletter Big News*, (7/2003, 10/2003, 2/2004, and 4/2004)
- Bend Bulletin, mention in article on the National Fire Plan (June 15, 2003).
- Community Fire Planning Framework, published for distribution through the Forest Service, BLM and other partners in January 2004. Available:
http://cwch.uoregon.edu/CCWP/PWCH/CFP_framework.doc

Conference and Workshop Presentations

Kathy Lynn presented at the following workshops and conferences on issues related to wildfires, poverty, and community fire planning:

- Oregon Emergency Management Association, Salem, Oregon, (September 9, 2003).
- Southern Oregon University, Community Studies, Medford, Oregon (October 28, 2003).
- Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group/Oregon Fire Marshal's Association Fire Prevention Cooperative Meeting, Salishan, Oregon (February 24, 2004).
- National Fire Plan Conference 2004, Reno, Nevada (March 4, 2004).
- Creating Fire Resilient Landscapes: Improving our understanding and Application. Medford, Oregon, (March 8-11, 2004).
- **Scheduled:** Partners for Disaster Resistance/Governor's Interagency Hazard Mitigation Team, Salem, Oregon (April 2004)
- **Scheduled:** Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council, (May 19, 2004).
- **Scheduled:** Pacific Northwest National Fire Plan Strategy Team, Portland, Oregon, (Summer 2004).

National policy meetings and program review

CWCH participated in the following meetings and workshops to provide input on programs and policy as they relate to the wildfires and poverty:

- National Fire Plan meeting with Community-Based Forestry and Federal Agency Representatives in Washington D.C. (Western Week in Washington, April 2003) **Outcome:** *Reviewed the NASF draft field guidance on Identifying and Prioritizing Communities at Risk.*
- National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) workshop, "Proposal on Mobilizing Wildfire Hazard Mitigation within States and Communities at Risk." (Bend, Oregon, May 2003) **Outcome:** *As a result, CWCH collaborated with the Ecosystem Workforce Program to submit a formal*

response to the legislation drafted by the NAPA panel. This legislation is intended to meet the challenge of coordinating intergovernmental and public-private partnerships to mobilizing wildfire mitigation activities. Our response focused on leveraging existing resources and partnerships and maintaining opportunities for local involvement in project planning and implementation.

- Understanding Appeals and NEPA: CBF Workshop (Portland, Oregon, November 2003). **Outcome:** *Shared information, materials and resources from the workshop with community partners in Josephine County. Created a partnership with the BLM, Medford District to conduct NEPA work on community sites where fuels reduction will be funded through the National Fire Plan.*
- Community-Based Forestry Annual Policy Meeting (Portland, Oregon, January 2004) **Outcome:** *Currently participating on the Healthy Forests Restoration Act working group. Assisted in the preparation of a briefing paper on HFRA for Western Week in Washington, April 2004.)*

In coordination with community-based forestry organizations, CWCH has had the opportunity review and comment on federal programs and to work on briefing papers for Western Week in Washington (WWIW).

- *Preparing a community wildfire protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland Urban Interface Communities.* (March 2004) Society of American Foresters, National Association of Counties, and NASF.
- *Healthy Forests Restoration Act Community Forestry Briefing Paper* (March 2004) (For WWIW 2004)
- *Wildfire, Poverty And The National Fire Plan Briefing Paper* (February 2004) (For Western Week in Washington - Update from 2003 briefing paper)
- *Draft Guidelines for Community Wildfire Protection Plans* (February 2004) NASF
- *Field Guidance: Identifying and Prioritizing Communities at Risk.* (June 2003) NASF. This review led to changes in the guidance document that recognize the need to address isolated, rural communities.

Poverty Indicators in the context of wildfire

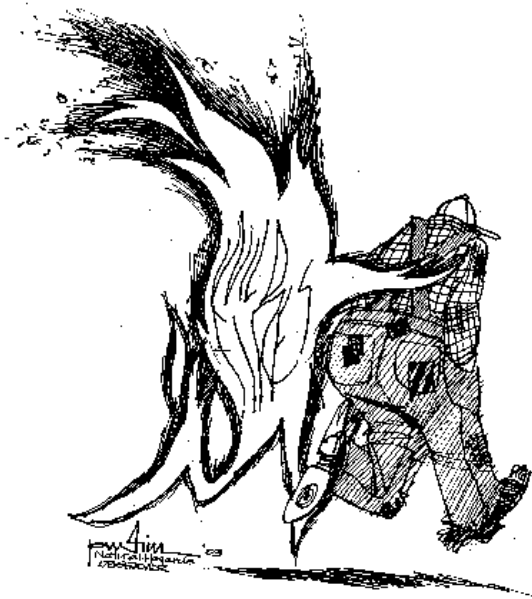
CWCH drafted a background paper to illustrate indicators of poverty, capacity, and risk and provided preliminary recommendations on the indicators to use in illustrating the relationship between poverty and wildfire. These recommendations can serve as the basis for policy recommendations that ensure that poor communities are eligible for regional, state, and federal grants and programs. (*Indicators of Rural, Low Capacity Communities - CWCH May 2003*).

CWCH is also working collaboratively with the US Forest Service State and Private Forestry, Cooperative Programs and the National Network of Forest Practitioners to map indicators of wildfire and poverty in Oregon and Washington. Partnered with Housing and Urban Development to utilize Income Limit data and with the Insurance Services Office for Fire Hazard Ratings.

Grants

One first year objective was to assist communities by building their capacity to be successful in obtaining grants for National Fire Plan and other fire protection programs. CWCH accomplished this by assisting public agencies and fire districts prepare National Fire Plan, FEMA and other grants to increase fuels reduction and target special need populations (as illustrated in the table below).

Grant Applicant	Funding Source	Amount	Scope
Josephine County Forestry	County Payments Title III	\$300,000 for FY 2004 & 2005	Awarded Feb. 2004 – Funding for 400 acres of fuels treatment in '04 and 400 acres in '05 on county parks and forest land adjacent to communities in high-risk areas
Illinois Valley Fire Protection District	County Payments Title III	\$30,000	Awarded Feb. 2004 – Funding to coordinate community meetings and development of a local community fire plan.
Wolf Creek Fire Protection District	County Payments Title III	\$16,000	Awarded Feb. 2004 – Funding for training, equipment and communications for the district.
Josephine County Community Dev.	National Fire Plan Grant (FY 2005) – Fuels Reduction	\$1,250,000	1600 acres of roadside, home, and landscape fuels treatment. Includes provisions for low-income residents to receive up to 100% of the costs covered.
Josephine County Commission on Children and Families	National Fire Plan Grant (FY 2005) – Education/Prevention	\$145,588	Training, materials and support for countywide fire prevention and education focused largely through County social service agencies
Josephine County Community Dev.	National Fire Plan (FY 2005) – Planning	\$250,000	Funding for remote-sensed vegetation for Jackson and Josephine Counties (to strengthen risk assessment tools)
Lane County/Oregon Department of Forestry	National Fire Plan (FY 2005) – Planning	\$75,000	Funding for community fire planning in rural areas of Lane County and to address poverty issues
Josephine County Community Dev.	Title II RAC Grant – Siskiyou Forest	\$250,000	Funding for approx. 276 acres of fuels reduction targeted to low-income households and special needs facilities.



Natural Hazards Observer, Volume XXVIII, Number 2, University of Colorado, Boulder (November 2003).

Next Steps

CWCH will continue to provide support to Forest Service, BLM, and State Department of Forestry community fire-planning efforts and focus on strategies that address issues related to poverty and wildfire. We will also focus on extending resources to Native American communities. In March 2004, CWCH began conducting a needs assessment to gain a strong understanding of the needs Tribes have related to wildfire protection, traditional uses of fire, and the social, cultural, economic, and environmental resources that may be at risk to fire. Furthermore, CWCH seeks to identify areas of assistance to assist Tribal communities in developing community fire plans, mapping risk and developing appropriate and needed local programs related to wildfire. CWCH hopes to assist by working with Tribes to communicate the needs identified through the assessment to federal agencies, specifically related to funding and technical assistance. CWCH will be

interviewing Tribal forestry officers, emergency managers, fire fighters, and planners from the 42 Tribes in Idaho, Oregon and Washington.