



Community Wildfire Action Plan Guide:

*A tool for supporting planners to
develop impactful Community
Wildfire Protection Plans.*



**WASHINGTON
RESOURCE**
CONSERVATION &
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



**WASHINGTON STATE
FIRE ADAPTED
COMMUNITIES**
LEARNING NETWORK

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Introduction

The Action Plan is the cornerstone of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). It turns identified wildfire risks and community priorities into clear, actionable steps, ensuring that mitigation efforts continue beyond planning and take root on the ground.

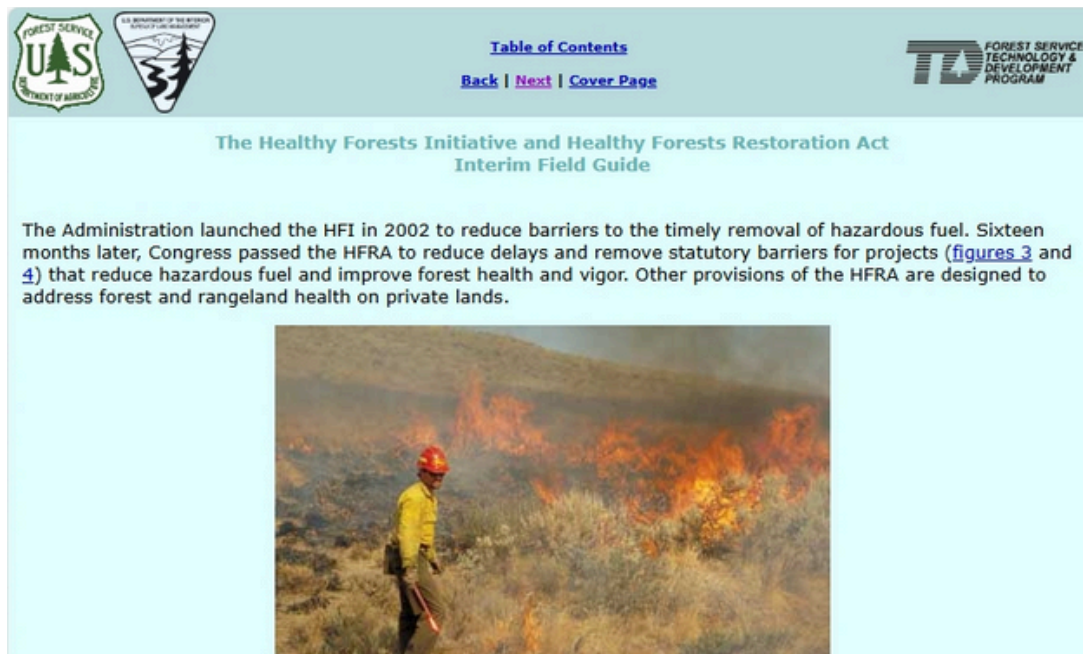
By outlining what needs to be done, who is responsible, and when, the Action Plan provides structure, promotes accountability, and supports collaboration across agencies and partners. When aligned with broader priorities and regularly updated, it becomes a strategic tool for guiding investments, accessing funding, and strengthening long-term wildfire resilience.

This guide was developed in conjunction with a supplemental **Action Item Table Template**. Identify which template works best for communicating your message to partners and funders.

Legislative Requirements

The **Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA)**, of 2003, stipulates that CWPPs must include:

- A **required** list of prioritized actions, which build community capacity and resilience to wildfire prevention, protection, and recovery.
 - It is also **recommended** to provide a list of areas that have either seen a change in wildfire risk, highly valued assets, or vulnerable populations that may need immediate efforts.
- A **required** list of recommendations for residents to reduce the vulnerability of both their structures and lands to damage from wildfire.
- Collaboration and consensus between a diverse array of response and community entities, including but not limited to local governments, fire departments, and state agencies.
 - Endorsement of the plan by representatives of your local government is a legislative **requirement**. This must include the written signature of fire districts and the state forester.



View [The Healthy Forests Initiative and Healthy Forests Restoration Act Interim Field Guide](#) for more information on HFRA.¹

What is a CWPP Action Plan?

A **CWPP Action Plan** is the strategic core of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. It bridges the gap between wildfire risk assessments and on-the-ground action by outlining specific, locally driven steps to reduce wildfire risks and build resilience. The table below summarizes the key functions and characteristics that make an Action Plan effective and impactful.

Key Functions & Benefits of a CWPP Action Plan

Function	Purpose & Value
Strategic Foundation	Translates wildfire risk assessments and community priorities into coordinated, actionable steps.
Targeted, Multi-Year Planning	Organizes actions over time to reduce risks to life, property, and resources.
Defined Goals & Responsibilities	Establishes measurable objectives, timelines, and leads for each action to support clarity and accountability.
Collaborative Framework	Coordinates efforts across jurisdictions and sectors, avoiding duplication and promoting shared ownership.
Funding & Policy Alignment	Links actions to available resources and increases eligibility for funding by aligning with local, state, and federal priorities.
Shovel-Ready Project Timeline	Maintains a list of well-developed, prioritized projects ready for implementation as funding becomes available.
Living, Integrated Planning	Designed to evolve and integrate with broader land use, emergency response, and resilience planning.

List of Recommended Strategies to Reduce Structure Wildfire Risk

HFRA requires that CWPPs include recommendations to reduce the ignitability of structures and critical infrastructure. These recommendations must address both existing development and new development. Best practices include using ignition-resistant materials, maintaining defensible space, hardening utilities and critical infrastructure, and referencing applicable state and local requirements such as the Washington State Building Code, Defensible Space Standards, and local Fire Safe Regulations.

CWPP planning teams may choose to either integrate this content into the Action Plan or present it as a separate section. However, it is strongly recommended to separate it, since the Action Plan is usually geared toward implementers (agencies, fire departments, local governments), while ignitability recommendations are more directly aimed at community members and property owners. Separating these sections helps prevent confusion and ensures that each audience can clearly access the information most relevant to them.

Key Components of an Action Plan

To ensure your Action Plan meets both legislative expectations and functional implementation needs, it should include the following key components:

- **Prioritized List of Actions** - A ranked or tiered list of wildfire adaptation projects and activities, addressing the highest-risk areas, most critical needs, and most feasible opportunities for risk reduction.
- **Roles and Responsibilities** - A clear identification of lead agencies, planning partners, and collaborators responsible for implementing each action. This promotes coordination, ownership, and efficiency in execution.

Key Components of an Action Plan

- **Timeline and Milestones** - Timeframes for initiating, maintaining, and completing each action, typically within a 5-year planning window that aligns with grant cycles and other local planning efforts.
- **Resources and Funding Mechanisms** - Information on available or potential funding sources, technical assistance, or local support needed to implement the identified actions. Communities may also maintain a secondary list of “shovel-ready” projects to act on when funding becomes available.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation** - A structure to track progress, evaluate effectiveness, measure outcomes, and update the plan as needed. Consider forming an implementation committee and creating a “report card” to track completed actions and identify ongoing needs.
- **Integration with Other Plans** - Evidence that the CWPP aligns with other local plans such as Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs), comprehensive land-use plans, or emergency operations frameworks. Integration reduces duplication of efforts, supports funding access, and promotes consistent community-wide hazard planning. You should also explicitly state any alignment with broader wildfire goals and objectives.
- **Engagement and Outreach** - The Action Plan should extend collaborative momentum beyond the CWPP’s development phase. Ongoing community engagement, education, and the formation of working groups are essential to maintaining local capacity and accountability.

Alignment & Integration

Aligning your CWPP Action Plan with broader wildfire strategies—local, state, and national—adds strategic value, unlocks funding opportunities, and strengthens your plan’s relevance within the wider wildfire resilience system.

When your action plan supports shared goals across jurisdictions, your community becomes a stronger partner in coordinated mitigation efforts and better positioned to receive resources, grants, and technical support.

Key Frameworks for Alignment

National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy² - A federally endorsed framework with three primary goals:

1. **Resilient Landscapes** - Encourage ecological restoration, fuels management, and sustainable land use.
2. **Fire-Adapted Communities** - Promote local responsibility, mitigation actions, and fire-resilient design.
3. **Safe & Effective Wildfire Response** - Ensure readiness of responders and protection of life and property.

Washington State 10-Year Wildland Fire Protection Strategic Plan³ - Washington’s state-level roadmap with four key goals:

1. **Integrated Systems** - Coordinate across agencies and disciplines for all-lands, all-hands approaches.
2. **Landscape Resilience** - Restore and maintain fire-resilient ecosystems.
3. **Fire-Adapted Communities** - Weave preparedness into local planning, land use, and daily life.
4. **Effective Wildfire Response** - Build capacity and readiness for local response operations.

Incorporating these strategic frameworks and goals demonstrates alignment with state and federal priorities. This will help frame your actions in a regional and national context and position your projects to access state or federal funding and support.

Alignment & Integration

Best Practices for Alignment

To clearly demonstrate alignment within your CWPP Action Plan:

- **Use Strategy-Aligned Language** - Incorporate key terms from federal and state plans (e.g., “resilient landscapes,” “integrated systems”) into your action descriptions.
- **Tag Actions with Broader Goals** - Add a column or notation to your action tables indicating which strategy or goal each action item supports. Some actions may support multiple.
- **Justify Actions with Strategic References** - When prioritizing or describing actions, briefly explain how they support state or national goals. This improves transparency and competitiveness for resources.

Integrated Planning: Combining CWPPs with Other Local Plans

Coordinating your CWPP with other planning efforts strengthens your community’s hazard resilience and improves access to a broader range of funding sources.

Plans to Consider Integrating:

- Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs)
- Comprehensive or Land Use Plans
- Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs)
- Forest or Tribal Action Plans

Why Integrate?

- Avoid duplicating efforts and data
- Enhance consistency across risk reduction strategies
- Open doors to federal funding (e.g., FEMA, HMA, USDA, DOI)

Tip!

When integrating with an HMP, ensure wildfire-related actions meet FEMA’s requirements⁴, including:

- Clear identification of actions, roles, and funding sources
- Measurable outcomes and a 5-year update cycle

Developing a CWPP Action Plan: A Step-by-Step Guide

1. Partner Engagement & Input Coordination

- **Objective:** Build and maintain collaborative relationships with key partners and community collaborators to guide the development of the action plan from start to finish. This is not a one-and-done step and should be continued throughout the entire development of the CWPP action plan. This step should build on partner engagement efforts already initiated during earlier phases of the CWPP development process.
- **Steps:**
 - Identify partners across sectors, including local leaders, fire chiefs, emergency managers, DNR, federal agencies, landowners, HOAs, planners, conservation groups, and community organizations.
 - Establish a workgroup representing diverse interests and define clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
 - Notify decision-makers and ensure early involvement.
 - Ensure that individuals brought in to review and provide input on the action plan represent the organizations, agencies, and land jurisdictions necessary for implementation.
 - Tailor engagement based on partner roles and capacity.
 - Conduct outreach through meetings, workshops, forums, surveys, interviews, and participatory mapping sessions.
 - Collect input on wildfire concerns, community values, and local priorities.
 - Provide consistent updates to ensure transparency and build trust throughout the process.
- **Outcome:** Coordinated partner engagement, resulting in clearly defined roles and a shared understanding of community needs and priorities, guides the action plan's creation and implementation.

2. Review & Align with Existing Plans

- **Objective:** Build upon prior and current planning efforts and ensure alignment with other local, state, and federal wildfire strategies.
- **Steps:**
 - Review the 'How to Align Your CWPP with Broader Strategies' section above to get started.
 - Review past and current CWPPs, HMPs, land-use plans, and other relevant local documents.
 - Identify successful actions and lessons learned to retain.
 - Note areas where past plans fell short or where new gaps have emerged.
 - Examine state and federal wildfire strategies (e.g., State/Regional Forest Action Plans, National Cohesive Strategy) for alignment opportunities.
 - Identify integration points across plans and jurisdictions.
 - Complete a crosswalk analysis of goals and actions to highlight consistency.
- **Outcome:** A CWPP Action Plan informed by past experiences, avoids duplication, and complements broader strategic initiatives at multiple levels.

3. Review Risk Assessment & Engagement Findings

- **Objective:** Prior to developing the CWPP action plan you should have developed a detailed profile of your community's wildfire risks and vulnerabilities. This step combines the technical findings from the CWPP's risk assessment and WUI mapping with qualitative insights gathered through community engagement. Reviewing these findings ensures the development of action items is grounded in a shared understanding of community wildfire risk and stakeholder priorities. This step is also important in prioritizing your action items and landscape fuel reduction treatments.
- **Steps:**
 - Review key findings from the CWPP's wildfire risk assessment, including fire behavior modeling, past fire history, hazard mapping, and identification of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).
 - Analyze which geographic areas, community assets, and infrastructure are most at risk based on hazard exposure and local vulnerabilities.
 - Examine engagement outputs such as community surveys, stakeholder workshops, public meetings, and participatory mapping sessions to identify expressed community concerns, knowledge gaps, and priority values at risk.
 - Highlight where technical data and community priorities align—or diverge—to help shape the focus and justification of action items.
 - Identify any communities or populations with elevated vulnerability based on location, capacity, or resource limitations.
 - Develop a risk matrix that ranks planning areas by potential fire frequency, severity, and intensity.
- **Outcome:** A comprehensive synthesis of spatial, technical, and social findings that will inform targeted, meaningful, and community-supported mitigation and adaptation actions. This ensures that the Action Plan reflects both the science of wildfire risk and the lived experience of the people who face it.

4. Action Item Identification

- **Objective:** Define specific, locally tailored actions to reduce wildfire risk and build long-term resilience.
- **Steps:**
 - Collaborate with partners to brainstorm a wide range of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery actions.
 - Reference frameworks such as the FACNet Post-Fire Recovery Framework and the National Cohesive Strategy to categorize actions.
 - Ensure representation across different scales (parcel, neighborhood, landscape) and sectors (infrastructure, housing, forest management, emergency response).
 - Consider feasibility, scalability, and the inclusion of both short-term and long-term actions.
 - For each action item, identify the lead and supporting partners, expected timeline and milestones, and any potential or current resources and funding sources.
 - Refine and organize the list based on input gathered from partner workshops and community engagement.
 - Consider categorizations of action items for readability and project management (e.g., based on the FACNet's Wildfire Preparedness Framework).
- **Outcome:** A comprehensive and balanced draft list of action items that reflects community values, wildfire risk, implementation potential, and resource needs.

5. Prioritization of Actions

- **Objective:** Collaboratively assess and rank identified actions to focus resources on the most impactful and feasible initiatives.
- **Steps:**
 - Develop prioritization criteria based on community and partner values, including wildfire risk level, community benefit, urgency, equity, cost-effectiveness, and readiness.
 - Use collaborative tools (e.g., scoring sheets, facilitated meetings, surveys, and GIS-based tools) to evaluate each action.
 - Facilitate consensus-building sessions or ranking exercises with the planning team and broader partner network.
 - Identify high-, medium-, and low-priority actions or group actions by time horizon (e.g., Year 1–2, 3–5, ongoing).
- **Outcome:** A transparent, inclusive, and actionable prioritization of projects that aligns with capacity, funding, and urgency.

6. Draft Review & Refinement

- **Objective:** Validate and strengthen the action plan draft through a deliberate, iterative review process.
- **Steps:**
 - Distribute the draft plan to key decision-makers, planning partners, and community collaborators through various accessible formats.
 - Organize community review meetings, surveys, comment periods, or one-on-one partner check-ins.
 - Use guided questions or feedback forms to collect constructive input on clarity, relevance, accuracy, and equity.
 - Reconcile feedback and revise action items, timelines, roles, and metrics accordingly.
 - Ensure that each action includes clearly defined lead and supporting partners, a proposed timeline with milestones, and a note of relevant resources or potential funding opportunities.
 - Finalize sections related to monitoring and evaluation based on what is measurable and meaningful to the community.
- **Outcome:** A partner-informed and community-vetted CWPP draft ready for endorsement and implementation.

7. Plan Endorsement & Publications

- **Objective:** Secure formal support and buy-in from key stakeholders and ensure the CWPP is accessible to the public and partners to guide the action plan implementation.
- **Steps:**
 - Engage key stakeholders and partners to review and give final input to implement into the CWPP document and action plan.
 - Present the finalized CWPP for signature to key endorsing entities, which includes but is not limited to:
 - Local government (city/county councils, commissioners)
 - Fire protection districts
 - State Forester (For Washington State that is the Department of Natural Resources)
 - Identify ways to communicate the Plan to stakeholders, partners, and community (e.g., distribute a summary or fact sheet to the public, organize public meetings/press releases, post the final CWPP on relevant websites, and handout copies).
 - Ensure the endorsed CWPP is submitted to relevant agencies or databases for implementation tracking and future maintenance.
- **Outcome:** A formally endorsed and publicly accessible CWPP is in place for implementation readiness and accountability.

8. Implementation & Maintenance

- **Objective:** Transition from planning to action and ensure ongoing progress through accountability, coordination, and adaptive management.
- **Steps:**
 - Assign lead entities and supporting partners to each action item, clarifying responsibilities, timelines, and communication channels.
 - Launch priority projects, leveraging available funding, technical assistance, and community resources.
 - Establish a routine check-in schedule (e.g., semi-annual or annual) to track project implementation and update the plan's status.
 - Develop a simple monitoring and evaluation framework, including key metrics, milestones, and reporting formats.
 - Revisit and revise the CWPP as needed—at least every 5–10 years or following major wildfire events or planning shifts.
- **Outcome:** A living, actionable document that drives sustained wildfire risk reduction and resilience-building, backed by regular coordination and progress tracking.

References

1. [The Healthy Forests Initiative and Healthy Forests Restoration Act Interim Field Guide](#) (USFS)
2. [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#) (USFS)
3. [Washington State 10-Year Wildland Fire Protection Strategic Plan](#) (DNR)
4. [Integrating Community Wildfire Protection Plans and Natural Hazards Mitigation Plans](#) (Headwater Economics)

Resources

- [DNR List of County CWPPs](#)
- [Creating a Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) (U.S. Fire Administration, May 2025)
- [CWPP Portal and Data Library](#) (Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network)
- [Community Wildfire Protection Plans Toolkit](#) (Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network)
- [CWPP Technical Assistance](#) (Washington Resource Conservation and Development Council)