



Community Wildfire Protection Plans

10 Points

New Action November 2015

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are a mechanism for municipalities to address their wildfire risk in a comprehensive manner. These plans promote collaboration and local action, and can work in partnership with Firewise and Ready-Set-Go activities. Together, CWPP, Ready-Set-Go and Firewise Communities' involvement can strengthen the success and outcomes of each. CWPPs are developed collaboratively with the municipal government, local fire departments and the New Jersey State Forestry Services – Forest Fire Service (NJFFS) and US Forest Service or other federal agencies, depending on the location of the community. For example, if a municipality is adjacent to federally owned property they should include that agency in the planning process. These plans allow communities to identify and define their wildfire urban interface boundaries and develop a communications and emergency management strategy to address wildfire issues such as: reducing risk, fire response, zoning regulations, building codes, development standards, fuel treatment and restoration, ecological considerations, monitoring and evaluation. Once these needs are identified and defined, a list of priority actions are identified for implementation. **Community Wildfire Protection Plans will be eligible to earn 10 points during the approved 10 year planning period.**

Why is it important?

NJ may experience more fires as climate change impacts our forest resources. Fires can be more costly to suppress in the Wildland-Urban-Interface (WUI) — the areas where homes are intermixed with forests. More homes are at risk from wildfire as residential development continues to encroach on forest areas. The first step in wildfire prevention is education designed to raise awareness of the responsibilities of living in a fire-prone environment. Individual and community action can ensure that homes and neighborhoods are prepared for wildfire. The CWPP collaborative process is effective in improving coordination and communication between emergency response agencies and the community. Spending an adequate amount of time developing a CWPP can help clarify and refine priorities to protect life, property, infrastructure, and valued resources. The CWPP process helps to identify high priority areas where municipal actions can be taken to reduce or mitigate that risk. This process can lead communities through critical discussions about private and public land management, as well as identify opportunities for fuels' reduction within a designated forest-urban interface boundary and improve outreach and awareness efforts. A municipality that is writing a CWPP can align its recommended measures with Firewise Communities. This action is part of a suite of 4 Emergency Preparedness Fire Actions (Firewise; Ready, Set, Go; Community Wildfire Protection Plan and Establishing a Municipal Wildfire Safety Council) and it addresses the issue of managing the increasing risk of forest fire in our communities as climate change impacts the forest resources.

Who should lead and be involved with this action?

Municipal stakeholders are the essential drivers for the CWPP process. Municipal government representatives including the Mayor, Township Committee, and Borough Council; other municipal staff or volunteers from the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), OEM Coordinator, Business Administrator, as well as local fire chiefs, and the NJ Forest Fire Service are the key stakeholders needed to develop the plan. During the planning process, each stakeholder brings a unique view of the issues, and it is important to have a wide cross section of municipality's needs considered during the CWPP process. Signatories to the CWPP include the Mayor, local Fire Chief(s) and the NJ Forest Fire Service.

Timeframe

It typically takes one to two years to complete the Community Wildfire Protection Plan process. During this time, the local stakeholders will be working with the NJ Forest Fire Service and possibly an external consultant to develop the plan. The planning period covered by the completed CWPP is 10 years.

Project costs and resource needs

The NJ Forest Fire Service actively seeks federal grant funding to support CWPP development in qualifying, (high risk)* municipalities interested in completing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The NJFFS utilizes this funding to provide technical assistance, usually through a private consultant, to develop the CWPP for the municipality, which results in no cost to the municipality. Municipalities not qualifying for financial assistance from the NJFFS but wishing to proceed with the CWPP process can hire a consultant to complete the CWPP. The cost to complete the plan ranges from \$5,000-\$7,000. Municipal staff time is needed, however to complete the CWPP, which averages about 20-40 hours depending on the complexity of the plan. The CWPP planning process also requires input from local fire chief(s) and other municipal authorities such as public works, township manager or planning department. Once a plan is completed and approved by NJ Forest Fire Service, your community may be eligible to apply for funding under the [Community Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program](#). Contact the NJFFS for more information about the availability of grant funding.

What to do, and how to do it (“How to”)

CWPPs must meet three basic criteria:

- *Collaboration*: A CWPP must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties.
- *Prioritized Fuel Reduction*: A CWPP must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure.
- *Treatment of Structural Ignitability*: A CWPP must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

A Municipality interested in developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) should start by contacting:

Gregory McLaughlin, Division Forest Firewarden

New Jersey Forest Fire Service

Division of Parks and Forestry

Department of Environmental Protection

Phone: (732) 833-4847; 609-292-2977

gregory.mclaughlin@dep.nj.gov

This section provides guidance and recommendations for implementing this action. our municipality does not need to follow this guidance exactly, as long as it meets the requirements for earning points for this action.

The CWPP Planning Process

1. The NJ Forest Fire Service seeks federal grant funding to support CWPP development for municipalities. Priorities are based on wildfire risk. A county-based map that identifies the fire risk as Low Fire Risk, Moderate Fire Risk, High Fire Risk can be found on the NJ State Forestry Services Wildfire Hazard Mitigation website at: http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/fire/wildfire_hazard_mitigation.htm

High risk municipalities are determined by the NJ State Forestry Services, Forest Fire Service. This designation is a function of wildfire risk and their Primary Forest Fire Service Area designation. Communities considered “High Risk” are eligible for technical assistance grants that cover the costs of an external consultant who will work with the municipality to prepare a CWPP. Municipalities outside of the high risk areas are encouraged to contact the Forest Fire Service for guidance on the appropriate risk reduction program for their municipality.
2. The [CWPP planning process](#) begins with a local stakeholders’ meeting that involves the consultant who will assist the community to develop the plan, NJ Forest Fire staff and municipal representatives including the Mayor, Fire Chief(s) for all fire companies servicing the municipality, Business Administrator, Department of Public Works Supervisor and Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Coordinator.
3. The NJ Forest Fire Service will provide free technical assistance to the municipality throughout the planning process and bring to the initial stakeholder meeting the following GIS mapping data for your municipality.
 - a. Fuel Hazard Location and Ratings
 - b. Fire Risk
 - c. Wildfire Locations by year and extent burned for the past 90 years
 - d. Property Ownership data layer
 - e. Emergency Services locations

- f. Water Infrastructure and Source Locations
- g. Road Infrastructure (for evacuation route review)
- h. Prescribed Burning Locations and Extent
- i. History of Wildfire ignition locations that shows the history of where wildfires started in the community.

These maps are designed to assist the local stakeholders in identifying priority areas based on the GIS data layers of: Wildfire Risk, Fuel Hazard Ratings, Land Ownership, Water Availability and location of Emergency Services.

4. The process begins with community leaders reviewing the maps and using their local knowledge to complete a wildfire risk assessment designed to rate the areas of their municipality most susceptible to wildfires. These susceptible areas may have limitations on suppression efforts, such as limited access to water or limited road access for fire fighting vehicles.
5. Working with the municipal representatives, the community identifies possible fuel reduction areas and assigns priorities based on local input. The priorities are identified based on the community conditions that increase the risk of wildfire impacting residents and critical infrastructure resources. Possible outreach and awareness opportunities are identified during the process.
6. The final step is to identify implementation strategies and develop an Action Plan. The Action Plan identifies the specific activity, responsible entity and timeframe for completion. The plan should cover a 10 year planning and implementation timeframe.
7. The final plan must meet three basic criteria in order to be approved by the NJ Forest Fire Service:
 - a. Collaboration: A CWPP must be collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties.
 - b. Prioritized Fuel Reduction: A CWPP must identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure.
 - c. Treatment of (building) Structural Ignitability: A CWPP must recommend measures that homeowners and communities can take to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.
8. The final CWPP Plan is considered complete when the contents of the plan are agreed to in principle and signed by the three main stakeholders:
 - a. Mayor of the Municipality
 - b. Local Fire Chief(s)
 - c. State Firewarden or their designee
9. The NJ State Forest Fire Service will be the last signatory on the plan and the State will provide the community with final copies of the approved plan.

All documentation must be **from within 10 years of the June submission deadline.**

What to submit to earn points for this action

In order to earn 10 points for this action, the following documentation must be submitted as part of the online certification application in order to verify that the action requirements have been met.

1. In the text box, please provide a short narrative (300 words maximum) to summarize what was accomplished and the general steps taken to accomplish it.
2. Upload a copy of your approved Community Wildfire Protection Plan including the signature page with the Mayor's signature, as well as the approval signature from the NJ Forest Fire Service. **Points will be awarded for this action during the plan's 10 year timeframe.** Make sure that the plan clearly indicates the plan approval date. Once the initial planning timeframe has expired, the CWPP will need to be updated to continue to earn points under this action.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

There is a limit of six uploaded documents per action and individual files must not exceed 20 MB. Excerpts of relevant information from large documents are recommended.

All action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submissions should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

Spotlight: What NJ municipalities are doing

Hardwick Township in Warren County has completed the CWPP process with a grant from the NJ Forest Fire Service. During the CWPP process, Hardwick identified several priority actions that would help reduce wildfire risk in their community. Hardwick has several narrow but strategic roadways that bisect the town and are essential for emergency vehicles to travel in the event of a wildfire. The initial priority was to brush cut the road shoulders as a

fuelbreak and to allow emergency equipment to travel unimpeded. Hardwick also identified a need for a new drafting “standpipe” to provide a source of water from a local pond in another priority area. Visible house numbers were also identified as a high priority in the community. Firefighters responding to a wildfire call need to be able to locate individual home-sites for structure protection. Hardwick will be painting visible house numbers for firefighters to more easily locate residents’ home-sites.

Washington Township, Burlington County, completed their CWPP in 2011 and identified 8 priority actions they wished to implement to reduce wildfire risk. The first priority was to take the Wildfire Risk mapping completed during the CWPP planning process and update their zoning capability to reflect the High Wildfire risk areas. Washington Township also recognized the need to focus on street address visibility and identified key areas to target fuel mitigation projects. The CWPP Planning process was spearheaded by Washington Township’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and that office was quick to recognize the extensive technical capabilities of the NJ Forest Fire Service and how the capability helped them to better understand the risk to local residents.

Resources

A municipality interested in obtaining a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) should start by contacting:

Gregory McLaughlin, Division Forest Firewarden

New Jersey Forest Fire Service

Division of Parks and Forestry

Department of Environmental Protection

Phone: (732) 833-4847; 609-292-2977

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NJDEP- New Jersey State Forestry Services, Wildfire Hazard Mitigation:

- **Fire Risk and Fuel Hazard Maps-** A county-based map that identifies the fire risk as Low Fire Risk, Moderate Fire Risk, High Fire Risk can be found on the NJ State Forestry Services Wildfire Hazard Mitigation website at: http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/fire/wildfire_hazard_mitigation.htm
- **Wildfire Hazard Map** - download at: <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/gis/njfh.html>
- **Community Wildfire Protection Plan Grants** - http://www.state.nj.us/dep/grantandloanprograms/nhr_wildfire.html
- **Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan - A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities** - <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/fire/docs/CWPP%20Handbook%203-26-04.pdf>
- **Community Guide to Preparing and Implementing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Supplemental resource guide to Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan** http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/communities/documents/CWPP_Report_Aug2008.pdf

Hardwick Community Wildfire Protection Plan 2013- 2022 - This is an example of an approved plan developed for Hardwick NJ. [Click here](#) to view pdf.

US Forests and Rangelands, Community Wildfire Protection Plan resources page includes information on preparing a plan, guides and resources. <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/communities/cwpp.shtml>