

Connecting People, Coordinating Actions, Collaborating Generously



Washington is ready for a new approach to meeting its wildfire challenges. In line with the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy's three goals- resilient landscapes, fire adapted communities, and effective response to wildfire- the Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network (Washington Network) has spent the past two years working to better live with wildfire.



Ten communities across Washington State are sharing their practices to help make their communities, and those down the road, more prepared for the next wildfire. By connecting the right people, coordinating actions, and collaborating generously, the Washington Network is making change throughout the State. The Network is supported by a diverse and well-rounded Steering Committee that connects communities to resources and opportunities and helps guide the Network's overarching strategies. Together, Network members are making progress toward a resilient and more prepared State- and demonstrating the diversity of successful approaches to other communities throughout Washington along the way.

*ABOVE: Communities with successful, innovative programs such as the joint wildfire mitigation/suppression crew in the **Hidden Valley/Swauk** area have been able to share the mechanics of this program with other member communities, resulting in the rapid dispersion of tangible actions that increase community resilience.*

Connecting people is a key element of the Washington Network. Communities are working to build fire adapted coalitions and partnerships where all participants embrace their roles. Analysis by the US Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy has indicated that 2.7 million acres of eastern Washington forestland needs work to become more resistant to disease and more resilient to the impacts of wildfire.

The **Yakima Valley Fire Adapted Communities Coalition** has spent much of 2015 and 2016 building trust, learning to work together and supporting the diverse needs of its community. The connections they've fostered have enabled the Yakima area to implement actions from their Community Wildfire Protection Plan and add seven Firewise Communities (where previously there were none). Lessons from other communities throughout the Network were key to their success. Members of the Yakima FAC Coalition are now able to share strategies with communities beginning their Community Wildfire Protection Plans.

"It comes down to connections...we can ask a question [of the Network] and have the answer within minutes. Those are best practices at work..."

Andrea Ely, Yakima Valley Fire Adapted Communities Coalition



"We are working hard this year to incorporate the entire community into preparedness efforts..."

Hilary Lundgren, Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition



The **Seattle City Light-Skagit Hydroelectric Project** has been working to create champions for wildfire adaptation within a public utility. Seattle City Light is the first public utility member of a fire learning network in the nation. The 2015 Goodell Creek Fire highlighted both the impact wildfire can have on west-side forests as well as the need for engaging utilities in fire adaptation efforts. One key to successfully doing this is by creating internal champions within utilities.

"Advocates are ultimately what I want – people inside the organization on all levels talking about the risks makes it an environment more prone to action."
– Cody Watson, Seattle City Light

Chelan County Fire District 1 has formed a strong partnership with the City of Wenatchee as a result of both a recent fire district merger and the 2015 Sleepy Hollow fire. Connecting with people and ensuring that people are connected to critical resources is extremely important when structures are lost. To that end, Chelan County Fire District 1 has created a Community Wildfire Liaison position to work within the community to manage relationships and better prepare for wildfire. In addition, the City of Wenatchee was a 2015 Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire grant recipient and other members of the Washington Network are eagerly awaiting their lessons learned and best practices centered around codes, ordinances and city planning.

Coordinating actions allows the Washington Network to increase its impact throughout the State. Communities working together are able to do more than they could alone. This is being demonstrated by key partners such as the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and Washington State Department of Commerce, who have helped leverage additional resources to enable communities to tackle fuel reduction projects and preparedness programs such as community-wide business resilience workshops.

The **Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition** has partnered with a variety of diverse organizations to increase their on-the-ground impact. Working with the American Red Cross, local senior centers and school programs has allowed the Chumstick Coalition to provide resources to segments of the community that have traditionally been underserved. Partnering with members of the Okanogan community, impacted by wildfire in 2014 and 2015, has allowed the Chumstick Coalition to provide innovative business continuity planning workshops throughout north central Washington.

Sidebar: Children learn about the fire triangle with Annie Schinnell of the Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition and a participant in the senior center evacuation preparedness day is ready to head home with an evacuation kit.

The **Okanogan Conservation District** provided extensive landowner assistance and led burned area recovery work in 2014 and 2015 and, through the connections catalyzed by the Washington Network, have been able to share lessons with communities impacted by wildfire in 2016. Their participation in the Washington Network is contributing to the State and National conversations and best practices for wildfire recovery. Network members have helped drive the conversation about post-fire risks and community needs throughout the State, resulting in presentations to communities during wildfire incidents, increased availability of post-fire outreach materials and the continued development of post-fire resources for impacted communities. Key partners include The National Weather Service, Conservation Districts and the Natural Resource Conservation Service along with many others.



Above: A well-attended fire recovery workshop. Left: An informational table featuring low-profile metal vents at a workshop for builders and landscapers that the Okanogan Conservation District (OCD) hosted. The workshop highlighted the importance of ignition-resistant construction and OCD worked with vent manufacturers to provide product samples of metal vents not readily available in Washington State. Below: An After the Fire infographic designed for use along the Columbia Plateau.

In 2015 and early 2016, **Lincoln County Conservation District** visited Kittitas Conservation District (a key partner of the Hidden Valley/Swauk network-member community) as well as the Okanogan Conservation District as part of a learning exchange organized through the Washington Network. Peer learning exchanges offer a valuable window into other communities. This learning exchange allowed the Lincoln Conservation District to work with partners to take coordinated actions to increase their preparedness. Due to their involvement in the Washington Network, when the



"IT HAS BEEN EXTREMELY BENEFICIAL FOR US TO SEE THE EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS. THIS GIVES US A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM THEIR SUCCESSES AND 'WHAT THEY WISH THEY HAD KNOWN.' THIS [LEARNING EXCHANGE] HAS BEEN THE MOST VALUABLE ASSET OF PARTICIPATING IN THE [NETWORK]..."

ELSA BOWEN, LINCOLN CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Lincoln Conservation District was confronted with the 2016 Hart Road fire they were more prepared than they would have been. This preparation was particularly important with respect to post-fire impacts and increased interest in Firewise activities.

Left: Lincoln County Conservation District is now working on their first Firewise Community: a Homeowners' Association where the 2016 Hart Road Fire stopped.

Mt. Adams Resource Stewards is working to steward resources for the next generation. A strong proponent of community-based forestry, Mt. Adams' programs are driven by the belief that forests and communities are fundamentally connected. Joining the Washington Network in mid-2016, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards are focused on taking coordinating actions in their community forest with local partners. For example, together with their local fire district, Mt. Adams is seeking to increase community awareness and understanding of prescribed fire while using fire as a tool to restore the community forest.

The Flowery Trail Community Association is the smallest community in the Washington Network. However, they are a leader in community engagement strategies. Working with partners such as the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and Stevens County Fire District 4, Flowery Trail has created defensible space around homes and the community as a whole, improved address signage and worked to train community members in the use portable hose carts. Bringing partners together to coordinate activities and actions around the community has helped increase their ability to live with wildfire and has contributed a resident-focused perspective to the Network.

Below: Members of the Flowery Trail Community Association working with the portable hose cart.



"There are so many rural communities that have been forest dependent, that have been resource dependent, that have really suffered in the last couple of decades... so any ability to create an asset that can benefit the community and promote values and stewardship in an era of changing climate and increased fire risk is super important to us."

Jay McLaughlin, Mt. Adams Resource Stewards

Collaborating generously ensures that all of the lessons learned by members of the Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network are easily accessible. Participants regularly share lessons, best practices, and even well-intentioned mistakes so that other communities can move forward faster and more effectively. Blog posts, available at www.fireadaptedwashington.org, help share these lessons beyond the Network membership.

Collaboration and generous sharing of best practices help to take actions like those described above and spread them throughout the State. Recently added to the Washington Network, Spokane Fire District #5 in the community of **Four Mound**, is working to with partners to coordinate fire adaptation activities throughout their community. Located just outside of Spokane, Four Mound is developing outreach programs for community members and youth. These programs will be informed and aided by the work done in the Chumstick and in Okanogan County. Address sign programs and Firewise Community recognitions can rely on lessons learned in Lincoln County, Yakima and others. Communities like Four Mound, just beginning in their process of adaptation to wildfire, have a tremendous amount to gain from participation in the Washington Network.

The partnerships and relationships established through the Washington Network have helped lay the groundwork for joint applications for resources (such as the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership) and innovative pilot programs.

The Washington Network has collaborated with partners to increase capacity for prescribed fire outreach and communication throughout the State. Members of the Network have worked with the Washington State Prescribed Fire Council to pilot a number of new approaches to community engagement during prescribed fires. These approaches, undertaken at the direction of the Washington State Legislature, are a model for other communities in Washington and beyond.

Steering Committee:

Tim Cook, Washington State Department of Emergency Management

Megan Fitzgerald-McGowan, Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Guy Gifford, Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Russ Hobbs, Kittitas County Fire and Rescue

Brett Holt, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Terry Lawhead, Washington State Department of Commerce

Reese Lolley, The Nature Conservancy

Lauren Maloney, Communication, Prevention and Investigation Working Team - Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group

Richard Parrish, Bureau of Land Management



Left: Participants in the Washington Network gathered for the 2016 Annual Meeting in Wenatchee, Washington to make connections, brainstorm joint projects, explore opportunities for innovation, and share lessons learned in 2015.

Connecting People

The Washington Network has catalyzed new relationships among its members. Together, network members represent a powerful force for change.

Coordinating Actions

The challenges facing communities are great. We must be strategic and coordinate our actions in order to improve our relationship to wildfire. The Washington Network is helping its members coordinate at the local and state levels, so that we can do more with the resources at hand.

Collaborating Generously

While we must work to coordinate our actions, we can also be more effective if we learn how to pay it forward. The only way to create systemic wildfire resilience is to work together in new and creative ways.

Looking forward, the Washington State Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network is excited to be at the forefront of wildfire preparedness, response and recovery work in the State. The Washington Network, led by Executive Director Ryan Anderson, is beginning to deepen its engagement with groups who have been historically underserved. The fire seasons of 2014 and 2015 highlighted the gaps in serving immigrant, refugee and limited English proficiency (LEP) populations. The Network is actively working with partners to integrate LEP population needs into fire adapted communities strategies.

The Network is excited to continue work with partners such as the Washington State Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce has provided business resilience expertise and financial support to communities within the Network. In addition, the Department of Commerce hosted the NFPA Home Ignition Zone training in Washington State in the spring of 2016, helping to fill a critical gap in local home assessment training.

Representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Washington State Department of Emergency Management have worked to help communities throughout the State create more effective Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans that successfully integrate with Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Continued engagement with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management supports communities making changes to their landscape.

The funding provided by the Bureau of Land Management to build and support the Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network has allowed communities throughout Washington to better live with wildfire. In the next several years, the Washington Network is committed to extending services, benefits and impacts to other communities throughout Washington.

Connect... and help build a resilient
Washington!

www.fireadaptedwashington.org

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