

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BRIEFING PAPER**

**Topic: Jefferson County Community Wildfire Protection Plan**

**Presented by: Brian Keating, Fire Management Officer, JCSO**

**Date: 10/22/2024**

For Information

For Discussion/Board Direction

Consent to  
Place on Business/  
Hearing Agenda

**Issue:**

The Sheriff's Office is requesting adoption of the updated Jefferson County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) by the Board of County Commissioners. The Plan is a requirement as defined by the Federal Healthy Forests Restoration Act (2003). It is a non-regulatory document with the Colorado State Forest Service having final approval authority. This plan will require signatures from the County Fire Management Officer, Board of County Commissioners and the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS).

**Background:**

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a non-regulatory planning document that provides an opportunity for a community, fire protection district, or county to assess areas of risk and recommend actions to reduce those risks. The Jeffco CWPP has been updated as part of the Together Jeffco project which included five other County-level plans and regulations (Comprehensive Plan, Transportation and Mobility Plan, County Emergency Management Plan-Evacuation Annex and the Unified Land Use Code). As such, the CWPP identifies recommendations, resources, and tools which may help to inform the other plans and regulations as part of the Together Jeffco project. The County level CWPP is intended to help reduce wildfire risk across the landscape and can serve as a mechanism to forge valuable new relationships and coordination among federal, state, County, and local fire and emergency management offices. The Jeffco CWPP is a larger landscape level plan that focuses on program development, capacity building, coordination efforts and strategic approaches across all jurisdictions to address wildland fire risk. The Jeffco CWPP references and links to local level CWPPs, and their management recommendations, to help coordinate and support local action while simultaneously providing county level support and uniformity across various wildland fire mitigation programs and actions.

The CWPP will ensure county compliance with federal and state requirements for wildland fire preparedness and form the basis for the County Wildfire Management Program. The CWPP will serve as an umbrella document to guide county actions and augment and ensure consistency across all other local CWPP documents. The CWPP will also ensure the county's eligibility for various federal and state fire mitigation and preparedness grant opportunities. The action items and recommendations within the CWPP are not regulatory but would require investments (appropriated county or grant funds) if supported to advance the county wildfire management program.

**Discussion:****Introduction:**

The goals of the Jefferson County CWPP are to advance the protection of human life and reduce property loss due to wildfires throughout Jefferson County. This 2024 plan was compiled from stakeholder and public input, reports, spatial and tabular data, modeling, and analysis. The plan was developed in response to the federal Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) and in accordance with the State of Colorado's CWPP requirements. Jefferson County contracted with the consulting firm The Ember Alliance to review and update the Jefferson County 2011 CWPP. A CWPP is a planning document that results from a collaborative planning effort and brings together a diverse group of stakeholders including local government, the CSFS, local fire protection districts, watershed collaboratives, community members and other partners focused on wildfire mitigation efforts. The CWPP identifies and prioritizes measures to protect life, property, and critical infrastructure in the wildland urban interface (WUI) during a wildfire event. The CWPP analyzes areas of interest including county program capacity, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, defensible space and structural ignitability. A county level CWPP provides a broad-based wildfire risk and hazard assessment and identifies management recommendations and actions across the landscape in Jefferson County. It is a nonregulatory planning document that helps engage stakeholders and residents countywide. This plan will serve as an "umbrella" document and link to local fire protection districts and community level CWPPs within Jefferson County.

**Purpose of the CWPP:**

The purpose of the 2024 Jefferson County CWPP is to:

- Provide a Countywide measure of wildfire risk to inform wildfire preparedness and risk reduction actions.
- Bring together key land use planning, resource managers, wildfire management, and suppression entities in the planning area to address the identified needs.
- Provide a framework for future planning and implementation of necessary mitigation actions.
- Provide information to inform future land use planning, building codes, and wildfire mitigation and prevention-related ordinances.
- Provide guidance on educational opportunities and resources that the community can engage with.

**Process of the CWPP:**

The CWPP planning process was multifaceted and collaborative. It included identifying and convening an Advisory Committee that included local, state, and federal representatives, and non-governmental groups in which six different meetings occurred. Advisory Committee meetings provided expertise, input, review, and oversight and guided the development of the CWPP. The team was responsible for making decisions and agreeing on the final contents of the plan. Through these processes, eight Action Items and a number of additional recommendations were identified to address county wildland fire program capacity, landscape risk mitigation, prescribed fire implementation, preparedness and outreach and education, evacuation planning, and data collection and management to help reduce fire risk across the County.

**Advisory Committee participation included:**

- Representatives from multiple (6) Fire Protection Districts
- Colorado State Forest Service
- United States Forest Service: Arapaho-Roosevelt and Pike National Forests
- Jefferson County Open Space
- City and County of Denver Mountain Parks
- Jefferson Conservation District
- Denver Water
- County Departments (P&Z, T&E, R&B, Public Health)
- Municipality representatives (Lakewood and Westminster)
- CSU Extension
- Community Wildfire Planning Center
- Upper South Platte Partnership

Throughout the process, the Jefferson County Wildfire Commission was also briefed and had the opportunity to comment on various components of the CWPP across five different meetings. Members of the public also participated in providing input and reviewing components of the plan as they were developed through the Together Jeffco Community Engagement events (8), online mapping platform and surveys, and through partner and agency outreach efforts and meetings. Feedback received was used to shape and develop the CWPP update and throughout the process, input from the citizens of Jefferson County has helped to identify broad wildfire needs, concerns and challenges that face our Jefferson County residents. No controversial issues were raised through any of these forums and overall, we had positive comments from participants that have been incorporated, as appropriate, into the final CWPP. As part of the draft CWPP review process, an internal county department review of the document was completed with feedback incorporated into the plan. County departments in this effort included:

- Sheriff's Office Emergency Services Section
- Planning and Zoning
- Transportation and Engineering
- Road and Bridge
- Public Health
- Open Space
- Building and Safety

A review was then completed by the Advisory Committee, again with feedback incorporated into the draft plan. Finally, members of the public had the opportunity to review the draft plan and provide comments from September 9-September 22. All comments and questions were compiled and reviewed by the CWPP Project Coordinator and The Ember Alliance and were incorporated to add clarity and understanding with no major substantive issues identified.

**Elements of the 2024 CWPP:**

- Comprehensive wildfire risk assessment for all of Jefferson County. Includes the delineation of 92 Resource Action Areas that summarize fire risk rating to assist in prioritization of future risk mitigation projects.
- Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) analysis and proposed map. This includes an expansion of the WUI from the current coverage of 76% of the county to 91%. Significant changes includes lower elevation lands (below 6400') and incorporates multiple municipalities such as Littleton, Lakewood, Golden, Arvada, etc..

- Fire adapted community discussion which includes Home/Structure Ignition Zone recommendations and resources for homeowners to become wildfire prepared and increase home survivability during a wildfire event.
- Equity in wildfire mitigation recommendations which identifies social vulnerability communities and populations that may be affected differently from a wildfire event and identifies factors or considerations that need to be incorporated in the county wildfire management program to address pre and post wildfire impacts.

**Priority Action Items and Recommendation from the CWPP:**

- Develop County Wildfire Management Program capacity with specific positions and duties identified to carry out and support citizens and partners in wildfire mitigation actions and programs.
- Identify and implement landscape and stand scale fire mitigation treatments. Includes the formation of an inclusive working group to annually convene and prioritize project work across the county.
- Explore opportunities for the reintroduction and expanded use of prescribed fire for risk mitigation treatments and maintenance.
- Implement roadside fuel treatments to mitigate fire risk along critical travel corridors.
- Develop a Jeffco Wildland Fire program to support homeowners fire assessment and mitigation work and promote educational resources across the county.
- Explore options to expand and make more accessible the county SLASH program.
- Support and standardize county and local fire evacuation procedures and protocols including expansion of notification platforms.
- Develop a county spatial data management platform and protocols to track and make accessible various fire management related data, maps and information to assist agencies and citizens in wildfire preparedness and response.

A table with an additional ten recommendations is included that addresses feedback received from partners, interest groups and the citizens of Jefferson County. Some of the recommendations are tiered to the action items but provide specific tasks while others address general feedback but would help advance county wildfire preparedness and response effectiveness.

**Next Steps:**

The CWPP is a living document that will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis and updated as needed or immediately following a significant wildfire event. We will also be exploring the creation of an online story map to serve as a resource and educational tool for the citizens of Jefferson County and its wildfire partners. The CWPP story map will provide a tool for residents to easily access risk maps, project data, wildfire information, and opportunities to participate in wildfire mitigation and preparation activities as needs and resources evolve.

**Fiscal Impact:**  yes  no

**Revenue Limits Impact:**  yes  no

**SPA Review:** N/A

**County Attorney Review:** Kurtis Behn, 10/11/2024

**Facilities Review:** N/A

**BIT Review:** N/A

**Fleet Review:** N/A

**Human Resources Review (new FTE only):** N/A

**Recommendations:**

The Emergency Services Section recommends the Board of County Commissioners place the Jefferson County Community Wildfire Protection Plan on a future consent agenda for approval.

**Originator:** Brian Keating, Fire Management Officer

**Contacts for Additional Information:**

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