

Frequently Asked Questions

December 2016



About CPAW

What is CPAW?

The Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW) program works with communities across the United States to reduce wildfire risk through improved land use planning. CPAW provides communities with multi-disciplinary teams, which include land use planners, foresters, researchers and policy analysts. Teams collaborate with communities to develop site-specific planning recommendations. All services provided through CPAW are grant funded and come at no cost to the community. Communities are selected through a competitive grant process and generally receive assistance over the course of one year. Participation in the program is voluntary and must be requested by local governments.

Why was CPAW created?

Wildfires are growing in size and frequency, causing more damage to communities. Protecting homes and other community assets threatened by wildfires depletes federal agency budgets, and increasingly places firefighters' and residents' lives in danger. With only about 16 percent of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) currently developed, but 60 percent of all new homes being built within the WUI, improved land use planning strategies can help reduce wildfire risks and costs.

In response, Headwaters Economics and Wildfire Planning International created the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW) program in 2015. Drawing off principles outlined in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, CPAW helps communities become more fire adapted through improved land use planning.

Who funds CPAW?

CPAW is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Forest Service and private foundations.

Who is involved in CPAW?

CPAW is managed jointly by Headwaters Economics and Wildfire Planning International. The CPAW team includes experts in land use planning, forestry, risk assessment science and research.

What communities are participating?

Thirteen communities from eight states have participated in CPAW since the [pilot project](#) in 2014. In addition, five urban communities were [profiled](#) for best practices.

For Applicants & New Communities

How does my community apply?

Applications are accepted annually in the late summer from eligible communities (see below) and can be submitted online through the [CPAW website](#). The application requests information about your community's planning documents, current level of stakeholder engagement, wildfire history, and wildland-urban interface (WUI). After submitting an application, the CPAW team may conduct an interview and request supplemental documents. Applications are evaluated based on community need and potential for success, and only a limited number of applicants are selected annually.

What are the eligibility requirements?

Any incorporated community in the U.S. can apply, including towns, cities, counties or tribes. The applicant must have authority over local land use and zoning decisions. To be eligible, the community must demonstrate support from both the community's planning and fire departments. Communities must also demonstrate commitment and capacity to support the CPAW process. HOAs, subdivisions, or other neighborhood organizations interested in the program are encouraged to contact their local planning department to pursue a community application submission.

If selected for CPAW, what is required of my community?

Once selected, communities sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the CPAW program. Communities are expected to contribute staff time, but all other expenses are covered by CPAW. Communities will commit to hosting site visits, providing planning documents, helping convene stakeholders, and participating in CPAW forums. At the end of the CPAW process, implementation of recommendations is voluntary and under the authority of the local jurisdiction.

What does my community receive from CPAW?

CPAW will work directly with your community to determine your specific needs. Communities are selected to receive either full or partial assistance for one year, followed by ongoing implementation support for a second year, if needed and if funding is available. Full assistance includes a complete review of all planning documents and the development of detailed recommendations. Partial assistance is focused on a segment of planning documents or helping a community implement a specific goal. The program also offers education and training opportunities for community members to increase their knowledge and local capacity to implement CPAW recommendations. In addition, communities receive access to science and research by experts in fire, forestry and planning; networking with other CPAW communities; and limited financial support to attend conferences, forums and trainings.

What can we expect in the CPAW process?

The CPAW team will work with your community to scope your project and meet your timing needs. In general, we will hold monthly team calls and conduct 2-4 site visits where we tour the community, meet with stakeholders, and present results. We also ask communities to participate in our annual forum (expenses paid) where communities exchange ideas and share best practices.

Who are the stakeholders we should include from our community?

We suggest including diverse and broad stakeholders during the CPAW process. The primary stakeholders will include planning departments, fire departments, fuels specialists, emergency services, public works, and public land management agencies (state, USFS, BLM, etc.). Additional stakeholders might include open space, park and recreation professionals; developers; real estate professionals; neighborhoods, property and homeowner's associations; and non-profit partners such as land trusts and watershed groups.

