Wildfire Risk Assessment
Taos County
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Presentation Overview

• Who We Are

• What We Did

Wildfire Risk Modeling

Identify Fuels Treatment Project Locations

Recommendations to Integrate Wildfire Risk Reduction Measures into Development Processes

• What’s Next?
Economic Impact of National Parks
This interactive and background materials show visits, spending, and the number of jobs created in gateway communities for every National Park Service unit.

Federal Coal Program in Context
Explore the Socioeconomic Context of the Federal Coal Leasing Program

Does Insurance Affect Home Development on Wildfire-Prone Lands?
It is unlikely that insurance rates and policies alone will determine whether or not a landowner decides to build a new home on wildfire-prone land.
Project Overview

- 2013-2014: First case study in Summit County, CO.
- 2015-2016: Efforts are scaled up to five more communities in the West.
  - Taos County, NM
  - Missoula County, MT
  - City of Bend, OR
  - City of Austin, TX
  - City of Wenatchee, WA

Reported on what 5 cities in the West were doing to address wildfire risk through land use planning.

- San Diego, CA
- Santa Fe, NM
- Austin, TX
- Boulder, CO
- Flagstaff, AZ

- 2016-2017: Five new communities selected, as well as ongoing support in existing five communities.
Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW)

- **Objective:** Help communities reduce wildfire risk through improved land use planning.

- **Structure:** Joint partnership between Headwaters Economics and Wildfire Planning International.

- **Approach:** Provide technical assistance in the form of planning advice, forestry expertise, and risk assessment modeling.
What do we mean by good land use planning?

- Landscaping Regulations
- Steep Slope Ordinances
- Land Use & Development Codes
- Building Codes
- Watershed Plans
- Subdivision Design Standards
- Local Governments
What We Did in Taos County:

- **September 2015:** Wildfire Assessment Project Proposed to Taos County and meeting with initial team of stakeholders:
  - Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Core Team
  - Land Use Planning Department
  - Carson National Forest
  - Taos Pueblo
  - Soil & Water Conservation District
  - The Nature Conservancy

- **Follow-up Trips:** November (2015), February (2016), June (2016)

- **3 Wildfire Risk Assessment Projects:**
  - Wildfire Risk Modeling
  - Identify Fuels Treatment Project Locations
  - Recommendations to Integrate Wildfire Risk Reduction Measures into Development Processes
Wildfire Risk Modeling

Wildland (Unbuilt Environment)

Intermix (Moderately Built Environment)

Ember Zone (Structures at Risk to Embers)
Wildfire Risk Modeling

Google Earth Format

- Risk Description
- Risk Ranking (out of 50)
Wildfire Risk Modeling

Wildfire Risk Assessment: Taos County, New Mexico

Printed Map Format
Wildfire Risk Modeling

GIS Geodatabase Format
Identify Fuels Treatment Project Locations

Two types of proposed treatment areas identified:

- Landscape Treatments
- Roadside Treatments
Identify Fuels Treatment Project Locations

Step 1: Areas most threatened by wildfire identified

Step 2: Most likely “Fire Paths” identified
Identify Fuels Treatment Project Locations

Roadside Treatment Locations

Landscape Treatments
Identify Fuels Treatment Project Locations

Not meant to delineate actual treatment perimeters but guide treatment locations in lieu of access, sensitive habitat, land ownership, and other considerations.
Recommendations to Reduce Wildfire Risk

Planning Process (Contracted to Wildfire Planning International):

1. Obtain and Review Key Planning Documents.
3. Share Policy and Regulation Recommendations with Taos County for Review.
4. Integrate Revisions and Discuss Recommendations.

Objective: Provide Taos County Planning Department with a roadmap to reduce community wildfire risk within their wildland-urban interface (WUI).

- Land Use Regulations (2015)
- Subdivision Regulations (2005)
- Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update (2016)
Recommendations to Reduce Wildfire Risk

Two Priority Areas Identified:

1. Revise content and expand wildfire policies as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update:
   • Update “Environment Element” chapter to include wildfire risk within the WUI; and
   • Identify and integrate synergies between updated CWPP (2016) and Comprehensive Plan Update.
2. Revise Land Use Regulations for consistency and clarity regarding wildfire mitigation standards:


• Refine definition of the “WUI” into explicitly identified locations,

• Identify geographic scope of required mitigation requirements,

• Develop set of standards for development within the WUI,

• Reconcile existing conflicts and avoid creating new ones (ex: “Aesthetic landscaping” vs. defensible space standards); and,

• Consider short- and long-term compliance mechanisms.
Summary

Wildfire Risk Modeling

Identify Fuels Treatment Project Locations

Recommendations to Integrate Wildfire Risk Reduction Measures into Development Processes
What’s Next?

Work with Collaborative Partners to Identify:

• What is the best way to implement the risk modeling outcomes?

• What resources are additionally needed within the County to reduce wildfire risk?

• What role can Headwaters Economics play in achieving the above?
Approaches & Ideas So Far…

• Online “Story Maps” to illustrate larger community narrative of watershed protection, wildfire impacts, and local socioeconomic health.

• Peer networking opportunities and sharing lessons learned (November 2016).

• Publications and literature dissemination,

• Presentation to Washington D.C. Wildfire Leadership; and,

• Other ideas to be discussed and proposed by CWPP Core Team, Land Use Planning Dept., agency partners, and other local stakeholders.
Are there any questions?

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