



Land Use Planning & Wildfire Workshop Summary San Luis Valley May 15-16, 2018

About CPAW

The [Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire](#) (CPAW) program helps reduce wildfire risk through improved land use planning. CPAW is a program of [Headwaters Economics](#) and is funded through the U.S. Forest Service and private foundations. The SLV applied to participate through a competitive process, and the services come at no cost to the community. CPAW provides training, customized research, data and mapping tools, and land use planning recommendations to communities.

Workshop Summary

Five members of the CPAW team facilitated the two-day workshop. Approximately 35 participants included members of SLV local governments (commissioners, mayors, land use planners and administrators, emergency managers), fire personnel, foresters, homeowners' associations, and land managers.

The first day included a detailed training, with the goals of helping participants:

- Understand trends in the wildland-urban interface.
- Learn about what makes structures and communities at-risk to wildfire.
- Explore land use planning strategies that can help reduce wildfire risk. This included an exercise to refine goals and policies in comprehensive plans.



The second day included a hands-on workshop to:

- Discuss and calibrate wildland-urban interface mapping tools.
- Tour wildland-urban interface conditions in the SLV. Stops included the Zapata subdivision, and cottonwood bosques near Alamosa.
- Identify next steps and opportunities in the SLV to become better prepared for wildfires.



Successes, Weaknesses, & Opportunities

At the conclusion of the workshop, stakeholders identified successes, weaknesses, and opportunities for becoming better prepared for wildfire. While CPAW cannot address all of these topics, the program can help provide focus for identifying next steps.

Successes & Strengths

- New collaborators participating in the conversation
- Culture and foundation of collaboration in the SLV
- Some neighborhoods are well-mitigated and can serve as examples
- Grazing history reduces fuels
- Participation in CPAW
- Community is receptive
- Existing community education projects

Challenges & Weaknesses

- Resistance to change in land use practices and resistance to regulation
- Lack of funding for planning and mitigation
- Lack of personnel and capacity to meet demand and growing interest
- Communicating with and educating seasonal residents
- Public education and awareness—knowing how much information to share, and via what channels
- Change will be slow
- Multi-agency processes can be slow and have regulatory hurdles (e.g., NEPA)
- Most development in SLV is small-scale (e.g., single-home) and less regulated
- Land use policies and regulations need to be easy and clear
- Lack of political will, in some cases
- Large scale of the SLV geography
- Growth pressure is coming

Opportunities

- Chance to get ahead of the growth that we know is coming
- Wildfire is timely and currently relevant; on people's minds
- Land use planning tools are achievable, concrete solutions
- Develop pilot or demonstration sites in subdivisions, parks
- Create fire council
- Build on momentum from workshop
- Develop websites
- Share videos and lessons from workshop
- Use momentum to find funding (e.g., FEMA, DOLA, water conservation district, SLVDR)
- Align with other planning opportunities (e.g., trails)
- Leverage mitigation needs into job opportunities, collaborations with conservation/youth corps, and job training

Outcomes & Next Steps

Participants identified next steps and prioritized tools and support that the CPAW team can provide. These include:

Product or Potential Support	Audience	Timeline
1. Create a WUI mapping tool to support land use decisions.	Counties	July 2018
2. Develop a website or StoryMap to provide information about the wildland-urban interface to the public.	Residents, homeowners, stakeholders	July 2018
3. Provide information about best practices and resources for developing a collaborative Fire Council.	Key stakeholders	Fall 2018
4. Provide resources and information about potential communication devices and tactics for reaching absentee homeowners.	Counties	Fall 2018
5. Additional training, or customized recommendations, as requested.	TBD	Ongoing

Additional Resources

In addition to general information on the [CPAW website](#), some resources from the workshop can be found online:

- The [workshop notebook](#) with background information, tools, and examples.
- Video from the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety's [Ember Storm Test](#).
- Footage of a [WUI fire in Reno, Nevada](#) that destroyed several homes (the Melody Lane fire in 2004).
- Dash cam video from the [evacuation during the Fort McMurray WUI disaster](#) in Alberta in 2016.

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