



**Linn County**  
**Community Wildfire Protection Plan**  
**Steering Committee Meeting**  
**NOTES**



**Tuesday, December 12, 2023**

**2:00 – 3:00pm**

**Online via Zoom**

Zoom recording: <https://dlcd.box.com/s/crpgy046l0wpdqsib8rswzi36bwq8bgt>  
Presentation slides (combined): <https://dlcd.box.com/s/oyt7t7gs8i9isvul1di97udng9m0x7a6>

### **Attendees**

Kate Bentz, Assistant Planner, Linn County  
Cara Walter, Linn County GIS  
Shane Wooton, Fire Chief, Albany Fire Department and Linn County Fire Defense Board  
Christian Whitfield, CWRR Program Manager, Sweet Home Fire District  
Stephanie Stafford, Risk Reduction Specialist, OSFM  
Craig Pettinger, South Cascade District, Sweet Home Unit Forester, ODF  
Chris Mushrush, Fire Planner, Northwest Oregon Interagency Fire Management, BLM/USFS  
Chuck Perino, Emergency Manager, City of Albany  
Danelle Hauther, Emergency Manager, PacificCorp  
Jeff Carlson, Safety & Compliance Manager, CPI  
Marie Heuberger, Wildfire Adapted Communities Specialist, North and South Santiam Watershed Councils  
Shannon Richardson, Executive Director, South Santiam Watershed Council  
Susan Millhauser, DLCD, Natural Hazards Planner-Wildfire, Project Manager

### **Welcome/Introductions**

- Attendees introduced themselves.
- October 5, 2023 meeting notes were discussed and approved.

### **Public Engagement Update**

The Linn County Wildfire Ready Night community open house was held on December 6, 2023, hosted by Sweet Home Fire District. Kate provided an update:

- Great turn-out, 40 participants and 22 partners, including many steering committee members. Good cross-section of people from across the county from rural and urban areas.
- The evening included background presentations and success stories followed by stations with maps and other materials where people could have discussions with the partners.
- A lot of questions were answered for people, they were connected to resources, some issues were raised, summarized below.
- Questions from participants included assessing and protecting one's home, where to get resources for fuels reduction work, getting registered for alert systems, access and bridge weight limits, evacuation, ideas for educational programs, and inventory of water resources on private property and needed access agreements, among others.

- It was suggested that additional partners could be included at future events, such as the BLM and Linn-Benton Community College. (Note: Both BLM and LBCC staff are on the committee meeting email list).
- It was helpful to hear what people’s priorities are. People shared feedback on the maps, including suggestions on design to make the purposes clearer.

Committee feedback:

- Some good discussions and connections between partners, would like to keep a core group together moving forward. Agree, it’s important to have a group that meets on a regular basis.
- Appreciation for the people who prepared for the event. Seconded.
- Good job explaining the risk assessment and maps to community members in an approachable way.

### **CWPP Action Item Refinement & Priorities**

The action items are close to being finalized, with a few refinements coming in (link to the updated [action item spreadsheet](#)). Two outstanding action items that lacked some needed information, 4.7 & 5.2, were discussed considering new information.

- “4.7 Identify partners and interest to explore and promote opportunities for multiple uses of small diameter biomass within fuels reduction projects and marketing for other uses.”
  - Committee members noted that there isn’t really a market out there for using biomass, more likely to chip and burn on site. Have done some demonstrations of biochar and it’s very costly. Small-diameter log and biomass utilization business is discussed a lot but there’s no place to do it right now. The chip market is very low. There’s research happening at OSU on mass timber.
  - There might be some point in the future where small diameter material might become more valuable, so the committee agreed to keep the action item and note that cost and funding sources are to be determined. The location would be countywide.
- “5.2 Work to establish a sub-committee or a Fire Prevention Cooperative to coordinate and sustain effective countywide public education and outreach activities.”
  - Committee members attended a recent Central Oregon Fire Prevention Co-op meeting. The Co-op serves three counties and reports to the Central Oregon Fire Chiefs Association, where they can also request funding to support programming. They’re primarily focused on wildland fire. Establishing and maintaining a prevention co-op in Linn County would be a huge undertaking and would need the Linn county fire agencies to maintain and fund, but there isn’t that capacity in Linn County.
  - It was suggested to start small and do an annual one-day wildfire summit to engage local fire protection agencies, focus on coming fire season needs, messaging, and outreach and engagement activities for the year.
  - It was noted that there is a lot of this capacity in the local FDB meetings, maybe we could get ODF, USFS, and Sheriff’s Office more closely involved. The FDB prevention committee could focus on this and report out. It would be valuable to have representatives from different departments come together. Shane will bring it up with the FDB.
  - People agreed it’s helpful to embed in an existing structure, like the FDB, and that it would also be important to encourage the FDB prevention committee to host an annual meeting to bring in additional fire prevention partners.

- ODF North Santiam had a functioning outreach committee in the past, which received funding support from insurance companies.
- It would be great to see this effort combined with other emergency preparedness outreach programing.
- Susan and Kate will draft a revised action item, with the co-leads being the FDB and the CWPP Committee.

Ten Committee members completed a survey to inform a conversation about prioritization. The purpose of the survey was to select up to eight action items that should be identified in the CWPP as top priorities for implementation in the next 1-5 years. In addition to the results shown below, 11 action items received 2 votes, 12 received 1 vote, and the remaining 11 received 0 votes. This doesn't mean they're not important as they will all be included in the CWPP.

Action Item Survey Results:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
1.5 Increase evacuation preparedness in high-risk WUI areas.	6
4.2 Engage in pre-suppression fire planning with partners and collaborators to create fuel breaks and enhance access across landownerships	5
1.1 Assess and address deficiencies in equipment and resources available for wildland firefighting for rural fire departments.	4
5.3 Resource a Fire Adapted Communities (or general Hazards Mitigation) Coordinator position to coordinate implementation of the CWPP, secure external funding, manage community-focused education and support programs, and seek additional opportunities for partnerships that advance wildfire resilience in Linn County.	4
1.11 Review emergency communication systems and procedures to improve accessibility by residents and consistent messaging across jurisdictions.	3
3.2 Complete the fire structural risk assessments in Albany, Brownsville, Lebanon, and Sweet Home fire districts, and utilize this as a model program for other Linn County fire districts for conducting voluntary defensible space assessments for homes within the WUI; document results using Survey 123, a centralized online platform,	3
4.4 Seek additional resources and manage and administer grants to provide cost-share to private forest landowners to manage fuels, buffer high value resources, and reduce landscape-level wildfire risk.	3
4.6 Implement landowner assistance programs to support creating defensible space around communities particularly with vulnerable populations (i.e., elderly, disabled, isolated or fire-affected areas, etc.) and incentivize fuels reduction activities. Create local workforce development opportunities through employment of fuels reduction crews.	3
5.1 Create and formalize a CWPP Advisory Committee to oversee implementation, identify and coordinate funding opportunities, and sustain the Linn County Wildfire Protection Plan	3

The full survey results are here on Box: <https://dlcd.box.com/s/fq5pkt669sbulq2ppv93h6z6bcpk4mcz>, including one response received after the Committee meeting, which resulted in the addition of two top priority actions.

The Committee discussed the action item survey results:

- There was a broad range of projects and programs that received the most votes, including fuels reduction, reducing structural ignitability, and increasing capacity. They are also projects that need money, so emphasizing these as priorities could give more emphasis to their importance in terms of funding opportunities.
- Are there others that should be bumped up or highlighted?
  - It was noted that there weren't any actions from Goal 2, which is focused on resident empowerment and education. Some of these are longer term projects. The action item to resource a countywide coordinator would go a long way to getting some of the Goal 2 action items going. [Note: With the addition of a survey response after the meeting, a Goal 2 action item is included.]
- The Committee agreed the top nine identified action items made sense to include as priority projects. With the addition of a survey response after the meeting, two additional top priority projects were identified, for a total of 11.

### Next Steps

- The Committee will review the draft CWPP and approve it at the January meeting. The draft will be shared at least a week in advance for edits and comments.
  - The meeting will be in late January, date TBD. Susan will send a Doodle poll.
- Next ODF, the Fire Defense Board, and then the Board of County Commissioners will approve the Plan.
  - January 28 and February 22 are the next Fire Defense Board meetings.
  - The ODF reviewer/approver is Craig.
  - Then it will go to the County Commission after that. Committee members are welcome to attend the County Commission meeting, Craig will try and attend. County Planning staff will also be providing the Commission with an update and preparation in advance of their reviewing and approving the Plan.
- The County would like to schedule semi-regular update meetings, one meeting pre- and post-fire season every year, in April and November, is what is included in the draft Plan. Planning will work with Emergency Management to keep things continuing through the coming years.

**Next meeting:** TBD, end of January 2024. Susan will send out a poll to schedule it.

Support this project by linking the following webpage to your jurisdiction's webpage:

<https://www.co.linn.or.us/planningbuilding/page/community-wildfire-protection-plan>