

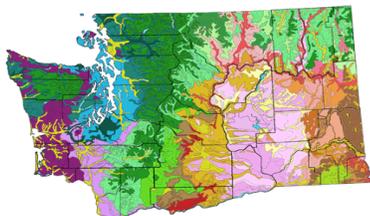


# FEMA

# Best practices

Disaster Mitigation Working in Washington DR-4243-WA

## Washington Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network



**Washington** - Washington State is fortunate to have a new organization of partners working together to find solutions to wildfire and forest health problems. The Washington Fire Adapted Communities (WA-FAC) Learning Network is the first state-level expansion of the national Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, a program designed to share best practices and innovations. Its Steering Committee comprises representatives of federal, state and local agencies and organizations, all of whom bring broad experience to the table.

The group first came together in January 2015 in response to an urgent need to develop integrated strategies and partnerships to implement wildfire resilient/risk reduction solutions that are most appropriate and effective for Washington state. It meets regularly and works continuously toward a shared goal: to accelerate the adoption of fire adapted community concepts that help to produce more sustainable and resilient landscapes and communities.

A fire adapted community acknowledges and takes responsibility for its wildfire risk and implements appropri-



**WA-FAC Learning Network Committee**

Top row (l to r): **Reese Lolley**, The Nature Conservancy; **Annie Schmidt**, Chumstick Wildfire Stewardship Coalition; **Richard Parrish**, U.S. Bureau of Land Management; **Steve Harris**, WA Department of Natural Resources; **Russ Hobbs**, Kittitas County Fire and Rescue; **Tim Cook**, WA Emergency Management Division.

Bottom row (l to r): **Ryan Anderson**, South Central WA Resource Conservation & Development Council; **Guy Gifford**, WA Department of Natural Resources; **Suzanne Wade**, Kittitas County Conservation District; **Brett Holt**, FEMA Region 10; **Michelle Medley-Daniel**, The Watershed Research and Training Center; **John Richardson**, Joint Base Lewis McChord.

Not pictured: **Lauren Maloney**, Pacific Northwest Coordinating Group; **Tim Sampson**, US Forest Service; **Jennifer Hinderman**, Skagit Conservation District.

ate actions at all levels. Among the concerns are the safety of residents and the protection of homes, businesses, infrastructure, forests, parks and other community assets. Since each community or group has a unique set of circumstances and capacities, the actions they take will vary. But the core work involves forming and sustaining effective partnerships, discovering new strategies and building new capacities to meet changing conditions.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District, provides critical funding to the WA-FAC Learning Network. Through this support, along with the contributions of other organizations, selected communities receive assistance from network staff along with some funding to host community-wide wildfire workshops, develop local business and community resilience initiatives and share lessons learned.

## Excerpts from *Guide to Fire Adapted Communities*:

### Development Pressures in the Wildland Urban Interface

Population increases in the wildland urban interface (WUI) exacerbate the wildfire problem by adding new residents who may have little or no experience with wildfire. In the past 50 years, the 220 million acres of identified WUI in the United States have become populated with over 120 million people living in 50 million housing units and working in several hundred thousand businesses. This is a growth rate of 300% in the WUI, which is faster than the general population growth rate for the same time period (IAWF 2013).

### What is a Fire Adapted Community?

Communities in wildfire-prone areas are learning what it takes to be fully prepared for wildland fire. A fire adapted community incorporates people, buildings, businesses, infrastructure, cultural resources, and natural areas into the effort to prepare for the effects of wildland fire. Community leaders and residents accept responsibility for living in an area with wildfire hazards. They have the knowledge, skills and have adopted tools and behaviors to prepare in advance for their community's resilience in a wildfire prone environment.

### A Fire Adapted Community...

- Acknowledges and understands its wildfire risk;
- Recognizes that it is in or near a fire-prone ecosystem;
- Has leaders and citizens with the knowledge, skills, willingness and realistic expectations to properly prepare for and deal with wildland fire;
- Communicates clearly with citizens about wildfire risks and specific methods for preparedness;
- Has adequate local fire suppression training, equipment and capacity to meet realistic community protection needs;
- Creates and uses a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP);
- Reduces levels of flammable vegetation on lands near and inside the community;
- Has local building, planning, zoning and fire prevention policies and codes that require ignition-resistant buildings, building materials and landscapes;
- Has buildings and landscaping that are designed,



constructed, retrofitted and maintained in a manner that is resistant to ignition;

- Creates safety features such as buffers between fuels and neighborhoods, designated evacuation routes and internal neighborhood safety zones;
- Makes sure fire adapted community features, activities and behaviors are maintained over time; and
- Has leaders and residents who coordinate, plan and collaborate to leverage their resources to reduce wildfire risk while increasing community resiliency.

### More information:

[www.fireadaptedwashington.org/](http://www.fireadaptedwashington.org/)

[www.fireadapted.org](http://www.fireadapted.org)

[www.facnetwork.org](http://www.facnetwork.org)

[www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/fac/facnet/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/fac/facnet/Pages/default.aspx)

[www.mil.wa.gov/emergency-management-division](http://www.mil.wa.gov/emergency-management-division)

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

Publication # 468 At Home in the Woods— Lessons Learned in the Wildland/Urban Interface: [www.fema.gov/library](http://www.fema.gov/library)