



# FEMA

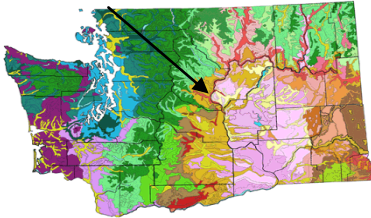
# Best practices

Disaster Mitigation Working in Washington

DR-4243-WA

## A Community Conversation About Wildfire

### Wenatchee



**Wenatchee, Wash.** - Scientists, educators, nonprofits, government representatives, businesses and residents gathered in this city at the confluence of the Wenatchee and Columbia rivers to explore solutions to a critical problem facing their community and others: How to thwart devastating wildfires like those that ravaged the state the past two summers.

The **Wildfires and Us Summit**, held on Nov. 9, 2015, at the Numerica Performing Arts Center, was designed to start a conversation about how to reduce the risk of wildfires and avoid their catastrophic damages and sometimes-deadly consequences.

The kickoff events featured videos of the recent historic fires depicting the tragic loss of life, farm animals, dwellings, businesses, forest resources and more. Next came a discussion of strategies to create safer and more resilient communities.

Several highly experienced professionals outlined key aspects of healthy forest management. They cited especially the relationship between a long history of fire suppression and the accumulation of excessive fuels in wilderness areas.

The merits of forest fuel-reduction

*Summit participants embraced the ideas of cooperation, shared responsibility and working toward a common vision.*

projects were among the topics explored. Serious smoke and safety concerns complicate the solution of prescribed burnings, while large-scale mechanical thinning projects can prove extremely costly, the experts noted.

Finding ways to support forest health was integral to the summit discussion. The complexity and diversity of landscapes and complications of ownership, for examples, require an accommodating approach for real risk reduction.

Strategies to reduce the vulnerability of houses and even entire communities, how to encourage “firewise” activities, flame-resistant building materials, improved building codes, warning systems, and road access during fires were all parts of the conversation.

Summit participants generally agreed that wildfire risk and the

damage fires wreak have been on the increase -- and the trend must be reversed. They called for cooperation, sharing responsibility and working toward a common vision.

The idea for the summit sprang from an enthusiastic reception to a wildfire photo exhibit hosted by the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center. In addition to getting the event organized and off the ground, planners worked with regional and national experts who contributed to developing a strong agenda to help set a course to find real solutions.

### More information:

[www.facebook.com/wildfireandus/](http://www.facebook.com/wildfireandus/)  
[www.wenatcheevalleymuseum.org/](http://www.wenatcheevalleymuseum.org/)  
[www.fireadaptedwashington.org](http://www.fireadaptedwashington.org)  
[www.chumstickcoalition.org/](http://www.chumstickcoalition.org/)  
[www.NCWFHC.org](http://www.NCWFHC.org)