

December 5, 2023

Regular

Meeting

Item #7a. -

Wildfire

Mitigation

Coordinator

Update

Mono County Wildfire Mitigation Coordinator Update

Mono County Board of
Supervisors

Nov. 21, 2023



What is a Wildfire Coordinator anyway?

The Mono County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) and the successful grant the County submitted to CalFire to fill the Coordinator position had some ideas.

CAL FIRE COUNTY COORDINATOR GRANT PROGRAM

The objective of the CAL FIRE County Coordinator Grant Program is to educate, encourage, and develop county-wide collaboration and coordination among various wildfire mitigation groups. The program provides counties with \$175,000 to hire a County Coordinator, whose roles are to:

- ❑ **Build a census of all active wildfire mitigation groups in their county.**
- ❑ **Analyze gaps in county-wide wildfire resiliency and emergency preparedness and develop recommendations to fill these gaps.**
- ❑ **Develop mechanisms to improve outreach and coordination efforts.**

Since 2021, CFSC has funded 52 out of 58 counties in California to hire and/or place a County Coordinator in pursuit of county-wide wildfire practitioner collaboration. Click the map below to find your county's Coordinator.





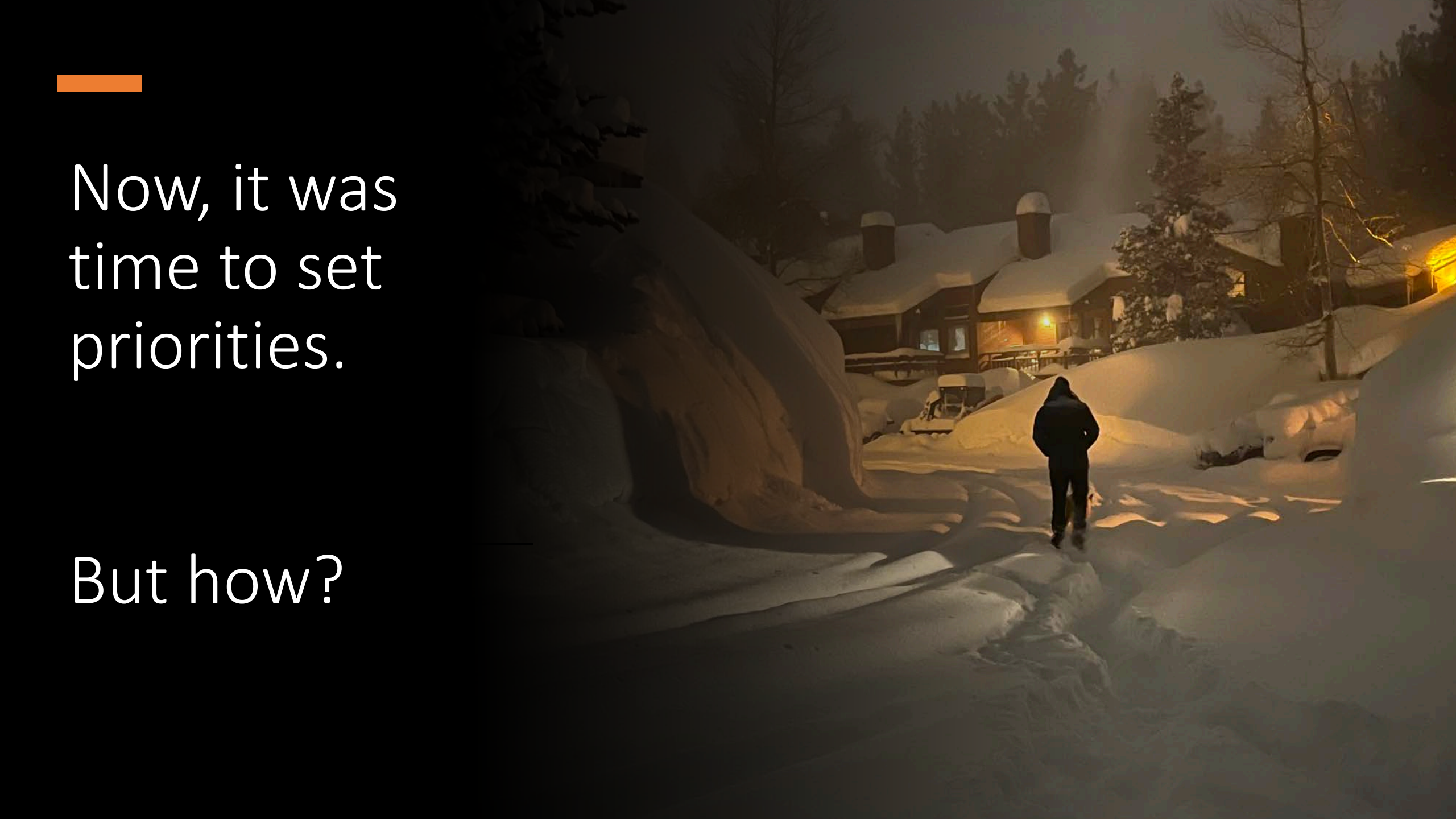
Here is a summary of the language from both documents:

- 1) Improve communication and coordination among local wildfire mitigation groups
- 2) Submit grant applications in partnership with wildfire mitigation groups
- 3) Create plan to improve County capacity to respond to wildfire events
- 4) Adhere more closely to/implement County's CWPP and General Plan
- 5) Strengthen partnerships with local Tribes
- 6) Add more functioning Fire Safe Councils; scale up; increase outreach, education
- 7) Improve coordination with fire departments operating within the county
- 8) Be a single point of contact for County for wildfire mitigation inquiries

I then noted how they indicated success would be measured:

- Number of relationships forged with tribes, fire safe councils, federal agencies, local governments, and more
- Number of fire safe councils functioning sustainably
- Number of planned improvements in County's ability to coordinate wildfire preparedness and response
- Number of activities undertaken of implement community wildfire protection plans
- Number of successful grants



A person in a dark winter jacket is walking away from the camera through a deep snowdrift at night. In the background, a large, multi-story building with snow-covered roofs and glowing windows is visible. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the warm interior lights of the building. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

Now, it was
time to set
priorities.

But how?

Not to mention the fact there was just one small problem hitting the County just as I was set to double down on calls and interviews...





Yes. That.

The winter of 2023 was underway.

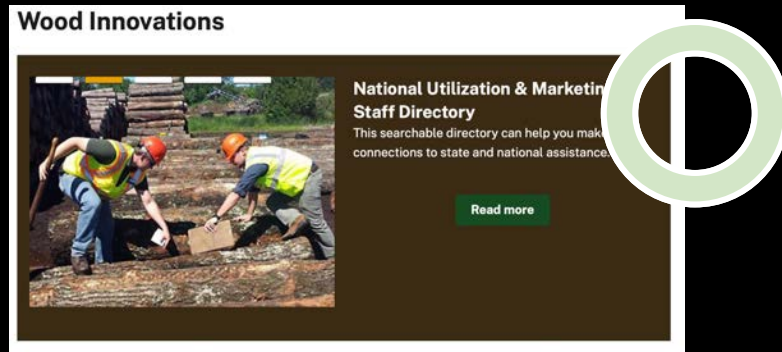
With every local fire chief, every fire-related first responder, every community member, every federal, state and local agency, group or organization almost literally buried under multiple feet of snow the first three months of 2023, few people had extra time to talk about wildfire.

So, I changed tactics.



Priority 1: Grants

- With the first round of state and federal grants approaching and locals swamped, it seemed a good time to try to get some wildfire resiliency money moving into the county.





By March 23, we had submitted two wildfire resiliency grants:

In partnership with Whitebark Institute, Ormat Technologies, the Mammoth Lakes Fire Protection District and the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (and with the support of many other organizations supplying Letters of Support), we applied for:

- A \$600,000 USDA Forest Service 2023 ‘Wood Innovations’ grant entitled ‘The Missing Link,’ which referred to the need for a locally-sited bioenergy facility.

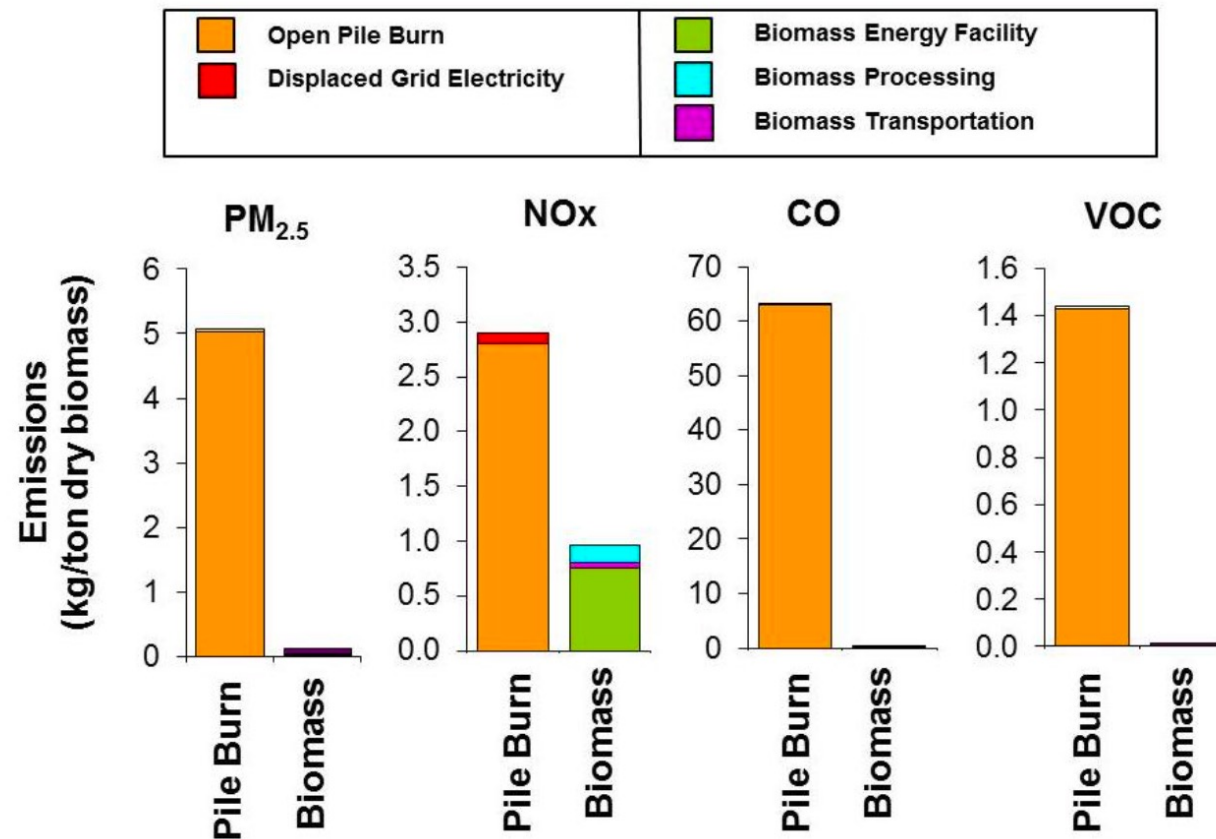
In partnership with Inyo County, we applied for:

- A CalFire 2023 Wildfire Prevention Grants Program grant to fund: wildfire mitigation/preparedness/home hardening education; some of the Wildfire Coordinator position; and a ‘mobile tool trailer’ program that would provide defensible space equipment to the region, such as chippers, handtools, etc.

In April, we received notice the USDA Forest Service Wood Innovations grant was funded!

- A contract to do the pre-engineering/pre-development work for a bioenergy facility will go before the Board this winter. The proposed site for the facility is on the west edge of the Ormat property east of Mammoth Lakes.
- As required by the Forest Service, the first quarter Progress Report was submitted on October 30.

Comparison of emissions from open pile burning and biomass energy (adapted from Springsteen et al. (2011) and (2015)).



The CalFire grant was not funded but...

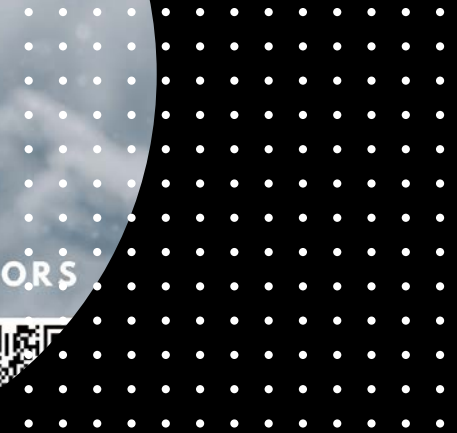
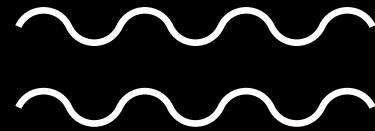
because of our interest in the concept of using mobile tool trailers for community defensible space projects, the California Fire Safe Council chose Mono County as one of three counties in the state to receive a non-competitive grant for a trailer under the CAL OES LISTOS trailer grant program, complete with the READYMono logo!

The trailer, educational and outreach materials and a \$5,000 stipend was delivered to Bridgeport in October.



The trailer logo and graphics are now the basis for a new county emergency preparedness campaign.

The winter preparedness portion of the campaign kicks off this month.



Priority 2: Creating Wildfire Adapted Communities

As the 2023 grant deadlines receded and the snow continued to fall, understanding Mono County's Fire Safe Councils and protecting local communities from wildfire emerged as a second high priority.

I attended my first Home Hardening Workshop and Field Tour in Bishop in January.

It was hosted by the Inyo County Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator, who had been hired in October under the same CalFire Wildfire Coordinator grant program.



Home Hardening Workshops

- Bishop, January 25
- Mammoth Lakes, June 13
- Crowley Lake, June 14
- Lee Vining, Sept. 26
- Bridgeport, Sept. 27



Mono County also co-sponsored the first, annual 'Wildfire Resiliency Week' with Whitebark Institute and Inyo County in June.

WILDFIRE RESILIENCE workshops



WHITEBARK INSTITUTE

Cultivating Resilient Landscapes and Communities

 MONO COUNTY JUNE 2023	 INYO COUNTY JUNE 2023
---	---

11 SUN Science On-Tap Wildfire Trivia @ June Lake Brewing	15 THURS Wildfire Resilience Tour Bishop Paiute Tribe
12 MON Lunch & Learn Contractors/Landscapers Working Toward Resilience	15 THURS Science On-Tap Wildfire Trivia @ Mountain Rambler Brewery
12 MON Realtors & Home Assessors Wildfire Insurance for Home Sales Virtual Option Available for Both Counties	16 FRI Wildfire Resilience Tour Independence Communities
12 MON Fire-Adapted Presentation Virtual Option for Both Counties	16 FRI Happy Hour Contractors/Landscapers Working Toward Resilience
13 TUES HOA & House Dwellers Defensible Space Tours	Workshop Instructor- YANA VALACHOVIC <i>UC Forest Advisor, Humboldt - Del Norte County Director</i> Yana is a registered professional forester and scientist who is passionate about helping communities learn to live with wildfire. She will bring key insights into building and landscaping design strategies to improve wildfire resilience.*
14 WED Lunch & Learn Crowley Lake Community Resilience	 For event times and locations, visit www.whitebarkinstitute.org/copy-of-calender



Funding for this project provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Fire Prevention Program as part of the California Climate Investments Program.

At the same time, I was introduced to the Firewise USA program through my monthly CFSC Coordinator meetings

By now, I had spoken to all Mono County RPACS and Fire Safe Councils. It seemed clear that while FSCs have great value, the FSC model also had some shortcomings, based on the feedback I received.

We started to plan some Firewise Community workshops, combined them with a Home Hardening talk by Yana Valachovic.

REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS IN THE HOME IGNITION ZONE

- Red Dot = Immediate Zone**
- Orange Dot = Intermediate Zone**
- Green Dot = Extended Zone**

■ WHEN YOUR HOME IGNITION ZONE EXTENDS INTO NEIGHBORING PROPERTIES
You may find your home ignition zone overlaps into adjacent properties. To maximize the benefits of your work, it's extremely important to work collaboratively with neighbors to reduce your shared risk.

■ ON PARCELS OF LAND LARGER THAN THE 100' EXTENDED ZONE
Property owners with more than 100 feet of land that extends beyond the home should also consider additional actions up to 200 feet into the Extended Zone to provide additional benefits in protecting the home and outbuildings.

FIREWISE USA™
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS



The workshops were
co-sponsored by:

- Firewise USA
- UC Cooperative Extension
- Whitebark Institute
- California Fire Safe Council



Are you
READY
North County?

SEPTEMBER
Community Wildfire Workshops

9/26 - Lee Vining Community Center
9/27 - Bridgeport Memorial Hall

6-8pm

Yana Valachovic
Defensible Space
Home Hardening

Beth Burnam
FireWise USA
CA Fire Safe Council

EVENT DETAILS:
<https://tinyurl.com/44kp2yb9>

For more information contact:
Wendilyn Grasseschi
Wildfire Mitigation Coordinator
wgrasseschi@mono.ca.gov



We continue to add more communities pursuing Firewise designation.

The concept of Firewise Communities has been appealing to Mono County communities due to its simplicity, its national connections (grant funders like Firewise Communities), and the fact individuals in a Firewise Community can get a discount on wildfire insurance.

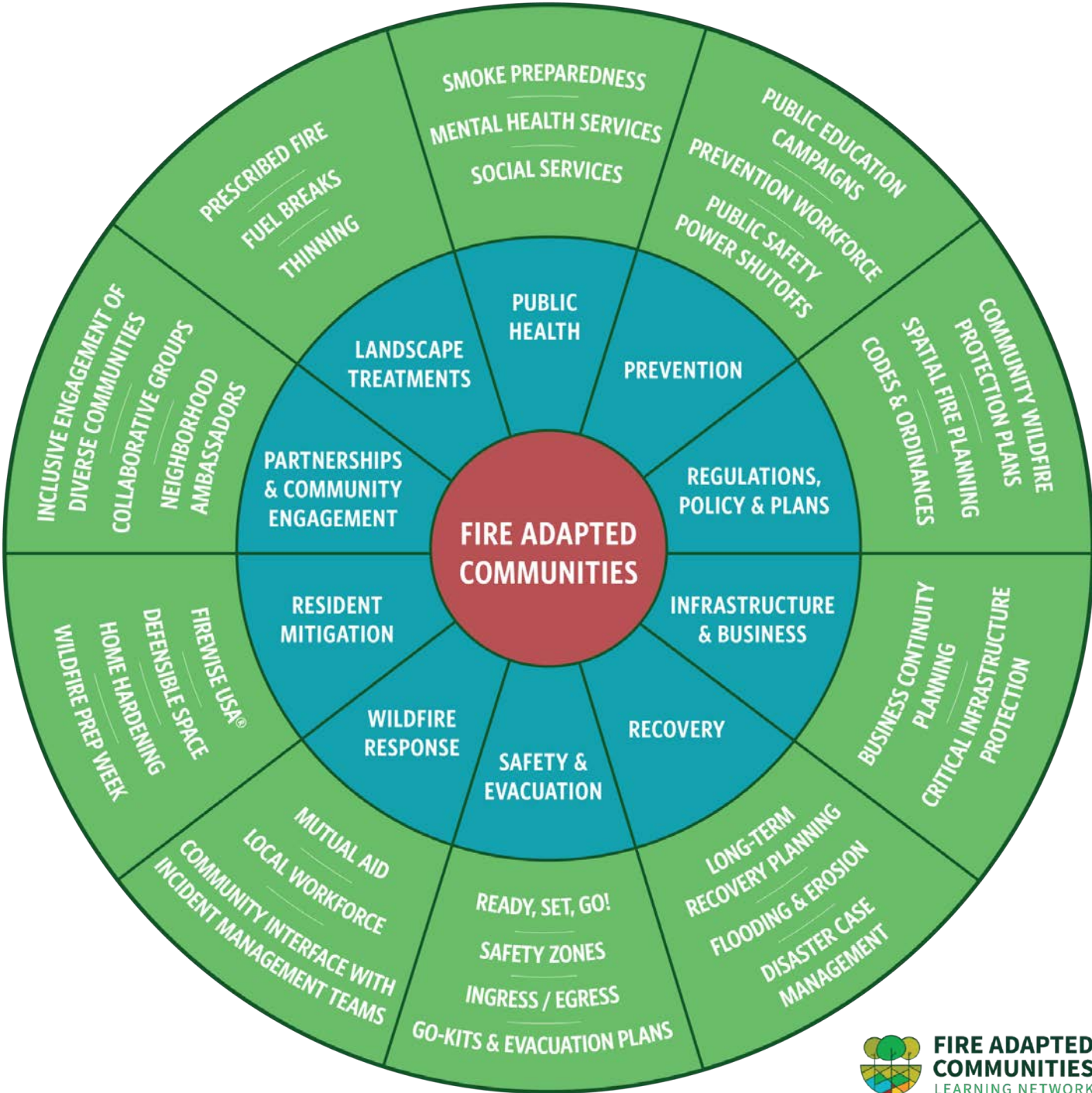
These communities are now actively pursuing the Firewise designation:

- Crowley Lake/Sunny Slopes/Aspen Springs
 - Mono Basin
 - Twin Lakes Estates
 - Swall Meadows/Paradise
 - Mammoth Lakes
-



Priority 3: A regional, capacity-building organization focused on wildfire resilience

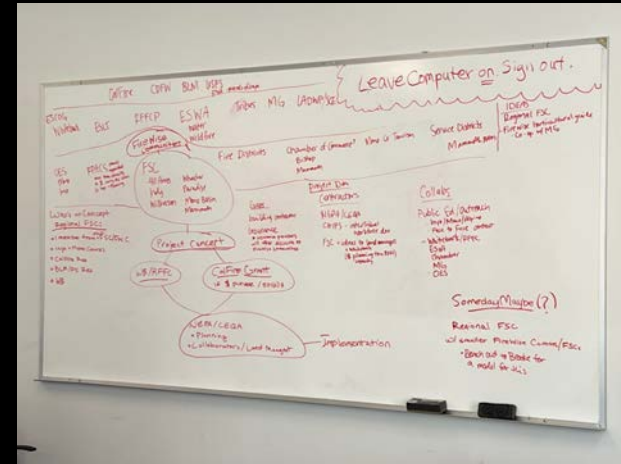
Conversations with local partners all pointed in the same direction: a need and desire for a regional, Eastern Sierra-wide organization that would provide support, expertise and fiscal capacity for our Fire Safe Councils, Firewise Communities, federal, state and local agencies and partners and more.



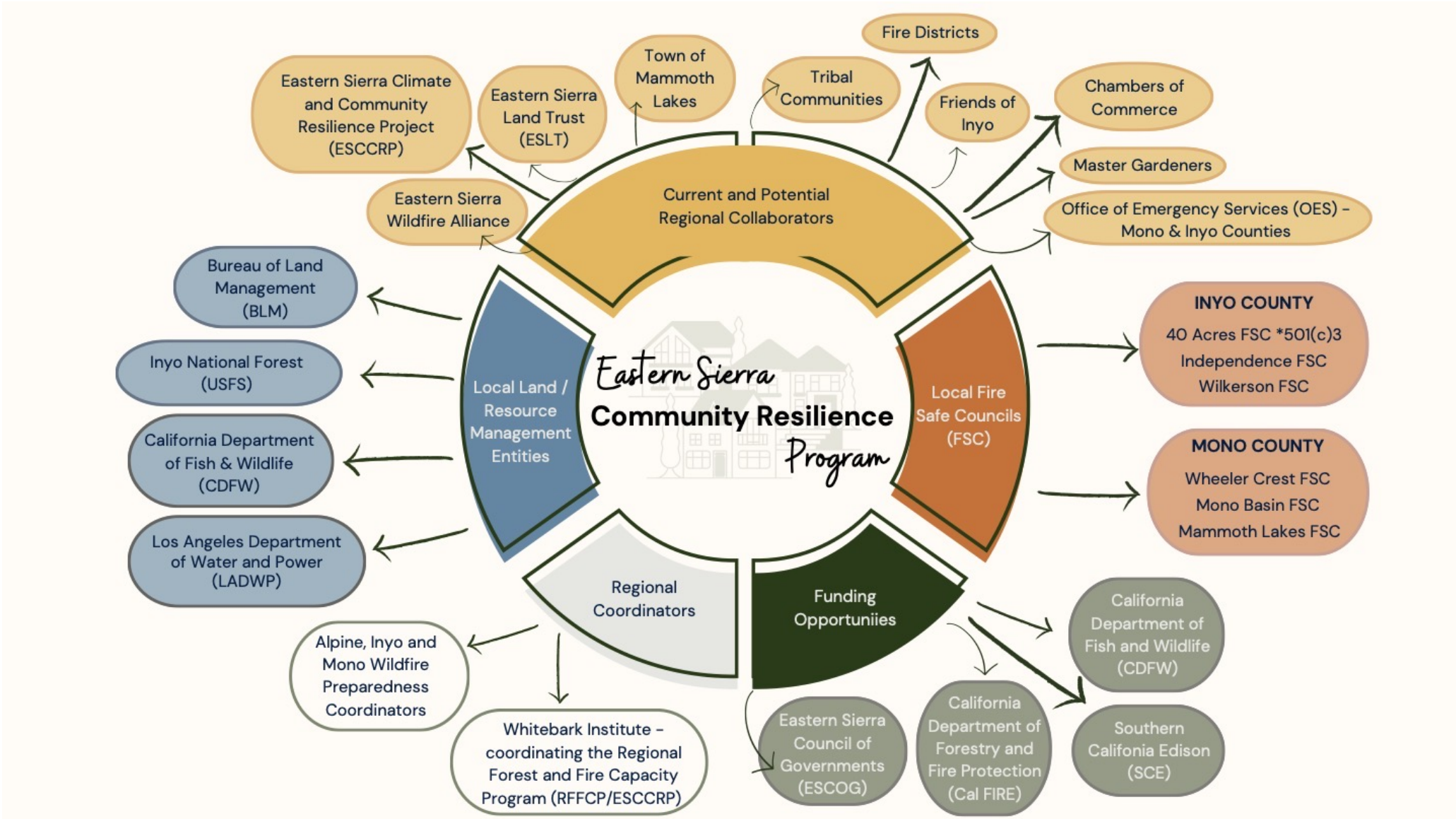
Warning!

Sausage-Making Underway

It starts with endless rounds of this:



Which becomes this:



The newly revitalized Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance is now under construction:

The graphic from the previous slide might look simple on paper, but it represents hundreds of hours of conversations, interviews, meetings, workshops and consultations with other County Coordinators, Resource Conservation Districts, Fire Safe Councils, Whitebark, partnering state and federal agencies such as the USFS, CALFIRE, SCE, LADWP, ESCOG, local non-profits and many more.

This process is not finished; it is ongoing.



What else am I working on now?

- 1) Providing leadership and administrative support for the 2023 Wood Innovations pre-planning and pre-engineering grant for a 3 MW bioenergy facility.
- 2) Supporting Whitebark Institute and local and federal agencies to implement the landscape-level fuels reduction project called the 'Donut Project' or the Eastern Sierra Communities and Climate Resiliency Project (ESCCRP).
- 3) Leveraging technology and data sharing to address capacity needs for planning and decision-making by working with Inyo County to establish an Eastern Sierra GIS Networking group focused on wildfire mitigation/preparedness at a regional, county and community level.
- 4) Continuing to assess and guide residents and communities in the process of creating FireWise Communities USA and or Fire Safe Councils, as appropriate.
- 5) Continuing to co-host with Whitebark Institute and other partners an annual 'Wildfire Resilience Week' for residents, second-home owners, property owners, real estate agents, contractors and other cooperators in various communities.



■ VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

1. HOME IGNITION ZONES

To increase your home's chance of surviving a wildfire, choose fire-resistant building materials and limit the amount of flammable vegetation in the three home ignition zones. The zones include the **Immediate Zone**: (0 to 5 feet around the house), the **Intermediate Zone** (5 to 30 feet), and the **Extended Zone** (30 to 100 feet).

2. LANDSCAPING AND MAINTENANCE

To reduce ember ignitions and fire spread, trim branches that overhang the home, porch, and deck and prune branches of large trees up to 6 to 10 feet (depending on their height) from the ground. Remove plants containing resins, oils, and waxes. Use crushed stone or gravel instead of flammable mulches in the **Immediate Zone** (0 to 5 feet around the house). Keep your landscape in good condition.

■ FIRE RESISTIVE CONSTRUCTION

3. ROOFING AND VENTS

Class A fire-rated roofing products, such as composite shingles, metal, concrete, and clay tiles, offer the best protection. Inspect shingles or roof tiles and replace or repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration. Box in eaves, but provide ventilation to prevent condensation and mildew. Roof and attic vents should be screened to prevent ember entry.

4. DECKS AND PORCHES

Never store flammable materials underneath decks or porches. Remove dead vegetation and debris from under decks and porches and between deck board joints.

5. SIDING AND WINDOWS

Embers can collect in small nooks and crannies and ignite combustible materials; radiant heat from flames can crack windows. Use fire-resistant siding such as brick, fiber-cement, plaster, or stucco, and use dual-pane tempered glass windows.

■ BE PREPARED

6. EMERGENCY RESPONDER ACCESS

Ensure your home and neighborhood have legible and clearly marked street names and numbers. Driveways should be at least 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet for emergency vehicle access.

- Develop, discuss, and practice an emergency action plan with everyone in your home. Include details for handling pets, large animals, and livestock.
- Know two ways out of your neighborhood and have a predesignated meeting place.
- Always evacuate if you feel it's unsafe to stay—don't wait to receive an emergency notification if you feel threatened from the fire.
- Conduct an annual insurance policy checkup to adjust for local building costs, codes, and new renovations.
- Create or update a home inventory to help settle claims faster.



TALK TO YOUR LOCAL FORESTRY AGENCY OR FIRE DEPARTMENT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SPECIFIC WILDFIRE RISK WHERE YOU LIVE.



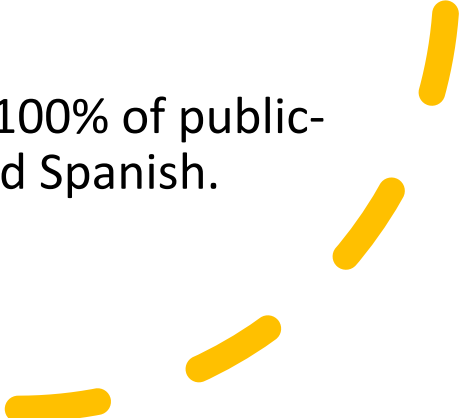
FIREWISE USA
RESIDENTS REDUCING WILDFIRE RISKS

VISIT [FIREWISE.ORG](https://www.firewise.org) FOR MORE DETAILS

Firewise® is a program of the National Fire Protection Association. This publication was produced in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service, US Department of the Interior, and the National Association of State Foresters. NFPA is an equal opportunity provider. Firewise® and Firewise USA® are registered trademarks of the National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA 02269.

The Long Run: Where do we want to be in five years?

Some ideas:

- 1) 'Key Contacts' Database:** Establish a Key Contacts database by Spring 2024, ensuring it is maintained in real-time and verified and updated quarterly.
 - 2) E-Newsletter:** Launch an e-newsletter by Spring 2024 and distribute it quarterly.
 - 3) Annual Stakeholder Convening:** Host a first annual convening of stakeholders in Spring 2024, with a continued annual occurrence.
 - 4) Community Events and Workshops:** Organize eight quarterly community events and conduct two annual community workshops per year, starting in Spring 2024. Half of these events will be tailored to serve vulnerable populations.
 - 5) Multilingual Public Information:** Ensure that 100% of public-facing information is available in both English and Spanish.
- 




Some more ideas:

6) Project Pipeline: Develop a 'Project Pipeline' consisting of three multi-jurisdictional projects, with the first project identified by Summer 2024, the second by Summer 2026, and the third by Summer 2028.

7) Operational Plan (OP): Create a detailed Operational Plan (OP) by Spring 2025, updated annually.

8) Centralized GIS Data Hub: Establish the centralized GIS Data Hub beginning in Fall 2025, with continuous evolution based on user feedback.

9) Project Tracking Dashboard: Create the project tracking dashboard to be hosted on the Ready Mono and Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance websites by Spring 2027.





And some
more:

10) Wildfire Coordinator Training: Ensure the Mono Wildfire Coordinator attends at least one GIS or leadership training per year.

11) Incorporate Paiute Translation: Include Paiute translation in at least one outreach/education campaign per year through partnership with the Owens Valley Career Development Center..

12) Firewise USA Communities: Establish at least 10 Communities or community-developed yearly mitigation items by the end of 2029.



All this said, these are just proposals based on my best assessment. What I really want to know now is...

- What do you think?
- Are we heading in the right direction?
- What am I missing?

READY Mono
READY MONO CA GOVT



BE DISASTER READY

- 1. Get alerts to know what to do.**
Sign up at ListosCalifornia.org/alerts.

- 2. Make a plan to protect your people**
Discuss how loved ones will get to safety and find each other.

- 3. Pack a Go Bag with things you need.**
Pack important documents now. Be ready to grab keys, wallet, phone, medication, and personal items.

- 4. Build a Stay Box for when you can't leave.**
Pack supplies for at least 3 days at home with no water or power: food, water, flashlight, and radio.

- 5. Help friends and neighbors get ready.**
Be ready to help those in need.




Questions?