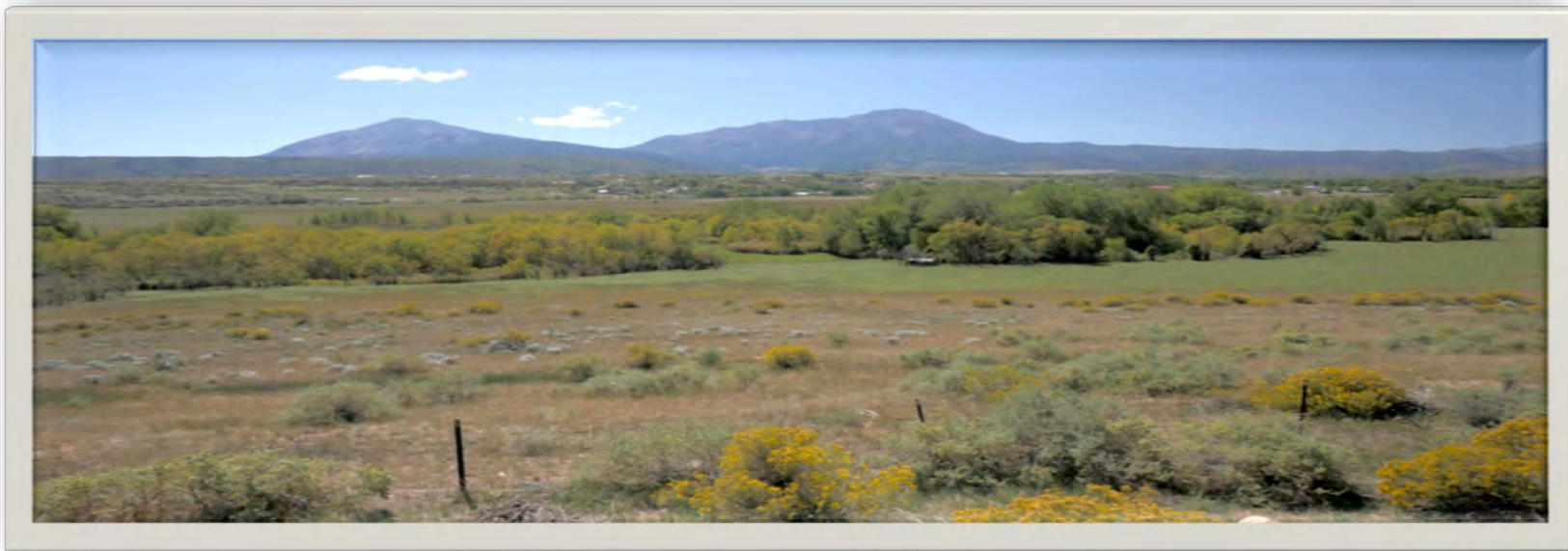


MITIGATING MOUNTAINS

A PARTNERSHIP SOLUTION TO WILDFIRE MITIGATION



Huerfano County, CO

Prepared by:
CMAT
USDA Forest Service
September 2018



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Spring Creek Fire started on June 27, 2018, burned approximately 108,000 acres, 141 structures, and cost \$35 million to suppress. Communities at high risk from wildfire are interspersed throughout the 1,593 square mile county. Large wildfires are not the historical norm for the area (over 87% of the fires since 1980 have stayed smaller than ten acres); however, the frequency and size of fires has increased in recent years.

Vegetation types range from grassland, pinon and juniper forests to dense spruce-fir vegetation types at higher elevations. Significant insect activity has impacted a large area of the forest in the higher elevations of the county.

Huerfano County and the Pike-San Isabel National Forest and Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands (PSICC) requested a Community Mitigation Assistance Team (CMAT) to work with local partners and communities within Huerfano County, taking advantage of the teachable moments from the recent 108,000-acre Spring Creek Fire.

CMAT was asked to:

1. Provide recommendations on development of a county/local wildfire mitigation partnership to include local cross-jurisdictional partners representing the public and private sector.
2. Review existing mitigation programs, plans and activities and provide analysis and recommendations intended to increase the effectiveness of those programs.
3. Provide Best Mitigation Practices workshops or discussions to advance sustainable mitigation opportunities.

4. Provide follow-up outcome tracking regarding CMAT impacts at three, six and nine-month intervals.

A variety of activities, from document review to workshops and one-on-one interviews, were used by CMAT to solicit input from agency representatives and community members and inform our recommendations.

The Team found numerous wildland fire mitigation planning documents were completed, a significant amount of completed mitigation, and innovative programs like the LEAP firewood distribution program. What seemed to be missing were cross-boundary connections and larger countywide treatments. Bringing together agency partners and residents to work collaboratively through a partnership is the logical next step for the county, and this became the focus of the Team's recommendations.

This report summarizes our findings, provides CMAT's Guiding Principles for mitigation practices, recommendations for creating a wildfire mitigation partnership, Huerfano County specific Best Mitigation Practices and includes two appendices, Appendix A - guidance on developing a partnership, Appendix B – an action plan that calls out direct tasks and responsibilities.

We believe these practices can help create an effective partnership that will promote sustainable mitigation actions, reduce negative effects from wildfire and create a better-prepared and more resilient community.

CMAT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Consider these guiding principles when developing a wildfire mitigation strategy and the projects that comprise it; they will make your efforts more effective. These guiding principles apply to mitigation efforts across the board in every community.

Be strategic- Focus on high-risk areas first. Be strategic by doing larger landscape scale fuel treatments and helping clusters of homes reduce risk. Scattered smaller treatments are not as effective.

No boundaries - Wildfires do not stop at jurisdictional or property boundaries. Link fuel reduction and defensible space projects to benefit cross-boundary areas. Engage with other neighborhoods and other jurisdictions to accomplish work on adjoining properties.



Work together - A group of people who share the same goals can get more done together than separately. They plan together, piggyback on strengths, share resources, staff, and the work. A partnership is more likely to get supporting funding. Collaboratively planning, implementing, sharing successes and lessons learned is an essential first step in building a common vision and gaining broad community support.

Face-to-face engagement - Sharing with residents is best done face-to-face through a home assessment and conversations about the realities of living in a wildfire-prone environment. Often this discussion has to take place many times before someone takes action.

Employ messaging wisely - Messaging will help raise awareness of wildfire risk and share successes, and messaging alone does not result in mitigation on the ground. That takes face-to-face engagement over time. Brochures, websites, blogs, and other social media are tools to share information and should not replace the critical face-to-face engagement that leads to action. A brochure that illustrates defensible space can be a tool during a one-on-one discussion. Only handing out brochures at an event, leaving door hangers, or placing a news release in the local paper asking folks to create defensible space has little value or lasting effects.

CMAT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Stretch project funds - Require homeowners to cover (either in cash or sweat equity) half the cost of a mitigation project. This investment empowers the homeowner to take responsibility for what's theirs and makes them more likely to maintain their project over time. Always engage local and regional partners that have something to lose or gain; these individuals and businesses may have financial resources to contribute.

Promote home hardening and defensible space - Having homeowners prepare their yard and structure for wildfire is the most important thing they can do to avoid loss, and is always where work should begin.

Invest most of your time and resources on risk reduction actions - Meetings, recognition programs, news releases, or going to events do not accomplish mitigation. Respect everyone's time. Do not hold additional meetings if wildfire mitigation discussions can be consolidated into existing forums. Remember, many hands make light work. Make meetings short and strategic. Spend time reducing risk on the ground. Ensure tasks and initiatives are clear at the end of each meeting and are moving the partnership forward.

Help vulnerable populations - Provide mitigation assistance for low-income, elderly, and disabled residents in high and medium risk areas who may be unable to accomplish this work on their own.

Celebrate success! - Sustained participation in any partnership will require frequent communication and recognition for volunteer contributions. Recognition does not have to be formal and can be as simple as a handwritten thank you. Recognition in the presence of peers and partners goes a long way towards retaining volunteers. Share accomplishments through media, presentations, yard signage, or site visits to build momentum for mitigation work. Stories, especially those from the perspective of the property owner, often have the biggest impact. Statistics are another excellent way to share success. Remember to incorporate these stories and statistics into personal interactions, speaking engagements, media opportunities and through social media.



DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP

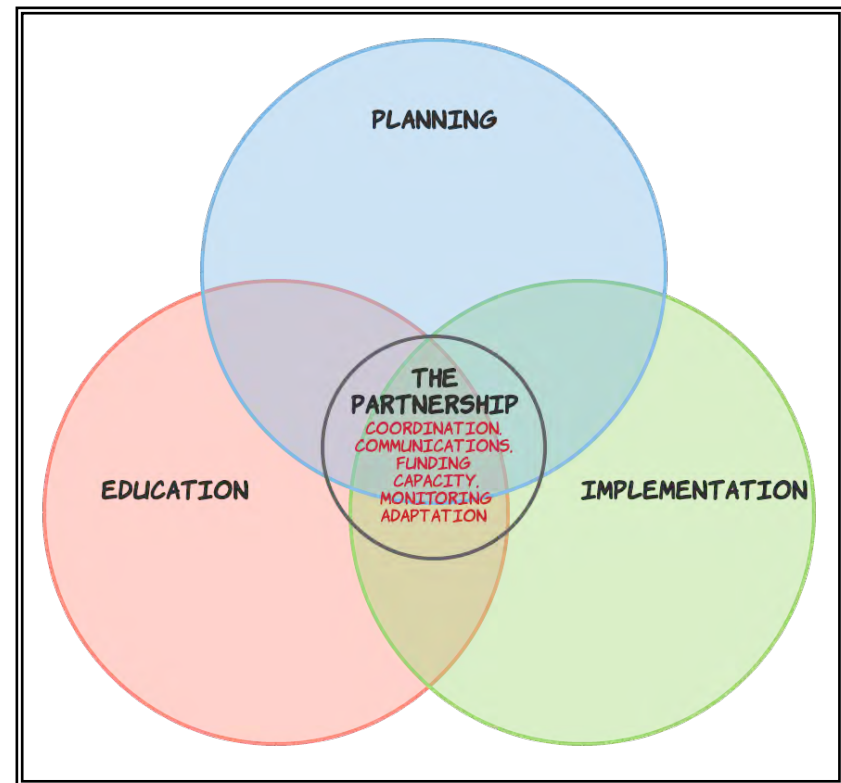
“Substantive and durable conservation success arises when community members from many backgrounds come together from day one to shape a common sense of place and develop a future vision grounded in respect for diversity of perspective. Such trust is the foundation for creating an open-source arena for dialogue and information exchange – a place where we work together in true collaboration to find common ground, a safe place where participants can change their perspectives, a platform that purposefully fosters a continual re-earning of mutual trust.” (M.Whitfield, speech for Network for Landscape Conservation, 2018).

To address challenges and barriers, collaborate and increase the pace of wildfire mitigation we have separated our recommendations (Mitigation Best Practices) into three broad categories. These three categories are – Education, Planning, and Implementation – as illustrated in the Venn diagram.

Our findings and best practices are organized by these categories, with the partnership as the foundation to success. A partnership would bring these three program areas together in a cohesive manner and would be responsible for the more administrative such as, coordination, communications, funding, capacity, and adaptation.

Stakeholders that participated in the Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T) Workshop identified a need to develop a mitigation partnership for a wide variety of reasons including: securing and managing funding, establishing communication channels with partners and community members, determining fuels mitigation priorities, and

increasing awareness and education. There was some mention of coalescing Firewise USA communities and Homeowner Associations (HOA)/ Property Owner Associations (POAs) into a group, and also mention of a desire for a multi-county organization; however, a level of scale for the partnership had not been formally identified.



DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP

Identify the Need - Make sure there is a common understanding and agreement of the wildfire risk and need.

Be inclusive - It is important at the initial phase of a collaborative's development, that you invite anyone that has an interest. The initial participation levels will likely wane as the group refines their purpose; however, new people will also join as progress is made. Invite people and organizations that have an interest, are willing to help or who are essential to the success of the partnership. When developing a wildfire mitigation partnership, consider including the following:

- Fire Departments
- City, county, state officials
- State forestry officials
- Friends groups
- Local influencers
- Contractors
- Forest product industry
- Subject matter experts
- Research
- Universities
- Community members
- Volunteer resource groups (Scouts, Rotary, faith based, etc.)
- Retired natural resource professionals
- Congressional representatives

- Federal officials
- Homeowners – Individuals and HOAs
- Utilities and water providers
- Transportation – roads, railroads
- Insurance companies
- Business owners
- Planning and zoning officials
- Non-governmental organizations
- Land Trusts

Developing a partnership is no easy task, but the benefits far outweigh the challenges. By committing to the development of a county partnership you will be better aligned to increase outputs and leverage resources. Partnership programs and projects have a higher likelihood of receiving funding, weathering staffing turnover and ensuring strategic implementation of landscape-scale efforts. The partnership will be responsible for all mitigation strategies, including:

1. Education
2. Planning
3. Implementation

DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP

Develop a partnership member's list - Create a partners contact list and identify what each entity or individual can help with, area of expertise, and skills.

Develop your mission and vision - What do you want your community's future to be? A common mission and vision will help provide a target for future goals and initiatives of the partnership.

Develop agreed-upon structure for the group - Review *Appendix A - Develop a Partnership*, which provides resources on different organizational structures, and tools to consider when developing your partnership and its programs.

Identify the goals and objectives of the partnership - Remember that goals are broad, general and often abstract. A goal is an overarching principle that guides decision-making. Objectives are narrow, precise, and concrete. Objectives are

specific, measurable steps that can be taken to meet the goal within a set timeframe.

Identify objectives and who will get them done - Set deadlines and hold people accountable.

Host partnership meetings frequently - Host meetings at regular times and at a location that will allow the greatest participation possible. The group should discuss plans and progress as well as provide a learning opportunity for future training and education opportunities. (i.e. cost-share program, fire ecology, changes in agency authorities).


Review progress often and address challenges as a team - Success and failures must be addressed in a timely fashion. Ask for help when needed and share resources to overcome barriers.

Maintain the partnership - Set aside time at each meeting to review participation, goals and objectives, and make changes as needed.



Huerfano County Wildfire Mitigation Partners

MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

Findings - Education	Recommendations
<p>Engagement and understanding – In Huerfano County, seasonal residents make up a significantly large portion of the population, with over 24% of housing units being seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.¹ Several subdivisions within the county have over 85% of owners identified as seasonal. Numerous seasonal residents are actively engaged in mitigation activities, others are not. Working on new ways to reach out and engage these residents is a priority for many.</p> 	<p><i>Engaging residents starts with involving them and providing wildfire education, outreach and awareness. As new residents arrive and new community leaders step forward, share information about the area they live in, the resources available and their responsibility as a member of the Huerfano Community.</i></p> <p>Train community members - Train community members to undertake home assessments, increase resident engagement and plan and coordinate projects. Fire department members could be used to provide home assessment training. Use the Fire Adapted Communities (FAC) Neighborhood Ambassador Program to increase engagement with residents and develop ideas for mitigation programs.</p> <p>Share information - Using the partnership, allow time to share information about fuel treatments so all stakeholders are aware of when and where projects will occur. Use maps to display “who, what, when, where, and how” information about work.</p> <p>From the “Front Door to the Forest” - Make sure residents are aware of home hardening techniques. Homes more often burn from firebrands (embers) that are sent aloft, than direct flame contact. A fuel-mitigated property with pine needle clogged drains and firewood piles under the deck are just as big an issue as an unmitigated forest. Homeowners should always begin at the home and work towards the forest.</p>

¹ U.S Census Bureau.2010

MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

	<p>Host a workshop - Find out what residents want to learn or need a better understanding of, and offer a 2-8 hour workshop. A few examples include: Home Ignition Zone, Mitigation 101, Grant Writing 101, forest and fire ecology.</p> <p>Develop and lead mitigation tours - United States Forest Service - lead a tour to the Black Mountain prescribed burn. Firewise Leaders - Invite residents from other communities to visit your successful project areas. Discuss the challenges and solutions. When undertaking these tours, ensure that all community members are invited.</p> <p>Engage year round, seasonal, and absentee landowners - Use Facebook, e-mail distribution, media, inserts into annual tax bills, and/or utility bills to raise wildfire risk awareness and understanding of programs available. Remember that peer-to-peer, in-person engagement is the number one way to move people to act and messaging may have a limited impact if not followed up with a visit to reaffirm the information.</p> <p>Speak firmly about homeowner responsibility - Speak candidly about the realities of the limited capacity (both of time and funding) of the local resources. Wildfire mitigation is everyone's responsibility. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each homeowner to be prepared for emergencies and to mitigate wildfire risk on their property and within their community.</p>
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MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

	<p>Be honest about State and Federal agencies' authorities and ability to implement projects - Be clear about what, when, and where land management agencies can do something and explain the limitations and challenges in transparent ways. Consider members of the partnership as subject matter experts to assist and provide guidance to be shared with other members.</p> <p>Do not invest time recreating the wheel - Use the existing outreach tools that are in place to share wildfire mitigation information. Ready, Set, Go! and Firewise are examples of information that can be used to provide wildfire information to residents. The Colorado State Forest Service also has some outstanding resources for homeowners. Use these outreach tools as a supplement to the more valuable one-on-one interactions.</p> <p>Share successes - Document success stories from the Spring Creek Fire - do this immediately. Success stories don't have to be just about homes that were saved in a wildfire. As your partnership grows, you will likely have stories of partners coming together on a project with a positive outcome. Document and share these stories far and wide.</p>
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MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

Findings - Planning	Recommendations
<p>Funding - The County has received several grants over the past few years from state and federal governmental agencies. Funding came from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, and the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS). The County also uses Secure Rural Schools Act Title III funding for wildfire mitigation activities. Some grant funds unfortunately have been returned due to a perceived lack of interest from residents. County officials indicated that they might have the capacity to manage grant funds; however, they expressed concern about their capacity to research and apply for grants or to provide for the project management.</p>	<p>Collaboratively develop grant applications and projects - Work directly with partners to develop collaborative grant applications. Review the CSFS Grants Database @ https://csfs.colostate.edu/funding-assistance/ frequently as due dates for grants fluctuate from year to year and new opportunities become available.</p> <p>Collaboratively develop - <i>CSFS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant</i> - While the grant is due in very short fashion (Oct 3, 2018), this opportunity could act as a first step in working together on a partnership-funding proposal.</p> <p>Include indirect costs on grants - Many grants allow for up to a 10% indirect fee for grant management to be included. This indirect fee can mean the difference between having the capacity to manage a grant, or not.</p> <p>Continue to use Secure Rural Schools Title III funding to support your wildfire mitigation program - Ensure funds are used to support a staff person and/or other mitigation needs based upon the partnership and identified priorities.</p> <p>Consider applying for Secure Rural Schools Title II funding - Work with the USFS and the local Resource Advisory Council to secure funding for fuels mitigation treatments. Your proposal is most likely to be successful for a project near National Forest lands.</p>

MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

Track all volunteer hours - Whether it's partnership members attending a meeting or workshop or residents doing mitigation work, track all volunteer hours for use as match on grant applications. With a value close \$25.00/hr., your in-kind match can add up quickly! Sometimes grant applications specify the dollar amount or the types of activities you can allow for volunteer time so read each grant carefully.

Increase diverse funding - Funding availability must be predicated on developing a pipeline of interested landowners or community projects. Seek funding opportunities from non-traditional organizations. These organizations range from: local businesses, the insurance sector, private foundations, utility companies, transportation companies, and national organizations.

Continue to provide cost-share programs - When available, allow residents to provide in-kind (sweat) equity to grants, but also emphasize the need for cash match to programs. Requiring a financial contribution allows program outcomes to be increased.

Encourage residents to complete work without grant funding - Receiving a grant should be considered a bonus. Simply rolling up your sleeves, getting out in the yard, and doing work over the span of several weekends can result in a lot of mitigation or mitigation maintenance. Make residents aware of the [Colorado Wildfire Mitigation Income Tax Subtraction](#).

MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

Codes and Ordinances - In 2017, the Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire program (CPAW) was engaged to review Huerfano County planning documents and provide recommendations to “address risk through improved land use planning strategies.” Based on this recommendation, the County has drafted a Wildland-Urban Interface Code, however, that effort has been put on hold until post-fire flooding issues have diminished. Concern was expressed about the capacity of the County to enforce codes and ordinances. Stakeholders noted that even at the Home Owners Association (HOA) level, the ability to enforce covenants is limited.

Adopt a County-wide WUI Code with realistic expectations - Within Huerfano County, Wildland-Urban Interface codes and ordinances can be installed within elements of the building code regulations requiring that new home construction incorporate home hardening features and home-hardened construction. Codes and ordinances are only a part of the mitigation strategy and only work if enforcement is active and properly completed.

Update conflicting Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) to allow Wildfire Mitigation

Activities - Revise existing CC&Rs to allow for removal of fuels to reduce wildfire risk. In many cases, homeowner and property owner association regulations and requirements can be specific and unique to the community, and more stringent than County requirements. To be successful, these CC&Rs must be enforced.

Passed in June 2005, Senate Bill 89 applies to Colorado’s common interest communities, and has a section regarding wildfire mitigation that will help residents whose HOA covenants are very restrictive in terms of tree removal. The bill states that “An association may not prohibit owners from removing vegetation around their homes for fire mitigation purposes as long as the removal complies with a written defensible space plan” and the plan was written by the CSFS, local fire department or a an individual certified by the local government to write such plans.

MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

Assessments and Prioritization - Huerfano County has an amazing number of high quality assessments and plans in place. An interest was shown in developing additional Community Wildfire Protections Plans and watershed assessments.

Use existing plans and assessments - Before investing funding or resources into new plans, use what you have. If funding becomes available to develop additional watershed assessments and Community Wildfire Protection Plans, consider working on them, but do not spend all of your time and money on this.

Prioritize the work - Start at the highest risk areas first. Use existing plans to help you prioritize work efforts. For example: Focus efforts to work across all lands in the Cuchara watershed. This area has been identified as an essential watershed providing water to Cuchara, La Veta, and Walsenburg. Prioritizing work does not mean that efforts in other areas should stop.

Mapping - Consolidate all treatment information, both completed and proposed on state, private and federal lands. Share widely as information may help other members of the partnership and can be used for multiple purposes ranging from education to future grant opportunities. GPS all future treatments on private lands (at least those through cost-share programs) and map on a community scale.

Home wildfire risk assessments - Completing home wildfire risk evaluations alone will not lead to mitigation.

- Develop a weighted risk ranking criteria for all home assessments. Understanding a parcel's risk as compared to other lots will help to prioritize treatments.

MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep a copy of the assessment for each individual property and use these documents for planning and follow-up. Handing a hard copy assessment to an owner does not provide a mechanism to hold residents accountable. Consider using an electronic assessment form that can be emailed to residents and accessible into the future.• Collect Geographic Information System (GIS) data for all assessments completed. Color code on a map the relative risk for each parcel.
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MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

Findings - Implementation	Recommendations
<p>Capacity - The county is comprised of passionate and engaged residents, leaders, and land managers. A sense of community runs deep amongst all residents, full-time and seasonal, and this resonates throughout the fabric of the community.</p> <p>A need exists to share the responsibility and increase the number of people who are carrying the load. Due to the recent fire activity, the County does not have as much capacity as in the past to maintain the existing mitigation program, as key staff are now fully engaged in the post-fire recovery efforts.</p>	<p>Engage existing resources to the fullest extent – Trained community members must help to complete all mitigation activities. These individuals can help to increase resident engagement, plan, coordinate and implement projects. Use subject matter experts and experienced partners to help make sound decisions.</p> <p>Utilize existing programs to increase activity - Increase opportunities to expand programs such as the Universal Alliance for Communities - Leaf and Limb Program to complete forestry projects, and remove slash and fuel wood.</p> <p>Engage volunteers for all activities – Capitalize on the amazing breadth of knowledge and skills available within both your year-round and seasonal residents. AmeriCorps, church groups, Scouts, service clubs and community groups can provide support to increase mitigation. Some of these groups may also be a source of grant funding for community projects.</p> <p>Use volunteer service organizations wisely - When working with no or low cost resources ensure that they work in areas where work could not otherwise be completed. Engage these types of organizations to complete projects for elderly, disabled or individuals otherwise unable to support the work. Using no or low cost groups in this way ensures that the private contractor base is not unfairly impacted.</p>

MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

Fuels and Forestry - According to the Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal, CO-WRAP, over 975,000 acres within Huerfano County are categorized as moderate to extreme with regard to flame lengths. The USFS, Huerfano County, Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) CSFS and residents have completed numerous defensible space, forest restoration, shaded fuel break, and prescribed fire projects throughout the county. A need exists to increase the pace and scale of treatments across Huerfano County on all lands.

Support the proposed USFS Cuchara forestry project - The partnership must get behind this proposed project. Broad collaborative support directed at USFS and State leadership may facilitate this project at a quicker pace.

Cuchara Project

The primary goal of the proposed Cuchara Vegetation Management Project is to reduce the potential for large-scale high severity fires adjacent to subdivisions, private lands, infrastructure, and other high value areas, and to address the increased fuel loads due to the insect and disease that has occurred in the area. In combination with the previous large fire (Spring Creek, 2018), the project also works toward creating a large-scale resilient landscape in the critical Cuchara watershed.

Increase the use of fire as a tool - Prescribed fire, wildfire in the right place at the right time, and pile burning are essential components of forest and fuels management. Community members and leaders must support the use of fire as a viable risk reduction tool.

MITIGATION BEST PRACTICES

The common ladder fuel (Gambel Oak) grows rapidly posing significant maintenance challenges. Limited maintenance has occurred on past projects.

Slash Management poses a significant challenge for residents.

Require mitigation maintenance - Require that residents complete home hardening activities as a condition of providing cost-share funding.

Develop slash disposal sites and resources - Work directly with programs such as the Universal Alliance of Communities, Inc., Leaf and Limb Program and the LEAP Program, and other entrepreneurs to further develop the slash and mulch program.

- Work with Federal or State partners to identify a slash site location between La Veta and Cuchcara.
- Advertise the existing slash collection facility located within Walsenburg. Develop additional slash sites within POA and HOA areas, if possible.

Certified Burner Class - Encourage interested residents and mitigation contractors to attend this [3-day class](#) that teaches how to safely conduct burning of slash piles. The next scheduled class is January 7-9, 2019 in Colorado Springs at the [Colorado Wildland Fire and Incident Management Academy](#).

The effectiveness and success of any partnership requires strong support and participation. Momentum increases when the partnership is primed to take advantage of the moment of heightened awareness that exists after a large fire, such as the Spring Creek Fire. Through a collaborative partnership, continued and ongoing successes can occur in Huerfano County. As many hands make light work, the potential exists for this partnership to make a lasting and sustainable impact on the community and future events that may occur. CMAT really enjoyed the opportunity to come and work with your community and we wish you great success in your journey.

Over the next year, CMAT will contact you at 3, 6, and 9-month intervals to check in on your progress with partnership and fire mitigation efforts in Huerfano County.

THANK YOU

Many thanks to the following individuals for their participation and input during the CMAT Workshops and in-person interviews:

*Al Tucker - Arkansas Basin Roundtable
Ed Skerjanec - BLM
Ron Jameson - Chaparral Construction
Adam Moore and Derek Sokoloski - Colorado State Forest Service
Gerald Cisneros, Ray Garcia and Max Vezzani - Huerfano County Commissioners
Margaret and Phillip Light - Cuchara Firewise
Joe Malone and Doug Fry - Majors Ranch Firewise
Mike Worley - Spanish Peaks Firewise
Shelby Jones, Janna Laudato and Sandy Magruder - Cuchara West Firewise
Jim Littlefield - Pandero Firewise and CVFAD Board President
Charles Chauvin - Pinehaven HOA Firewise
John Robinson - Spanish Peaks Firewise
Steven Keppers, and Greg Woods - Tres Valles West Firewise
Sandy White - HC Water Conservancy District, HCPC
Paul Branson, John Galusha, Vicki Koepsel, and Larry Sanders - Huerfano County
David DeTray - La Veta Fire Protection District
Wes Burton, and Dennis Page - USFS-San Carlos Ranger District
Bill King - USFS-PSICC NF
Jacque Sikes, and Darryl Stewart - San Isabel Electric Association, Inc.
Frank Kirkpatrick, Tom Coseno - Universal Alliance of Communities, Inc.
Manuel Molles - University of New Mexico (retired)*

THE TEAM

The Community Mitigation Assistance Team (CMAT) is sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service to assist communities impacted by wildfire. CMATs are comprised of public and private wildland-urban interface (WUI) mitigation professionals from across the country. The Team provides technical and strategic mitigation support to build and strengthen sustainable mitigation programs. The team mentors organizations, helps to identify and provide tools, advises on the highest priorities for risk reduction, and shares best management practices for mitigation.

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[Community Toolbox](https://tinyurl.com/ycntfc5b)
<https://tinyurl.com/ycntfc5b>

The Community Toolbox contains this report and numerous resources that will help you increase mitigation in your area.

USDA National Forest Service CMAT
<https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/fire/cmat>



APPENDIX A – DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP

“Substantive and durable conservation success arises when community members from many backgrounds come together from day one to shape a common sense of place and develop a future vision grounded in respect for diversity of perspective. Such trust is the foundation for creating an open-source arena for dialogue and information exchange – a place where we work together in true collaboration to find common ground, a safe place where participants can change their perspectives, a platform that purposefully fosters a continual re-earning of mutual trust.” (*M. Whitfield, speech for Network for Landscape Conservation, 2018*).

Whitfield (2018) strongly believes several key elements as central to this approach, including:

- The full array of stakeholders should be invited to the discussion from day one (or as soon as we identify them). From there we will have to invest in our collective capacity to allow all sectors to continue to participate.
- We start by building trust that diverse values and perspectives will be respected and we will work together to discover common ground.
- We need to work across boundaries in an “All Lands and All Hands” approach.
- We need to develop and share science at appropriate scales that allow practitioners to define what conditions will be if we choose one vision over another, to help us understand the advantages or disadvantages of conservation strategies.
- We rely upon our investment in one another and our shared stewardship of nature to make the right choices for the landscape.

- Our goals will necessarily be holistic: social, cultural and ecological.
- We must stay the course; true collaboration is a long iterative process. We must nurture the collaborative.
- Results matter -- small successes keep people at the table. We should celebrate success.
- We have a much better chance of succeeding if we worry less about “Who” authored the success and more about Who gets to share in the outcomes.

First Meeting:

The first meeting of a coalition is important. If it's a high-energy, optimistic gathering that gets people excited, you're off to a good start. If it's depressed and negative, or just boring, it's a good bet that a lot of people won't come back. It's up to the core group - in what may be the last official task they undertake - to plan a meeting that will start the coalition off on the right foot.

General parameters of a partnership are included in this website

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-partnerships>

Steps to starting a partnership can be found on this website. You have the ingredients in place for starting a partnership. This website offers ways of inviting people to participate and addresses some of the common roadblocks to diverse opinions and ways to overcome that diversity.

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/promotion-strategies/start-a-coalition/main>

APPENDIX A – DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP

There are really two concerns here: the logistics of the meeting (where, when, how long, etc.) and the content of it. There are a number of possibilities for the content of the **first meeting on September 28, 2018, hosted by Jim Littlefield at the La Veta Fire Department**. Here are suggestions for the first agenda:

- Introductions all around. Everyone present should give a brief statement of who they are, the organization if any they're connected with, and the nature of their interest in the issue.
- Discuss the structure of the coalition. What kind of group will it be? how (if at all) will it be run? What kinds of things will it actually do? Is hiring staff a reasonable goal, either currently or eventually?
- Continue creating a common vision and agree on shared values about the direction of the coalition. This will lead to developing the vision and mission statements that will define the coalition and guide its work. Vision summarizes your coalition's dream for the future.
 - The vision should be: easy to communicate to potential new members, uplifting and inspiring, clearly communicating your hopes for your community, and a direct reflection of the perspective of the community it represents.
- Mission is a statement of what it is going to do and why.

- Use widely inclusive language to avoid limiting potential new members and strategies with which to bring about the vision. Use the headline you agreed to at the CMAT Best Practices Workshop as the starting place for your mission:

“Cooperative mitigation saves the summer for Huerfano County – from extinguishing trees to marking trees, Huerfano County spared disaster thanks to Wildland Fire Coalition’s Fine Work.”

- The words for the Vision are embedded in your headline above that was created during the CMAT Exercise. Include these words in your vision: *“Cooperative, Mitigation, Huerfano County, Coalition, Work.”*

Example vision statement: ***“Cooperatively mitigating fire risk in Huerfano County”***

Grant funding opportunities may be a direction this partnership wants to pursue. The most current available grant is the Colorado “Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant (FRWRRG).” Discuss opportunities, like the Colorado State Forest Service grant, and who will develop the various sections of the grant. **DO THIS COLLECTIVELY** as it will stand a greater chance to be funded if submitted by a partnership.

APPENDIX A – DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP

- Many grant opportunities require letters of support, the more beneficial impact single projects have on the partnership, and the more effective the grant application will be.
- It also will be critical to determine a fiscal sponsor, such as Huerfano County, a Fire Protection District, or other non-profits.

Discuss a procedure for forming an action plan. Again, this may result in an actual, or at least a preliminary, plan, or it may lead either to the appointment of a smaller group to draft a plan, or to the establishment of a procedure by which the larger group will generate a plan over a set period of time.

Identify stakeholders together. Continually ask the question who is not involved.

- **Suggestions:** fire department, fire commissioners, city and county officials, federal line officers, homeowners, local influencers, insurance companies, business owners, planning and zoning officials, NGOs, state forest officials, friends groups, volunteer resource groups (scouts, rotary) contractors, forest product industry, subject matter experts, research, universities, community members, retired agency people, local spark plugs, congressional representatives, etc.

Review the things to be done before the next meeting, and who has agreed to do them. As mentioned above, it's important that people leave the first meeting feeling that something has been accomplished. If there are tasks being

worked on, and specific results expected at the next meeting, even if those results are simply statements or preliminary plans to react to, coalition members will have that feeling and need to stay engaged and have target goals and commitments.

Schedule at least the next meeting. It may be possible to develop a regular meeting schedule at this first meeting, or it may make more sense to schedule only the next meeting and wait until the membership stabilizes and some other people join before creating a long-term schedule. **OFFER CONFERENCE CALLS** to include part time residents in all of the meetings. Keeping those that are not local will be critical in sustaining engagement when they do come back during the summer months. Decide if you want a seasoned facilitator to lead your meetings at least in the beginning and query the community for such a resource.

Include a learning opportunity at every meeting such as a field trip to the recently burned area to view the fire's impact on both mitigated and non-mitigated properties or a presentation from a subject matter expert. These learning opportunities should be generated from topics the group would like to learn more about.

And one final note:

“When we bring diverse perspectives together around a shared interest in sustaining a place that we call home, we can direct that power of community for tremendous benefit to nature and community at large regional scales. We succeed together.”
(Whitfield, 2018)

APPENDIX A – DEVELOPING A PARTNERSHIP

You have accomplished much and are off to a great start... maintain your passion and move forward to continued success!

Additional References:

How to start a nonprofit can be found on this website:

<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/how-start-nonprofit>

Additional Resources

<https://www.nationalforests.org/collaboration-resources/tools-search>

Forest Service Partnership Guide, updated from 2005

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/prc/tools-techniques/partnership/?cid=stelprdb5438298>

Colorado State Forest Service Website wildfire mitigation resources website

<https://csfs.colostate.edu/wildfire-mitigation/>

APPENDIX B - THE ACTION PLAN - MITIGATING MOUNTAINS - A PARTNERSHIP SOLUTION TO WILDFIRE MITIGATION

DEVELOP A HUERFANO COUNTY WILDFIRE MITIGATION PARTNERSHIP

ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE	LEAD
Develop an invite email and notification list to inform residents on the future partnership meeting (Use CMAT created contact list to start).	Send: September 21, 2018	Jim Littlefield & Partnership
Develop Agenda for Sept 28 meeting - Agenda must include: 1. Set parameters for the partnership; 2. Develop a vision for the group; 3. Project updates and success stories; 4. Grant application discussion and opportunities; 5. Identify new partners; 6. Set next meeting. Partners must support Jim Littlefield by being prepared to discuss everything noted above.	Meeting: September 28, 2018	Jim Littlefield & Partnership
Develop news release notifying the public of the formation of the Partnership.	October	Partnership

EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND OUTREACH

ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE	LEAD
Share project information in detail at the next Partnership meeting.	Sept 28, 2018	Universal Alliance of Communities, Inc., USFS
Develop a Neighborhood Ambassador program to help train and recruit new ambassadors within the county. (See Community Toolbox).	December - March	Firewise Leaders, County, Fire Departments
Share draft plans for Cuchara Vegetation Management Project and seek broad community support.	October 2018	USFS
Lead an educational tour to the Black Mountain Project.	Time during planned Activities within project area	USFS Partnership
Develop home assessment training on proper mitigation with Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS).	December - March	Partnership, CSFS
Work with the County to provide wildfire awareness information to be sent with annual tax bill.	December / January	Huerfano County, CSFS (Derek Sokoloski)
Share recent Spring Creek Fire success stories with local media and partners.	October 2018	Community leaders and Partnership members share pictures and stories with Media & community.
Develop assessment and assistance request form to connect residents with mitigation resources.	Ongoing	Fire Protection Districts
Plan and host a Community Wildfire Information Forum meeting with up to three guest speakers to discuss: (1) How to be prepared for the next wildfire (personal preparedness); (2) How to create defensible space and home hardening.	Ongoing	All Partners
Develop an email invitation and notification list to inform residents on the future partnership meeting.	Ongoing	All Partners

PLANNING

ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE	LEAD
Collaboratively develop CSFS Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant. Investigate the possibility for Universal Alliance for Communities, Inc to act as a fiscal host.	Discuss at Sept 28 meeting, Due October 3	Firewise Leaders, Partnership, (Frank Kirkpatrick)
Hold quarterly Land Manager & County Meeting to discuss proposed and planned projects and Plans.	December	USFS, CSFS, BLM, Huerfano County
Share upcoming funding opportunities widely.	Ongoing	Partnership
Utilize existing plans to prioritize cross-boundary projects.	January	Partnership
Seek San Isabel Rural Electric Company award to support development of partnership.	October 22, 2018	Ray Garcia, San Isabel Rural Electric Company (Darryl Stewart)
Discuss best mitigation practices that work within respective communities and share with partnership during winter meeting.	December / January	CSFS, USFS, Huerfano County

Complete mitigation assessments and develop wildfire risk assessment maps at parcel level to help specify target priority locations.	Ongoing	Firewise Leaders, Huerfano County GIS, Fire Departments
Provide guidance to POA /HOAs regarding CC&Rs and wildfire mitigation.	January 2019	(POA, HOA, Firewise Leaders)
Create or share in-kind tracking form for partnership.	Sept 28	Partnership
Adopt WUI Codes and Ordinances.	2019	Huerfano County, Partnership
IMPLEMENTATION		
ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE	LEAD
Work with federal and state partners to provide guidance on effective fuels reduction.	November 2018	USFS, CSFS, BLM, Huerfano County, Firewise Leaders
Coordinate with Universal Alliance of Communities, Inc. and Leaf and Limb Program to expand funding, awareness and impact of slash collection site and Biomass utilization opportunities.	November 2018	Commisioners, City of Walsenburg, Frank Kirkpatrick
Reach out to Americorps Vista program to develop application for Vista Support.	December 2018	Huerfano County
Coordinate with service organizations such as, Team Rubicon, to complete mitigation demonstration site in a highly visible area and where the need is great.	January 2019 - June 2019	Huerfano County
Solicit interest and if appropriate schedule a certified burner (RXB3) with Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC).	January - March	DFPC (Kirk Will), Fire Protection Districts, Huerfano County