



NACD's December 2019 U & C Webinar
presents

A Successful Community Wildfire Preparedness Program

Strategies & Lessons from Washington State

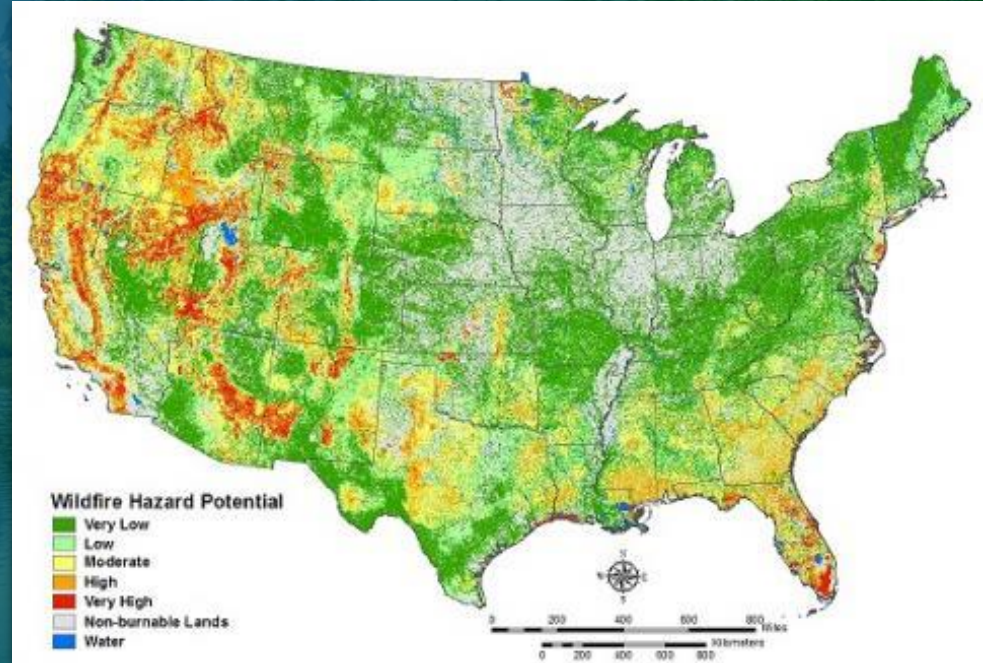
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Southeast Region, Washington Dept. of Natural Resources

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Northwest Region, Washington Dept. of Natural Resources

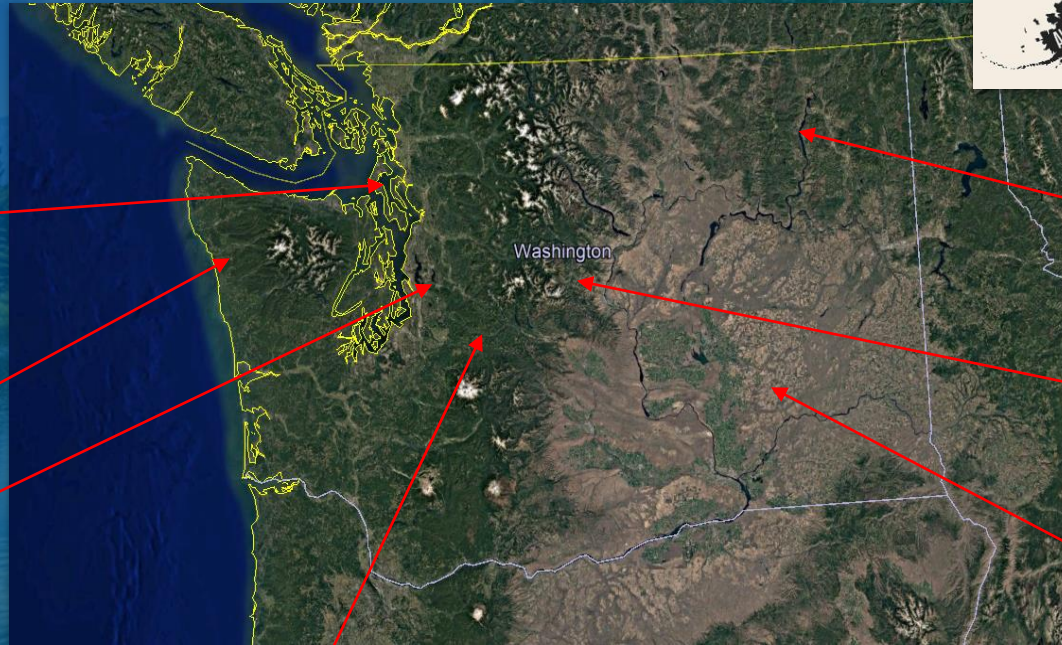
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Wildfire: History, Culture, Ecosystems



Wildfire in “WA” - An Overview



Islands w/ lowland forests

Coastal
Temperate
Rainforest

Greater Seattle
Metropolitan Area

Cascade Crest w/ montane
forests run north to south

3

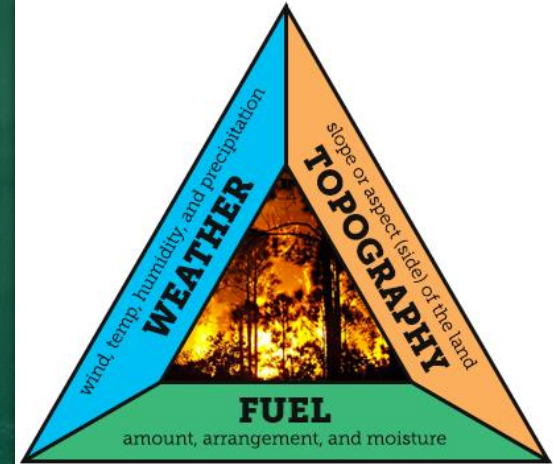
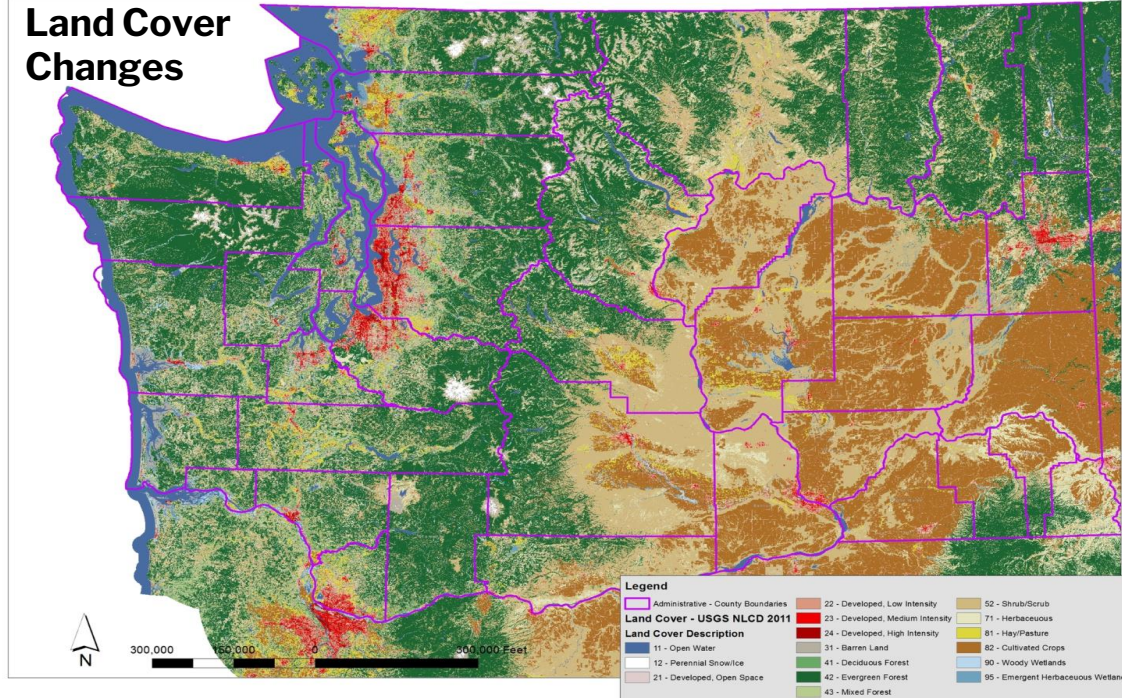
Northeast
Kettle Crest
Mountains

Dry central
Cascade
Mountains

Columbia
shrub-steppe

Wildfire in “WA” - It’s About the “WUI”

Land Cover Changes

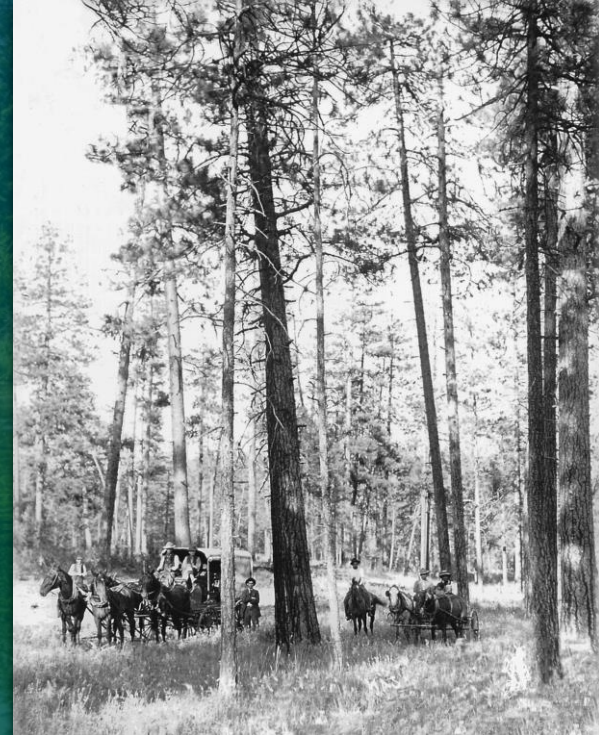


Fire Behavior Triangle

Not a matter of “IF” but
“WHEN.”

Unique Challenges of Central & Eastern WA

Dry, windy, and plenty of trees !

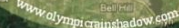


Central & Eastern WA: The Perfect Storm

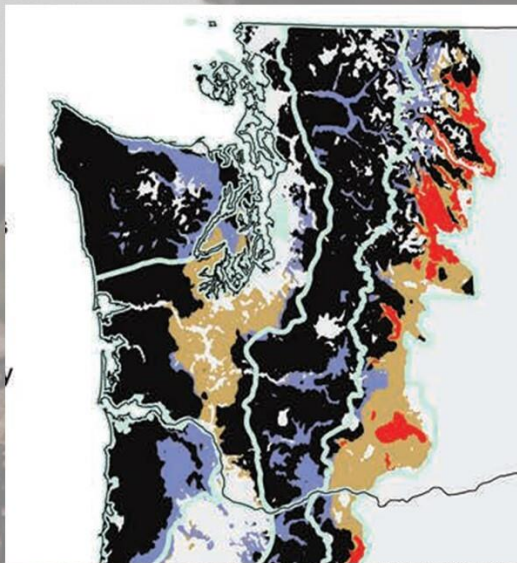
- Historic, frequent fire regime
- Growing population, with many living in high risk locations, WUI
- Increased density of Ponderosa forest changing fire patterns from low to high intensity
- Little precipitation and high summer temperatures
- High wind causes fires to move and spread rapidly
- Climate change
- Second homeowners



A lot of fuels, a growing population & more drought-prone summers!



Western WA: A Complex, Evolving Story



Characteristic Fire

Infrequent – high
severity

Moderately frequent –
mixed severity

Frequent – mixed
severity

Very frequent – low
severity

Spies et al. 2018. Slide courtesy Josh Halofsky



Engagement in Wildfire Preparedness Programs: Central & Eastern WA

- Creating partnerships and assigning roles for Conservation Districts and partners
- Events and other outreach sources



Engagement Continued: Central & Eastern WA

Spreading the word, not the fire

Programs/Resources

- *Home fire risk assessments* – CD & FDs
- *Cost-share fuels reduction* – CD, DNR, NRCS
- *Firewise USA (NFPA) Recognition Program*
- *Community Wide Wildfire Protection Plans* – one per FD, update annually, if possible



Events/Outreach Tools

- Roving chipper programs
- Firewise Days, Earth Day Fairs, community mtgs.
- Website pages and Facebook posts
- Local newspapers, radio stations, CD newsletters



Engagement in Wildfire Preparedness: Western WA Programs

- A mix of programs that have been around for 15+ years, others are relatively new (less than 4 years old)
- Employ similar strategies to Central & Eastern Washington for programs & outreach
- Continue to seek partnerships in the community to better manage fuels reduction projects & communications between private community land & publicly owned land
 - Local County Emergency Management Departments
 - WSU Extension Forestry
 - Local Land Trusts
 - Washington State Parks
 - Washington Dept. of Fish & Wildlife





Weekend Warriors

Tips for Engaging the 'Harder to Reach' Communities and Landowners



- Want to relax in their second homes, not work
- Outreach events held on weekend w/food!!
- Promote events at local hangouts for weekenders
- Need not be present for home fire risk assessments and chipping - Free chipping helps with motivation
- Full time neighbors act as local FW champions to connect with absentee neighbors rather than government stepping in
- Offer mentoring for local champions or sparkplugs – empower them!
- Work with HOAs or other organized community groups
- Offer grants for supplies, signs, community work
- Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network workgroup made of area FW leaders – each reach out to own FW community

Momentum for the Public

- Small grants for community level fuels reduction/chipping
- Check in often and forward opportunities for chipping, training, grants, etc
- Annual get together. Attend Firewise Days
- Really comes down to FW Board commitment – very landowner driven effort
- Key person in community to create an accepted norm – trains the next generation



13

What's Next?

Continuing the Momentum after the First Few Years of Your Wildfire Program



Celebrate Success! Eastern

Firewise Success Stories and What Made Them Possible - Central & East Side

Firewise Challenge of 2015-16

- Funds from DNR for CCD to work with 10 communities toward FW recognition - ended up working with 16
- Used map of Plain/Lake Wenatchee area – assigned leader to each area to become new community
- WA led nation in new FW communities in 2016, Chelan Co led WA - after years of effort building program
- Made possible by community coming together and program start up support from CD & DNR for funding
- Leaders from each smaller community formed executive board – now a FAC pilot
- Momentum still going from this effort



Celebrating Success!

Firewise Success Stories and What Made Them Possible - West Side



- Sierra Country Club became Whidbey Island's first Firewise USA community & is now mentoring adjacent communities

- Strong partnerships remain between local conservation districts, fire districts, & Dept. of Natural Resources, with inclusion of other agency partners as program becomes more visible - increasing communications between all parties!

Strategies Across Boundaries: Tips to Get Started

1. **Designate a lead** coordinator who is collaborative!
2. **Network & recruit your key partners.** Build your toolkit and play on each others' strengths.
3. **Develop a program strategy** & seek feedback.
4. **Prioritize your audience** & geographic region.
5. **Develop clear, concise deliverables** on an **achievable timeline** that are **tailored** to your audience.
6. **Follow-through** on what you say you'll do. This requires efficient use & long-term pursuit of funding.
7. **Revisit your strategy** regularly.
8. **Recognize successes** & offer opportunities for **reflection**.





Thank You!

Questions?

www.whidbeycd.org/firewise/

www.cascadiacd.org/wildfire-preparedness_226/

www.dnr.wa.gov/programs-and-services/wildfire-resources/

<https://www.dnr.wa.gov/ForestHealth>