

Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory Update

ICARP TECHNICAL ADVISORY COUNCIL,
12/11/2020

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A Brief History of Wildfire in California

Pre-1800s

- Many of California's Native American Tribes used prescribed fire to maintain environmental health and promote resilience against catastrophic wildfire.

1800s to
1960s

- Settlers enforced a strict fire-suppression regime. Policies were passed that criminalized tribal burning and made California's landscapes extremely vulnerable.

1970s to
Today

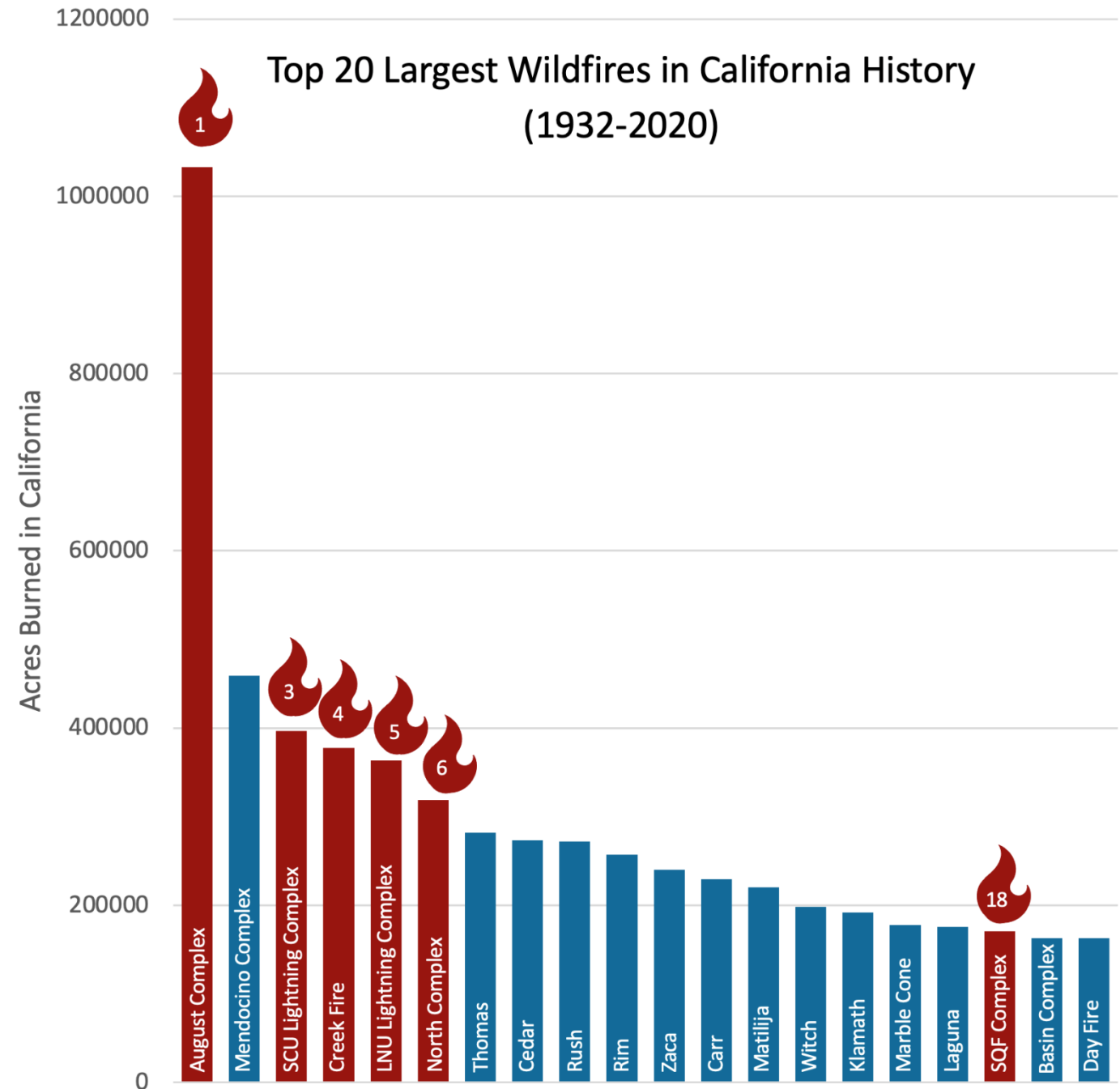
- Today we are grappling with how to make communities fire-adapted and resilient within the context of climate change and expanded growth into the wildland-urban interface.

Today's Context

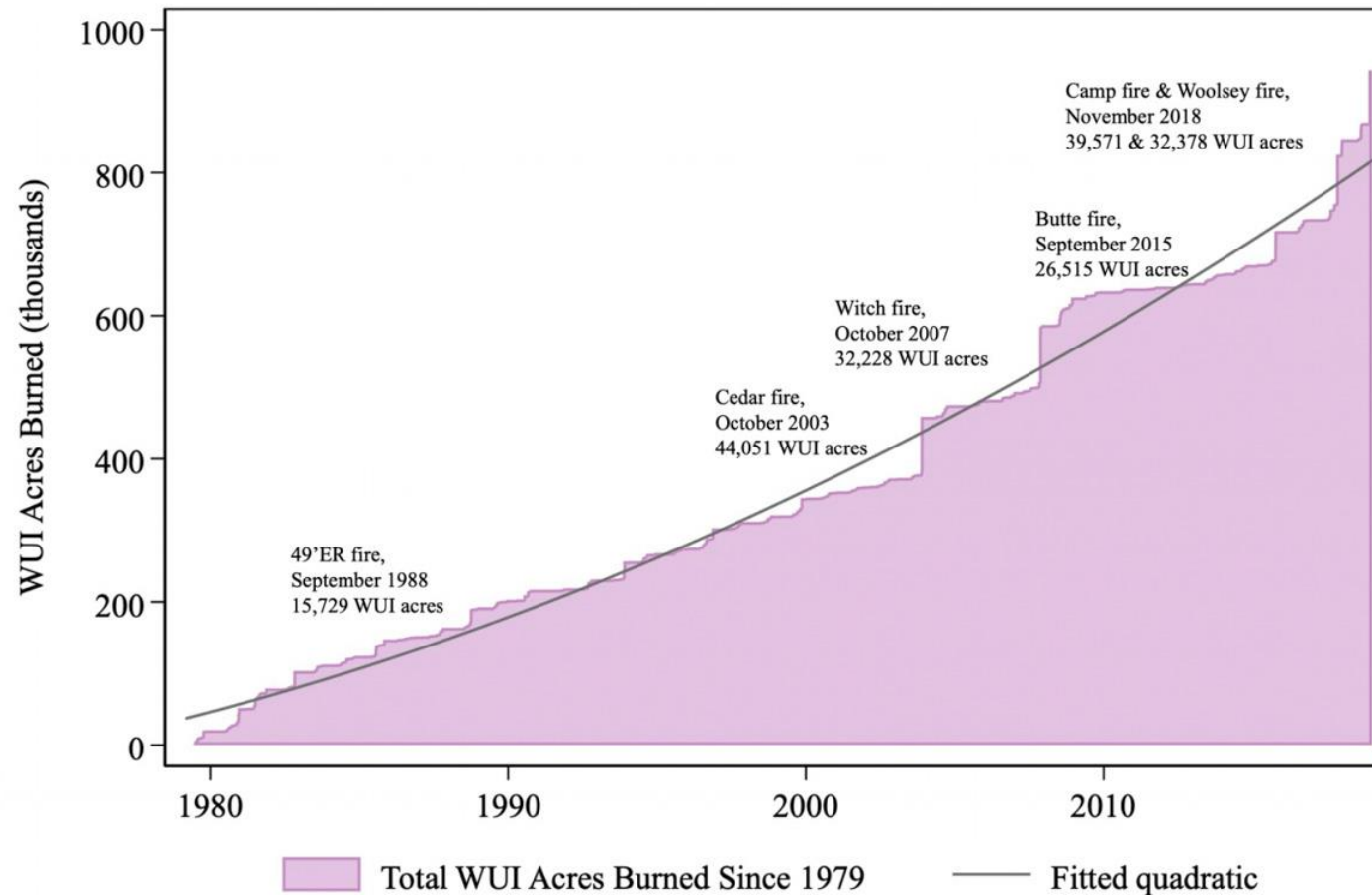
In 2020, California experienced its first “giga-fire” and 6 of the 20 largest fires in the state’s history.*

**Not all numbers are final. Also, the data for this graph was last updated November 3, 2020.*

Source: [CAL FIRE](#), Top 20 Largest California Wildfires



WUI Area Burned Over Time Has Been Increasing



Source: Buechi et al, "Long-term trends in wildfire damages in California"

Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory

General Plan Technical Advice Series

2020 Update

Public Review Draft – November 2020



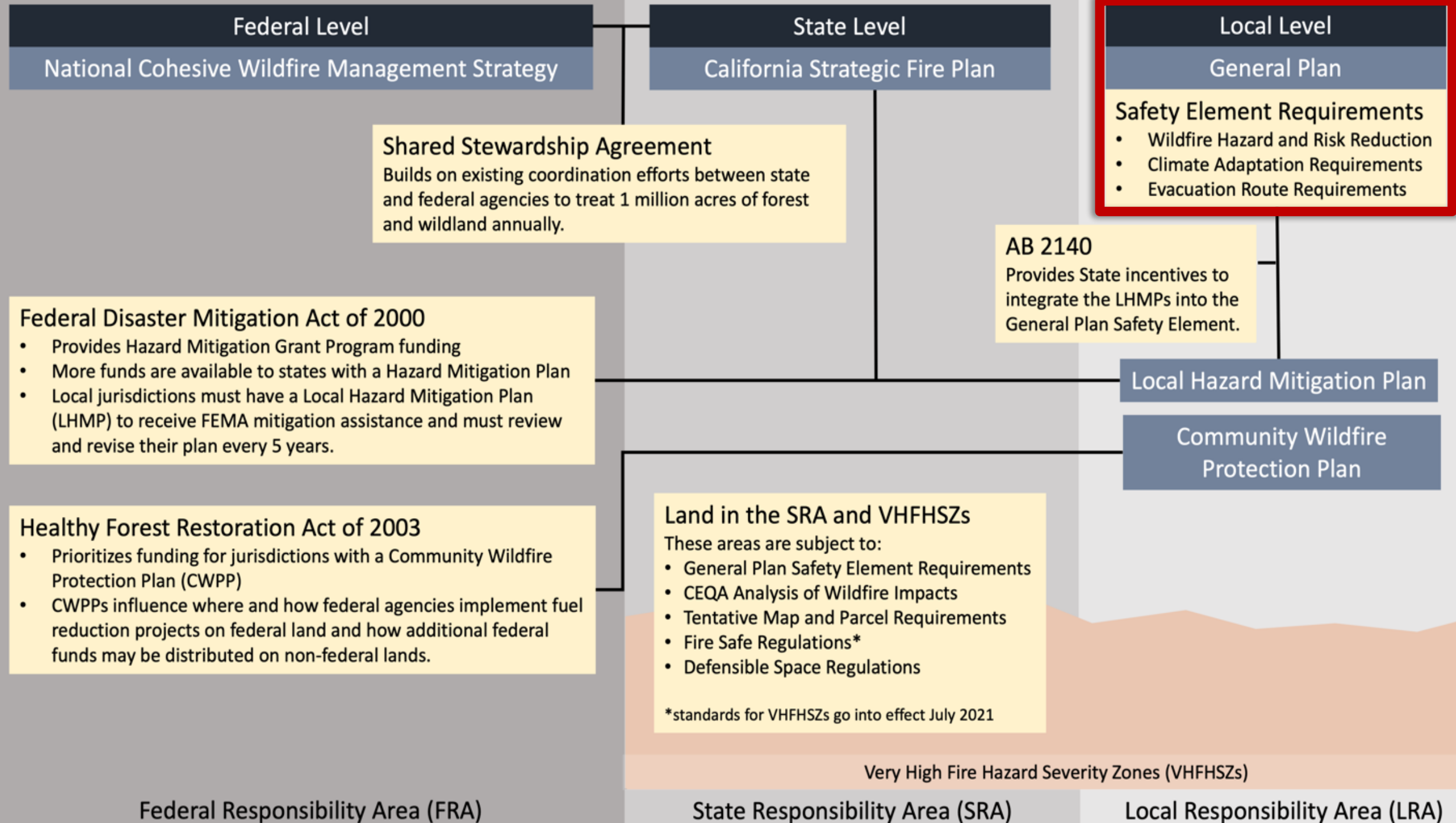
Draft TA Update Overview

Technical Advisory Update Requirements



The office shall...update the guidance document entitled “*Fire Hazard Planning, General Plan Technical Advice Series.*” The guidance document **shall include specific land use strategies to reduce fire risk to buildings, infrastructure, and communities.** The office shall, on and after July 1, 2020, update the guidance document not less than once every eight years.”

-SB 901 (2018) and AB 2911 (2018)



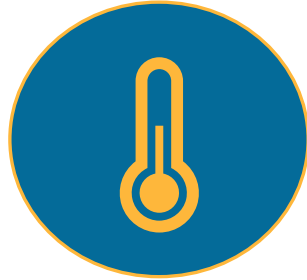
Safety Element Requirements



Wildfire Hazard & Risk Reduction

SB 1241 (2012)

Wildfire is a required topic for jurisdictions in State Responsibility Area (SRA) and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) and must be addressed upon the next housing element update on or after 1/1/2014.



Climate Adaptation

SB 379 (2015) and SB 1035 (2018)

Local agencies must assess community vulnerability to climate change and develop adaptation and resilience goals, policies, and implementation measures upon the next LHMP update; OR, upon the next housing element update.



Evacuation Routes

AB 747 & SB 99 (2019)

Local agencies must identify evacuation routes and evaluate their capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios and identify residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes.

Guiding Questions

Q1: **Who should be engaged** in the fire hazard planning process?

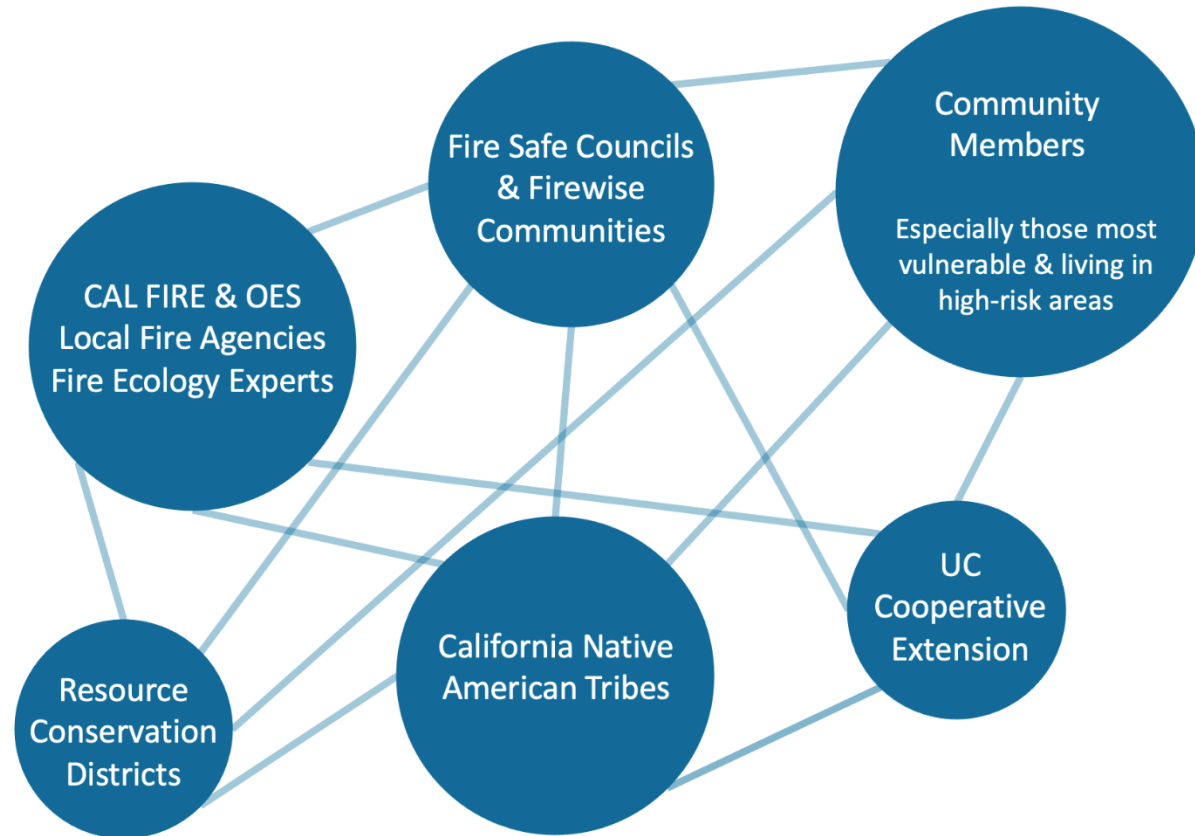
Q2: How do you determine the **fire hazards and risks** in your jurisdiction?

Q3: How can we **support populations that are vulnerable** to wildfire?

Q4: What are specific **land use strategies** to reduce risk?

Q5: What **examples or resources** could help with these efforts?

Outreach & Engagement

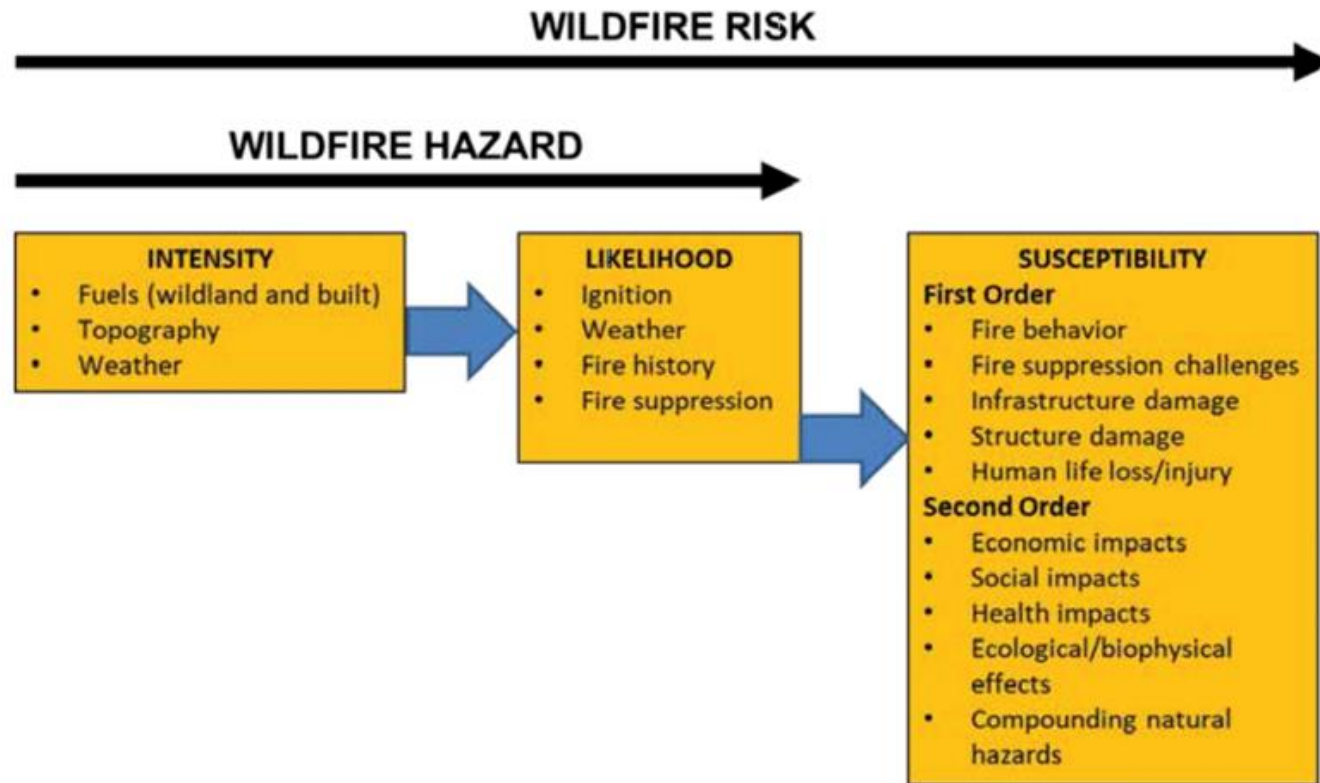


Engage early and often!

Get the right people to the table to inform the planning process at each step of the way.

Work collaboratively to align fire hazard planning with other efforts. This will allow your jurisdiction to leverage resources, avoid duplication, and maximize the strengths of each effort.

Determining Fire Hazards & Risks



Action begins during the general plan update process itself.

The hazard and risk assessment reveals not only where the hazards are and their potential severity, but also who and what in the community is most vulnerable to wildfire.

This assessment should inform the General Plan's land use and growth alternatives analysis as well as the policies and programs incorporated into the plan.

Supporting Vulnerable Populations



Source: Davies I., Haugo R., Robertson J., Levin P. (2018, Nov). The unequal vulnerability of communities of color to wildfire. PLOS ONE. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205825>



Source: The [U.S. Fire Administration](#) social media toolkit.

Certain groups are more vulnerable to the impacts of wildfire than others.

Fire hazard planning presents an opportunity for local planning agencies to identify just and equitable solutions. Local agencies should coordinate fire hazard planning with environmental justice and climate vulnerability requirements in the general plan update process where applicable.

Reducing Risk to Existing Communities

How can we avoid and minimize “unreasonable risk” in existing developed areas?



Retrofit and Protect
Existing Development



Implement Landscape
Management Practices



Increase Community
Capacity & Resilience

Reducing Risk to Existing Communities

Retrofit and Protect Existing Development

Retrofit and protect existing buildings and infrastructure.

Scale-up defensible space compliance efforts.

Leverage existing programs to find funding and incentives.



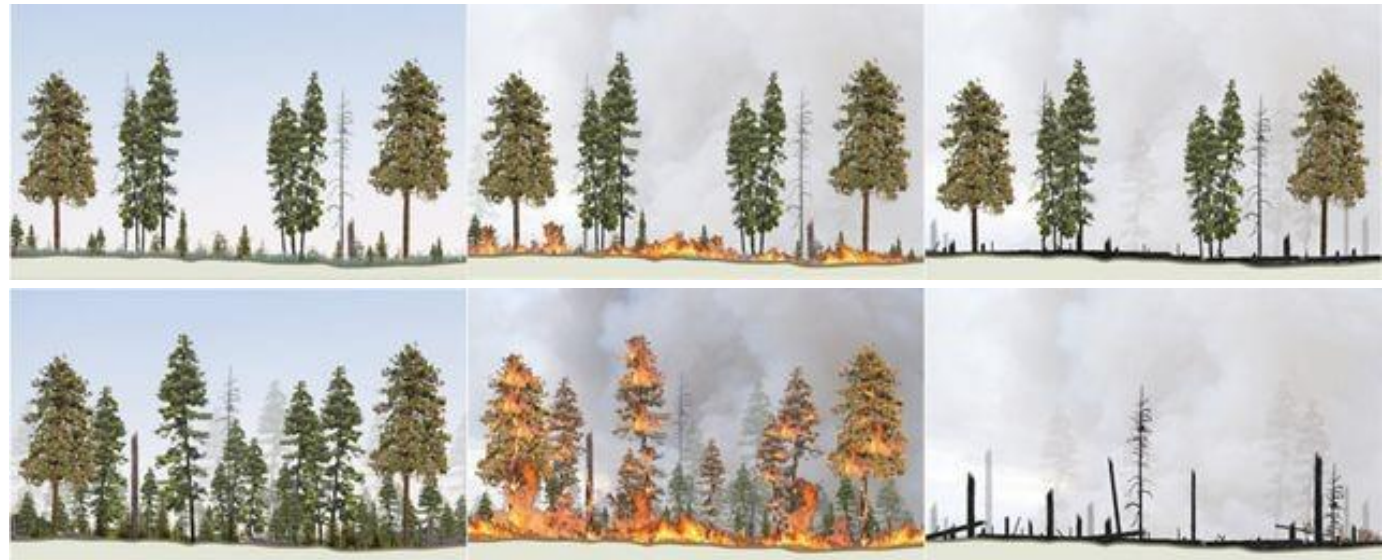
Source: [CAL FIRE](#) Defensible Space Zones

Reducing Risk to Existing Communities

Implement Landscape Management Practices

Establish and maintain fuel breaks, buffer zones, and other landscape management techniques.

Reduce hazard severity and risk through fuel modification in adjacent “wildland” areas (e.g., prescribed burning or other vegetation treatments)



Source: Managed Versus Unmanaged Ponderosa Pine Forest (Source: Erika Sloniker, The Nature Conservancy)

Reducing Risk to Existing Communities

Increase Community Capacity & Resilience

Prioritize the needs of vulnerable communities.

Increase local capacity to prepare, evacuate, and recover from wildfire events.

Plan for compounding and cascading hazard events such as flooding and landslides, water contamination, and housing needs.

SAFETY STEPS FOR ANY DISASTER



1.

Get alerts to know what to do.



2.

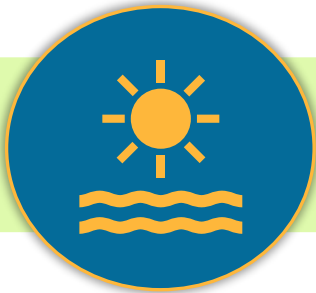
Make a plan to protect your people.



Source: [Listos California Disaster Readiness Guide](#)

Land Use Strategies

How can we avoid and minimize “unreasonable risk” through land use planning and development review?



Start Upstream



Develop Local Solutions



Align Efforts

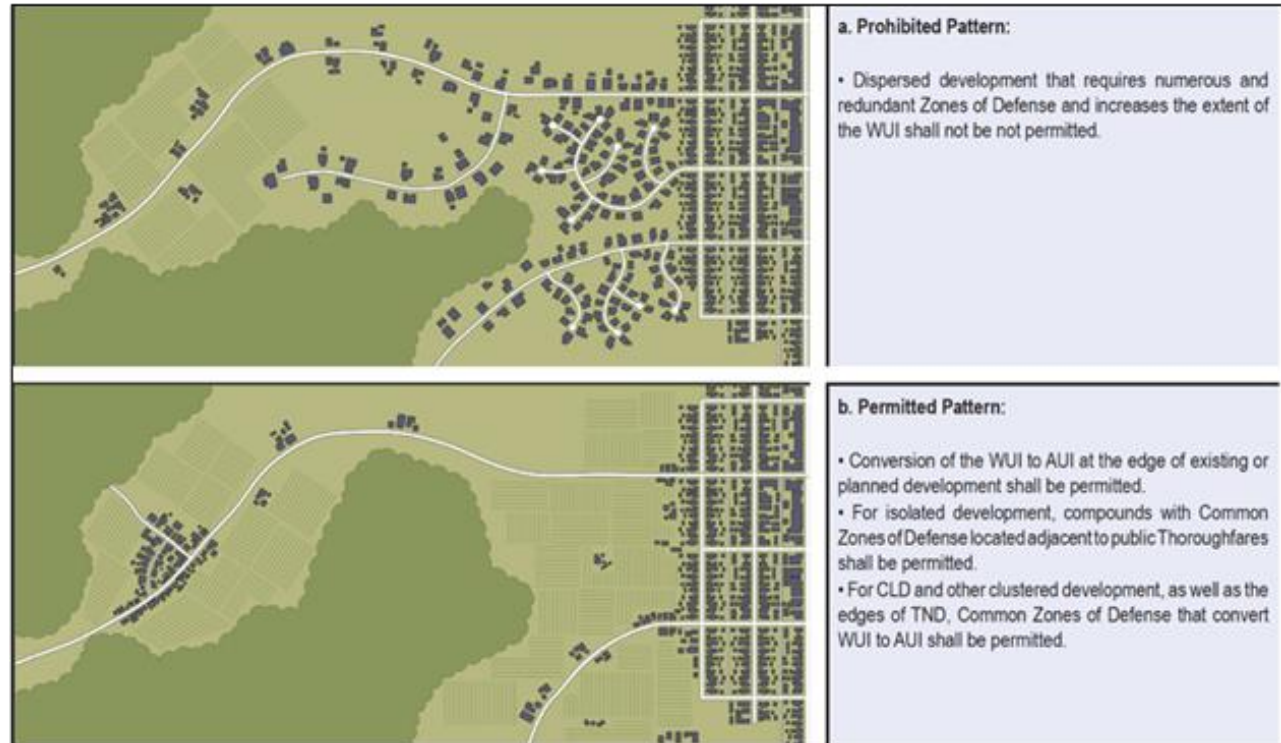
Land Use Strategies

Start Upstream

Integrate wildfire risks into the land use alternatives analysis.

Weigh the costs, benefits, and tradeoffs of different approaches with respect to wildfire risk.

Consider long-term resilience, sustainability, and equity implications.



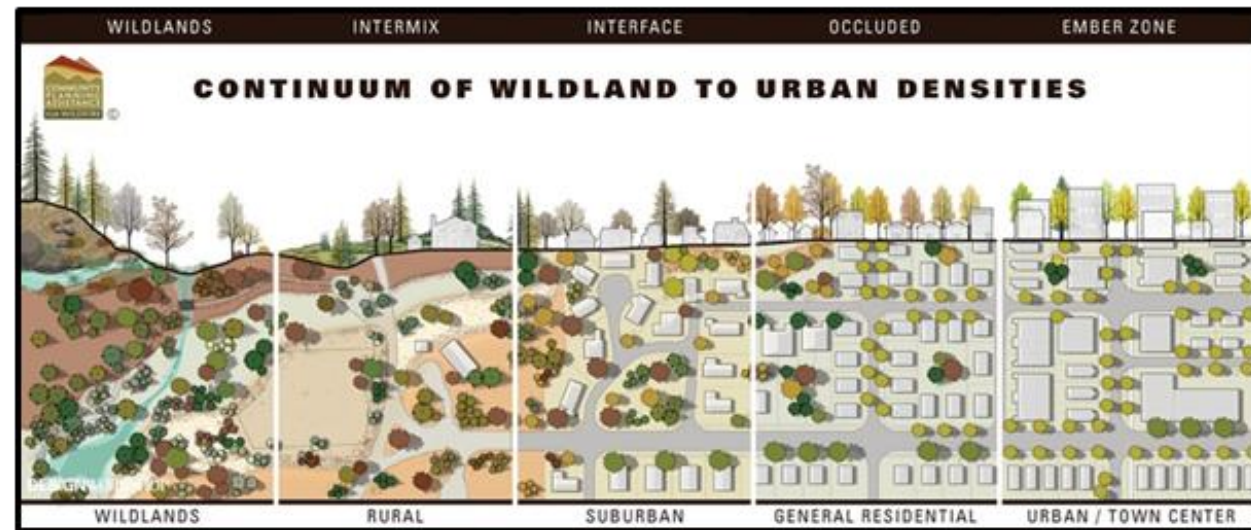
Source: [Martin Dreiling Smart Code Module - Comparison of Conventional Versus Clustered Development in the WUI](#)

Land Use Strategies

Develop Local Solutions

Implement land use development and review procedures to identify and reduce unreasonable risks that are specific to the local context.

Apply community-scale risk reduction measures and resilient design features into code updates.



Source: Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire with permission by Wildfire Planning International

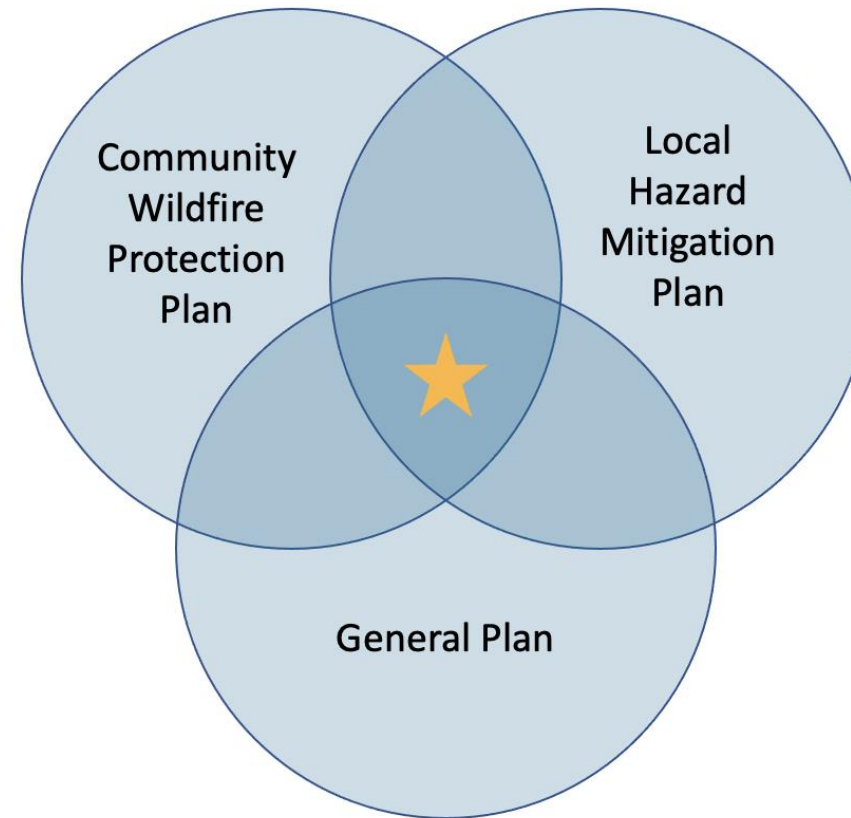
Land Use Strategies

Align Efforts

Harmonize conservation and open space policy with hazard and risk reduction.

Plan to rebuild not only efficiently but in a manner that increases resilience.

Align plans to maximize the strengths of each.



Examples & Resources



OPR is not the first to publish guidance for how to plan for wildfire, good resources are out there already.

The updated technical advisory contains:

Example Policies and Programs

Funding Sources

Guidance Documents

Tools and Data Sets

Case Studies

Peer-Learning and Support Programs

- Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire
- Fire-Adapted Communities Learning Network

Get Involved: Submit a Public Comment

1

Read the [draft Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory update!](#)

2

Review our [FAQ document](#) if you have any questions about the TA.

3

Submit your input through OPR's [Public Comment Submission Form](#).

All public comments are due by December 18, 2020.

4

If you have additional questions, please send an email to WildfireTA@opr.ca.gov

Questions & Discussion