



The Interests and Issues of Ashland Residents
Regarding Wildfire and the Update of the
Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

A Report Submitted by
The Center for Social Ecology and Public Policy, Inc.
Kevin Preister, Ph.D.
Trish Malone, M.A.
Luis Ibañez
Aubrey Sharp

With special thanks to Julia Bercovich, intern,
Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, Brazil

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Enhancing Productive Harmony between Human and Natural Environments

479 Russell Street, Suite 101-A ♦ Ashland, OR 97520 ♦ 541/ 601-4797 ♦ FAX 541/ 552-9683 ♦ national@ikagroup.com
837 Steele Street ♦ Denver, CO 80206 ♦ 970/ 927-4424 ♦ FAX 970/ 927-4443 ♦ international@ikagroup.com

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Executive Summary

The City of Ashland's Wildfire Mitigation Commission asked CSEPP to engage a qualitative research project to enlist Ashland residents in conversations about fire and fire readiness in preparation for its upcoming update to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. CSEPP made contact with 437 residents over a four month period with a four person team. Every effort was made to sample the range of social and geographic diversity in the city, as well as businesses and organizations with interest and responsibility relevant to the Fire Plan.

Major Findings

Specific questions, such as, "Are you prepared for evacuation?" elicited much more detailed responses than general questions like, "Do you have any concerns about the updating of the fire plan?"

Three community themes, or patterns of shared perceptions, characterized local discussions:

- "I'm too busy with everyday life."
- "It's not going to happen to me."
- "This is a town that gets things done. It feels good to work together."

We estimate that at least two-thirds of the people contacted were aware of fire risks, the recent fire history in the region, and some ideas about activities they should take to be safe. About one-half of these people reported actual activity to improve their readiness.

In our data analysis, we could not find a difference in fire awareness and readiness among residents living above and below Siskiyou Boulevard.

Three key findings relate to the readiness of local residents for wildfire events:

1. The importance of baby steps in learning new behaviors;
2. The value of repeat visits;
3. People are willing and expecting to be mobilized.

Demographic changes indicate an aging population and frequent turnover of a portion of the resident population. Education programs that inform residents of fire risk and the importance of preparation are thus likely to be ongoing.

Citizen issues identified by residents include the following:

- An integrated approach to disaster preparedness
- Are you prepared for a wildfire? Do you have Defensible Space?
- Love of privacy as a Deterrent to Defensible Space
- Evacuation Routes
- "Ready, Set, Go" Bags
- Education or Regulation?
- Private lands in the County next to City land present a problem
- What About Climate Change?
- How will Animals be Cared for?
- Prescribed Burns
- Fire Smoke

Populations described in this report with specialized interests regarding the Fire Plan are these:

- Young Families
- Homeless/Transient
- Visitors/Lodging Establishments
- Renters/Property Management Companies
- Senior Citizens in Their Homes
- Vulnerable Populations
- Landscapers
- Realtors
- Building Contractors
- Nurseries
- Insurance Companies

Management Concerns of organizations and businesses were specific and detailed in providing direction to the City of the Fire Plan update. These organizations and government agencies were contacted:

- Southern Oregon University
- The Chamber of Commerce
- Ashland Community Hospital
- American Red Cross
- Alzheimer's Association
- Recology
- Mount Ashland Ski Area
- GEOS Institute
- The Ashland Fire Department
- The Ashland Firewise Program
- The Ashland CERT Program
- Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF) Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Planning Committee

Recommendations

1. Because the success of the Fire Plan is ultimately based on changes in individual behavior, and because Ashland has such deep patterns of citizen involvement in local affairs, CSEPP recommends a decentralized, neighborhood-based approach to the planning process.
 - The Fire Department's Firewise and CERT programs are highly-valued and trusted, and offer a firm foundation for such an approach.
 - Residents in several neighborhoods expressed interest in starting a Firewise community.
 - Three captains of the Ashland Food Project spontaneously offered their program as a means to inform and mobilize people around the planning effort.
 - Many areas of Ashland routinely communicate at the neighborhood level for common interests such as dust abatement, block parties, and efforts to reduce fire risk.
2. Include an Issue Management component in the planning process. Issue Management refers to the ability of the planning organization to recognize and respond to citizen issues and to integrate them with management concerns of organizations in creating action elements in the planning process. This recommendation is a call to "resolve as you go" so that ongoing action is built into the planning process in order to foster trust and momentum. Four examples were provided of quick responses by officials to citizen interests identified in the research. A sample worksheet was provided to assist in organizing Issue Management activities.

3. Use a graduated approach to citizen engagement. Starting in a decentralized fashion optimizes citizen contact and prevents hijacking of public meetings by individuals and groups that have an agenda for which the planning process provides a stage. With a focus on neighborhoods, a “buzz” is created of energy around wildfire that will percolate into other neighborhoods, creating interest and involvement. As neighborhood residents grapple with issues like evacuation routes and pet evacuation, their work is preparation for larger events in sections of town or community wide.
4. Interests that are common across the community could be organized into community-wide “working groups” that can tackle a planning element such as evacuation.
5. City personnel can operate as staff for whatever citizen teams are assembled. They facilitate, provide data, and technical expertise. They can also bring in the city’s perspective or management concerns as factors that have to be incorporated into the planning process.
6. Use community-wide meetings not to develop the plan but to showcase the elements developed at smaller scales and to integrate the whole. It is a time for confirmation, public recognition of citizen contributions, and celebration.

Chapter One

Introduction, Project Objectives and Research Strategies

Introduction

Ashland, Oregon has had a direct stake in the management of the Ashland watershed since 1892 when the Ashland Board of Trade, now the Chamber of Commerce, petitioned the federal government for protection of the water supply. The area became a national forest in 1907.¹ The last 25 years has witnessed numerous successful efforts by citizens and officials to reach agreement about forest management in the Ashland Watershed, but ongoing concerns at the local and regional levels prevented early agreements.

The Ashland Forest Plan (1992) and subsequent planning and management under Marty Main's guidance set the stage for successful efforts in the watershed on federal land. This was collaborative and run through the Forest Lands Commission. It was the passage of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) in 2003 that provided an opening for more collaborative approaches on federal lands that ultimately led to the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project (AFR) and the current forest treatment projects in the watershed. HFRA allows for the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) by which community members and officials develop strategies for preventing and responding to wildfires. A CWPP can attract funding for projects related to the plan. Moreover, a CWPP permits a community to directly influence federal decision-making in determining priority areas for fuels reduction and forest thinning operations through the development of a "community alternative."

The current Ashland Forest Resiliency Project (AFR) was a community alternative for the management of the Ashland watershed that was accepted by the U.S. Forest Service in its decision-making. AFR represents a stewardship agreement between the City of Ashland, the U.S. Forest Service, Lomakatsi Restoration Project and the Nature Conservancy.

The Ashland CWPP was completed in 2004 and has mainly been focused on watershed management with attention to the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).² However, the Siskiyou Fire (2009), the Oak Knoll Fire (2010), and other regional fire events have increased awareness of wildfire risks in the larger community, and officials determined that an updated CWPP was appropriate. Officials intend that the updated CWPP will include the residential areas of Ashland.

Project Objectives

The City will be updating its Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) over the next year. The Ashland Wildfire Mitigation Commission (AWMC) directed the Center for Social Ecology and Public Policy (CSEPP) to identify the interests and issues of residents related to the wildfire plan and to devise strategies for community engagement for the plan update that would be effective in mobilizing people to participate in the planning effort. In particular, we were asked to:

1. Enter the routines of the community using CSEPP's Discovery Process™ in order to engage residents in settings that are comfortable for them in discussions about wildfire awareness, preparation, and ideas for sound city policy.

¹ Chapter One, "Social, Educational, and Political Status," Draft Forest Plan, City of Ashland, 2015.

² <http://www.ashland.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=13513>

What are the perceptions and attitudes of residents regarding wildfire preparedness and what factors shape the perceptions?

2. Describe the patterns of activities employed by Ashland citizens in learning about and responding to wildfire risk.

How do people learn about wildfire and what are their trusted sources of information?

What are they doing now to address wildfire risk?

Do people feel that they have access to the resources needed on a regular basis to help them be better fire wise and fire safe?

3. Describe local communication patterns of residents regarding wildfire preparedness and develop communication strategies for use by the AWMC to sustain citizen dialogue as the update of the CWPP proceeds.

What are the most effective ways to communicate?

4. Identify the citizen issues related to wildfire education and preparedness, as well as locally-identified ideas for improving communication and citizen action. Identify emerging issues (“low hanging fruit”) for early response by the AWMC.

What are the main issues?

How can citizen input assist in the design of mitigation programs?

What do residents see as opportunities, including the expansion of the Firewise program?

What can be done now to foster citizen ownership and to build momentum in building an effective plan?

About CSEPP

The Center for Social Ecology and Public Policy (CSEPP) Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to individual empowerment through the maturing of natural systems present in all human communities. These natural systems are a pathway for direct participation of citizens in the creation, ownership and management of public policy. Natural systems are the informal networks that operate in communities and the formal bodies that are in alignment with these informal networks. They are place-based, geographically-centered, and are responsible for caretaking, survival, and cultural beliefs, traditions, and practices. When public policy grows out of social ecology defined in these terms, productive harmony is enhanced through the integration of bio-physical and social ecosystems, resulting in efficient application and mobilization of human, monetary, social, and natural capital.

The principals of CSEPP have worked in over 120 communities, specializing in the interface between communities and the projects, programs and policies of our government and corporate clients. Our focus is to assist change initiatives to be responsive to the people they are designed to serve, to be supported broadly in the community, and to optimize the social, economic and ecological benefits of change.

Selected clients from Southern Oregon include:

City of Ashland, Oregon
The Bureau of Land Management
City of Medford, Oregon
Illinois Valley Community Development
Organization
Oregon Department of Transportation

Rogue Valley Council of Governments
Southern Oregon University
The Applegate Partnership
The West Medford Community Coalition
U. S. Forest Service
Upper Rogue Watershed Council

Currently, CSEPP is in its fourth year assisting the International Right of Way Association in changing its paradigm for community engagement to incorporate a Social Ecology perspective. For a fuller review, our website is: www.csepp.us.

A Social Ecology Approach

In this report, the reader will see terms like citizen issues, management concerns, and community themes. In the CSEPP lexicon of Social Ecology, the term “issues” belong to the people operating at the informal level of community and so are labeled “citizen issues.” Concerns belong to organizations and formal bodies in society and so are labeled “management concerns.” Both issues and concerns are statements people make that can be acted upon.

By contrast, the term “community themes” is defined as general attitudes, perceptions and values about conditions in the world that are reinforced in daily social life but which are not directly actionable. They are abstract statements that are repeated often in local conversations. They are the kind of statements that if you make them at a social event, in a grocery store, or in other social settings, people nod in agreement and say, “Yeah, isn’t that the truth.” For example, if someone says, “I’m against growth,” if that sentiment is shared widely, we call the statement a community theme because it is widespread and so general it can’t be acted upon. However, if someone says, “I’m against growth because the parks are overcrowded and my kids have no place to play,” we consider that a citizen issues because it can be acted upon—additional parks can be created.

In our experience, these distinctions are highly useful in promoting community-based solutions to policy challenges. If a theme dominates public discourse, for example, such as in the current controversy over the Keystone XL Pipeline, it is difficult to get underneath the language and to find and resolve the issues. The situation remains controversial. If public initiatives are successful in focusing on the issues and concerns, the project or program can be improved upon, add to the quality of life in a community, and be supported by residents.

Similarly, oftentimes citizen issues are conflated into management concerns—a city will undertake development of affordable housing, for instance, on behalf of its citizens. In such a scenario, however, citizens are not able to participate in their own solutions, so even the best “solutions” may be resisted or ineffective. In our experience, it is when citizen issues expressed through informal networks are aligned with the management concerns of formal organizations that productive harmony is achieved and the project can be approved and implemented with community support.

To undertake research of this nature, CSEPP makes use of our Discovery Process™ by which fieldworkers “enter the routines” of the community as a way to understand local conditions and aspirations. Our fieldworkers frequent the gathering places where people congregate, observing and interacting with residents about their community. The Discovery Process reflects the old aphorism,

“People hate to be interviewed but love to talk.” We get in situations where people want to tell us their stories. Rather than have a pre-determined set of questions, we have a number of topics (see Objectives above) that we introduce and we see where the person wants to take it. Our team hangs out where people hang out—the great coffee shop that everyone is at, the soccer games on Saturday morning, the church social on Sundays, or the hardware store where a couple extra chairs are sitting. In conversations with people, we ask, “Who else should we talk to about this?” and thereby learn something of the informal network of the speaker. We make a special point of contacting people whose names come up repeatedly.

In social science, this process is called naturalistic theory building about how the community is functioning, with open-ended interviewing, and a “snowball” method of getting nominations for other people to interview. It is a qualitative methodology, ideally suited for getting to sensitive information, and to the social meaning that people experience in their everyday lives. It is also well-suited, as one might guess, for building relationships and for mobilizing people to participate in change. It is thus a fine method for community assessment but also for community organizing.

The drawback of qualitative research is that it lacks the scientific rigor of quantitative approaches that use probability theory to generalize from a random sample to a larger population. In a quantitative approach, one can say with some confidence that “38% of the people favor a speed limit of 70 MPH.” We are unable to make statements like that in this report.

In a qualitative approach, the questions get better as you learn from people what is important and how they look at things. This came out in two ways through the course of this research.

1. When we asked people about “fire”, they tended to dismiss the topic and say off-handedly that the fire department takes care of that. But when we asked people about “wildfire”, there was a pause and then a more thoughtful discussion about what it meant for that person in her life.
2. We started with asking people, “Do you have any issues that you’d like to make sure are heard in preparation for the city’s wildfire plan update?” The answers we got were general and on the level of community themes. But when we asked, “Do you have an evacuation bag ready?” or “Does your home have defensible space?” the response became more reflective and detailed.

Research Strategies

The research period lasted from July 16 to October 30, 2015. During that time, our team of four had contact with 437 people. All ages were represented except children. Figure One describes the types of public contacts made and the number of people contacted in each category.

Figure One: Types of Public Contact in the Research Process

Types of Contact	Numbers of People Reached
Type One Contacts: Random, man-on-the-street type conversations or meeting people informally at gathering places or public events. There is often less depth to this kind of contact, but it is unfiltered and offers a view into attitudes and wishes. Oftentimes, names are not known and	204

residents may give us referrals to other individuals.	
Type Two Contacts: Scoping of Informal Networks. We ask, “Who else should we talk with,” and we go to that person and say, “So and so said I should call you.” Excellent for understanding informal network communication. These are more extended interviews, lasting from 30 to 90 minutes.	60
Type Three Contacts: Presentations at Public Events and Invitations to call the Team. We were invited to speak at several public events to announce our project and invite input by calling our team.	116
Type Four Contacts: Social Media Platforms. We posted an information bulletin on local blogs.	6
Type Five Contacts: Individuals representing organizations and businesses	41
Type Six Contacts: Individuals representing government agencies	10
Total Number of People Contacted	437

These contacts brought us into communication with many of the various publics that reside in Ashland. A public is defined as any segment of the population that can be grouped together because of some recognized demographic feature or common set of interests. A public may exist currently or at some future date; it may reside permanently in a geographic area, or may live elsewhere and have an interest in local decisions.³

The publics we focused on were:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Young families | Professionals |
| Retired | Students Latinos |
| Newcomers | Teachers |
| Forest Users | Part-timers |
| Activists | Homeowners |
| Homeless | Renters |
| Youth | Vulnerable Populations |
| Businesses | Visitors |
| Low Income | |

Type Three Contacts, public events and group gatherings, were as follows:

- Mountain Meadows, September 22, 2015, attendance 60 (est.)
- CERT Meeting, August 26, 2015, attendance 18
- Ashland Bed and Breakfast Network, October 13, 2015, attendance 22
- CERT presentation at Ashley Senior Apartments, October 19, 2015, attendance 16

Public events attended included:

³ Kent, James A. and Kevin Preister, “Methods for the Development of Human Geographic Boundaries and Their Uses,” In partial completion of Cooperative Agreement No. 1422-P850-A8-0015 Between James Kent Associates (JKA) and U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Task Order No. 001, June, 1999.

The Salmon Festival, October 3, 2015

The Ashland is Ready (AIR) Event, sponsored by the Ashland Fire Department and its CERT program, September 12, 2015, approximate attendance: 400

Type Four Contacts involved the use of social media platforms to provide information and solicit input from participants. CSEPP posted a request for input on three such sites:

Ashland Mama's Medicine Wheel Facebook Page

Ashland Peeps Facebook Page

Southern Oregon Single Parents Facebook Page

The post on these outlets read as follows:

“The city will begin updating the wildfire plan in this next year. I am working with a team to discover what local citizens thoughts are on this subject. I would really appreciate to hear from as many of you as possible so your input is included into the plan. This is an important issue as we face drier climates and more wildfire threat.

* What are you doing around your home and with your family in case of a wildfire? Do you have a go bag ready in case of evacuation?

* Where do you search for information regarding wildfire preparation?

* What else would you like to know more about on this topic?

Thank you!”

There is a lot of information transferred through these facebook pages daily between mothers with young children on the Medicine Wheel in the community, local people wanting to discuss issues on the Ashland Peeps and Single Parents discussing issues relevant to single parenting in Ashland. We wanted to try and engage them in the wildfire discussions via Facebook posts but we received only six responses. Usually, on the Medicine Wheel especially, when there is an issue near and dear to the hearts of the mothers, there are many replies and discussions. . When the issues of the deer or plaza restoration are mentioned on these pages, many people have much to say. The wildfire issue is not important, the questions were not rightly framed, or some other factor was involved. If the posts were made during the time wildfire smoke was present, we expect our response rate would have been higher.

Type Five Contacts, organizational representatives, were as follows:

Ashland Chamber of Commerce, Ashland Visitor and Convention Bureau

Ashland Community Hospital

Southern Oregon University, Public Safety

Recology, Inc.

Mount Ashland Ski Area

Ashland Bed & Breakfast Association

Rogue River Watershed Council

American Red Cross

Various businesses

Alzheimer's Association

Type Six Contacts, government agency representatives, were these:

City of Ashland, The Firewise Program
City of Ashland, The CERT Program
City of Ashland Planning Department
City of Ashland, Parks and Recreation Department
Oregon Department of Forestry
Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Planning Committee
Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG), Senior & Disabled Services
The Jackson County Fire Plan
Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District

Organization of This Report

The concepts of community themes, citizen issues and management concerns will be used to organize research findings into a planning framework that can facilitate the update of the Fire Plan, as described more fully in Chapter Two. Chapter Two presents key findings of the study and recommendations on how to proceed with the planning process. The remaining chapters document information provided by citizens and officials. Chapter Three focuses on wildfire Issues and Opportunities reported by citizens who live in all geographic areas of the city. Chapter Four deals with specialized publics which have unique interests related to the fire plan. Some of these publics are occupational, such as realtors, landscapers, nurseries and insurance companies. Other publics deal with vulnerable populations, the homeless and transients in the community, elderly senior citizens still in their homes, and the visitor population. Chapter Five reviews findings from some of the major organizations and government agencies with responsibility or interest in the wildfire plan.

In this report, we want people to speak for themselves. We organized the comments but did not change the language except for a few grammatical improvements here and there. The brackets, [], are editorial comments provided for clarification. They are also used after quotes to provide the geographic location in town of the speaker or something about his or her social identity when it was known.

In addition, comments are coded by the researchers to the person who made the comment, so their names are known, and if officials want to re-contact people to follow up on their interests, bridging to the owners of the quotes can be done. This feature can promote good communication and issue resolution.

Acronyms Used

AFR	Ashland Forest Resiliency Project
AWMC	Ashland Wildfire Mitigation Commission
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CSEPP	The Center for Social Ecology and Public Policy, Inc.
CWS	Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Planning Committee
CWPP	Community Wildfire Protection Plan
HFRA	Healthy Forest Restoration Act, 2003

HOA	Home Owners' Association
ODF	Oregon Department of Forestry
OSF	Oregon Shakespeare Festival
PUD	Planned Unit Development
RVCOG	Rogue Valley Council of Governments
SOU	Southern Oregon University
TID	Talent Irrigation District

Chapter Two

The Elements of a Responsive Process for Wildfire Planning

This chapter explains a process for wildfire planning that is responsive to the interests of citizens and officials as described in the subsequent chapters. It contains the following sections:

- Community Themes Related to Wildfire Readiness
- Findings Related to Wildfire Readiness
- Effective Communication Strategies
- A Neighborhood-based Planning Process
- An Issue Management Function
- Process Recommendations
- Structure Recommendations

Community Themes Related to Wildfire Readiness

“I’m too busy with everyday life.”

Upon reflection of the CSEPP team, and in analyzing the fieldnotes, it seems to us that Ashland residents have the preparedness conversations, read the literature, know something about preparedness, but then often don't go the next step, the action step, to make a “Go bag,” for instance, and place it in an easy location.

“We all lead busy lives so advice helps.”

“It’s not going to happen to me.” This was a widespread sentiment expressed by people throughout the community, especially younger people or those in a hurry, or in the shorter conversations of people who could not talk long. Some people commented that it was “just human nature” to not plan for disaster. This psychological dynamic may be common to disaster preparedness planning.

“My ex-husband lost his home in the Butte Fire recently in California. He thought it could never happen to him but it did. People are in some sort of denial about that and then when it happens, it is too late.” [Mountain Meadows]

“Everybody worries about the watershed. Everybody knows what to do. There’s not so much worry about homes.” [Coffee shop talk]

“We don’t feel that we need to worry about wild fire where we are located as we are in the middle of the city.” [New homeowners, Mountain Street]

“Many homeowners won’t do defensible space and that worries me. They don’t think it’s going to happen to them until it does. Most people don’t plan.” [Harrison Street]

“This is a town that gets things done. It feels good to work together.”

Citizens told several stories to show how Ashland residents work together for the common good and to voice their optimism that the community is already preparing for disaster events and is willing to do more.

- The development of North Mountain Park is a story of a citizen-initiated project. The city was looking at a lot of ball fields and it was planning in isolation. When a couple residents began talking about the park idea around town, a broader set of ideas emerged, such as preserving the flood plain and historic sites, and making use of the natural setting for natural history education. A “Get Acquainted Day” was initiated by these residents that included the presence of experts like botanists, wetlands specialists and soil experts. It was a great success and this self-appointed group went on to shepherd wide agreements among citizens about the shape of the park. Excitement grew, officials began attending, and after design features were in place, city staff did the technical planning to codify agreed-upon ideas. The ballfields remained, the development proposals faded away, and the naturalistic features desired by residents remained, showcased by the North Mountain Nature Center whose numerous public programs are so popular among Ashlanders today.
- The development of the Ashland Food Project was begun by a couple individuals that believed a simple organizational structure and a pressing issue of hunger in Ashland could create an effective program of providing food for the hungry.
- The Watershed Enhancement Team came together to determine the source of E. coli in Ashland Creek about five years ago. This is another initiative begun by citizens that then attracted officials and experts. In this case, the group attracted organizations and equipment that aided in the group’s goal.
- The Ashland Watershed Stewardship Alliance, the group that followed the controversial HazRed proposal, formed the Ashland Watershed Protection Project and began to develop many of the elements of the community alternative that the Forest Service eventually accepted, and which became the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project (AFR).
- A group of strong community citizens of Ashland mobilized, planned and finally carried out their dream to facilitate overnight sleeping accommodations for homeless persons through the winter months. For four nights each week from November through March, people living on the streets know that they have a safe and warm place to sleep. A well-known valley agency provided facilities for a resource center and during the winter months it becomes a warm place to be during the day. People can get in out of the elements, have a cup of coffee, search the internet, hang out, meet friends and find resources.
- Ashland’s voluntary water conservation program in the summer of 2015 was touted by city officials as being a great success in which voluntary measures were sufficient to save the necessary water and forestall the need for mandatory restrictions.

Findings Related to Wildfire Readiness

4. The Importance of Baby Steps in Learning New Behaviors

“We went to a Firewise orientation meeting and then began to call neighbors about the gas shut off. We just kept going one step at a time and pretty soon almost everyone was on board and doing something.” [Paradise Lane]

“Some people were reluctant. A group walk-through helped. We pulled the wood away from the house, took down a dead tree. Rosemary was pulled. It was just a little at a time.”

“A few years ago we got instructions and a timetable from Firewise and we didn’t do it, but now that I think about it, I think we’ve done it little by little.”

“We cut our juniper back and will be cutting out more. I’d like to get a couple weeks’ supply of food but I haven’t done that yet.” [Oak Knoll, on the benefits of Firewise training]

5. The Value of Repeat Visits

CSEPP team members made return visits to individuals that we felt were thoughtful and interested in wildfire preparation. On several repeat visits, we were struck by how much people had been thinking about topics we had discussed and noted the actions people had taken between contacts.

“Since we talked last time, I placed all the important items that would be taken in the event of an evacuation in a certain place in the house. I’ve shown it to my husband and I’ve told him, ‘Even if I’m not here or even if I am, this is what you pick up and go.’ I included photo albums, copies of birth certificates and other papers like that. If we had to stay and couldn’t get out, our pantry is well stocked.” [Lupine Drive, commenting on changes she made between our visits]

“Well I guess I’m more ready than our talk last week. I have an old bag in the front closet with all kinds of things in it. I wrote down the names of all my prescription, doctor names, important phone numbers and people that are important to me and I think a sweatshirt. But I don’t always grab it when the fire alarm goes off and we’re all supposed to leave the building. I guess that would be a good practice to grab it. Hopefully we’ll never have a fire.” [Elderly woman in senior citizen complex, Siskiyou Boulevard]

6. People are willing and expecting to be mobilized.

One of the women we spoke with is part of a women’s support group that meets regularly in Ashland. She mentioned the discussion in her group, and now the group is actively talking about defensible space, and they have asked for information about a “Ready, Set, Go” evacuation bag.

“Maybe the Firewise program could hold an event to offer education. What do you have to do to be a Firewise community? The City of Ashland needs to bump it up!!!” [Social Media Platform]

Effective Communication Strategies

There is an assortment of various information sources that people rely on to receive updates about their areas of interest. In this era of fractured communication opportunities, formal programs must mimic the patterns of the residents. Hence, communication strategies must be multi-faceted and ongoing. The prominent sources of trusted information, by order of frequency reported, include:

- “My friends and neighbors”
- Jefferson Public Radio (JPR)
- The Ashland Daily Tidings
- The City’s utility bill
 - “I just got my electric bill from the city. It has wildfire preparedness and evacuation information in it. I was so pleased to see this.”
- Facebook
- Email
- Locals Guide
- Various social media platforms
- Activation call from CERT

In addition, some of the Firewise and HOA organizations put out newsletters and CSEPP received several offers to put notices and education pieces in their often-quarterly publications.

Figure Two below identifies several sites that are appropriate for neighborhood meeting places and several sites that serve as information distribution spots in Ashland.

Figure Two
Possible Neighborhood Meeting Places and Information Distribution Spots in Ashland

<u>Possible Neighborhood Meeting Places</u>	<u>Information Distribution Spots</u>
Homes	Food Bank
Bellview Grange	Uncle Food’s Diner
Senior Center	Farmers’ Market
Helman School	Nature Pet Store
Bellview School	Veterinarian offices (animal evacuation)
Walker School	ACCESS One-stop
Methodist Church	Green Bag
Mountain Meadows	Ashland Food Coop
Hidden Springs Wellness Center	Ashland Art Center
SOU Student Housing community room	Northwest Nature Shop has a monthly newsletter
Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on 4th St. welcomes community groups to host	Ashland General Hardware ⁴

⁴ The manager of this store is the only person we talked with that mentioned the Fire Department website. She said, “If you want to know the best way to design your landscape, you need to go to the website of the Fire Department. They

meetings at its facility Havarah Ashland First Congregational United Church of Christ on Morton St and Siskiyou (they host Monday shower program for homeless) Armory Fire stations (2) Community Center/Pioneer Hall Library Ashland Co-op Community Classroom	
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An essential feature of effective communication strategies is to reflect the cultural language of the people, such as contained in this report.

When wildfire planners are in conversations with residents, a useful question is, “Who else should I talk with about this?” If the names and context are recorded and compared across the wildfire planning team, they reveal the informal networks operating in the community and the trusted individuals within them.

A Neighborhood-based Planning Process

There is ample evidence that a neighborhood-based planning process is appropriate for Ashland that can be effective and successful.

- The history described earlier of the great number of citizen-based initiatives undertaken in Ashland and the traditions in the City of active public involvement.
- The Firewise and the CERT programs have been very successful and are neighborhood-based by design. It is likely that a large portion of the City is already covered by one or the other of these programs which can expedite the update of the wildfire plan. The social knowledge embedded in these programs should be used to expand wildfire planning. A map showing the geographic presence of these programs, as well as areas to be developed, would be most useful.
- Residents in five Ashland neighborhoods have expressed interest in beginning a Firewise Community (see page 52 in Chapter Five for details).
- Three individuals who are captains in their neighborhoods of the Ashland Food Project spontaneously offered to use their monthly notices and their communication network to encourage participation in the wildfire plan and to stage events in their area.

have wonderful tips in it. The City has a program to replace your grass with plants that don’t use much water.” She went on to say that she refers customers to the site any time it is appropriate.

“I’m the Food Project coordinator in my area. I pick up from 10 families. I think this organization could be used to test the water for Firewise. I could see sending a note with the next notice—‘Are you interested in Firewise?’ I think the Food Project, Firewise, and CERT would be a good combination for education. We could have a yearly party.” [Wimer Street]

- At least two areas in Ashland, Almond Street and Ohio Street, organize for dust abatement each year.
- There has been an annual Block Party at 8th and B Streets in the Railroad District for many years.
- Neighbors on Ashland Mine Road formed the Wildcat Creek Canyon Fire Association about five or six years ago to work on making defensible space. Several projects were accomplished but the group has become inactive in the last couple of years. This group could be rejuvenated for planning purposes.
- Residents in some areas of town already coordinate informally to reduce fire risk in their area, such as at Euclid and Altamont Streets.
- Not all areas of Ashland have strong neighborhood identity. Residents on Wimer and Granite Streets, for example, told us that neighbors don’t know each other well or communicate very often. Other areas, however, have strong neighborhood identity, such as the Railroad District and Quiet Village.

Create a process and a structure for the plan (below) that is as decentralized as possible. Although it is time-consuming, having the participation of broad segments of the community will foster the changes in individual behavior that are critical to success.

An Issue Management Function

An Issue Management capacity refers to the ability of the planning organization to recognize and respond to citizen issues and to integrate them with management concerns of organizations in creating action elements in the planning process. Citizen issues have stages in their development—emerging, existing or disruptive. A learning organization is one which is capable of identifying and resolving emerging issues when they are the easiest and cheapest to address.

The central feature of an issue management function in a planning process is to “resolve as you go.” The single best way to sustain citizen interest and momentum in a planning process is to resolve actionable issues as they come up.

It is clear that the Ashland Fire Department, and its associated programs, are skilled at issue management functions. It has built trust and support across all social segments of Ashland. That means the social infrastructure is in place to consider the more challenging aspects of wildfire planning that may stimulate citizen issues.

An example of an existing issue that is current is recounted on page 50. A woman protecting her home during the Siskiyou Fire suddenly lost TID water. An investigation was reportedly begun but

the results were never communicated, so she is left with distressing uncertainty about whether it could happen again. The Wildfire Mitigation Commission was encouraged to address this issue soon.

The CSEPP team pledged to foster attention to the “low hanging fruit” represented by emerging issues and we did so in the following instances:

- An owner of lodging establishment was frustrated that he had notified a city official of a troublesome lot where transient people were creating a fire risk. When we notified the right people that this existing issue remained unresolved, officials visited the business owner within a couple of days.
- People at Mountain Meadows have worked some months to put together an emergency preparedness plan. When the committee chair showed us their plans and asked for an expert review, we passed this on to the appropriate officials who quickly responded.
- One of our teammates got to know several residents at the Ashley Senior Apartments and worked with the CERT program to present information on emergency preparedness.
- CSEPP informed the Wildfire Commission of the offer of a few well-known landscapers who offered to resolve contradictions in the city’s educational lists of drought-resistant and fire-resistant plants.

Figure Three on the next page is a simple means to integrate citizen issues and management concerns into a planning process. The example used is the issue of county lands bordering the city which pose a fire hazard and for which no easy intervention has been developed since the lands are outside the city jurisdiction. This issue is reported in detail on page 28. In our experience, it is useful to maintain a distinction between citizen issues and management concerns because when they are conflated, citizen issues are lost and the risks of surprise and disruption grow. The third column contains the communication and action opportunities identified by citizens and planners that could simultaneously address both issues and concerns. The actions identified should contain a mix of things officials should do or are required to do, but also items citizens can and should do to support wildfire planning.

Process Recommendations

1. The Fire Department has an excellent reputation in Ashland that gives it social “credit” to encourage and expect emergency preparedness on the part of individuals and families.
2. Transparency, transparency, transparency. The Fire Department, its operating programs, and its openness in dealing with citizens are highly valued in the community. The Department is to be commended for posting online its interest in expanding the Wildfire Hazard Zone and in prohibiting wood shake roofs and other building materials that are fire-friendly. Transparency is the antidote to paranoia and “issue-loading”—the stacking of unresolved citizen issues onto unrelated public forums.
3. People trust day-to-day and face-to-face communication, which is essential if the wildfire plan is going to fit and be an extension of the community. One thing this means is that the

Figure Three: A Sample Worksheet to Integrate Citizen Issues and Management Concerns in the Planning Process

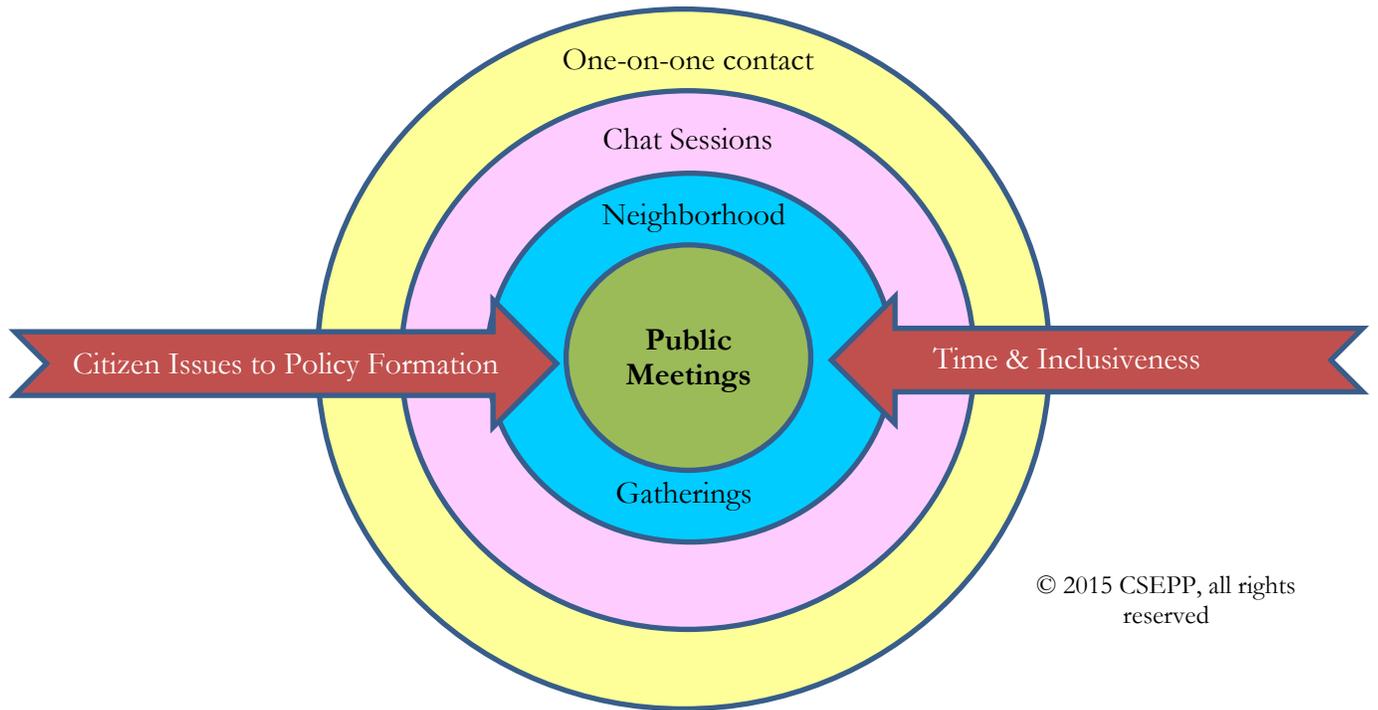
Strategic Planning Question: How can we address the fire risk on county properties bordering the City so that we are also sensitive to jurisdictional concerns?		
Citizen Issues	Management Concerns	Communication and Action Opportunities
<p>The Blossom View Firewise community voiced concern about county lands with high fuel loads that are contiguous to City properties whose owners have not treated their parcels according to Firewise standards.</p> <p>Store employees in the Albertson's Shopping Center voiced concern about the properties east of Rite-Aid toward the freeway which are characterized by overgrown weeds and frequent use by transients.</p> <p>The County land that begins at the top of the hill on Wimer is of high concern to local residents because there are some parcels that pose a fire risk.</p> <p>"Our family just moved here. We live on Ashland Mine Road. There is 200 acres behind our house that is unincorporated. It is a worry because it is all grass."</p> <p>"There is brush behind my business and I think it could easily go up in flames." [A Street business owner]</p>	<p>Pinecrest Terrace, and other lands we could identify, are near private land in Jackson County that pose a fire risk to Ashland residents. Ashland Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>The County has been unresponsive to City requests for assistance. Forest Division, Ashland fire Department.</p> <p>Jackson County concerns were not identified for this example.</p>	<p>The City could look at mitigating measures for future houses located on county lands, including using more fire resistant building materials or construction techniques on houses located on county lands which border the city.</p> <p>It could also consider requiring a defensible space buffer strip around new PUD's like the Normal Street proposal.</p> <p>If these mitigating measures are not required, they could be offered as educational materials for city homeowners.</p> <p>When the county fire plan conducts its final public meetings, local residents and officials could attend and insert this issue into the County Fire Plan, thereby assuring its attention.</p> <p>Have the Ashland rep to the County Fuels committee purpose the issue as an action item for the committee to work on.</p> <p>There is a section of the Jackson County draft Fire Plan on Firewise Communities. The Ashland portion needs to be updated to cover accomplishments 2012 - 2015. The issue should be inserted in the update. Perhaps someone from Ashland could work with George McKinley on the Ashland FW update.</p>

trusted public officials are those who are out in the public often but they also have the personality to engage with a wide variety of people. There is a finite set of these officials whose names came up frequently in conversations with local residents. Even though there is a price for these activities in longer days and evening events, these individuals should be encouraged to continue public interface activities. It pays off in community goodwill and the ability to implement.

4. Use the natural social gatherings and activities if possible so that participation is as natural as possible.
5. Make use of city programs that are already highly decentralized and have a great reputation, especially the Firewise Program and the CERT Program.
6. The Firewise Program is correct to consider using existing chapters to build others. Pot luck dinners, awards and public recognition, and tours of exemplary projects are ways to build the appreciation of this program and encourage other citizens to participate. Friend networks are especially powerful to establish an automatic “in.”
7. Conversely, avoid authoritarian approaches that will tell people that “this is the way it is going to be.” Such approaches will put an immediate brake on collaborative activity. If regulatory strategies seem the most prudent, for example, in situations of public safety, pose the dilemma to citizen groups and ask them to come up with workable solutions. Let them come to the same conclusions so that final planning decisions are sustainable.
8. Public officials set the sideboards of the planning process. Let people know the steps of the process. Be clear about what items are part of the planning process and which items are not. Don’t let people decide items that are not in their decision space. Set the ground rules, respect, courtesy, listening, and so on. Set a public expectation that people cannot bring their personal agendas to the effort (“soapboxing”).
9. Find ways to “turn over” responsibility to citizens. Encourage neighborhood areas to develop their “mini-plans” which might evolve into Firewise or CERT chapters. If there is a set of people voicing concerns about evacuation of animals, empower them to document the problem and devise solutions appropriate to the plan. Empower a citizen’s group in a neighborhood to devise a feasible evacuation route, with expert consultation as necessary.
10. Use tours liberally to demonstrate the successes achieved.
11. Choose people who are well-regarded in their networks to view successes, or to talk over a problem or potential solution. They are found by asking people, “Who else should I talk with about this?” These types of people are the “trial balloons” for community acceptance because they have great influence in their networks. If they can see the wisdom of proposed approaches, others will come along.
12. Use a graduated approach (Figure Four) to public contact that begins at the individual and family level and advances to informal chat sessions in homes, to the neighborhood level, and to community-wide events. As shown in Figure Three, over time, the inclusiveness is greater and the progression goes from responding to individual citizen issues to government policy

that codifies what has already been occurring in an ad hoc fashion. In this way, final decisions will be widely supported and able to be implemented.

Figure Four
The Discovery Process: A Graduated Approach to Citizen Engagement



Structure Recommendations

The structure of the planning process could proceed as follows:

1. Continue the process of citizen contact begun through this research with additional one-on-one and informal network contact in specific neighborhoods until key individuals, meeting spots, and fire interests are identified.
2. Use key contacts to generate “chat sessions” in people’s homes as appropriate. Chat sessions are informal gatherings of people initiated by residents that discuss relevant topics but which are not dominated by presentations or large staff numbers. The number of chat sessions is a matter for staff judgment and planning resources. When the same information begins to get repeated and staff confidence level grows that there will be no surprises in the neighborhood, the first two steps are complete.
3. Assign a small “issue management team” to “resolve as you go” for the life of the planning process. The job of the issue management team is to resolve emerging issues so that they do not escalate into existing or disruptive issues. This “resolve as you go” function is extremely

helpful in building citizen energy and momentum in the planning process. Emerging issue resolution may include removing a dead tree or providing informational brochures on pet evacuation, and so on.

4. Generate neighborhood-based meetings to confirm understanding of neighborhood interest and direction, and to celebrate accomplishments.
5. Assign tasks to “turn over” planning elements to teams of citizens. Examples: an animal evacuation plan for the mini-area, evacuation routes, or CERT-like disaster planning among neighbors. Citizen ownership of the plan is created when residents go beyond “input” to actively engaging the challenges of the plan.
6. As neighborhood meetings are conducted throughout the city, and small teams are assigned tasks to develop “mini-elements” of the plan, assemble the teams, and/or compile their work and begin to develop a “staging” event for a larger meeting.
7. City personnel can operate as staff for whatever citizen teams are assembled. They facilitate, provide data, and technical expertise. They can also bring in the city’s perspective or management concerns as factors that have to be incorporated into the planning process.
8. Use community-wide meetings not to develop the plan but to showcase the elements developed at smaller scales and to integrate the whole. It is a time for confirmation, public recognition of citizen contributions, and celebration.

Chapter Three

Citizen Issues and Opportunities Related to Wildfire Planning

This chapter opens with a review of the demographic trends in Ashland which will affect the Wildfire Plan update. The focus of the chapter is in the Citizen Issues described by residents and opportunities identified by them to address the issues. The CSEPP team reached all geographic areas of Ashland, from Ashland Mine Road to Oak Knoll, and from the upper reaches of the watershed to lower Oak Street. We also made every attempt to reach the social diversity represented in Ashland, with particular focus on the list of publics provided in the previous chapter.

Demographic Trends in Ashland Affecting the Wildfire Plan Update

Available demographic information was reviewed for trends in Ashland's population that have a bearing on the wildfire plan update. These are salient trends:

- School enrollment is steadily declining, from 3,255 in 2001-02 to a projected 2,493 in 2021-22.⁵
- Ashland's population is aging. Table One shows that the proportion of the population 55 years of age and older is steadily growing. For the Fire Plan, this means that attention to the special needs of senior citizens will be necessary.
- Ashland's Housing Needs Analysis of 2012 (adopted 2013) reported that 49% of housing units are renter-occupied as determined by the 2010 census. That rate is much higher than Jackson County (37%) and the State of Oregon (38%) and is attributed in part to the presence of the student population at the university.⁶ Renters may require special attention in the Fire Plan (Chapter Four).
- Several residents and the Chamber of Commerce asserted that the turnover in the Ashland population is high. Although there is a core of stability and leadership in the population, a Chamber official stated that a turnover rate of every five years for a large segment of the population is occurring. The U.S. Census reported that between 2009-2013, an estimated 73.4% of people at least one year old and over living in Ashland was in the same residence from the year before. That means that 26.6% had moved to Ashland in the prior year from other areas of Jackson County (14.9%), from another county in Oregon (3.6%), from another state (6.9%), or from another country (1%).⁷ For the Fire Plan, this information on geographic mobility means that "Education is Forever."

⁵ <http://www.ashland.k12.or.us/Files/ASD%20Demographer%27s%20Report%202012.pdf>

⁶ City of Ashland, Housing Needs Analysis, A Technical Supporting Document to the Housing Element of the City of Ashland Comprehensive Plan. Prepared by City of Ashland Community Development Department, adopted by Ashland City Council September 3, 2013 per Ordinance #3085.

⁷ Ashland Chamber of Commerce, "Ashland: Living & Doing Business Guide 2015."

Table One: Ashland Population by Age Group⁸

Ashland Population by Age Group								
	1990	% of total	2000	% of total	2008	% of total	2010	% of total
Under age 5	793	4.8%	802	4.1%	1,315	6.3%	1068	5.3%
Age 5-9	5,391	33.2%	923	4.7%	1,065	5.1%	1002	5%
Age 10-14			1,144	5.9%	951	4.6%	1206	6.0%
Age 15-19			1,906	9.8%	1,613	7.8%	1655	8.2%
Age 20-24			2,314	11.9%	2,251	10.8%	1885	9.4%
Age 25-34	5,126	31.5%	2,174	11.1%	2,873	13.8%	2248	11.2%
Age 35-44			2,378	12.2%	2,096	10.1%	1918	9.5%
Age 45-54	1,545	9.5%	3,249	16.6%	2,072	10.0%	2694	13.4%
Age 55-59	551	3.3%	1,042	5.3%	1,822	8.8%	1806	9.0%
Age 60-64	595	3.6%	694	3.6%	1,318	6.3%	1406	7.0%
Age 65-74	1,279	7.8%	1,272	6.5%	1,671	8.0%	1562	7.8%
Age 75-84	771	4.7%	1,143	5.9%	1,279	6.2%	1259	6.3%
85 and over	184	1.1%	481	2.5%	456	2.2%	394	2.0%
Total Population	16,234	100%	19,522	100%	20,782	100%	20,103	100%
Total Population 55 and older	3,380	20.8%	4632	23.8%	6546	31.6%	6,427	32%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Awareness of Wildfire Risk

As might be expected, the awareness of residents regarding the risks of fire was highly variable. Some people showed very low awareness:

“I’m a summer visitor so I don’t know much about the Ashland wildfire situation.”

“I don’t pay attention to that stuff.” [A common statement]

Several of the community leaders made the case that awareness of fire risk, activities for fire readiness, and support for forest fuel treatment projects has grown a lot over the last couple decades.

“I remember a Chamber of Commerce forum 20 years ago. I had just started with the chamber, and people just didn’t get the connection between forest health and community health, between fire risk and being ready for fire.” [Chamber official]

“Awareness of urban interface issues has grown. Look at the fights on watershed management 15 years ago with HazRed. Compare that to today. Plus, now all those trails are up there. People are up there and they see.” [Local leader]

⁸ City of Ashland, Housing Needs Analysis, Adopted 2013, derived from U.S. census data.

We estimate that at least two-thirds of the people contacted were aware of fire risks, the recent fire history in the region, and some ideas about activities they should take to be safe.

“When the fire happened on Grizzly peak, I had some guests on the back deck. When the fire came around to the front of the mountain, we’re all staring at it, and my friends asked me if I was in crisis. I said, ‘I think I am!’ That fire generated embers that reached Ashland. In the Siskiyou fire, there were embers on Scenic.” [Business leader]

“We just moved to Ashland about four months ago from LA where wild fires are the norm these past years. So one of the things we really liked about the house we bought is the manicured grassy lawn that we could use water to grow flowers and vegetation was a plus and the trees around our home are nicely trimmed. Yes my husband and I have our Go bags and have had them for years. I should probably check them to see if everything is there and not outdated.” [Siskiyou Boulevard—she knew the term “defensible space”]

“Are you kidding? My wife is a Mormon and we have three years of food in the pantry. All the food, water, gas, propane, camp stove and supplies in the basement that anyone would need in case of an emergency.”

“We were worried about response times for fire when we moved up there [in the urban interface], so we designed a non-combustible house—thick rock walls, stone floor, HardiePlanks. The roof is 1” thick concrete tiles.”

“I ride my bike up in the watershed and I am very impressed by what the City has been able to accomplish in cleaning up the fuels. Very remarkable change in just a few years.”

Based on the level of awareness shown by residents, we began to think that there were differences between those who lived above Siskiyou Boulevard and those who lived below. In reviewing the fieldnotes, we found that assumption was not supported. As shown in Figure Five below, of the 101 people who were asked about these factors, and it was known where they live, by far the majority were aware and active regarding fire risk. Ninety-one out of 101 (90%) were aware of risk and 83 out of 98 (85%) who were asked, reported being “active” to reduce fire risk. Notably, residential relationship to the boulevard appeared to be an insignificant factor.

Figure Five
A Comparison of Awareness of Risk and Active about Fire Risk for
Residents Above and Below Siskiyou Boulevard

	Aware of Risk	Not Aware of Risk	Active re: Fire Risk	Not Active re: Fire Risk
Above Blvd.	49	5	43	7
Below Blvd.	43	5	40	8

Citizen Issues

General questions

“I’ve got problems with pines dying off. Will that get worse with drought?”

“There are a couple dead trees nearby. Are they on city property?”

On the Importance of Planning

“I have tons of overgrown vegetation and some dying pines. I have spent thousands of dollars to get those trimmed and they are still a fire risk. The city has no funds to help homeowners with high risk vegetation. [not true] And no one has ever contacted me about an emergency evacuation plan. My neighbors don't know each other and there are a lot of elderly people in this neighborhood. I just don't see the planning from where I live, so it feels like it's not in place.” [Top of Park Street]

On an Integrated Approach to Disaster Preparedness

In talking with residents about wildfire, they commonly included discussions about earthquakes, floods, drought, active shooters and other events. A number of people believe that Ashland is vulnerable on water supply and that water should be factored into the planning. Although no one explicitly asked the City to have an integrated approach, it is easily inferred from the broader remarks that people made. CSEPP includes this point as a recommendation in Chapter One.

“In Ashland, we are vulnerable on water. The new pipeline from Medford helped but in 30 years that may change also. We are having less snow, relying more on water run off; we are water vulnerable in late summer.” [Euclid Street]

“I’m new to town but I’d like to learn more about earthquake safety plans the city has for its residents.” [Mountain Meadows]

Are you prepared for a wildfire? Do you have Defensible Space?

When we asked that question of residents, typically there would be a pause, a guilty look that seems to say, “I should have been doing more,” but then a thoughtful repose would settle in and people would begin to list the things they have done to prepare Defensible Space around their home. Our team began to call it “the defensible space recital” because there was a pattern to the responses—pause, guilt, list of activities, conclusion that maybe it’s not so bad after all.

“Ali True came to our place a few years ago and gave us instructions and a timetable but we didn’t do it, but now that I think about it, I think we’ve done it little by little. Yes, I think it has all been done. There are Firewise signs in the area but I think they start uphill a little bit. So I’m not sure if I’m in or out.” [Roca Street]

“No, are you kidding? I’ve thought about it and have a piece of paper here about what I should do and how to organize to be prepared, but I cannot find that paper. I should find that paper and do that.” [Granite Street]

“Yes, we’re ready. We have defensible space around our home. All our neighbors take care of their yards, we all water, have lawns and shrubbery, not juniper, and keep our trees trimmed. We don’t have a bag packed yet but I know where everything is to get out.” [Quiet Village]

“My house is fire ready. I have a rock yard, I stay mowed. I have a lot of firewood but it’s not stacked next to the house. My gutters need cleaning.” [Garden Way]

Four elderly women in a senior citizen apartment complex chat about the recent fire alarm, acknowledging that they are not prepared to remove their animals, important possessions and so on. “But there hasn’t been a real fire in a long time and so I’m not worried. We won’t have to leave.”

“My canyon is thick. When Chris Chambers came up here, we looked at my erosive steep bank and he said it was better to stay out. But on other parts of my property, I have been very active. I worked with Marty recently and we marked 40 or 50 trees. I regularly work to keep material from getting too thick. My neighbors—all but one at least—have been very active in addressing fire risk.” [Elkader]

“We did work on our Defensible Space five years ago through the ODF program. I cut the brush and did the work myself. Got \$1200 back. These were the best programs; they should re-create these.” [Ashland Mine Road]

Long pause, guilt look, but then she goes down the list—“Let’ see, we’ve limbed our pines, we got rid of our shake roof, it’s a stucco and rock house, so overall it’s not so bad.” [Wimer Street]

“TID brought in a monster machine and took out a lot of vegetation. They hacked a bunch in August but this activity is not routine. They are not a responsive organization.” [Paradise Lane]

“They do a pretty good job here keeping people informed about preventing fire. By the reservoir [above Lithia Park] they do ‘slash and burn’ every year. It really helps. Those with big lots, they keep the grass down. We just bought a house and there’s a vacant lot with weeds. We’ve been cutting that lot and we bill the city. The city bills the owner. [Referring to the City’s weed abatement ordinance and enforcement]

“I’m slowly taking out all these juniper bushes, I hate them and they are not good for fire.” [Lupine Drive]

“The City has done a wonderful job in removing the brush on these hills. I have a friend who lives on Strawberry Lane and he has defensible space. They are very aware up there.”

Love of Privacy as a Deterrent to Defensible Space

“People are not going to give up their privacy and shade. They would rather take the risk.”

“My wife is usually rational but she likes to have plants close to the house for shade.”

“My place has 2 large cedar trees beside my home. I know I should limb them up but we enjoy the privacy.”

“I have too much vegetation around my house, but I just can’t bring myself to cut it. I like living in the woods.” [Active Firewise participant]

“Chris who lives below Mathew has lots of cypress. He refused to cut them down. He is reclusive. He likes his privacy. He promised to thin but didn’t.”

On Evacuation Routes

Many people seemed to dismiss questions about evacuation by saying they would just go downhill. A high level of uncertainty was expressed by residents about evacuation, and routes out of town. It is clear that the options and the contingencies are not discussed and not thought through.

“I had a friend in the recent Clearlake Fire. He said he got zero notice. He got his keys and left.”

“My evacuation route is pretty obvious—I’d go downhill.” [Ashland Mine Road]

“I’ve walked my evacuation route but couldn’t tell you what the street names are.”

“I would grab my kids, my box of important papers and head towards the evacuation route. I have been living here so long, I just have paid attention. The one I would use now is the one that goes down Mountain Street and up through Mountain Meadows. When I lived on Morton Street, I think there was a different one that I had mapped out in my mind in case I needed to use it. Could you imagine if you lived up in the canyon where Lithia Park is and in the watershed area? What a nightmare that would be getting out of there. Scary.” [East Main resident]

“I’d like to know more about evacuation routes and local community projects. FYI, fire crews are more likely to save and protect your home if they see that you’ve done your part.” [Social Media Platform]

“I never really thought about wildfire except for last summer when I saw potential evacuation notices posted at Shop N Kart. I felt nervous because I don’t have a car, just a bike.” [Store clerk]

“I would like to know more about the route for evacuation. How do I do that?” [B Street renter]

“I feel nervous about wildfires. There were helicopters this morning responding to a fire possibly. They made me think about it and I’d like to know what the city’s plan is for evacuation routes.” [Woman renter in her 40s]

“I never really think about wild fires, except for last year when lightning strikes were all around. I made a plan to stay with friends in Shady Cove if there was a need.”

“As a new homeowner I had to attend a two-hour orientation about the subdivision. A part of the orientation was the plan and procedure for fire, how to leave your condo, where to congregate and the evacuation route out of the complex.” [Mountain Meadows]

Mountain Meadows has been preparing an “Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Plan” since February, 2015 and plans to unveil it for review in the fall of 2015. The facility has a landscaping company contracted to plant and manage the property according to Firewise principles. The plan includes such provisions as drinking supply for large numbers, blankets available for large numbers, and the use of company busses.

On “Ready, Set, Go” Bags

“I have 3 cats. Can you see me trying to get them loaded for evacuation? I have extra food in my pantry but maybe this year I’ll get a Go bag so that I’ll be ready.” [Woman at AIR event]

“Yes I’m ready to bug out if I have to. My backpack is right by my car with extra clothes, water, nutritional bar. The dogs will load easily. Monty is used to being out side and so while I’ll worry, I think he would know how to find safety. That leaves Sophie. I’d grab her and put her into the carry kennel and in about 5 minutes we’d be out of here.” [Lupine Street]

“I’ve had an evacuation bag hanging next to my front door for years now, even before I moved here, when I lived in the condos over by the skate park. I went to a CERT training and while I never really did anything with CERT, I did learn about being prepared.”

“Yes I’m ready to get out if I ever needed to. I’m very active outdoors, bike, hike, so I put together evacuation things I’d need in an old bag. My house is defensible as possible. I live in HOA and they tell us what to plant. All my trees are cut back and yard watered.”

“My home is one house away from the fire that burned 13 homes in ‘09, but I still don’t have a ‘go bag’ ready. I do have pictures and important papers backed up on a cloud, so I guess I’ve begun. But you’d think after the fire that we’d be ready.” [Oak Knoll]

“Oh, I’ve never thought of things like computer passwords. How would I ever get that information if I didn’t do what you are suggesting. I better think about that. I could get a bag and put it in my trunk, I suppose.” [Salmon Festival, 10/3/15]

“There’s more we could do in my family. We do have an alternative meeting place, but I’ve still never prepared an evacuation bag. We got a pamphlet in the mail about how to do it. I also got information from Fire District #5 about how to sign up for Jackson County Alert System.” [Ashland Mine Road]

“Jackson County has a great guide filled with lots of info and supply list for a three-day kit on up to a two- week kit.” [Social Media Platform]

“Go Bag? No, please send me information. I need to do one. My son is a wildland fire fighter and nags me about being ready. In the 1997 flood, we went eight days without water. We weren’t ready.”

“I don’t have a Go bag, but my wife and I have a meeting spot.” [Granite Street]

“We made our camper our ‘Ready, Set, Go’ bag. It’s packed facing out in the garage and all we would have to do is leave. We know where our gas shut off is.” [Paradise Lane]

Education or Regulation?

The Citizen Perspective

When asked, residents resoundingly favored education over regulation. Many had stories, often related to fire and disaster preparedness, of efforts to educate residents that led to positive changes in behavior. Mayor Stromberg, for example, in a public event recently said that the majority of residents act in an appropriate manner so the City doesn’t have to regulate them or make laws to make them, stating, “You can see this in our water signs around town. Check them out...bubbles on a sign that says please conserve water.”

However, discussions were general enough that the trade-offs and hard decisions that accompany such policy choices did not have to be made. The search for the “Goldilocks” equation (“How much regulation is ‘just right?’”) continues.

Suffice to state these general conclusions about regulation resulting from this study:

1. Ashland residents value the many educational efforts of the City and voice positive appreciation for the nature programs at North Mountain Park, the classes for landscapers and builders about fire safe approaches, and CERT, CPR and other emergency-related classes.
2. Ashland residents make it clear that they support regulation when it is related to safety.
3. Residents value consultation and participation in these choices, and they appreciate when the City displays transparency on the more complex issues facing the City.

“When public safety issues are involved, regulation is the way to go.” [Oak Street]

“I can tell that people are motivated by regulation, because a lot of my business happens before the June 15 deadline of having your lawn mowed.” [Landscaper]

“It is a big educational challenge on the city’s part. People need to know that for prescribed fires, they are done only in the wet season, only with the right wind conditions, with careful perimeters and hoses at the ready, DEQ regulated. They are very different than wildfires. Regulations for prescribed fire are only increasing.” [Scenic Drive]

“The City focus should be on education.” [Widespread comment]

“The trouble with ordinances is that they are not enforced! In my neighborhood, there are people living in cars and campers and the city does nothing. They are parked on the streets for months and I don’t think they are supposed to be more than two weeks.”

“I don’t want any ordinances because that’s just more red tape but I would like for everyone to get regular letters in the mail notifying them of the importance of maintenance up keep during fire season.” [Ashland Mine Road]

“The problem is that if you don’t remove the cut grass, you then have a field that’s highly flammable. People have to know that you can’t just mow it down and leave it there. The wording on the fine should be changed to say “cut tall grass and remove grass.” [Business owner]

The Official Perspective

Some officials in the Fire Department and other agencies, along with some citizens, of course, favor regulatory action on some sources of fire risk. The Ashland Fire Marshall, for example, pointed out that Firewise landscaping and building are entirely voluntary and no enforcement can be applied. Some city and fire department staff promote Firewise and would like to see it implemented as code. Regulatory measures that are regularly talked about include

- Expanding the Wildfire Hazard Zone (see below).
- Instituting a vegetation ordinance that would prohibit fire-loving landscaping, such as juniper.
- A building ordinance that would require new residential buildings to install inside water sprinklers and boxing the eaves of roofs.

On Expanding the Wildfire Hazard Zone

Residents were not very informed about the Fire Department’s intent to expand the Wildfire Hazard Zone. When it was explained that such a move would provide the city more regulatory authority and that it would like to outlaw wood shake shingles for roofing, not a person objected. However, we know that residents are sensitive to increased regulation, as noted above, and active consultation on this question will be important.

“Expanding the wildfire zone is a good idea.” [Common]

“Am I in an area of concern, should I be concerned?” [Mountain Meadows]

Private lands in the County next to City land present a problem.

The City of Ashland has a weed abatement ordinance and program that requires compliance or fines to ensure weeds are kept to 4 inches. In 2013, it began a concerted effort to notify and seek voluntary cooperation from owners of boundary properties. The Fire Department, responsible for implementing the weed abatement program, began sending “Good Neighbor letters” to boundary property owners, asking them to do landscape treatments to match the work of neighbors who are

in city boundaries. The response rate has been 60-70%. Some people just mowed, while others did all that was asked.

“We’re new to town and don’t know anything about the wildfire plan. We have a fire hydrant right in front of our house, so we feel safe. But there is a large acreage of open space behind us of unincorporated land. I don’t know who owns the land or what fire district would respond. The brush on that property is high and a definite potential for wildfire.”
[Location unknown]

“We want a bigger fire break for the county land. Our goal is 30-40 yds. We get winds every afternoon.” [Firewise next to county lands]

“I’m backed onto a 40 acre brush field I’m concerned about. But I have a fire hydrant in my front yard, so I’m OK.”

Residents and officials identified the following areas containing untreated County land:

- The Chamber of Commerce identified Pinecrest Terrace as an example of county lands bordering the City that contain fuels not managed by the owners that pose a risk to the City of Ashland.
- The Blossom View Firewise community voiced concern about county lands with high fuel loads that are contiguous to City properties whose owners have treated their parcels according to Firewise standards.
- A business owner and store employees in the Albertson’s Shopping Center voiced concern about the properties east of Rite-Aid toward the freeway which are characterized by overgrown weeds and frequent use by transients.”
- “The large overgrown field next to RiteAid is just waiting to burn. About 30 homeless people live across the field and below the hill and they have camp fires.”
- “If you go over the hill on Wimer and you start back down it becomes county land. This area is thickly overgrown, thick with bushes.” [Wimer Street]
- “Our family just moved here. We live on Ashland Mine Road. There is 200 acres behind our house that is unincorporated. It is a worry because it is all grass.”
- “There is brush behind my business and I think it could easily go up in flames.” [A Street business owner]

Some property owners communicate directly with other landowners who may be on county land next to them about fire risk. Even though Jackson County does not regulate weeds, property owners can be induced to reduce their fuel loads.

“We made sure we had ____ and ____ on the HOA board and it’s worked really well to keep communication going on the adjacent lands. They are practical and reasonable.”

[Comment from a Firewise leader on their efforts to bring in neighboring landowners in the county into their association]

One official identified these opportunities:

“The City could look at mitigating measures for future houses located on county lands, including using more fire resistant building materials or construction techniques on houses located on county lands which border the city. It could also consider requiring a defensible space buffer strip around new PUD’s like the Normal Street proposal. If these mitigating measures are not required, they could be offered as educational materials for city homeowners.”

What About Climate Change?

A couple residents commented about climate change. Chapter Five includes comments from the GEOS Institute in Ashland regarding climate change.

“Climate change must be tiered to future scenarios. I hike Land Mine Trail, near road 2050. I can see die backs that are occurring. Some life forms are disappearing, while other places seem representative of the watershed.” [Altamont Street]

How will Animals be Cared for?

“My question is where do we take our animals? I mean, if we have to evacuate, do we take our animals to a location with us, or leave them and someone comes and collects them? There are many people living alone that have animals and can barely get around. How will they get their animals evacuated?” [Mountain Meadows]

“My sister was on the Butte Fire and the Lake fire. She said keeping weeds and brush down is big. But, more than anything she said that many, many animals got left behind because the owners couldn't get them out. She suggested I get a horse trailer because I have sheep, goats, rabbits and chickens. Make a plan for your animals.” [Social Media Platform]

“A lady just recently ordered a dog waterer that hooks onto the inside of a dog carrier so that her dog would have water and food secured in the crate if she should have to evacuate.” [Clerk, at pet supply store]

“I would like to see included in the plan if it is not already how people’s pets will be rescued if they are at work and pets are stuck at home inside.” [Mountain Meadows]

“My biggest concern is for my animals. How will they be rescued or will they be rescued? How I will get out of the middle of town if a wildfire hits? [A Street business owner]

On Observations of Fire Risk

“I see ramshackle homes that are lived in and at risk of fire. We are at risk. Some are unoccupied, some are unsafe.” [Oak Street]

“There is a ready supply of fireworks each year right outside the city limits. How can that be safe?”

On Prescribed Burns

Chapter Five reports on the effects of smoke on plaza businesses, many of whom reported loss of business from wildfire smoke in the summer of 2015 but who unanimously understood the difference between prescribed fires and wildfire smoke, and who supported the City’s prescribed fire program.

“Yes, you can tell the city that we need more prescribed burn days.”

On Fire Smoke

“We like to breathe. Why do they allow fires?” [Oak Street]

“My neighbors still burn their trash. It is still tolerated. You can smell it.”

“We have smoke here from the Siberian fire that they say could go on for seven years!”

“I have a disease that affects my lungs. When there is smoke and I walk from my car to the house, I am done! The only reason I’m still alive is that this is a supportive and caring community.”

On Trees in Lithia Park

“If we have to cut down those trees to be prepared, I’d rather have a fire come through and deal with it.” [Granite Street woman who points out her window to the trees in Lithia Park.]

On Insurance

“In the event of total loss of the home, is our personal homeowner insurance all there is? Does Mountain Meadows have community insurance coverage?” [Mountain Meadows]

On Information Needs

“I would like to see one place where I can go online to find out information. Kind of a go to emergency link?” [Social Media Platform]

Additional Opportunities Identified by Residents to Address Issues

Additional opportunities identified by residents for the city’s consideration include the following:

- Explore the use of apps for smart phones that can be downloaded and serve multiple purposes such as:
 - ✓ Ready/Set/Go instructions for evacuation bags
 - ✓ Real time updates during a disaster like the Red Cross app

- ✓ Interactive apps, whereby residents can report problem areas
- The City could produce, and subsidize, Ready/Set/Go kits for an affordable price.
- Put out reminder letters to maintain properties in preparation for the fire season.
- Include the Ashland Conservation Commission in bringing climate change considerations into the updated wildfire plan.⁹
- “I’d like the City to make a banner across the front page when it is really smoky in the valley so that residents can know whether or not there is an emergency wildfire situation nearby or that it is smoke that has blown in.”
- “Mandate non-flammable roofs.”
- Schools, community organizations, and churches could get members to create simple, inexpensive “Go” bags for the vulnerable and low income members of the community.
- In addition, it seems that people don't necessarily feel compelled to prepare personally but show a willingness to be engaged through an external source such as children or pets. Focus on children and pets could be a way to increase motivation. Young families are very oriented to their children and people. People always want to know how to best take care of their pets.
- An effective way to engage more leaders in neighborhoods could be through school presentations. Get the kids excited about the program and parents would follow their lead. Kids are great sources of inspiration. Also, consider an effort of getting older kids in Middle School and the High School to establish leadership roles in their neighborhoods to engage in wildfire preparation.

⁹ An example is a document from GEOS Institute, “Preparing for Climate Change in the Rogue Valley Basin of Southwest Oregon,” at: <https://www.ashland.or.us/Files/Climate%20Change%20in%20the%20Rogue%20Basin.pdf>.

Chapter Four

Issues and Opportunities of Publics with Specialized Interests Related to Wildfire

In this chapter, we will look at different publics and businesses in the community that have special interests related to wildfire risk and planning. These publics may require special attention in the fire plan. They include:

- Young Families
- Homeless/Transient
- Visitors/Lodging Establishments
- Renters/Property Management Companies
- Senior Citizens in Their Homes
- Vulnerable Populations
- Landscapers
- Realtors
- Building Contractors
- Nurseries
- Insurance Companies

Young Families

An effective way to engage families with young children around the discussion of wildfire preparation is to approach it through the topic of smoke and the health and safety of their children. Parents with young children are most active on the topic of wildfire when they are conversing about how to keep their children safe from the effects of smoke. This was witnessed through the social media site “Ashland Mama’s Medicine Wheel” and through many personal conversations during fire and smoke season throughout town. Many families do not feel they are at risk by living in town, but how to deal with wildfire smoke is a potent issue.

During fire season, parents were discussing on a daily basis:

- Where are the fires coming from?
- What are the best sources of information for fires?
- How do we know Ashland’s smoke quality specifically because Medford air monitoring is not accurate for Ashland?
- Where is there no smoke within 2-3 hours of driving? Is the coast smoky and where are the best places to camp there?
- How can air filtering be used to protect their children?
- What are good indoor activities to continue to entertain their little ones for the long periods of time where smoke is present?

Some ideas to engage families more in this discussion would be to:

- Have an activity table at the Farmer’s Market on Tuesdays. Many families with small children attend this after they drop their older children off at school and then throughout the summer.
- Collaborate with Scienceworks to do an exhibit/informational display about wildfires and smoke. This could engage many families in Ashland, especially when families are taking their

children to the Scienceworks because it is indoors during fire/smoke season. Also, Scienceworks could have an exhibit on wildfire that families could learn about it and then have information there on how to get involved locally.

- Have a team of people do school presentations that are exciting about wildfire preparation and send home fun worksheets and brochures for the children to do with their parents. It is a parallel process when the children find out information and share it with their parents.

Homeless/Transient

Several people mentioned their perception that transients pose a high fire risk in the watershed and around town. A few claimed that homeless people had started the major recent fires. A review of the Ashland Daily Tidings at the library revealed that three fires—the Oak Knoll fire of 2010, a fire on the plaza and one at Jackson Wellsprings—were begun by homeless or transient individuals. The Chamber of Commerce cited transients as the number one fire risk in Ashland, SOU identified fire risk from the presence of homeless people on their properties as a high concern, and Ashland Hospital identified fire risk from the presence of transients on nearby properties.

“About three years ago, a homeless person started a fire by Jackson Wellsprings and it came up over pretty close to our homes. We had to use our roof sprinklers and TID water. Thank God the TID water was still there because the helicopter had to come dip into it to put the fire out.” [Ashland Mine Road]

“A couple years ago, I noticed an empty lot on Ashland Street. It was overgrown and homeless people were hanging out there. They were having fires and cooking. I contacted the landowner who ended up taking care of it. I called the City too but got no response. I’m sure that something just came up because that is not how they operate.” [Walker School area]

“I’m concerned about the hippies that hang out on that lot by Ashland Creek on Water Street. There are a lot of weeds. I think they are a fire risk.” [Business owner]

“Vagrants live on Wrights Creek. They do a circuit from Portland to San Francisco. We always worry if they will cause problems.”

Not all homeless people are the same. Of the six people we spoke with, they themselves make distinction between the freeway transients and those that stay in the community. Within the ranks of those who stay here for longer periods, about one-third are considered mentally ill, one-third have substance abuse issues, and one-third function at a fairly high level. People in the latter category are often watching out and caring for people in the other two categories. A central value of this population is a desire to give back. They are well aware of the support provided to them in the community, and they express hurt feelings when regular people will not give them eye contact or acknowledge them. In addition, these people are very aware of fire, both its value and its risk.

“I’m always careful, manage my trash etc, but there are lots of mentally ill and addicted people and they don’t always know what they’re doing. Lock up is no answer.” [Homeless person]

“Things have gotten better with the Center. I camped a year on Dead Indian under the bridge. Then others came and began to leave trash. People complained. The Sheriff said he knew it wasn’t me, but I still had to move.” [Homeless person, referring to the Ashland Community Resource Center on Clover Lane]

Homeless people in Ashland are served by the Ashland Community Resource Center (ACRC). Operated and funded by Jackson County’s community action agency, ACCESS, as well as by Options for Homeless Residents of Ashland (OHRA), the center receives funds from Ashland’s lodging tax, the Rotary Club and others. The website states its mission:

“The Ashland Community Resource Center (ACRC) provides assistance to low income residents that could help them improve their economic circumstances. Services include case management, referral services, restroom, backpack storage, mailing address, internet, phone, and job search-related printing. Modest amounts of food, clothing, hygiene supplies, bus tokens, gas money, and cold weather gear are distributed as needed and as budget permits.”¹⁰

The ACRC had literature available to homeless people but nothing related to fire safety or evacuation.

Opportunities identified by the homeless and others include:

- Provide periodic classes for homeless people by the Fire Department that show safe handling of fire. Although fires in the watershed are not legal, they are occurring. Acknowledge the social reality that is present and work with it to provide the education needed by the homeless to be safe.
- Use the occasion of the updated fire plan to leverage a multi-agency, multi-pronged approach to manage the social problems created by the homeless including panhandling, petty crime, and loitering, while fostering coordination among social service agencies for those who need care.
- Create an asset from the presence of homeless people by enlisting them as the “eyes and ears” in the watershed, encouraging them to report unsafe conditions and rewarding their vigilance.

Visitors

The Chamber of Commerce notes that Ashland has at least 300,000 visitors each season. How does an evacuation plan factor in the presence of this number of uninformed temporary residents? Bed and Breakfast establishments say that they try to inform visitors about local conditions, including fire hazards. Should this informal notice be bumped up to include brochures and orientation classes for lodging operators? Moreover, what about hotels and campgrounds?

“If people are hiking, we tell them don’t drive in the dry grass because of fire risk. We put information in the running store and other places. We have a lot of visitors from California

¹⁰ <http://homelessoptions.org/>

and they tend to be fire aware. Deer and bear are down here because of the drought, so we caution our visitors about that also.” [Bed and Breakfast owner]

“There is no good evacuation plan for residents, businesses or visitors. We can have 2000 visitors a night at OSF. Where do they evacuate to?” [Chamber of Commerce]

Lodging Establishments

Visitors to Ashland stay at hotels and motels in town, Bed and Breakfast establishments, local campgrounds and with friends and family. The organizations responsible for coordinating these activities include:

- The Ashland Chamber of Commerce and the Ashland Visitor and Convention Bureau (<http://www.ashlandchamber.com/Splash.asp>)
- The Ashland Bed and Breakfast Network (<http://stayashland.com/>)
- The Ashland Lodging Association (<http://www.ashlandlodgingassociation.com/>)

Contacts with these organizations yielded this information:

“What is the evacuation plan for visitors in the new wildfire plan?” [Chamber of Commerce official]

“If I know people are hiking I advise them not to drive in dry grass. Plus a lot of people are from California and Nevada and they are fire conscious.” [Bed and Breakfast owner]

“We put information in the running store and other places where visitors go.”

Renters

The CSEPP team talked with 26 renters during this research and they pretty much dismissed attention to fire risks. It is worth noting that the Jackson County Fire Plan determined that rental properties frequently had significant fire risks in landscaping and building conditions, and that landlords, particularly absentee landlords, were not timely or responsive often in addressing problems. On the other hand, staff at Ashland’s weed abatement program reported high levels of response from absentee landowners related to weed abatement and fuels reduction.

“I’m a renter so I let the landlord take care of that [wildfire preparedness].” [A common reaction of renters]

“We’re renters but we want our place to look nice for the neighborhood, so we keep it trimmed, but we really don’t think about fire stuff.” [Faith Street]

“I’m a renter, it’s not my problem.” [Salmon Festival]

“There is so much information scattered between many sites. If there was more consistency, it would take the panic and time out of the search.” [Mountain Meadows]

“My landlord requires that we keep all the brush and long grass weed wacked within a certain distance of the house and the median in the alley way behind the house to create defensible space. I have a list of restrictions of what can be planted in my yard and most have renters insurance in case of natural disaster.” [B Street]

Opportunities

“You could get renters involved in the neighborhoods by asking the property manager to distribute specific neighborhood information and asking the renters to get involved.”
[Allison Street]

The Jackson County Fire Plan began to conduct workshops for renters in the steps they can take as renters to address fire risks, and a self-assessment kit for renters is available.

Property Management Companies

Three property management companies reported that prospective renters do not ask about wildfires or how to properly maintain a rental for fire readiness. At the same time, company workers seemed eager to locate and distribute educational material to renters.

“What a great idea, we never have thought of that but maybe we should.”

“I didn’t even know this material existed!”

“The only conversations I’ve ever had about wildfires are when homeowners that rent out their properties call because they see wildfire information on the news where they are located out of area and they would like to know how at risk their property is.”

“Sometimes property owners ask how to make sure their properties are properly maintained as to create ‘that space around their home.’ Then we look stuff up on the internet and use general guidelines.” [Office manager, unaware of City of Ashland’s educational material]

“Yes, we’d be very interested in this kind of material. It would be a great idea to include this information into our ‘welcome packet’ for the renters. I did not know the Fire Department had information like this.”

“Our [landscaping maintenance] people are on the job by 7 a.m. to minimize fire risk. One spark can catch a whole field on fire so they are finished by the hottest part of the day. It’s too hot, they decide to quit early in order to be safe.”

“We always abide by the rules for cutting grass and weeds.”

Senior Citizens in Their Homes

Vulnerable populations are treated below and include senior citizens who are in care facilities. The current category refers to retired people in their homes. Demographics show that Ashland’s population is aging. The dominant strategy of most social service agencies is to assist senior citizens

to “age in place,” reasoning that such approaches add to the quality of life and longevity of older people. As the number of this social group grows, attention to the needs of senior citizens may need to be included in the updated Fire Plan.

“I worry that we are such an aging population—people who are able to do less and less to maintain their homes. So many people who can’t mow their lawns anymore. They are in danger of fires or some other calamity. With taxes as high as they are here, they are vulnerable to being pushed out, too.” [Kent Street]

“It’s getting where our property is too much for us.”

Opportunity

“It’s an aging population—how do we keep seniors in their homes and still keep fire risk low? We should get work crews out of the high school to provide this community service with some sort of nominal pay.” [Paradise Lane]

Vulnerable Populations

The Jackson County fire plan received national recognition for its innovative effort to include vulnerable populations. When social service agencies came together over a period of years to develop capacity for the Jackson County wildfire plan, they determined these categories comprised Vulnerable Populations:

- Developmental disabilities
- Mental health
- No English
- Residential group homes (foster, nursing, residential care, dialysis centers)
- Homeless

The Vulnerable Populations Annex calls for a VP shelter but insurance issues were insurmountable so planning for a shelter has stalled. However, RVCOG has a complete list of facilities and their client capacity which has been included as **Attachment A**. The spreadsheet does not include retirement homes but that list is available at RVCOG. The spreadsheet does include these types of facilities:

- Adult foster homes
- Nursing homes
- Child care facilities
- Certified family child care
- Mental health foster homes
- Developmental disabilities group/foster homes
- Residential/Assisted living

The Rogue Valley Council of Governments, Senior and Disabled Services (RVCOG, SDS) agreed to serve as the coordinating body for the Vulnerable Populations planning element in Jackson County Fire Plan. Through collaboration with the many medical and emergency entities in Jackson County,

a county “Disaster Registry” was created (not to be confused with the disaster notification for cell phones).¹¹ Anyone who cannot survive on their own for 3 days or who cannot evacuate can be put on this list and they are phoned if there is a disaster. The maintenance of the Registry used to be funded through ODF but that financial support has disappeared. Responders have said that the information has to be accurate or they won’t use it. Consequently, RVCOG recruited 10 volunteers who call everyone quarterly to keep information up to date. Once the registration is completed, the person is located on a map and the information distributed to emergency responders. The application for the county Disaster Registry is included as **Attachment B**.

“We need to identify those who are less mobile and need help during emergencies, so we have a plan to evacuate them.” [Park Street]

“In the ‘97 flood, I worked with homebound people. They could not get to the porta-potties put up around town. There were about 50 such people in Ashland at that time.” [Wimer Street]

“As a senior living in low income housing, my friends and I often have to choose between breathing expensive clean air or leaving the screen door open and breathing in that horrible smoke air. It’s a constant choice between being sick from breathing in that smoke filled air or staying well by turning on the air conditioning and paying a higher electric bill. If I can’t afford the air I know I’m going to suffer and pay in doctor and prescription bills. My friend has COPD and the same thing, anyone with a higher risk of lung problems will have to weigh the money vs the health. The city offers a deferred winter rate for electricity if you qualify. You can call the city utility department and they will mail you an application.”

Opportunity

“Create a city program where young people assist the vulnerable populations. They already use criminals to clean garbage off the highways, so why couldn’t they do something like that?”

Landscapers

Ashland is filled with landscapers. Many have business locations and licenses while others operate out of a pickup truck with a lawnmower. Landscapers told us that commercial businesses do not ask about nor are interested in firewise landscaping. “They just want it to look nice,” one landscaper said. Homeowners, however, show a mixed interest in firewise landscaping—many times no interest is expressed and other times wildfire is a central factor in the discussions about landscaping. The CSEPP team talked with eight landscapers in the course of this research.

“I have been providing landscape design in the Ashland area for 10 years. Most of my clients know about fire safe landscaping or at least ask about it, especially if they are on the WUI [she used this term]. I have clients at Green Meadows and many of them have torn out their juniper and have told me that they received \$500 from the city. I think this is reimbursement

¹¹ “Region 5 Vulnerable Populations/Special Needs Branch Plan”, Rogue Valley Council of Governments, Senior and Disabled Services, 2008.

for making their property Firewise. I'm also working on a yard on Jessica Lane where the houses are small and close together. My client recently requested to have juniper planted in her back yard but I advised her to choose maybe a maple or something else. Her backyard is enclosed with an old wooden fence so I pointed out the firewise risks. This is a normal topic of conversation—drought resistant plants and fire safe landscaping.”

“I use the Shooting Star Nursery out in Central Point as do a lot of landscapers in Ashland. They have the most knowledgeable staff on everything from native plant species, to drought resistant landscaping plants, fruit trees, fire safe landscaping, etc. They also educate the public by having classes on Saturdays and sometimes there are classes on how to do fire safe landscaping. I don't think there are any local certification programs. The closest I know is Davis, California and Corvallis, Oregon.”

“People only ask me about fire safe landscaping occasionally. Most people feel confused about what is legal and what is suggested. There's not clarity about the codes. People often ask about how much space they should have between their house and trees.” [Landscaper, 20 years' experience in Ashland]

“The city's information about drought resistant plants is at odds with information about fire safe plants. They are not recommending native species and their information sources are from the Willamette Valley and Idaho. For example, fire wise trees are dogwood, birch, maple but these plants take a lot of water as you will see when you drive around Ashland right now. These trees are dying because of the drought.”

“Sometimes when I work with clients I try to help them come to their own conclusion about what to plant or what to tear out. I ask, ‘Is it going to make a bunch of dried dead leaves? Can it catch on fire easily?’”

“I have discovered that these two things motivate people the most when doing property maintenance—property values and what the neighbors think. If you don't have a lot of money, you do the bare minimum. And people really pay attention to what their neighbors would think.”

“Where do I go for better information?” [on firewise landscaping]

“Many people are tearing out their lawns and replacing it with bark/mulch but they are putting this right up against their home. It's given as a suggestion to conserve water. However, mulch is highly flammable, especially when we are having drought conditions. Any cigarette can light that stuff up right away.”

“Typically we don't get questions like that [about firewise landscaping] but more and more people are asking. Maybe not here in town as much but with people who live up in the hills. We get requests to pull out junipers and things like that.”

“Most everyone I work for is focused on water saving landscaping. The city has a list of those trees, flowers, and shrubs. I don't talk to customers about Firewise planting and I've never had a client bring it up.”

The landscaping company for Mountain Meadows is directed to provide and promote firewise landscaping and larger facilities, such as Ashland Community Hospital, make use of landscapers who routinely keep vegetation trimmed.

Opportunities

“The city should hire local experts for a brief period to integrate the landscaping lists for drought tolerant and firewise plants. Let us make a more specific list for educational materials.” [Landscaper]

“What I would really love for the city to get more into is water catchment. It’s a very gray area. Also to promote fire safe landscaping with water conservation and provide wildlife habitat for our pollinators. This helps people catch and utilize our natural rain source to keep their properties watered better. This water would be good for fire safe landscaping and creating pollinator gardens to feed our butterflies, bees and hummingbirds.”

“The City has made a great effort, but I think if it took the extra time to go the next step—let landscapers help come together with some local guidelines so people make better choices about fire safe and drought resistant landscaping. This is a good time, too, because of all the dead bushes and trees around town from the drought.”

Do classes for landscapers in both English and Spanish.

Explore the codes and guidelines regarding landscaping and see if confusing items can be reconciled in order to provide better clarity in the language.

Realtors

CSEPP talked with seven realtors. Realtors told us that they do not initiate conversations with clients about wildfire risk. When asked if they thought realtors could be induced to play an educational role to prepare new homeowners to the reality of wildfire risk, we received a resounding, “No.” “It’s all about money,” one person said. “They are not going to jeopardize a sale by bringing up a negative.”

“In the nine years I did real estate, there was never a discussion with a potential buyer of wildfire risk. It just didn’t come up. It wasn’t as dry in those days, of course. Maybe now the realtors are talking more about it.”

Opportunities

An opportunity identified by a realtor is to develop a designation or a certification, like they do with agents who have been certified as an “Eco-broker.” It is the premier green designation program for real estate professionals that in turn helps consumers take advantage of energy efficiency and environmentally-sensitive design. Usually, brokers have one or two agents who are certified.

“Why not realtor certification in Firewise?”

Another opportunity is to keep inquiring among realtors for a champion of this interest so that appropriate education can be achieved. In other settings, CSEPP has worked with realtors to provide an educational brochure to prospective home buyers that they were more than willing to hand out.

Building Contractors

Three building contractors were contacted in this research. All three stated that they follow state and county codes. While builders would respond to requests for Firewise construction, their customers do not ask. No one had seen a Firewise builder's guide.

“I follow the city and state building codes. I am not aware of the Firewise building brochure you're talking about. But I would guess that those would be included in the city and other regulations that I have to follow.”

“Mostly the home owner tells me what they want and there is always a budget to follow.”

Nurseries

CSEPP spoke with three workers at two nurseries, Valley View Nursery and Ashland Greenhouse. One worker from Valley View Nursery said that 4 employees went to the Firewise class two or three years ago, the class was very beneficial, and hoped Firewise would hold the class again. Both companies said that customers are looking for drought tolerant plants and do not bring up a wish for firewise plants. One company has a list if they are asked. Both companies said they would attend future classes and would appreciate any information on firewise landscaping.

Insurance Companies

Four insurance companies were contacted in Ashland through the course of this research. They reported that protection classes (the “ISO rating”) go from 10 to one with one being the best. The ISO rating determines insurance rates and is based on a variety of criteria such as the presence of fire hydrants, distance from a fire station, if the fire station is voluntary, and many others.

In recent years, in response to the increased frequency and intensity of wildfires, many companies have begun to require inspections and homeowner measures to reduce fire risk.

“Our company has a code that requires us to look at properties under its “Guidelines for Wildfire,”—how close the shrubs are to the house, distance from trees, driveway width. We don't get a lot of those properties. I did a home recently ‘way up’ and the owners were very aware of fire issues.”

“There is a wildfire checklist routine we use in our company. Customers are eligible for a discount if they are within 1000 feet of a fire hydrant. If someone is in a wildfire zone, we inspect their house and property [for fire safe conditions].” [This person did not say how the wildfire zone was determined.]

“Five or six years ago, we started the ‘Wildfire Brush Inspection Program.’ If you are uphill on a slope, we require greater clearance so we can do a 100-200’ fire break. Ashland has a good Fire Class rating. If the locale’s ISO rating is greater than 6, we implement wildfire inspection. Ashland’s ISO is 3 which is good. We do non-wildfire inspection in the city limit. If we see overhanging brush or weeds, we can say something about it. No discounts are given. We anticipate that ISO ratings will come down. Talent is ISO 5 and Medford 4. When we determine the Wildfire Inspection Zone, this designation would include more restrictions. Also, it may be that your property is not overgrown, but if you can’t get your neighbor to be responsive, you are stuck without insurance. I had this case recently in Butte Falls.”

“We use the term ‘wildfire brush zone.’ If house is in the zone then the brush must be cleared 100-150 feet from the house. Some exceptions are granted if the trees are trimmed. These steps are required to get the policy. It’s an incentive to remove brush.”

“If a home is in the wildfire zone, we have to prove it has defensible space. We must prove there is no risk.”

Opportunities

Insurance companies asked for consultation from the City regarding the proposal to expand the Wildfire Hazard Zone.

“If all the city is in the zone, every house will have to be looked at. It slows the policy which is the real problem with us. The inspections are routine but the slow pace would be a frustration.”

Chapter Five

Concerns and Opportunities Identified by Organizations and Government Agencies Regarding the Updated Fire Plan

This chapter will review the organizations and government agencies that have interests regarding the update of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Organizations

Southern Oregon University
The Chamber of Commerce
Ashland Community Hospital
American Red Cross
Alzheimer's Association
Recology
Mount Ashland Ski Area
GEOS Institute

Government Agencies and Programs

The Ashland Fire Department
The Ashland Firewise Program
The Ashland CERT Program
Oregon Department of Forestry's (ODF)
Cohesive Wildfire Strategy Planning Committee

Organizations

Southern Oregon University (SOU)

The Director of Campus Public Safety at SOU described the current efforts to develop disaster and evacuation plans capable of serving the entire campus. A Crisis Management Plan is in place, and an evacuation plan will be in place in the next two years. It will reflect an integrated approach to deal with wildfire, earthquake, flooding and an active shooter. Currently the stadium is rated for earthquakes and is the designated on-campus site for evacuation. When the new gymnasium on campus is completed in two years, it will be earthquake rated as well and will become an on-campus evacuation site. There appears to be no disaster preparedness material available for students.

There are three concerns raised by SOU for consideration in the update to the wildfire plan:

1. There is currently no off-campus evacuation site, for which SOU would like to coordinate with the City of Ashland to accomplish in the wildfire plan.
2. A piece of property owned by SOU called Roca Canyon, directly above the campus, is slated to become a park with an arboretum. Currently there are many transients who make use of the area, and SOU is concerned about the possible fire risk and potential liability issues posed by this activity.
3. The railroad easement has a lot of grasses that create a risk for wildfire. The railroad has been unresponsive. Communication with the Fire Department to address this concern would be appreciated.

SOU has continued with its plans to begin a biomass plant to serve campus energy needs using biomass material from forest waste and other sources. Issues about air quality have surfaced and have not yet been resolved. This facility could conceivably interface with the AFR project to provide material for energy production.

The Chamber of Commerce

The Ashland Chamber of Commerce has been involved in stewardship of the watershed for over 100 years. In fact, its predecessor organization, the Ashland Board of Trade asked for federal protection of Ashland’s water supply in 1892.¹² The chamber currently has 700 members and includes the Ashland Chamber Visitor and Convention Bureau that drives tourism support activities in the city.

Two Chamber of Commerce officials described the role of their organization in community life and in promoting the interests of Ashland businesses. Given the special situation of Ashland in a forested environment, the presence of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Southern Oregon University, the growing economic importance of outdoor recreation, and the aging population of the city, they see themselves as champions for the quality of life and promoters of the many amenities of Ashland. “It’s all about our setting—a small town ringed by mountains—and the importance of protecting the natural and physical setting of Ashland,” one official said. In a setting such as this, supporting business means supporting the amenities of the area and the quality of life features that make Ashland such a livable community. The health and safety of residents is related to tourist satisfaction.

This perspective is reflected in Chamber activities in the last several years which include:

- Active support for the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project and for the importance of prescribed burns;
- Creation of a watershed and street map of Ashland that highlights outdoor recreation opportunities, the environment, Ashland’s water supply, fire and the AFR Project;¹³
- Support of disaster preparedness activities such as the Ashland is Ready (AIR) event that was held in September, 2015.
- Efforts to “grow the younger demographic through an outdoor culture.”

In their experience, the local awareness of wildfire risk has grown tremendously over the last 20 years which they attribute to the high value of education and promotion. At the same time, they point to the rapid population turnover in the community even though the rate of growth is about 1%. Consequently, the need for citizen and business education is ongoing. Because the City’s water conservation strategy was so successful in promoting volunteer efforts in 2015, they believe the program could be a model for wildfire education and planning.

Critical risk factors from the Chamber’s perspective that are warranted for attention in the Wildfire Plan are these:

1. The Chamber leadership believes that the presence of transients in the community presents a significant wildfire risk. This concern is considered widespread and citizens throughout the

¹² City of Ashland, 2014. The Ashland Map [Brochure]. Ashland Chamber of Commerce, Ashland, OR. 2 p. <http://www.ashlandchamber.com/Page.asp?NavID=1200>, as cited in Chapter One of the draft Ashland Forest Plan, 2015.

¹³ Ibid.

community report fire risky behaviors of this group. Moreover, transients caused trouble all season. Young women don't feel safe, and some tourists said they would not come back. The issue is complicated by the fact that no one claims responsibility to address the issue so there is no leadership. The Chamber will participate in the City Council's Study Session in November, 2015, devoted to the topic.

2. The Greenway and other lands in the County that lack vegetation ordinances and enforcement. There is smoking, camping, motorized vehicles along the Greenway and it is considered unsafe. Sweeps are done by the police but they are not strategic. There is no good management plan. The Greenway represents a community and visitor resource but who is going to manage it? How do we address long-term maintenance? Get the County to take care of County lands within or bordering the City, like Pinecrest Terrace, and others.
3. The Ashland Forest Resiliency Project (AFR) should be expanded to the whole watershed.
4. Interstate 5 is a significant risk because of amount of traffic it carries and the potential of cigarettes to cause a fire. "The Oak Knoll fire showed that the highway is not a barrier to fire."
5. There is no good evacuation plan for residents, businesses or visitors. We can have 2000 visitors a night at OSF. Where do they evacuate to? What about campgrounds?

The Chamber of Commerce ideas for assisting in the wildfire update are these:

1. Officials said they would like a short training session for businesses like, "Five things a business can do to prepare for wildfire," or "Planning for Disaster." The Chamber could sponsor it. The course could cover storing data off-site; making sure fire insurance is received for leases put out; doing a self-assessment. "Make it easy for members—show them what has to be done. Check with the Fire Chief on these things."
2. How can business help with public education? The Chamber has resources that they can direct to help, such as marketing and media relations support, as well as ties to other community leaders.

Smoke Effects on Ashland Businesses in Fire Season 2015

The Chamber of Commerce reported that six OSF performances were canceled in the 2015 season which resulted in lower taxes for lodging and food/beverages. Last minute travelers cancelled. CSEPP contacted six businesses on the plaza, in addition to the Chamber of Commerce, to discuss the smoke effects of this year's fire season. Business owners understood the difference between the smoke caused by wildfires burning elsewhere and the City's prescribed fire burning as part of the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project (AFR). Almost to a business, they said prescribed fires, and their smoke, are a "non-issue." Several business owners voiced support for prescribed burns. Here is what they said about the effects of the smoke during this season:

"Outdoor seating is 1/2 my business, it came to a screeching halt. I depend on summer business. My employees were coughing and hacking. People were cranky and complaining."
[Restaurant owner]

"One month was pretty bad for smoke but we didn't lose business. OSF shut down a few times." [Restaurant worker]

"On a nice day, business goes on and on. When it was real smoky, we'd have a rush hour but then it would be finished. OSF loss was not huge. I lost maybe 10% during that period."

People sat inside and not outside. With climate change, this won't get better." [Restaurant owner]

"Smoke did not affect us much. OSF shut down sometimes but it did not affect us."

"The smoke did not affect us because we don't have outdoor seating. Marguerite [Ashland Fire Marshall] comes through here once a year and makes sure all is well."

"We don't see much effect unless OSF shuts down, then we'd notice." [Worker at restaurant with outdoor seating]

"Yes, we saw less business with the smoke. When OSF was down there would be fewer people. The city has done a great job on the prescribed fires." [Retail store owner]

Business Concerns

"I don't know anything about a plan for here. I do know that someone came and told the owner that we should put a hydrant back there so we did. But what happened when there was that fire 3 years ago? The fire trucks came and there was no water coming out of the hydrant! They had to dip from the TID instead to put the fire out." [Jackson Wellsprings]

Ashland Community Hospital

The Chief Engineer at Ashland Community Hospital stated that the hospital contracts with a landscaping firm which is very diligent in keeping things trimmed up. With lots of asphalt and lots of irrigated grass year-round (partly to discourage rodents), they feel their fire risk is fairly low. Because evacuation is not practical, the hospital's policy is to defend the building according to a zoning scheme, and their plan is to evacuate zone by zone within the hospital, for flood, fire and even smoke. Two management concerns were raised:

"The houses around us have problems. There's lots of over planting and overgrown areas."

"Don't forget that the last few big fires were either arson or transient caused. Like the Siskiyou Fire and the railroad tunnel on Mt. Ashland which collapsed from the fire that was started."

American Red Cross

The local Red Cross office, located in Medford, gets calls by the Fire Department and Mental Health during a wildfire and other disasters. After a fire, it is at least two or three days before people can get back in their houses because of smoke effects. Mobile homes are most often condemned because of the vapors and chemicals released by a fire. The Red Cross is able to deploy a Disaster Action Team that helps people deal with the disorientation that often accompanies disaster. Team members secure money for food, clothes, tools that might be needed for a job, locate photographs, and so on.

The Red Cross also has an “I’m OK” program where relatives can call in and check on family members in a disaster area. In addition, there is a Red Cross app available for disasters. It provides real time updates on the status of a disaster and puts out advisories.

Alzheimer’s Association

Alzheimer’s Association is a national organization based in Chicago, and its Oregon office is located in Portland. According to the Program Director of that office, there are two memory care places in Ashland, Skylark and a new one being built near Lithia Park. Each facility has its own individualized plan for emergency response, including wildfires, and there is also a state protocol that is currently being revised. At the state level there is a registry that each facility must keep current for the patients under their care. This also includes developmentally disabled people. The registry tracks where people live and the care that is needed for each individual. In the event that there was an emergency evacuation or wildfire and some people were unable to be located, the state would call the local program person to locate the persons in the registry. The Alzheimer’s Association provides trainings to police officers and community members about how to approach a patient so as not to scare and confuse them. Their staff has expressed a willingness to work with local groups to improve coordinated care for this population.

“Call the Safe Return and Comfort Zone programs at our agency and see how these programs would work in the event of a wildfire emergency.”

“Sixty percent of caregivers for Alzheimer’s patients are elderly themselves and often have health issues.”

Recology, Inc.

Recology is an employee-owned private company in a franchise relationship with three municipalities, one of which is Ashland. It is a waste management company that includes resource recovery and recycling. Its activities which support the mission of the CWPP include:

1. The Firewise Clean-up in the spring for the last four or five years. The events provide an in-town drop off spot for yard debris and free dumping service.
2. It sponsors a year-round Debris Program in which twice a month for a fee green waste is picked up at the homes of subscribing residences—“If it grows, it goes.”
3. It sponsors two free leaf drop days in November and December. Leaves that are blown into the streets are wasted because they cannot be composted when combined with the trash collected by the street sweepers. Ecologically, it is better if residents collect yard leaves on site through the available recycling opportunities.
4. Recology also has pre-paid leaf bags.

A Recology official stated that weeds are well-mowed in Ashland because of the City’s ordinance requiring weed abatement. An opportunity is to include education in the Fire Plan about the proper treatment of leaves.

Mount Ashland Ski Area

The manager of the Mt. Ashland Ski Area discussed strategies of the Ski Area in dealing with the low snow loads of recent years. The organization currently has proposals under review with the Forest Service to bring summer visitors to the mountains through hosting weddings and the development of zip lines, disc golf and bungee jumping. The Ski Area has the following interests and concerns regarding the update of the wildfire plan:

- There are areas of high fuel loads in the buffer areas of the ski slopes and at the base of the ski lifts. Is any assistance available in terms of fuels reduction dollars?
- Concerns have been raised about increased fire risk in the summer from weddings and other events. Can the Ski Area get help on defensible space?
- The staff need education on fire risks.

GEOS Institute

GEOS Institute in Ashland is a national organization devoted to “using science to help people predict, reduce, and prepare for climate change.”¹⁴ The organization’s staff scientist shared these thoughts about accommodating climate change in the new fire plan:

- The Rogue Valley should expect hotter conditions with more extremes, which means we could get more vegetation growth, followed by extreme drought and high fire risk. Our future is longer, hotter summers with the potential for wetter winters and more large storms.
- Climate change affects vegetation distribution. Existing vegetation will become stressed. Fire and disease will be the main drivers of the shift from one vegetation type to another.
- Climate is the primary driver for wildfire in many systems, yet most of the focus is on fuels. For example, mid to upper elevation forests characteristically burn in mixed-severity fire mosaics that are largely weather driven events less responsive to fuel reduction.¹⁵
- The maintenance of the fuel treatment areas in the Ashland watershed cannot be assured because of the vagaries of funding. So we are thinning with no assurance that we can return, creating a false sense of security. For example, when madrone stems are cut, they sprout numerous new stems—sometimes 8-10. Those grow back quickly and where there was a single madrone, there is now have large and bushy madrone.
- The most important thing we can do to protect people and resources from wildfire is to lower our emissions drastically and immediately, and to work with other towns, states, and nations to do the same. We need to transition away from fossil fuels now, not later. This will protect far more people over the long run than our futile attempts at controlling fuels.

¹⁴ <http://www.geosinstitute.org/>

¹⁵ Two sources for this perspective are: <http://www.esajournals.org/doi/abs/10.1890/07-1183.1>; and, <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/313/5789/940.short>

- Finally, we need to protect mature forests in the Pacific Northwest, which store a LOT of carbon and also create moist and cool microclimates, making them less prone to wildfire and important for carbon uptake on an international scale.

Opportunity

“We need to stop encouraging people to build houses in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). I have been watching extravagant house after extravagant house go up at the top of Park Street. Someone will have to protect those houses when (not if) fires come. And with these hotter and more extreme fires, the firefighters' lives are at risk.” [Climate change scientist, GEOS Institute]

Government Agencies

The Ashland Fire Department

Ashland residents mostly had words of praise for the Ashland Fire Department—for its many programs supporting citizen education and fire prevention like CERT and Firewise, its professionalism and effectiveness in fire suppression events, and even for the comfort it provides victims in times of crisis.

“The Fire Department is great. It’s a wonderful department.” [Widespread comment]

“The Fire Department gets good ratings from me. I trust them. I witnessed an accident here and the police were doing their usual strutting and barking orders, but the firemen were comforting victims and being helpful.” [B Street]

Only two issues were discovered regarding fire department operations:

“The City did not manage traffic coming into the area during the 2009 Siskiyou Fire. There should have been police to stop entry to area.” [Greenmeadows Way]

“Someone turned off the TID water flow. I was about 30 minutes into fighting the fire in my back yard. I’d climbed onto my roof and put a sprinkler up there and helped my neighbor put a sprinkler on his roof. We were wetting down the area when suddenly the TID water quit flowing. I was stunned. Of course, we continued to fight the fire, changing the hoses and using the city water. But basically we were unable to defend our space. Access to city water was minor, as the hose bibs around our houses are TID hooked up. This was investigated but I never learned how it was resolved.. I don’t know if this could happen again.” [Siskiyou Fire related]

The Ashland Fire Department has two programs of importance to wildfire preparedness and prevention, the Firewise Program and the CERT program

The Ashland Firewise Program

The website for the national Firewise program, sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), states:

“[The] Firewise Communities Program encourages local solutions for safety by involving homeowners in taking individual responsibility for preparing their homes from the risk of wildfire. Firewise is a key component of Fire Adapted Communities – a collaborative approach that connects all those who play a role in wildfire education, planning and action with comprehensive resources to help reduce risk.”¹⁶

To become a certified Firewise “community”, residents must meet the following requirements:

- Enlist a wildland/urban interface specialist to complete a community assessment and create a plan that identifies agreed-upon achievable solutions to be implemented by the community.
- Sponsor a local Firewise Task Force Committee, Commission, or Department which maintains the Firewise Community/USA program and tracks its progress or status.
- Observe a Firewise Communities/USA Day each spring that is dedicated to a local Firewise project.
- Invest a minimum of \$2 per capital annually in local Firewise projects. (Work by municipal employees or volunteers using municipal or other equipment can be included, as can state/federal grants dedicated to that purpose.)
- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA that documents continuing compliance with the program.¹⁷

As of 2010, Firewise had over 700 communities participating in over 40 states. In Ashland, under the direction of the Fire Department, there are 23 Firewise “communities” which are neighborhood areas, and six more are pending in various stages of development as local residents work toward certification of their neighborhood areas. The six pending neighborhood areas are: Ravenwood, the Cottages, Crestview, Chataqua Place, Henley and Woodland Drive.

That program in the past has had grants which allowed Firewise to compensate property owners for Firewise activities. Currently, ongoing funding is not assured but the Fire Department has other grants pending that may provide financial support for fuels reduction work.

The CSEPP team talked with people representing the following Firewise communities: Oak Knoll Meadows, Blossom View, Clay Tres, Granite Street, Mountain Ranch, Strawberry Lane Meadows, Mountain Meadows, Tolman Creek, and Paradise Lane.

“I work with several Firewise communities up above the boulevard and I am very familiar with them. This program has been very valuable to our town.” [Landscape]

¹⁶ <http://www.firewise.org/about.aspx>

¹⁷ <http://www.ashland.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=13509>

“I tried to organize people in my neighborhood but no one was interested. With everything going on [with recent fires], I was surprised and disappointed.” [Meadow Mountain condo association]

“About Firewise, I called the city and had someone come out. He said we have some high risk vegetation, but that there was no money to help with its removal. He has never come back to our neighborhood.” [Park Street]

“We’ve been talking Firewise for a while in my neighborhood. I think it’s going to go this time. It’s fall and people are active in their yards and will focus on Firewise.” [Crestview Street]

“My wife and I have frequent talks about ‘preparedness.’ I showed her how to turn off the gas valve and left a wrench for easy access. I placed a hose on the hot water heater, so I have easy access to drinking water if needed. We cut our juniper back and will be cutting out more. I’d like to get a couple weeks’ supply of food but I haven’t done that yet.” [Oak Knoll Firewise member, on the benefits of Firewise training.]

“I got people going. I went to the Firewise people, got in touch with ODF who gave us instructions. We did a lot of trimming and cut several trees. We got a guy to do the pruning. He cut me a hole in a tree for owl habitat. All my neighbors participated except the new house.” [Granite Street Firewise]

“Firewise people often say, ‘I’m not telling you you have to do this.’”

“The HOA walked the whole neighborhood and identified problem areas with combustibles and landscaping. We made a list of all the things to take care of. Firewise was in a coaching role, how we can do it. It worked very well.” [Mountain Meadows condo association]

“I have removed all my private landscaping and replaced it with bushes and landscaping that is more water conservative and fire friendly. I got \$400 from the City of Ashland for my expenses. All of Mountain Meadows is changing the landscaping.”

My neighbors are all in the Firewise program. We’re very close to the forest. The neighbors are OK, most are good and fire ready.” [Strawberry Meadows]

On Expanding the Firewise Program

Individuals in the following areas stated that they would be interested in starting a Firewise program in their neighborhoods:

- Beach Street
- Lit Way by Walker School
- Upper Wimer Street
- Avery Street
- Crestview Street

“I’d like to help get a Firewise going here. Look at the problems here. The neighbors below me have sumac on their roof followed by cedar and Leland cypress. Above me are thick bushes.” [Wimer Street]

“I think my block would be a good Firewise neighborhood. I’d participate in that.” [Avery Street]

“I have two pine trees across from me that would be a hazard in a fire. I would like to move further with Firewise.” [Crestview Drive]

“I wanted to help my community. That’s why I joined Firewise. The neighbors were easy, they wanted to do their part.” [Crestview Street]

Firewise Issues

The Firewise program received overwhelming support from Ashland residents with whom we spoke. Residents appreciated the common sense, flexible, cooperative and voluntary nature of the assistance, as well as the financial support.

CSEPP discovered a few individuals who were new to Ashland, lived in a Firewise neighborhood, yet were not being educated about Firewise. If this dynamic is widespread, it may indicate that the program has to incorporate a “welcome wagon” function.

“I’m in a Firewise area over at _____. They had the fire department come and create defensible space. They did a horrible job and cut all kinds of things at angles. I had to hire someone to come and clean up the messy job they performed.”

“We got \$1500 to remove the blackberries but now they’re back three years later. What did we accomplish?”

“What about maintenance? We went to all this work, got rid of so much of the fuels material, but how do we keep it up?”

“I’m in the neighborhood behind the library. I called the fire station last year to get an assessment of defensible space around my home. I made an appointment and no one ever showed up or called to follow up. My house has defensible space. I’m mostly worried about my neighbors that do not.”

Opportunity

“Maybe the Firewise program could hold an event to offer education. What do you have to do to be a Firewise community? The City of Ashland needs to bump it up!!!” [Social Media Platform]

The Ashland CERT Program

The CERT program, under the direction of the Fire Department, is sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), whose website states:

“The **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community.”¹⁸

From the Ashland CERT website comes this quote:

“Created in 1999 after the community experienced a severe flood on New Year day 1997, Ashland’s CERT program has trained over 600 volunteers to be better prepared to survive a disaster making Ashland’s program on the most successful in the nation. CERT has been mobilized thirty-four times for activities ranging from managing emergency shelters to evacuating residents during wild fires. CERT’s competency is ‘preparing our community to endure disasters.’”¹⁹

The program has one paid staff whose position is contained in the city budget. The program itself is funded by federal Department of Homeland Security through Oregon’s Office of Emergency Management, as well as by Ashland taxpayers. Its training covers such topics as disaster preparedness, fire safety, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue, terrorism, and disaster psychology.

CERT involves citizens in two ways. An “all hazards” training allows volunteers to augment first responders in a disaster through support functions such as radio, traffic control, and supervised home evacuations. In addition, CERT operates a neighborhood program through its Map Your Neighborhood project in which residents in a neighborhood come together for 20 hours of training that determines a neighborhood gathering place, reviews the steps to secure the safety of nearby residents, and other factors of importance to residents such as pet evacuation..

The Ashland is Ready (AIR) event of September 12, 2015, sponsored by CERT, attracted an estimated attendance of 400.

Comments from residents:

“CERT is a fine organization. They have effectively raised awareness about disaster preparations.” [Oak Street, common comment]

¹⁸ <http://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams>

¹⁹ <http://www.ashland.or.us/Page.asp?NavID=541>

“CERT has had good people over the years. ____ ____ did very well to organize neighborhoods into plans for emergencies that were very complete. They included medications for those who would need them such as seniors and the disabled.”

“There are few opportunities for young people in CERT. There’s one guy at the high school—he was my student in kindergarten!—that feels good. We need more opportunities for this generation to learn how to do community.” [Quiet Village]

“Several years ago, the CERT director started a canvassing program. I think they talked with 3000 people. It was about what to do if the dam broke. It was a good effort. It left a whole cadre of volunteers.”

“Map your Neighborhood is so valuable because it gets neighbors talking and this is where more things happen. It is very practical. In case of an emergency, it will be your neighbors that help you. Emergency personal might not be available or may take a long time to respond.” [Allison Street CERT]

“CERT should only encompass a block radius, about 20 people. Beyond that, it is uncomfortable to give out private info to people beyond your neighborhood that you don’t see every day. There is a block up by Sherman that is organized as a CERT and they have somewhere between 60-80 people, but these people have been doing block parties and have had long-time residents so it might work better for them.” [CERT member]

I have a very active CERT group in my neighborhood and the lead gathers the neighbors together at his home to talk about disaster plan. Some of the plan is to put a sign in window if you are ok, or if you have a plan to free animals. The CERT yearly meeting helps me feel more prepared.”

“Terri Eubanks of CERT came and did an emergency planning meeting with the workers at Standing Stone. This was very beneficial to begin thinking about how to plan for emergency evacuations. Family plan, phone tree, water, and gas shut off were all discussed.” [B Street]

“I’m going to contact CERT and find out who their neighborhood member and whether there is neighborhood plan. This feels very important.”

Issues

“The Map Your Neighborhood is a horrible name. It should be changed because people don’t understand it. It is also not a well-publicized program and it should be because of its value.”

Opportunities

“A good way to get buy in into the Map Your Neighborhood program would be to color code a city map of all the neighborhoods that are spearheading this and then show the blank ones and ask who would like to step up in each neighborhood. It’s almost like people would feel the need to be responsible if they saw that others were doing this.”

Cohesive Wildfire Strategy (CWS) Planning Committee

This group has recently assembled the many partners in the Jackson County Fire Plan in order to take advantage of new learning, new funding streams and a new framework for addressing fire risk in the U.S. West. They are a collaborative, science-based group that will be promoting fuels reduction projects throughout the County. Its vision is “To safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a nation, to live with wildland fire.” The Forestry Division of the Ashland Fire Department is in touch with members of this group.

The CWS Planning Committee Objectives are:

- Develop and implement public outreach and education (O&E) strategies targeting the need for forest ecosystem restoration, fuels management/maintenance practices (understory thinning, prescribed burning, etc.), and the need for the public to assume responsibility for the stewardship and protection of their lands and homes.
- Engage and support communities, private industry, local government, and land management agencies to build capacity for successfully implementing landscape restoration projects across adjoining ownerships (public and private).
- Locate and develop fuels project demonstration areas, to provide the public visual examples of the different practices used for fuels mitigation and landscape restoration.
- Expand public O&E programs targeting the components of a Fire-Adapted Community (home preparedness, planning, partnerships, etc.) and its concepts, to all fire districts/departments, local governments, agencies, and residents of Southwest Oregon.
- Increase public awareness and understanding of wildland fire threats to communities, and the need for mutual-aid and interagency wildfire responses.
- Identify and utilize any funding sources available, to aid with the successful completion of CWS activities and projects (public education, landscape restoration, promoting FAC concepts, equipment to increase capacities, use of volunteers, etc.).
- Develop consistent training and opportunities for volunteers used in non-suppression activities (CERT, Citizens Fire Academy, etc.).
- Increase public awareness about emergency evacuation protocols and notification systems.
- Establish, increase, and maintain capacities for a collaborative planning process during all CWS activities in Southwest Oregon, including developing effective communications between all partners.

This group is new and has no track record. However, given the positive and collaborative history of the Jackson County Fire Plan, this latest iteration could prove to be an able and valuable partner in Ashland’s updated CWPP.

Attachment A

A List of Facilities Housing Vulnerable Populations in Ashland

Attachment A: A Listing of Facilities Housing Vulnerable Populations in Ashland

Facility Type/Name	Street Address	Capacity
Adult Foster Homes		
BARTON, JESSICA	884 CLAY ST	Not listed
BARTON, JESSICA	1115 OAK ST	
BELL, LOLITA	315 YORK ST	
CORDIZAR, CLARITA	355 YORK ST	
EASTMAN, GEOFFREY	700 REITEN DR	
FARMER, KATHY	3319 HIGHWAY 66	
FRIED, YVONNE	1320 PROSPECT ST	
PERRY, MATTIE	733 FAITH AVE	
PETERSEN, KATHLEEN	714 GLENDALE AVE	
PITTS, MARIAN	314 W NEVADA ST	
Nursing Homes		
Linda Vista Nursing & Rehab Center	135 MAPLE ST	87
Child Care Facilities		
Ashland Family YMCA CDC	540 YMCA Way	39
Children's World Bilingual Montessori Presch & Kinderg	320 Beach St	80
Ashland Head Start	421 Walker Ave	19
YMCA - Walker Kids Club	364 Walker Ave	60
Explorers	705 Helman St	28
Children's World Montessori - Main Street	175 N Main St	18
Certified Family Child Care		
The Secret Garden	782 Park St	16
Puderbaugh, Diane	1400 Tolman Creek Rd	12
Noyes, Darcy Rae	384 Cambridge St	10
Benegas, Linda Mary	420 Helman St	10
Wilson, Teri Lee	152 Helman St	10
Thommen, Arlene Bernardette	362 Tudor St	10
Meyer, Dimna Jatzive	678 Park St	10
Danforth, Lola Conde	518 Auburn St	10
No Name	740 Salishan Ct	10
Mental Health Foster Home		
Smith, Tim & Rebekah	275 MYER CREEK RD	3
Developmental Disabilities Group/Foster		
Bianca Home	192 STEINMAN DR	1
Brann Home	402 N LAUREL ST	2
Lindley House	842 MICHELLE AVE	5
Miller House	290 W NEVADA ST	5
Neet Home	375 KENT ST	3
Pinel House	135 ALMEDA DR	5
Residential/Assisted Living		
Brookdale Ashland	548 N MAIN ST	45
Skylark Assisted Living/ Memory Care	900 SKYLARK PL	95

Attachment B

Registration form for Jackson County Disaster Registry
For Vulnerable Populations



Jackson and Josephine Counties, Oregon

Would you need special help in an emergency?

You might want to apply to be in the Disaster Registry if--in the case of a flood, forest fire or other disaster--you or someone you care for would:

- Need outside help to safely leave your home during a disaster;
- Be in jeopardy if you stayed in your home, without assistance, for three days;
- Need special notification about the need for evacuation, due to impairment.

The Disaster Registry provides the names and locations of people who need special assistance to fire, police, health and rescue workers during disasters. Being on the Disaster Registry does not guarantee that you'll get help first in a disaster. There are so many needs during a disaster, that our firemen and police can't help everyone at once. But if your name is in the Disaster Registry, they will know of your need for special assistance.

Please remember: even if you are on the Disaster Registry, you should call 911 if you find yourself in a life-threatening situation.

If you want to be on the Disaster Registry, or if you want someone for whom you are legally responsible to be on it, please complete and sign the attached form. Once we receive your application, it may take three months or more for your information to be available to rescue workers.

After completing the registration form, please keep this letter for your records.

*You may also register on-line at
<http://jackson.or.networkofcare.org/aging/home/index.cfm>.*

Be Prepared yourself! Remember: whether a person stays at home during a disaster or goes to a shelter, there are certain steps he or she can do to prepare. For instructions about creating a “72-hour Kit” for use if you must stay at home, see your county’s Family Emergency Preparedness Handbook. You can pick up a free copy from your local county or law enforcement office.

If you are a person who has special needs because of a disability you should make a list ahead of time of items to be packed quickly in case you must leave your home if there is a disaster. Keep a backpack or small suitcase available to pack on short notice, if necessary, with a list, customized to your needs, similar to the one below:

- § Personal hygiene items and a change of clothing
- § An extra set of keys for your house and car
- § Cash, a credit card, and change for a pay phone
- § Your insurance agent's name and phone number
- § Special needs such as eyeglasses, hearing aid batteries, incontinence supplies, walker, cane, wheelchair—all labeled with your name and phone number
- § A copy of your health information card
- § A few days worth of essential medications and, if you use it, cylinders of oxygen or other essential supplies.

You will be contacted by us on a quarterly basis to make sure your information is current.

If you have any questions about the Disaster Registry, please call Senior & Disability Services of Rogue Valley Council of Governments at (541) 664-6674.

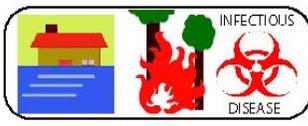
***Please complete and return the attached application form to:
SDS RVCOG, P.O. Box 3275, Central Point, OR 97502.***

PLEASE DATE AND KEEP THIS NOTICE FOR YOUR RECORDS

Date of application_____



Disaster Registry



Think Ahead. Be Prepared.

Jackson and Josephine Counties, Oregon

Application

1/11 ver.

Date _____

Name: Last _____ First _____

Street # _____ N S E W _____ Street _____ ST LN RD _____ Apt/Sp # _____

City _____ ZIP _____ County _____

Mailing Addr _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Cell Phone _____

Is House number visible from the Street? Y/N _____ Is this a Care Facility? Y/N _____

Apt/Mobile Park Name _____

Apt/Mobile Park St Address _____

Gender _____ Birthdate _____

Special Needs that affect my ability to help myself in an emergency:

Mobility Impairment?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Hearing Limitations?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Vision Limitations?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Use Oxygen?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Speaking Difficulty?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Mental Health?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Medical Equip?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
ME Needs Electric?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Dialysis?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Other Condition?	Y/N _____	Describe _____
Speak English?	Y/N _____	Language _____
Service Animal or Pet?	Y/N _____	Type _____
Cooperative Under Stress?	Y/N _____	Memory/ Concentration Problems? Y/N _____
		I need to take medications with me. Y/N _____

Medical and _____
 other Notes _____

Caregiver Information

Require a Caregiver? Y/N_____

My needs are:_____

Caregiver_____ Relationship? _____

Mailing Address_____

Phone_____ Cell_____ E-mail_____

Emergency Contact Information: Guardian, Family Member

EC 1 Name_____ Relationship? _____

Mailing Address_____

Phone_____ Cell_____ E-mail_____

EC 2 Name_____ Relationship? _____

Mail To_____

Phone_____ Cell_____ E-mail_____

Do you use any of the following services? Please note all that apply

SDS Contact? Y/N_____ Contact_____ Phone_____

Medical Equip Co? Y/N_____ Name_____ Phone_____

DDS Contact? Y/N_____ Contact_____ Phone_____

DHS Contact? Y/N_____ Contact_____ Phone_____

Medical Doctor? Y/N_____ Doctor_____ Phone_____

Pharmacy Used? Y/N_____ Name_____ Phone_____

Mental Health Provider? Y/N_____ Name_____ Phone_____

Other Service? Y/N_____ Name_____ Phone_____

Miscellaneous Other _____
Information

The information on this form is used in the event of an emergency to assist those with special needs who would need additional time to evacuate their home or need assistance from others. **This information is available only to Emergency Service workers, Emergency Planners and Emergency Operations Center staff**

Do you wish to receive emergency preparedness information? ___ Yes ___ No

I authorize this information to be used by Emergency Planners and Emergency Service workers in Jackson/and or Josephine Counties to assist me in the event of an emergency and in preparation for such event.

I understand that I will be contacted every quarter to make sure my information is current, and that failure to provide updated information may result in my record being dropped from the Disaster Registry.

Printed Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Preparer's Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

