



West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment Project Overview



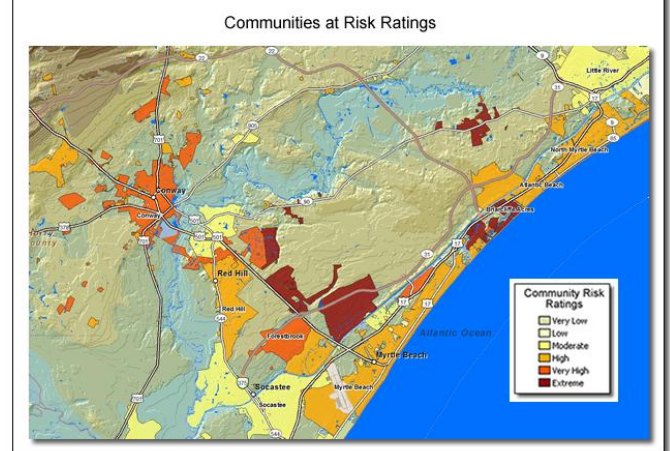
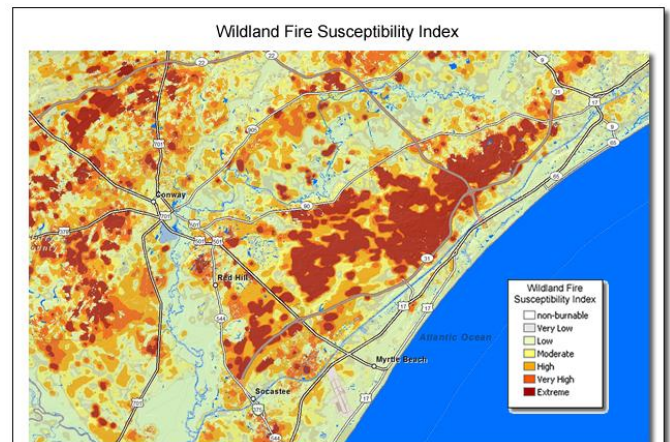
Wildfire risk in the western U.S. is increasing and becoming a more complex problem that warrants coordinated assessment, planning and response. The Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF) and the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) has embarked on a wildfire risk assessment of all lands for the 17 western states and selected Pacific islands. This assessment is known as the “West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment, or “WWA”. Project funding has been secured in the form of State Fire Assistance grant funds allocated to the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) to administer the project on behalf of CWSF/WFLC.

Background & Objectives

The WWA will document the risk from wildfire by quantifying the magnitude of the current wildland fire problem in the West. The WWA is unique because it will assess all lands across the west using consistent data and methods, therefore providing information to support planning and decision making at national, regional, state and local scales. The WWA results will provide a foundation for coordinating policy and baseline data for state and county level planning, especially for those states with limited resources. The WWA is a separate, regional effort with potential to complement the State Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies currently underway by individual states as required by the 2008 Farm Bill and part of USFS State and Private Forestry Redesign.

Deliverables

- ◆ **A Comprehensive Wildfire Database:** A comprehensive GIS data repository reflecting current conditions will be developed. This GIS database will leverage existing federal mapping programs combined with state, tribal and local data. The database will not only be used to derive the assessment outputs but will also be delivered to support on-going fire protection planning efforts.
- ◆ **Conducting the Wildfire Risk Assessment:** The assessment will utilize the GIS database to leverage a standard, proven method to model wildfire threat, fire effects, and wildfire risk. This information can then be used to summarize the risk to communities and other areas of concern. Since a significant part of the fire problem in the west is associated with federal and tribal lands, and many of these fires affect state jurisdiction, the assessment will include all lands.
- ◆ **Final Report – Methods, Findings and Using the Assessment Products:** A summary of the risk assessment methods and findings will be developed including state and regional statistics. The assessment summary reports will facilitate comparisons between regional geographic areas, states and user defined areas of concern.
- ◆ **Technology Transfer** is a key element of the WWA project and outputs will be delivered with detailed information in a form ready to use by project partners. Nonetheless, it will be the responsibility of the user to be familiar with the value, assumptions, and accuracy of WWA products. More specific information will be developed as the assessment progresses.



Benefits & Use of the Published Results

The WWA will develop numerous key datasets in addition to deriving output data describing wildfire threat, fire effects, wildfire risk, and communities risk ratings across the west. The database and assessment results will be delivered to project partners for their use. While not intended to replace existing state and local decision tools, the WWA may be used for a variety of complimentary purposes for local, state, tribal and federal stakeholders. These include:

- ☑ Providing key inputs for prioritizing mitigation and prevention activities by providing comparable and consistent information that can be used to answer typical questions such as - *What communities are most at risk? Where do we prioritize fuel treatments?*
- ☑ Identifying areas where more detailed analysis, planning and prevention efforts are required, such as home assessments and on-the-ground stakeholder collaboration
- ☑ Aid in the future revisions of State Forest Resource Assessments and Strategies
- ☑ Communicating the risk situation to the public, in support of local Community Wildfire Prevention Plan, FireWise prevention, and Hazard Mitigation Planning efforts
- ☑ Communicating the risk situation to legislators and decision makers in support of federal and state funding initiatives
- ☑ Quantifying ratings for communities, watersheds, and other areas of concern to support planning for where fuel treatments and mitigation activities will have the greatest benefit
- ☑ Helping states prioritize areas for allocating grants to Counties and local communities
- ☑ Providing information for “Fire in the West” documents that will summarize assessment results, report on recent accomplishments since Healthy Forest Restoration Act implementation, provide a status report and analysis of the policies, programs and processes, and discuss future challenges and recommended actions.

State & Partner Participation and Responsibilities

In addition to the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and ODF project and contract management, active participation from State representatives and Tribal and Federal cooperators is necessary to complete the project. Much of the local knowledge about available data sources, wildfire characteristics, issues and priorities, only exists with these agency representatives. Accordingly, active participation is required throughout the project to ensure this knowledge is incorporated into the project methods and outputs. This includes:

- ◆ **Partner State Points of Contact – Fire Occurrence, Fuels, Meteorology & GIS:** Each State and Territory will provide a point of contact for providing fire ignition and report data; input and feedback on vegetation, fuels, and canopy datasets; weather influence zones; definition on weighting of fire effects and values at risk; as well as review of other key model inputs and outputs. GIS representatives will also be required to support the efficient transfer of data to and from the partner agencies.
- ◆ **Federal agency and tribal participation** is essential to ensure that data, issues and priorities for all land ownership is incorporated. The PSC will work with these groups to facilitate active involvement throughout the project.

Project Timeline

The project began in July 2009 with a projected two year timeframe focusing on delivery of the assessment results and final report in August 2011. A complete project schedule is available on the WWA web site.

Partner States

- Alaska
- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Hawaii
- Idaho
- Kansas
- Montana
- North Dakota
- Nebraska
- New Mexico
- Nevada
- Oregon
- South Dakota
- Utah
- Washington
- Wyoming
- Territory of Guam
- Republic of Palau
- Federated States of Micronesia
- American Samoa
- Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands