



West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment Project Update – October 2011



This update provides a summary of the current status of the West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment (WWA) project being conducted on behalf of the Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF) and the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC). Links to more detailed information are listed at the end of this update. The Sanborn Map Company is the primary contractor.

Wildfire risk in the western U.S. is increasing and becoming a more complex challenge that warrants coordinated assessment, planning and response. The WWA is unique because it assesses all lands across the West using consistent data and methods. It uses one standard method to model and summarize wildfire threat, fire effects, and wildfire risk. It's being completed at a scale compatible with state and community use – much finer than current national efforts.

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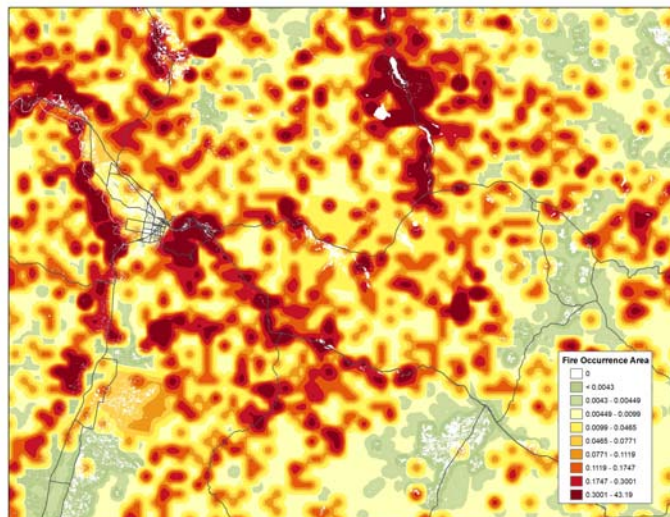
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Data compilation nearing completion

The data compilation phase (Component 1) of the assessment is nearing completion. Fire occurrence, weather, and fuels data necessary to calculate wildfire threat have been acquired, compiled, and assessed. Several data issues have been found and corrected throughout this phase of the project.

For example, several areas along the coastlines were identified where the project's county boundaries did not cover all available LANDFIRE fuels data. Sanborn adjusted the boundaries along the coastlines of CA, OR, WA and HI, and identified a different source of 'county' boundaries for AK to ensure that this data is not lost for the WWA.

Processing these data into Fire Occurrence Areas (FOA) is nearly complete (within each FOA the probability of each acre igniting is the same). Pacific Island data acquisition is underway.



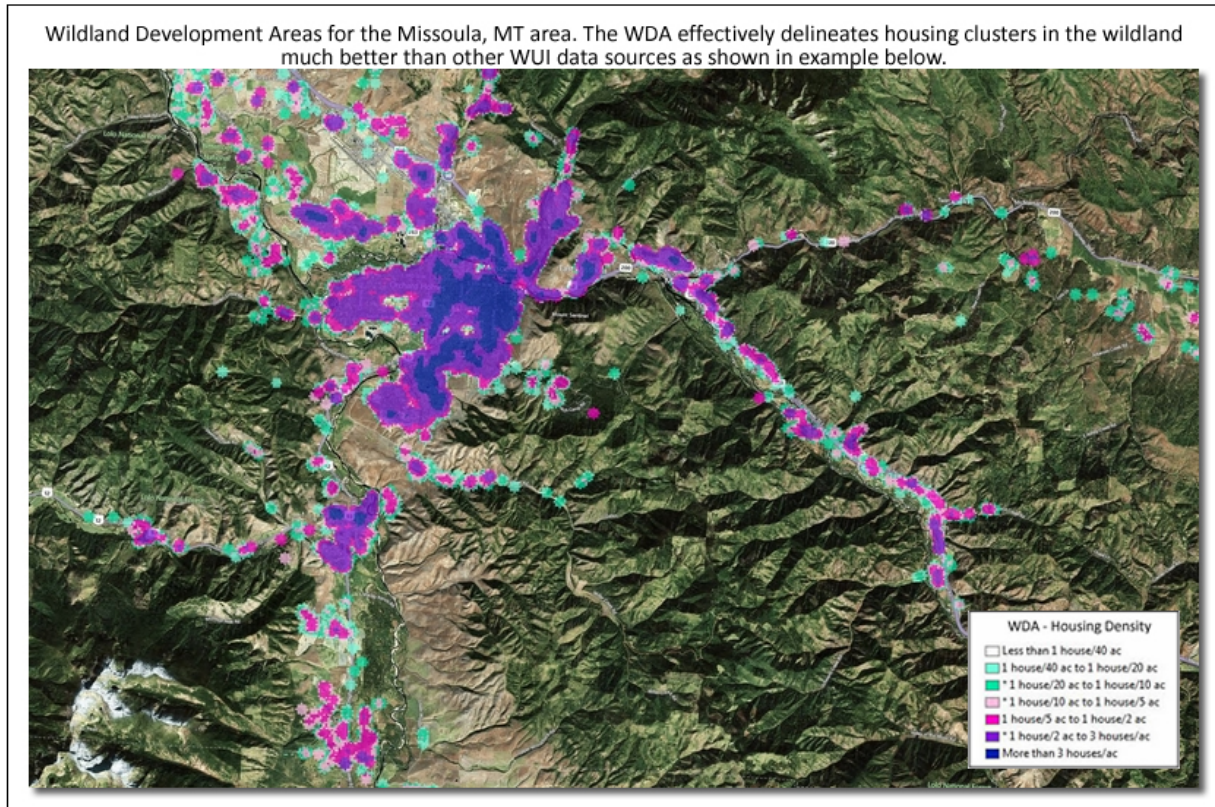
Fire Occurrence Areas (FOA) for the Missoula, MT area. The FOAs are developed to identify areas where the probability of a fire igniting is similar.

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Acquiring and compiling data necessary to assess the effect or impact of fire on *Wildland Development Areas, Riparian Forest Assets, Infrastructure, Drinking Water, and Important Forest Assets* is underway.

Wildland Development Areas

The technical team reviewed options with the steering committee for determining class breaks for the WDA dataset. The final classes are shown in the figure below. This dataset is currently being processed.



Important Forest Assets

Fire ecologists representing a range of agencies and geographic areas recently assisted the project with assigning a fire sensitivity/response class to nearly 200 vegetation types across the west.

Riparian Forest Assets, Infrastructure, Drinking Water

Data is being processed for these layers using data methods established earlier this year.

A report summarizing the quality of data and identified gaps will be delivered this fall.

Completion date revised

The project steering committee recently agreed to push out the completion date of the risk assessment to February 2012.

Why is the revised completion data necessary? There are two primary reasons for the change. First, there have been a number of factors – many of them dealing with data issues beyond the control of the project managers – that have put the project schedule behind. This includes the availability of government furnished datasets key to the assessment. Second, it will be important for the success of the project to ensure adequate time for the states and partners to review data outputs and establish fire effect weights and scores. The extended completion date will benefit this process.

The detailed project schedule is being revised and will be available soon. This schedule will be shared with states and partners to adequately plan time for their involvement.

The extended completion date should not affect needs for regional policy decisions or projects.

What's coming this fall?

To this point, the WWA project work has been quite “clerical” – acquiring, compiling and assessing data, developing and running models. This is about to change. Engagement with the states and project partners will be increasing significantly. Below is a thumbnail sketch of what's coming this fall.

- **Review of data** – As the WWA begins generating outputs, states will have the opportunity to - and will be encouraged to - review many datasets developed for their states. To facilitate the review, a web-based tool will be provided that will allow partners to view the data through a web-browser and provide feedback directly to the project team. This is the most efficient method to facilitate review of the data.
- **Fire effects weighting and scoring** – Each state will be responsible for assigning weights and scores to the fire effects layers. The WWA will provide web briefings and forms necessary to facilitate this process.
- **Determining technical transfer components** – Project funds are available to develop a technical approach to maximize the utility of the risk assessment data that each state will receive. The specific scope and project deliverables for this component have not yet been determined. Options are being developed by the management team for the steering committee to consider and approve.

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Project Timeline

The WWA began in July 2009 with a projected two year timeframe. We are now focusing on delivery of the assessment results and final report in February 2012. A complete project schedule is available on the WWA web site.

Upcoming milestones and events in fall 2011:

- Webinars will be held to assist state representatives in defining fire effects scores and weightings for each state. The project steering committee will establish region-wide values.
- States will review project data as developed.
- States will be asked for some datasets to be used for reference (not model inputs, e.g. such as land ownership, protection boundaries).
- Pacific Island fire occurrence and fuels data will be acquired.
- Technology transfer scope and deliverable will be finalized.

Helpful Links

The West Wide Wildfire Risk Assessment project has a dedicated web-page at <http://www.westwideriskassessment.com/>



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Partner States
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• Oregon
• South Dakota
• Utah
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