



Home and Homeland Ideas Submitted to the WRSC from METI

American Indian Tribes and other stakeholders expressed concern during the outreach effort that current management emphasis on the wildland-urban interface (WUI) creates an artificial distinction between “home” and “homeland” that often results in a lower priority for active management of the larger landscape.

Quotes from tribal stakeholders included:

- “The WUI concept is foreign to tribes. Community is not about ‘home’ separate from the land. It’s the ‘homeland’ including food, water, and place for spiritual awareness. Everything is connected, so breaking land management into components is problematic. Pieces can’t be treated separately.”
- “WUI treated separately from the rest of the landscape violates the idea of integrated fire ecology on the landscape. Treating WUI as separate area is artificial. A key point of the Cohesive Strategy is to get beyond WUI mentality – it’s about managing the land. Not just about protecting structures. Healthy land leads to fire-adapted communities.”

Many Tribes rely on revenues from the management of forest and rangelands, and thus have an economic interest in maintaining a healthy and resilient landscape in addition to fire-adapted communities. While this is a widely held value with the Tribes, the concept of actively managing the larger landscape outside the WUI was expressed by other stakeholders as well:

- “Expand the concept of community to be inclusive of all values that contribute to a community, not just structures. Communities are more than a collection of buildings.”
- “Some good work can be done to improve fire protection around communities but our watersheds, and our forests and rangelands beyond those WUI boundaries are really where it starts when it comes to values at risk that are important to communities that provide substantial economic importance. If these communities lose these values that provide economic income into communities then they are in serious trouble to stay economically viable.”

Potential short term actions:

One of the most successful tools for addressing wildfire risk challenges is the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Communities without plans need to work collaboratively to create CWPPs, and communities that have experienced a recent wildfire need to update plans to deal with their changed



situation. The goal of protecting communities and natural resources from wildfire cannot be accomplished by any one person or entity. Communities must work together to identify and pursue a pathway to success.

Many ideas surfaced during the public outreach effort and many will likely be incorporated into the final Cohesive Strategy. In the meantime, an opportunity exists to share key ideas that can be implemented at this time to help achieve resilient landscapes and fire-adapted communities. For example:

- Expand and continue to use Community Wildfire Protection Plans to plan for work in WUI and the larger landscape, across jurisdictional boundaries. Develop a prototype or identify pilot projects for an expanded CWPP.
- Take a holistic view that values communities and ecosystems, natural and social/cultural resources.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) clearly states that the definition of WUI is to be done at the local level. It further states that federal agencies are obligated to use this WUI designation for all HFRA purposes around a formally adopted CWPP. In defining an expanded WUI or homeland, a community may wish to consider:

- A countywide strategy with a matrix (forest condition class, fire severity risk, historic fire frequency, population, number of structures, community value of structures, linkage to other fuel breaks, priority for availability of federal and state wildland fire fighting resources, etc.) for prioritizing candidate shaded fuel breaks and public lands projects to protect communities and the surrounding values that contribute to community character, viability, and wellbeing.
- Existing successful examples such as in Shoshone County (Idaho). A holistic approach to defining and protecting the WUI has created jobs while providing infrastructure protection. The county's CWPP can be found at:
- http://www.idl.idaho.gov/nat_fire_plan/county_wui_plans/shoshone/2011-Shoshone-County-CWPP.pdf
- Handbook resources from the Western Governors' Associations, National Association of State Foresters, Society of American Foresters, National Association of Counties, and Communities Committee. <http://www.stateforesters.org/files/cwpphandbook.pdf>

Effective community collaboration and full use of existing authorities are key elements for success with this effort. Future communications will identify action items related to these topics.