



# Okanogan Conservation District

1251 S. Second Ave, Room 102

Okanogan, WA 98840

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## **ANNOUNCEMENT:**

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## **Okanogan Conservation District Announces the Approval of the 2024 Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Okanogan County**

After a year-long effort led by the Okanogan Conservation District, the 2024 Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for Okanogan County was officially approved on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and signed by the Okanogan County Commissioners and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. The CWPP was published on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and is available on the Okanogan Conservation District's website.

This updated document acknowledges the collaborative work of more than 1,000 community members and over 100 partners, including Okanogan County Emergency Management, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. This includes residents and business owners, fire districts, local government organizations and non-profits, tribal partners, local, state, and federal natural resource managers, and wildfire recovery, air quality, and additional conservation groups.

The CWPP promotes a county-wide wildfire hazard mitigation concept that is intended to guide the way to a safe and sustainable future for Okanogan County, ensuring that people, structures, infrastructure, wildlife, livestock, unique ecosystems, natural resources, and cultural heritage are protected and resilient to wildfire. An active and up-to-date CWPP is required to qualify applicants for certain wildfire resiliency grants and some forms of federal post-wildfire aid. The accomplishment of this update in 2024 allows Okanogan County to have an active CWPP until 2034.

First authorized by Congress in 2003, CWPPs are intended to identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommend the types and methods of treatment to protect communities and measures to reduce structure ignitability. The first Okanogan County CWPP was drafted in 2009 and was last updated in 2013, one year before the Carlton Complex Fire.



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The 2024 CWPP edition, succeeded in incorporating over 1,000 Okanogan County residents who provided invaluable information highlighting their experiences with wildfire, concerns for the future, and areas of priority for action. Public feedback was collected throughout 2024 via online inquiries, a community survey, and five hybrid public meetings that were organized in various locations across the County.

This feedback was combined with local partner input and previous CWPP action item information to assist the CWPP planning committee in the development of over 180 action items. These project actions are not legally-binding but are intended to help prioritize and guide planning efforts for wildfire resiliency, forest and shrubsteppe health management, and wildfire recovery in Okanogan County for the next decade.

Action items range from supporting already existing fuel treatments, education programs, and efforts in pursuit of funding to retrofit and build new fire halls to supporting the use of prescribed fire on private and public lands, the expansion of critical infrastructure, and increasing access to air filtration systems to reduce wildfire smoke impacts on public health.

In addition to those action items, the 305-page document provides a narrative of the drastic changes to the landscape and recent history of wildfire in Okanogan County, assesses current and future wildfire risk, includes newly added sections to highlight air quality and shrubsteppe management challenges, and includes educational information and resources for best practices to assist property owners, residents, and natural resource managers with their wildfire resilience and recovery efforts.

The CWPP draft was offered for public review in September 2024 and received final approval from the Okanogan County Commissioners on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024. It was then approved by George Geissler, Washington State Forester (WA DNR) on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025, surmounting its last hurdle in the process of becoming officially approved. The partners involved have committed to annually revisiting the plan to assess the success of implementing the numerous action items, with plans to perform a formal update in five years and a new plan in 2034.

The CWPP is available online at <https://www.okanogand.org/cwpp>. Physical copies are not yet ready, but once printed will be available at the Okanogan Conservation District's office and other locations will be noted on the website.

Please contact Eli Loftis, Okanogan CD Wildfire and Community Resilience Program Lead, at [eli@okanogand.org](mailto:eli@okanogand.org) or by phone at 509-429-3453 for questions, additional resources, and other information regarding the CWPP.

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