

**AMENDMENT 2006
CASSIA COUNTY IDAHO
WUI INTERFACE
FIRE MITIGATION PLAN
JUNE 2006**

When the Cassia County Fire Mitigation Plan Team initially prepared our fire mitigation plan for Cassia County, Idaho, the focus was on individual homeowners, existing subdivisions, fire resources and equipment that were present for fire protection, and meeting the wildfire requirements of an all hazard Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan as defined by FEMA. There was an overall focus on existing resources in proximity to the dominant vegetative type of the county which is range grassland and farm land. While the habitat has not changed, population growth, city and county fire districts and resource needs have changed dramatically.

Because of the need to amend and update our existing fire mitigation plan and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) maps for Cassia County, our team met in November, 2005 and charted a collaborative effort to receive input for this amendment. Our collaborative effort has resulted in new planning, WUI map updating and mitigation needs documentation directed not only at individual cities and communities but also rangelands, farmlands, subdivision areas at high risk from fire, educational needs and new grant funding needs.

After the Cassia County Fire Mitigation Plan was completed in 2004, new national legislation, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) was passed by Congress in 2003 and made available to states and communities in early 2004. Community Wildfire Prevention Plan (CWPP) guidance came out in March 2004, while counties in Idaho were finalizing their mitigation plans. Based on this new legislation, our Cassia County Fire Mitigation Plan Team defined our "Wildland Urban Interface", with the cooperation of federal and state fire management agencies and HFRA definitions.

We decided in November 2005 that a series of collaborative meetings were needed to update and change our Fire Mitigation Plan. These meetings began in February 2006 and continued through May 2006. We are very serious about our collaborative work with federal and state fire management agencies in accomplishing hazardous fuels reduction treatments, firesafe education, and updating our Fire Mitigation Plan.

As part of our planning process, fire mitigation projects have been evaluated for county priority. These revisions and reprioritization coincided with new WUI mapping by the Twin Falls District of the BLM for inclusion in the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) Fire Mitigation website. We have also documented all parties that have been involved in our amendment process and our Fire Mitigation Plan update meetings so that the collaborative nature of our effort can be demonstrated.

1. WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE (WUI) DEFINED FOR CASSIA COUNTY

Fuel modification work to protect habitats, cities and subdivisions throughout Cassia County was defined in our original Fire Mitigation Plan and has been a basis for grant applications to accomplish hazardous fuels mitigation work. In addition, an external boundary within which modifications of rangeland fuels would reinforce this work and help ensure its success in the event of a catastrophic wildfire is defined as the perimeter of the urban interface.

WUI perimeters, or defensible space, around home sites in urban or rural areas will change with fuel type and terrain based on updated WUI maps. The WUI map will determine defensible space perimeters for fire protection. Additional important factors used to determine defensible space will be weather conditions including wind, humidity and temperature.

Infrastructure also includes power and communication lines and towers, transportation routes for ingress, egress, and evacuation, rail lines and watersheds where citizen groups have organized for joint collection of water for domestic uses. In instances where topography immediately outside the WUI defense zone would allow “anchoring” to good fire control points, such as ridge tops or roads, the zone will be extended to that anchor point. Since determine of “best” location of the boundary of the WUI defense zone is dependent on local site situations, a mapped boundary will be created. Individual project planners will assess where this boundary will lie, in conformance with this written definition.

This “perimeter” definition will be useful to agencies in their efforts to continue hazardous fuels reduction projects that would make the protection of human habitations within the interface easier and safer.

2. WUI RATIONALE FOR CASSIA COUNTY

Humans and their habitats are at greatest risk from catastrophic wildfire in periods that support extreme fire behavior. The observed fire behavior of rapid rate of spread, and heavy light fuels loading in recent fires near urban communities of Cassia County indicates that a major component of risk exposure is created by a combination of rate-of-spread and fuels loading in these fuel models.

Recent fires in Cassia County have had a tremendous rate of spread, ranging from one acre to several hundred acres per hour. We need adequate fuels modification work to successfully protect habitat and infrastructure in cities and rural fire districts like ACE, Albion, Burley City/North Cassia, Oakley, Raft River, Declo, Malta, and Rock Creek, to reduce heavy light fuel loading conditions. A WUI designated perimeter around cities and communities at risk from catastrophic fire is needed. Hazardous fuels modification in the buffer zone would assist tremendously to the effectiveness of current Firesafe work around individual home sites.

HFRA allows County managers to treat hazardous fuels along evacuation routes that have been identified in project area fire mitigation plans under “Develop and Post FEMA Emergency Evacuation Routes “. Treatment of these corridors will be a priority. Roads and railroad corridors are major sources of ignition in Cassia County. HFRA also gives communities/counties the flexibility to define their own WUI. Cassia County has defined its WUI based on collaborative input, and the County’s CWPP boundary definition is the same as its WUI boundary.

As noted in our original plan, transportation routes for successful evacuation of residents at the same time fire crews and equipment are being deployed during a catastrophe are limited throughout Cassia County. Hazardous fuels treatments within the two mile zone along any of these routes would greatly reduce the potential that the routes would be cut off during an event.

3. INTEROPERABILITY

Interoperability, the ability for on-scene fire, medical and law enforcement units to immediately communicate with each other, is vital in the mitigation of emergency events. Present and future mutual aid and automatic agreements to utilize closest appropriate response units require the ability to quickly establish radio communications with all other response units for the planning and execution of the established mitigation plan.

4. CASSIA COUNTY FIRE UPDATE/NEEDS

Additional Goals

Maintain the goals set in the 2004 mitigation plan.

Work with the public in education of wildland fires.

Work towards the funding of additional fire equipment needs.

Work towards a county-wide burn permit policy.

Establish better road signage and rural addressing.

Create a PSA program for fire education county-wide.

Update Elba and Rock Creek hazardous fuels reduction projects.

Continue Jim Sage, City of Rocks, Cotterels, Conner Phase I and II, Jones Hollow, and Red Rock restorations.

Continue City of Rocks restoration.

Continue WUI projects in rural fire districts county-wide.

Map Update

Work with Twin Falls District BLM on WUI mapping needs.

Material needs

(See specific rural fire department needs).

Infrastructure Updates

(See specific rural fire department needs).

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

After the fire year of 2005 the County will be expanding the fire education program.

Put in place an education program in the high schools about wild land fires.

Continue to participate in the RedZone program and continue the program. It will help in determining the areas within the County that will need the most attention.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

(See specific rural fire department needs).

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

(See specific rural fire department needs).

Additional Areas

Continue to work with County homeowners to identify risks and provide recommendations for reducing fire risks.

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

Fires in the County burned in areas that have a strong history of burning in the past. Only through education can the fire danger be reduced.

New Small Communities/Rural Fire Districts

(See specific rural fire department needs).

High Risk Areas

(See specific rural fire department needs).

Issues for fire Protection

Main issues for fire protection throughout the County are still education and equipment needs.

Fire District Updates (Resources)

(See specific fire rural department needs).

New Treatments, Additions (burns, Vegetative Control, etc.)

(See specific fire rural department needs).

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

A very aggressive fire prevention program should be continued.
Radio communications need to be updated.

Additional Supporting Information

Funding equipment needs along with dispatch and radio communications along with county-wide addressing updates need most of our support.

5. ALBION FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT UPDATE/NEEDS

Additional Goals

Finish the new firehouse's training area in communication networking.

Get our firefighters trained more in wildland firefighting, group leaders and teams. We currently have two individuals with BLM knowledge in wildland fire.

Albion Fire Protection District has currently gone through the mitigation criteria on Community at Risk commitments through 2005. We have cleared over 500 acres of hazardous fuels reduction projects within the private sector, by burning and chemical spraying.

We would like to see additional funds for clearing the additional areas that were originally set up in the Cassia County Mitigation Plan. This covers 160 acres of BLM and State lands within the Protection District, and 264 acres included in an Interagency Project Area (WUI Maps).

Continue Cotterals restoration.

Continue to work with isolated tracts of land for fire protection.

WUI Map Update

Work with Twin Falls District BLM on WUI mapping needs.

Materials Needs

We would like up-to-date communication equipment for training our volunteers such as a large TV screen with video capabilities, projector, power point, RedZone software, DVD player and other electronic equipment.

Purchase a new Water Tender (3500-4000 gallons), newer structure fire truck with pumping & foam capabilities to replace the 1949 Ford fire truck.

House a BLM L6 size truck at our new firehouse facility, it has four bays with a two-station 6" water line loading feature within the facility and fire hydrant outside.

Purchase additional PPE's.

Purchase additional equipment for the safety of the firefighter.

Purchase additional P2500 digital radios.

Purchase a portable 1,000 – 2,000 gallon water storage container.

Infrastructure Updates

Coordinate additional scheduled "Fire Wise Clean Up Days". Programmed to utilize and educate residents about long-term improvements they could make to increase fire safety.

Purchase Firewise brochures, conduct Firewise town hall meetings and other public information events

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

Albion Fire Protection District is currently training volunteer firefighters but we do need the additional aids that were requested in item 3a.

We need funding for rural home inspections annually, fire prevention seminars, educating homeowners on defensible space and what to do in case of wildfire: (pre attack planning).

We need funding for additional rangeland fire suppression supplies, equipment, annual maintenance of equipment, and replacement of used equipment.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

Going back two to three years a lot of growth has occurred in the Albion Valley.

A new gas & food service station has been built, fourteen new homes have been constructed, four of these homes are two stories.

Two new subdivisions going in within the city limits, two houses have been built so far.

One proposed subdivision with additional homes on ½ acre lots is planned at this time with 22 proposed single homes.

Another proposed subdivision, contains four additional homes.

There is a proposed Windmill Project to be developed within the Fire Protection District on BLM ground (100 large type), this will change our firefighting capabilities pertaining to wildland fires on the Cottrel Mountain Range.

The city of Albion is in the process of selling of the College Campus Buildings and grounds.

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

We are a small budgeted Fire Department and depend on grants for funding. A grant did enable us to build our new Firehouse with four bays and a training area. This was a 50/50 cost share grant (Idaho Community Development Block Grant, \$189,119).

Other grants received:

1. Homeland Security Cost Share \$16,000/\$53,148.
2. BLM Standby 2004-2005 (\$4,000.00).
3. BLM 3rd Year Grant \$6,719.

4. BLM 4th Year Grant \$5,000.
5. Community at Risk Mitigation Assessment Preparation (Phase 1-7) \$32,613.
6. Community at Risk Implementing The Mitigation Plan (2004-2/28/2006) \$115,000.

Funding Assistance

Albion Fire Protection District needs additional equipment that has been mentioned above.

In an effort to train our structure firefighters and officers on a ongoing basis, to be completely proficient in WUI defense, the following program is being proposed. It would consist of May/June training for all firefighter levels and year round opportunities for officer level candidates to train to the proficiency of a task force leader.

The program would be designed to keep numerous and proficient crews at entry-level firefighter status while bringing along more senior firefighters to higher officer levels of training. The initial program would be more than ten years with an idea to continue training if the program is effective on a continuing basis. The Albion Fire Department desires to start the practice of paying for firefighter time spent in the classroom to encourage ongoing education.

Training Program

The proposed ten-year training program would provide the opportunity for entry level volunteers to become "Task Force Leaders" and achieve the organizational level of "Assistant Chief" thereby, maintaining leadership in the primary chief's absence. Those associated costs of this program are \$50,000

Additional Areas

No changes.

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

Due to the emphasis on fire safety, this Fire District has been very fortunate in the last 14 years. In the last two years we had one structure (mobile) fire due to electrical problem. The structure was saved and the family was back into the home in two to three days.

Four wildland fires have occurred in the past several years, Albion Fire Protection District was the first responder.

Albion Fire Protection District has performed a estimated 20 controlled burns within the fire district.

Under the Community at Risk program, we performed control burns to clean up sage brush piles generated from ground crews clearing the land.

New Small Communities/Rural Fire Districts

No changes.

High Risk Areas

BLM and Idaho Department of Lands proposed 160 acres and included 264 acres in the interagency project area (WUI maps).

Additional private land areas have been cleared of hazardous high risk fuels.

Issues for Fire Protection

Additional education needs include resources for door-to-door contact.

Open hearing meetings to the public; utilize Firewise brochure handouts and BLM personnel presenting Firewise programs public meetings.

Fire District Updates (Resources)

The Albion Volunteer Fire Protection District in 2005 has operated under a new Fire Chief. Under this new leadership Albion Fire Protection District has been training two times a month from structure firefighting to wildland firefighting.

Utilizing certified trainers from BLM (more are planned) and the Burley Fire Department plus attending the Southern Idaho Fire Academy dealing with both types of firefighting has greatly improved the firefighting capability of the District.

The new Chief has also put together a young team of firefighters with different degrees of ability in both structure and wildland firefighting.

We have two members that were BLM Crew Leaders.

New Treatments, Additions (burns, vegetative treatments)

Our Brush cutting process did not start until the late fall of 2004. In accomplishing this work plan Albion Fire Protection District has upgraded the survivable space on all areas by 90 percent, except for several high risk areas.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

No changes.

Additional Supporting Information

No changes.

6. ACE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT UPDATE/NEEDS

Additional Goals

Update fire protection capabilities and training of personnel and continue to improve fire prevention efforts.

WUI Map Update

Work with Twin Falls District BLM on WUI mapping needs.

Materials Needs

Add two satellite stations, a new urban interface engine, replacement of wildland PPE, and refill stations.

Infrastructure Updates

Five miles of new county highway.

Newly completed Fire and Emergency Services station.

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

Continue current program.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

There is increased visitation attributed to City of Rocks Federal Reserve and the newly created Castle Rocks State Park.

Two new structures are planned for the Castle Rocks State Park, a bunkhouse and pavilion.

Additionally, there is a 60 unit RV park planned the City of Rocks. It is downslope and in heavy pinyon-juniper vegetation.

Over the past two years there has been a noticeable increase of new home building and small businesses within the wildland interface (WUI).

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

Grants may be sought for satellite stations, improved equipment, and continual training.

Funding Assistance

No changes.

Training Program

No changes.

Additional Areas

No changes.

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

Past burns in the City of Rocks have left heavy grass and standing, dead trees on several hundred acres.

New Small Communities/Rural Fire Districts

No changes.

High Risk Areas

The City of Rocks Core Area is at high risk to fire due to past fire suppression, heavy fuels, and a heavy concentration of people and dispersed camping.

Heavy pinyon-juniper concentration in the Bud Ward Subdivision.

Issues for Fire Protection

No changes.

Fire District Updates (Resources)

Update mutual aid with Box Elder County for the Yost, Utah area.

The Cache Peak Emergency Services Building (ACE Fire Station) has been designated the command center for local disasters that may occur in the area. This includes a standby generator for water and power.

New Treatments, Additions (burns, vegetative treatments)

Need additional pinyon-juniper thinning on BLM ground adjacent to private land and some small parcels of private land can use additional thinning.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

No changes.

Additional Supporting Information

No changes.

7. OAKLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT UPDATE/NEEDS

Additional Goals

Update the fire protection capabilities and training of personnel and continue to improve fire prevention efforts.

Pave the concrete driveway at new fire station.

Landscape new fire station.

Install a new compressed air foam system.

Continue the Communities At Risk Program.

Continue Goose Creek restoration.

Continue to work with isolated tracts of land for fire protection.

WUI Map Update

Work with Twin Falls District BLM on WUI mapping needs.

Materials Needs

Same as goals.

Infrastructure Updates

In 2005 we began work on a new fire station and will complete in 2006.

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

Continue current program.

Utilize RedZone mapping in the wildland urban interface and continue fire education and prevention program in local community.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

Growth continues in the fire district. We are experiencing large homes being built sporadically in the district.

We are also seeing large confined animal feeding operations (9000 cow) dairies being built in the district.

With this growth comes mega hay stacks and silage pits, which are highly combustible.

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

Continue to do wildland fire training with the Twin Falls District BLM.

Continue to attend the Southern Idaho Fire Academy.

Attend Idaho Fire Service training.

Continue to conduct monthly fire training within the District.

Rural development and Region IV development assisted the Department with a new fire station using both a loan and a grant.

The District is eligible for a Homeland Security grant to receive a thermal imaging camera.

The District applied for a National Highway Safety grant for extrication equipment, i.e. air bags.

The District applied for a FEMA grant for vehicle exhaust removal system for new fire station.

Training Program

No changes.

Additional Areas

No changes.

We will continue to work with all homeowners to identify fire risks and provide recommendations for reducing fire risks.

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

Agriculture burning continues to be an issue within the District.

New Small Communities/Rural Fire Districts

The District needs to annex in an additional ½ mile north of fire protection boundary.

High Risk Areas

Confined animal feeding operations continue to be a high fire risk.

Historic homes in downtown Oakley are at risk from fire.

Fertilizer plant and storage facility are at risk.

Wood pallet business needs a maximum fire protection limit to be established.

Issues for Fire Protection

Main issues for fire protection are still fire education and District fire suppression equipment needs.

Fire District Updates (Resources)

New fire station.

New Treatments, Additions (burns, vegetative treatments)

The Fire District is working on a Community At Risk project, should complete in 2007. Would like to expand Communities At Risk program.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

The new County WUI fire plan update should be used to justify recommendations.

Additional Supporting Information

No changes.

8. CITY OF BURLEY/NORTH CASSIA RURAL FIRE UPDATE/NEEDS

Additional Goals

Update the fire protection capabilities and training of personnel and continue to improve fire prevention efforts.

Add a new fire station on south side of Burley to increase ISO rating.

Add a Type 4 urban-interface engine with a capacity of 600 gallons.

WUI Map Update

Work with Twin Falls District BLM on WUI mapping needs.

Materials Needs

No changes.

Infrastructure Updates

No changes.

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

Continue to conduct fire prevention education programs with children and adults.
Peruse RedZone fire program to assist the Department in mapping the wildland urban interface.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

As in all Idaho counties we are experiencing growth in our county, The Milner Area, Declo Hills, and Albion Grade will pose WUI problems as growth continues.
We need to continue to work with planning and zoning in the County so we know when growth is occurring.

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

Training of fire department personnel in wildland fire would be beneficial,
New recruits need to be trained in both wildland and structure fire.
We will need proper equipment to equip firefighters.
Need to continue to use the budget process to assist our department with needs and also pursue grants when possible and applicable.

Training Program

No changes.

Additional Areas

We will continue to work with all homeowners to identify fire risks and provide recommendations for reducing fire risks.

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

No changes.

New Small Communities/Rural Fire Districts

Our main fire issue will be the large dairy operations moving into the County along with expanded hog operations. These operations have large hay stacks and feed piles (silage) which are highly combustible.
All fire departments will need to train and prepare for an event that would call for all departments to respond as a mutual aid.

High Risk Areas

Confined animal feeding operations continue to be a high fire risk.

Issues for Fire Protection

No changes.

Fire District Updates (Resources)

No changes.

New Treatments, Additions (burns, vegetative treatments)

No changes.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

No changes.

Additional Supporting Information

No changes.

9. RAFT RIVER FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT UPDATE/NEEDS

Additional Goals

Update the fire protection capabilities and training of personnel and continue to improve fire prevention efforts.

WUI Map Update

Work with Twin Falls District BLM on WUI mapping needs.

Materials Needs

Generator with work lights for night work.

Wildland fire PPE (15 sets),.

Refill Station for oxygen tanks.

Turn outs (four full sets).

Halligan tools.

Ventilation fan.

Radio harness (chest type).

Wildland fire goggles (16 pair).

Infrastructure Updates

A new fire station is located on Yale Road, with space for training room, storage for gear and equipment and shower room for decontamination.

Build a single bay fire station for Elba.

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

Purchase RedZone Equipment to map Fire District wildland urban interface.

Continue fire prevention and education to the public in our fire district.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

The city of Malta is experiencing new growth which increases the need for additional fire assistance by the fire district.

There has been an increased need for housing for workers in the expanding dairy and hog farm business.

There is a proposed wind farm on Cottrell Mountain which will be in the Fire District.

Proposed annexation from Yale Road to the Snake River.

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

Continue training with Twin Falls District BLM regarding wildland fire.

Provide SCBA training for 15 fire fighters

Provide new firefighter training for new recruits in wildland and structure fires

Training Program

No changes.

Additional Areas

No changes.

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

Highway I-84 and I-86 corridors continue to be a challenge for the Fire District. Vehicle fires are a problem for our District.

New Small Communities/Rural Fire Districts

No changes.

High Risk Areas

City of Malta is identified with a high degree of WUI and is at risk.

City of Elba is identified with a high degree of WUI and is at risk.

Cassia Creek homeowners association is at high fire risk due to wildland fire.

Connor Creek store and east of the store has also been identified as a high risk area.

Issues for Fire Protection

New growth in subdivisions will require additional water supplies and infrastructure improvements. This growth will place additional strain on an over worked volunteer fire suppression force.

Additional personnel and/or funding are needed for monitoring controlled burns.

Fire District Updates (Resources)

The District has acquired two Type 4 trucks, two Type 6 trucks, and one Water Tender Type 3 truck.

New Treatments, Additions (burns, vegetative treatments)

The west side of Malta proposed a buffer strip that would reduce the potential of catastrophic wildfire, reduce the fire departments response time, and reduce the wildfire potential for approximately 120 private homes and ranches.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

No changes.

Additional Supporting Information

No changes.

10. SIGNATURE PAGES

This **Amended Cassia County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan** has been reviewed in cooperation and collaboration with the representatives of the following organizations, agencies and individuals.

By: Paul Christensen
Cassia County Commissioner

Date

By: Dennis Crane
Cassia County Commissioner

Date

By: Clay Handy
Cassia County Commissioner

Date

By: Kerry McMurray, Administrator
Cassia County

Date

By: Don Bowden
Mayor – City of Albion

Date

By: Garth Greenwell
Mayor – City of Oakley

Date

By: Tina Looke
Mayor – City of Malta

Date

By: Tim Duffner, Supervisor
Idaho Department of Lands

Date

By: Chris Simonson, FMO
USDI Twin Falls District BLM

Date

By: Ruth Monahan, Forest Supervisor
Sawtooth National Forest

Date

By: Bruce Allcott, Chief
Burley City/North Cassia Fire Protection District

Date

By: Tony Wheeler, Chief
Raft River Rural Fire District

Date

By: Harlo Clark, Chief
Oakley Rural Fire Department

Date

By: Mike Hansen, Chief
Rock Creek Fire Protection District

Date

By: Jeff Leach, Chief
Albion Fire Protection District

Date

By: Mike Santini Chief
ACE Fire Protection Association

Date

By: Travis Rothweiler, Chairman
Mid-Snake RC&D

Date

By: Kelly Adams, Coordinator
Cassia County Public Lands

Date

By: Jim Higgins, Coordinator
Cassia County Emergency Services

Date

By: Danny J. Ebert
Project Leader, Cassia County WUI
Wildfire Mitigation Plan Amendment,
Lead Author
Enviros Consultants

Date