

AMENDMENT 2006
MINIDOKA COUNTY IDAHO
WUI INTERFACE
FIRE MITIGATION PLAN
JUNE 2006

When the Minidoka County Fire Mitigation Plan Team initially prepared our fire mitigation plan for Minidoka 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 Minidoka 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 Minidoka 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 Minidoka 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 Upper Snake River, 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 MINIDOKA COUNTY

Fuel modification work to protect habitats, cities and subdivisions throughout Minidoka 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, based on the Minidoka CWPP 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 MINIDOKA 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 Minidoka 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 Minidoka 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 habitation and infrastructure in cities like Rupert, Paul, Norland, Acequia, Minidoka, and Heyburn, 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 Minidoka County. HFRA also gives communities/counties the flexibility to define their own WUI. Minidoka 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 Minidoka 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.

Minidoka County Dispatch supports these response units within its boundaries as well as assists the Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Department of Lands when operating with local agencies.

4. MINIDOKA COUNTY-WIDE UPDATE/NEEDS

Additional Goals

Purchase RedZone software and enter information on problems in WUI areas.

Implement RedZone technology county-wide.

Take steps to arrive at a county wide rotation of fire fighting vehicles.

Explore avenues to acquire a training tower and land for structural training of firefighters.

Institute a county-wide burn permit program.

Institute a county-wide rural addressing program.

Continue with fire education programs county-wide.

Institute a county-wide fire prevention PSA program.

Continue Laidlaw, Kimama I, II, III, Cream Can, Whiskey Lake, and German lake restoration projects.

Continue county-wide hazardous fuels reduction projects in isolated tracts of land.

Continue Arco-Minidoka and German Lakes hazardous fuels reduction projects

WUI Map Update

Update county-wide WUI Pre-plan and Mitigation Map.

Materials Needs

Continue purchasing P-25 radios, pursue thermal imager purchases, more wildland PPE's and approved structural gear, extrication equipment, fire prevention materials, laptop computers and palm pilots.

Obtain grants and or secure funding through the budget process to maintain and or purchase equipment.

Infrastructure Updates

(See specific Fire District responses)

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

Purchase additional fire prevention materials and handouts.

Upgrade county safety trailers for wildland fire prevention presentations.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

Enforce access road requirements, green spaces and water supply requirements.

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

Apply for FEMA grants for PPE, extrication grants from Idaho EMS and Highway safety funds, wildland grants for P-25 radios, REDZONE mapping.

PPE's & training could come from BLM grant funds, and thermal imagers from Homeland Security grant funds.

Additional Areas

(See specific Fire District responses)

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

The public has seen the effects of wildfire near some of their homes in the WUI area and are more receptive to change their habits.

High Risk Areas

Protect high fire risk area through:

- a. suppression
- b. structure protection
- c. protection of out buildings (non-occupied buildings)
- d. protection of vegetation
- e. monitor the fire behavior (control the burn)
- f. mutual aid
- g. education

Issues for Fire Protection

New growth in subdivisions throughout the Minidoka County will require additional water supplies and infrastructure improvements.

This will strain an over worked volunteer fire suppression work force.

The county's fire suppression organization needs additional personnel or funding for monitoring controlled burns.

Utilize existing resources, and develop new strategies for the procurement of land for future fire stations.

Utilize existing resources and develop new strategies for the procurement of fire apparatus.

Fire District Updates (Resources)

(See specific Fire District responses)

New Treatments, Additions (burns, vegetative control, etc.)

Assist in the abatement of dry vegetation as requested and or directed by county management.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

Focus resources on burn permits and proper signage on roads for residences in rural areas.

Additional Supporting Information

(See specific Fire District Responses)

5. MINIDOKA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT UPDATE/NEEDS:

Additional Goals

Hire personnel to install RedZone software and enter information on problems areas in WUI area maps. Begin planning for consolidation of Rupert City Fire with Minidoka County Fire District. Secure funding for new, larger station in Heyburn.

Take steps to create a 15 year rotation of fire fighting vehicles.

Explore avenues to acquire a training tower and land for structural training of firefighters.

WUI Map Update

Work with Twin Falls District, BLM to update WUI maps.

Materials Needs

Continue purchasing P-25 radios, thermal imager purchases, wildland PPE's, approved structural gear, extrication equipment, fire prevention materials, laptop computers and palm pilots.

Infrastructure Updates

No changes.

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

Purchase additional fire prevention materials and handouts.

Upgrade fire information and safety trailer for wildland fire prevention presentations.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

Enforce access road requirements, green spaces and water supply requirements in rural areas.

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

Apply for FEMA grants for PPE, extrication grants from Idaho EMS and Idaho Department of Highway safety funds, WUI grants for P-25 radios, BLM grant funds for REDZONE mapping, PPE's & training, and thermal imagers from Homeland Security funds.

Additional Areas

No changes.

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

Homeowners have seen the effects of wildfire near some of their homes within the WUI area and are more receptive to change their fire safety habits.

New Small Communities/Rural Fire Districts

No changes.

High Risk Areas

Maintain scrutiny of areas around Walcot Park and outer fringes of farmland for wildland fire threats.

Issues for Fire Protection

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

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

Fire District Updates (Resources)

Purchased a new rescue truck at Heyburn Station,

Will purchase a new wildland interface truck due in July,2006 for North Side Station.

A new station at the North Side is now in operation.

New Treatments, Additions (burns, vegetative control, etc.)

No changes.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

Focus on burn permits and proper signage on roads and residences in rural areas.

Additional Supporting Information

No changes.

6. WEST END FIRE DISTRICT UPDATE/NEEDS:

Additional Goals

Recruit three additional firefighters for our department and get them fitted with turnout personal protective gear.

Obtain training for the three individuals in the areas of wildland and structural fire suppression as first responders.

Map Update

Work with Twin Falls District, BLM on WUI mapping needs.

Material needs

No changes.

Infrastructure Updates

West End fire fighters and first responders will not travel not out of the fire district unless it is for a Department of Land's (IDL) or BLM fire or requested by IDL or BLM. We simply do not have the resources to assist outside of our fire district. We are not planning to put a fire truck out at the new BLM location unless the area is annexed into our fire district.

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

No changes.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

There has been more growth in West End's Fire District in 2004 and 2005 than in the last 15 years. In one subdivision all of the lots have sold, three homes were built in 2005 and as many as six more new homes will be built in 2006. West End planners are also working on two new subdivisions and putting in a new park on the west side of town. There is also an expectation that a new airport might be built.

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

West End has applied for a Self Contained Breathing Apparatuses (SCBA's), as part of a Home Land Security Grant.

Fire fighting clothing and radios as well as tools have been requested as part of a BLM grant. We acquired thermal imaging equipment, heavy extrication equipment, a power unit, and three AED's with a 2005 grant.

Up to date training is requested. We trained youth at the Paul elementary school and the head start program in Rupert in 2006. We taught them how to call 911 and to find to a safe place outside the school during an emergency.

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 dispatch center is working on a new enhanced 911 system with mapping, listing of the resources needed to dispatch fire, EMS, law enforcement, Power Company and many more features.

High Risk Areas

The Hunt and North Wilson Lake areas are very high risk areas, these areas have had two good years of moisture and the fuel is very heavy.

Issues for fire Protection

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

Fire District Updates (Resources)

Our 1988 Chevrolet Support Van has been updated by adding a 2004 International Rescue Truck, also replacing the pump unit on our F-350 Ford Brush Truck from BLM and making it a CAFS system with 300 gallon capacity.

We have ordered a new unit CAFS System with a 300 gallon capacity for our 1996 Ford Super Duty truck.

A new Pumper/Tender unit will be ordered in April 2006. The unit will contain a CAFS System, 1250 gallon pump and carry 2500 gallons of water.

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

No changes.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

No changes.

Additional Supporting Information

All BLM burn permits contain our address.

7. CITY OF RUPERT UPDATE/NEEDS:

Additional Goals

Secure fire pre-planning areas of proposed annexation prior to annexation.

Update and coordinate annexation areas with West End Fire Protection Dist and Minidoka Fire District.

Evaluate annexation areas and their impact on the Cities I.S.O. rating, water supply, additional fire stations, apparatus and FTE's.

WUI Map Update (BLM)

Update Department's wildland Pre-plan and Mitigation Map.

Materials Needs

Obtain grants and or secure city funding through the City budget process to maintain and or purchase equipment such as;

- a. brush hose
- b. brush nozzles
- c. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- d. fire shelters (Shelf Life)
- e. pumps and tanks
- f. upgrade existing brush truck(s)

Infrastructure Updates

Fire protection infrastructure within the city proper is well maintained and continues to be upgraded.
One 1977 Class A Pumper needs to be replaced.
One 1969 Command Van needs to be replaced with a Type 6 Heavy truck.
Type 6 Heavy truck is needed to provide protection through mutual aid agreements.
Fire flows need to be maintained within the city for proper fire protection.

Rangeland Fire Education Needs

There is no range land found within the city proper and or adjacent to the areas of annexation or impact. However, the danger of wildland fires continues to exist within the city. There is also a continued need for public fire education and prevention within the city.

New Growth, Subdivisions, Structures, Homes

In the area of fire protection, this type of growth is planned through the permit and review process. Infrastructure upgrading is required prior too and or in conjunction with the building process. It is possible that during the infrastructure installation process wildland fires could impact the department prior to the installation of access roads and water supplies (fire flows).

Grants, Funding Assistance, Training

As a city department we find that grant money for wildland firefighting is being decreased and or eliminated. Past funding, provided the city the opportunity to develop and enhance its wildland response. Without that funding we wouldn't have the off road firefighting capabilities that we have today. Continued funding is needed if we are to continue a wildland program. Federal funding was cut due to the lack of wildland responses that a city responds to when compared to a fire district. However, when an incident occurs, a certain level of city response is required just as it would in the fire district. It might be higher due to the possible exposures within a city as compared to farm or rangeland.

Mutual aid Departments, non-mutual Departments and BLM need to work together on an annual basis to maintain proficiency. As a city Department we are not involved due to the decreased chance that we would ever be contacted to respond. This is the reason why we do need to be included in these types of drills.

Close fire and emergency stations and/or replenish manpower.

Effects of Historic Fire Events, New Fire Effects

Homeowners and occupants residing within the impact and annexation city areas need to be contacted to make them aware of their provided fire protection resources and their potential fire hazards.

New Small Communities/Rural Fire Districts

No changes.

High Risk Areas

Most of our potential grass/brush fire areas are not high risk.

Most areas do require one or more of the following;

- a. suppression
- b. structure protection
- c. protection of out buildings (non-occupied buildings)
- d. protection of vegetation
- e. monitor the fire behavior (control the burn)

f. mutual aid

Issues for Fire Protection

Mutual Aid Responses; departments that may respond to wildland mutual aid incidents should be aware of high hazard areas in their neighbors response districts. This information could be vital prior to and or during the initial mutual aid response. We should include mutual aid departments during the pre-planning stage.

Utilize existing resources, and develop new strategies for the procurement of land for future fire stations. Utilize existing resources and develop new strategies for the procurement of fire apparatus.

Fire District Updates (Resources)

No changes.

New Treatments, Additions (burns, vegetative control, etc.)

Assist in the abatement of dry vegetation as requested and or directed by city management. Continue to enforce the burn ordinance within the city.

Update County Wide Recommendations & Activities

Update Rupert City Wildland Pre-plan and Mitigation map

Additional Supporting Information

Working in conjunction with the Twin Falls District, BLM update all county burn permits to contain self addressing.

SIGNATURE PAGES

This **Amended Minidoka 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: Dan Stapelman, Chairperson
Minidoka County Commissioner

Date

By: Marvin Bingham
Minidoka County Commissioner

Date

By: Lynn Huntsaker
Minidoka County Commissioner

Date

By: Randy Jones
Mayor - City of Paul

Date

By: Audrey Neiwerth
Mayor – City of Rupert

Date

By: Larry Wall
Mayor – City of Acequia

Date

By: George Anderson
Mayor – Heyburn

Date

By: Maxine Homer
Mayor – Minidoka

Date

By: Tim Duffner, Supervisor
Idaho Department of Lands

Date

By: Chris Simonson
USDI Twin Falls District BLM

Date

By: Randy Sutton, Chief
West End Fire Protection District

Date

By: Mike Brown, Chief
Minidoka Rural Fire District

Date

By: Larry V. Pool
Chief, Rupert City Fire Department

Date

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

Date

By: Kevin Halverson
Minidoka County Sheriff

Date

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

Date