

San Benito Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update

Wildfires play an important role in natural systems and cultural practices. They can benefit ecosystems by promoting forest regeneration, increasing nutrient cycling, and maintaining biodiversity. Indigenous communities have relied on wildfires as a management tool for millennia, intentionally setting controlled fires to shape landscapes, support ecological balance, and reduce the accumulation of flammable materials. Historically, San Benito ranching families used fire to improve throughout the County. Currently, however, wildfires can cause destruction and damage to ecosystems, people, and property. One of the most useful tools for collaborative wildfire prevention and response are Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). San Benito adopted its current CWPP in 2010. To develop an update to this plan, several partners have teamed together to identify the current needs and priorities of San Benito County.

What is a CWPP?

As wildfire severity increases, communities need a plan to help prepare for, reduce the risk of, and adapt to wildland fire events. A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a community-based plan focused on identifying and addressing the local threats of wildfire. CWPPs have been a national standard of practice since 2003 when the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) was signed into law. The HFRA requires that CWPPs are developed by multiple agencies at the state and local level in consultation with federal agencies and the public.



San Benito adopted its current CWPP in 2010. In the last 14 years, many changes have occurred across the County. Updating San Benito's CWPP can help residents understand current wildfire hazards and risks for communities and resources, identify and prioritize areas for wildfire risk reduction projects, create opportunities for funding, and increase collaboration among residents, fire management agencies, and local businesses.

Is an update underway?

Yes! San Benito is undergoing an update to its CWPP. This update includes:

- Maps and figures of wildfire risk
- An updated definition of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)
- Recommendations to reduce risk at an individual homeowner and community-wide level
- Priority fuels reduction projects eligible for funding
- A publicly available comprehensive plan

What is the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)?

The WUI is the area where wildland fuels meet development, often in the form of homes, businesses, infrastructure (e.g., power lines, drinking water supplies), and other valuable assets. Targeting these areas for fire risk reduction projects is likely to have the greatest effect in protecting homes, livelihoods, and valued natural resources.

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Who is responsible for updating the CWPP?

Development of San Benito’s CWPP is rooted in facilitated partnership among local, state, Tribal, and federal officials, as well as non-governmental organizations and private citizens. Throughout the update period, residents and homeowners’ associations, fire protection districts, non-profit organizations, and government and business entities, will work together to help make their communities safer from wildfire and provide a roadmap of clear actions for the community. Core collaborators on the update include the San Benito Fire Safe Council, San Benito Agricultural Land Trust, San Benito Resource Conservation District, San Benito Office of Emergency Services, San Benito County Cattlemen’s Association, University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Cooperative Extension, City of Hollister Fire Department, California State Parks, Amah Mutsun Land Trust, Bureau of Land Management, CAL FIRE and National Park Service. The consultant team supporting this CWPP update includes Environmental Science Associates (ESA) and Spatial Informatics Group. Funding for this effort is provided by a grant through the California Coastal Conservancy and the California Department of Conservation.



How can I participate in the CWPP process?

A key element in the CWPP planning process is the discussion generated among community members regarding priorities for local fire protection and forest management. There will be a variety of community events to gather public feedback and discuss the updated CWPP. There is also an online survey available, which provides an opportunity to share community needs and priorities. The draft update will be available later in 2024 for public review and comment. Please see the information below for more detail.



Online Survey

Share your input at <https://tinyurl.com/sbwildfiresurvey>



Community Meetings

Join us for an introductory meeting online on **May 8th, 2024 at 6pm**. Register for the meeting here: <https://tinyurl.com/sbcmtg> Information on additional meetings in your area coming soon!



Contact Us

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