

## 2. Executive Summary

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003 provides the impetus for wildfire risk assessment and planning at the county and community level. HFRA refers to this level of planning as a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The CWPP provides a means for Garfield County to evaluate its current situation with regard to wildfire risks and hazards, and devise ways to protect human welfare and important economic and ecological values. This CWPP addresses at a higher-level types of wildfire risks, including fuel hazards, structure flammability, vegetation-fuel treatments, and ways to improve fire protection response capabilities. More specifically this is a long-term plan for strategy implementation. Representatives from the fire protection districts, federal agencies, state agencies, county agencies, communities, and other organizations were invited to participate in the collaborative planning effort to develop the CWPP.

The Garfield County CWPP is countywide, with emphasis on the protection of human welfare, communities, and other economic and ecological values. Catastrophic wildfire fires have occurred throughout the county and the threat of wildfire continues, especially as drier climate and extended drought conditions persist across the nation contributing to larger and more destructive wildfire events. Wildfire risks to human welfare and economic and ecological values are more serious today than in the past because homes and other infrastructures are located in close proximity to forest and rangeland vegetation-fuels.

This CWPP is a strategic plan that delineates the wildland urban interface (WUI) areas, identifies wildfire threats within these areas, and prioritizes mitigation actions that are designed to reduce wildfire hazards and risks. The accumulation of hazardous fuels and inaccessible terrain may set the stage for catastrophic wildfire occurrence. There are varieties of vegetation-fuels around communities, ranches, structures, and on public lands that create problems for fire protection. A coordinated effort among all fire authorities, private landowners, and other stakeholders is needed to manage hazardous fuels and reduce the risks of wildfire.

Implementing and sustaining the CWPP is crucial to success. This is the responsibility of the core planning team. Building partnerships among community-based organizations, fire protection authorities, local governments, public land management agencies, and private landowners is necessary in identifying and prioritizing measures to reduce wildfire risk. Maintaining this cooperation is a long-term effort that requires the commitment of all partners involved. The CWPP encourages citizens to take an active role in identifying needs, developing strategies, and implementing solutions to address wildfire risk by assisting with the development of local community wildfire plans and participating in countywide fire prevention activities.

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