

WILDFIRE ADAPTED MISSOULA

A VISION FOR A MORE
RESILIENT FUTURE

SUMMER 2019

A HEIGHTENED RISK OF WILDFIRE

Fire season in western Montana often stretches for several months – no longer just a few weeks. Intense and fast moving fires that burden suppression resources and threaten residents and property have become more frequent. This trend is not likely to reverse itself, putting communities and first responders at risk.

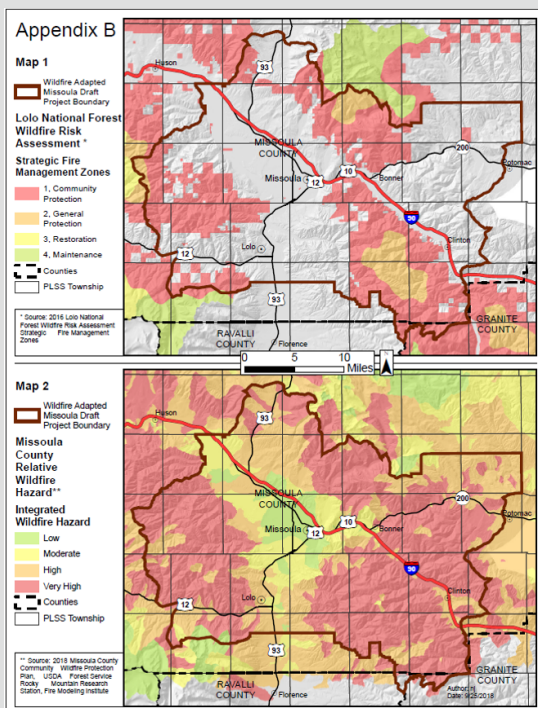
Wildfire management is complicated by the fact that the Missoula area is comprised of a patchwork of landownership, including tribal, federal, state, county, municipal, and private.

ADAPTING MISSOULA TO WILDFIRE

The Missoula Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest is working to develop an all-lands focused fuels project called “Wildfire Adapted Missoula” or WAM.

The goals of WAM are to reduce wildfire risk to the community and first responders, and to improve forest resilience to uncharacteristic wildfires. Modeling completed for the Lolo National Forest Risk Assessment (2016) and the Missoula County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (2018) demonstrates that the risk of wildfire in the WAM project area is very high to high on 177,000 acres, moderate on 50,000 acres, and low on just 27,000 acres.

Successfully creating a wildfire adapted community depends on the support and participation of Missoula residents and community leaders. The Missoula Ranger District, in partnership with the National Forest Foundation, is convening interactive “learning lab” discussions with neighborhoods, civic groups, and elected officials. The purpose of the learning labs is to build community understanding of strategies to reduce fire risk on surrounding National Forest lands and offer an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.



WAM draft project boundary over 2016 Lolo National Forest Risk Assessment map (top image) and 2018 Integrated Wildfire Hazard map from the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (bottom image)

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INTEGRATION WITH THE COHESIVE STRATEGY

Wildfire Adapted Missoula aligns with the Missoula Area Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (“Cohesive Strategy”), an interagency effort to improve forest health and reduce the risk of wildfire in areas where homes and the forest meet. In revising Missoula’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan (finalized in 2018), local, state, and federal land management agencies recognized the need to develop a coordinated plan for reducing flammable vegetation and increasing the wildfire resilience of communities throughout the Missoula area. The three principle objectives of the Cohesive Strategy are:

- 1) Maintain and restore fire-resilient landscapes across all jurisdictions.
- 2) Prepare communities to effectively manage wildfire (minimize the loss of life and property).
- 3) Coordinate swift interagency response to wildland fires.

CONTACT

WAM PROJECT QUESTIONS

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LEARNING LAB QUESTIONS

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TENTATIVE PROJECT TIMELINE

Spring – Summer of 2019: Data collection

Fall of 2019: Public scoping under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

2020: Project design, effects analysis and public comment period

2021: Decision

2021: Begin Implementation