

The Boulder Watershed Collective Community Collaboration on Wildfire & Forest Health in Nederland, Colorado

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In an effort to leverage community engagement for improved awareness and support of wildfire planning, we will pilot methods to incorporate community input and values in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Nederland Fire Protection District. One-on-one interviews in combination with a series of engagement workshops will contribute to recommendations for a stakeholder-driven CWPP that reflects community values.

Project Background

Since the 1980s, wildfires across the West have increased in size and severity. Located at 8,236 ft, Nederland, Colorado has historically seen low risk for catastrophic wildfire. However, new data from the [Colorado Forest Restoration Institute](#) indicate that wildfire risk in higher elevation forests has been underestimated. Wildfire risk in the Nederland area has increased due to the changing climate and expansion into the Wildland Urban Interface.

One method for addressing wildfire risks is Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). CWPPs came out of the 2003 Healthy Forest Restoration Act and authorized communities to adopt their own plans for wildfires. CWPPs allow communities to identify risk levels and consider local issues and knowledge in wildfire planning. Nederland's current CWPP has not been updated since 2011.

Furthermore, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (2021) allocated approximately [\\$500 million to community wildfire planning](#). To receive any of this much-needed funding, communities must have an updated and current CWPP in place. The need for a robust, up-to-date, and community-driven plan for wildfire resilience in the Nederland area has never been more urgent.

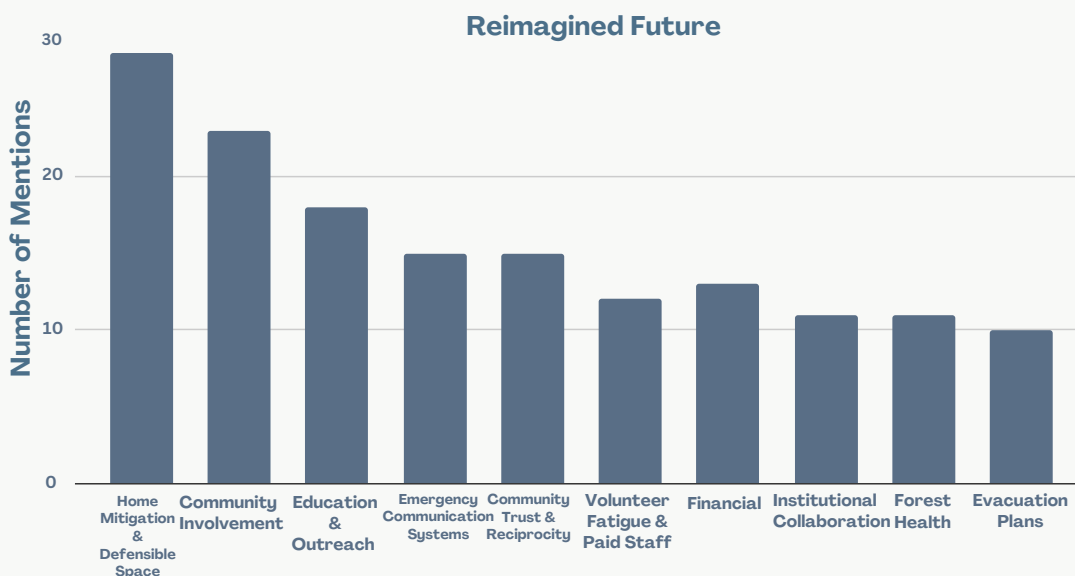
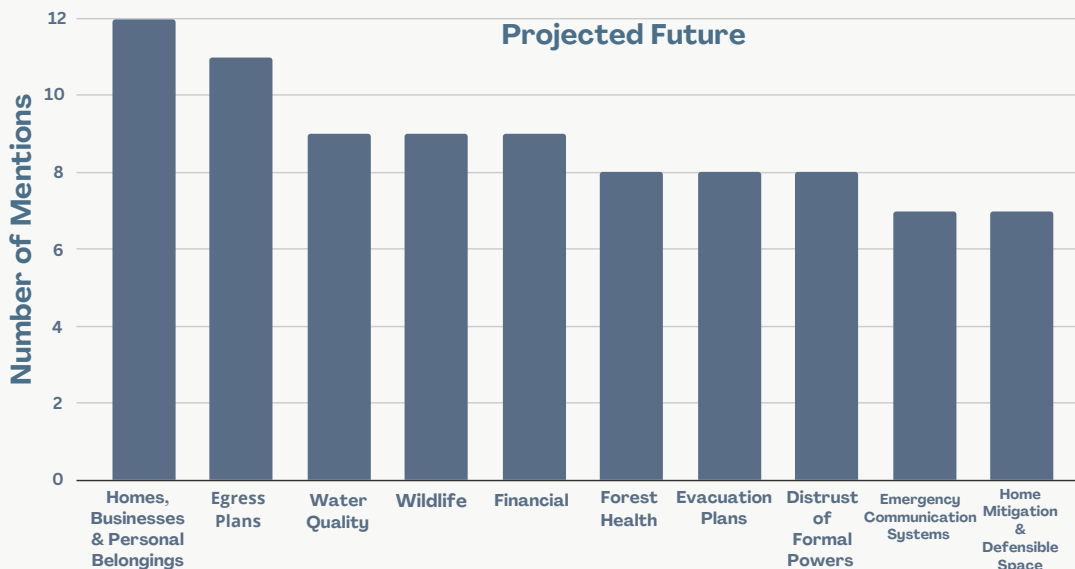
Purpose

This project aims to ensure that the community of Nederland is adequately engaged in the CWPP update. The goal is to support a final CWPP that is stakeholder-driven, representing community values and priority concerns. The Boulder Watershed Collective (BWC) is a non-profit local to Boulder County, Colorado, focused on protecting ecological systems, engaging communities, and cultivating partnerships in the Boulder Creek Watershed. BWC acquired grant funding from Coalitions and Collaborative's Action and Implementation for Mitigation Program in the spring of 2022 to update the Nederland Fire Protection District's CWPP. The Colorado State Forest Service's minimum standards for CWPPs state that community engagement is essential to this process. In the past, engagement has been limited by insufficient capacity. Partnership with students from CU Boulder's Masters in the Environment program provides the capacity needed for this critical engagement effort.

Preliminary Visioning Workshop Data

Methodology

We conducted an in-depth social science investigation based on one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 38 community members to better understand the needs and priorities of the community. To supplement the interviews we also facilitated a series of community visioning workshops in which an additional 50 participants envisioned alternative wildfire futures in Nederland. To further increase capacity, we applied for and received a [*Living with Fire Design Challenge*](#) grant from WonderLabs, an organization committed to “catalyzing social and ecological innovations with communities on the frontline of climate impacts.” The theme of the *Living with Fire Design Challenge* grant was “expanding wildfire risk management capacities and capabilities for just, inclusive, and equitable outcomes.” Throughout the engagement process, we have worked with trusted community organizations that represent diverse populations in Nederland including older adults, young adults, Indigenous people, and unhoused people.



1

Academic Research Paper

This research paper will present and analyze findings from our social science research, based on interviews with 38 Community Members and Decision-Makers in Nederland. We will seek publication for this paper to be available to the academic community interested in social perceptions of wildfire risk and resilience in small mountain communities. This research seeks to answer the following questions through both qualitative and quantitative analysis:

What are the similarities and differences in meanings of wildfire resilience and recommended actions between community members and local decision-makers?

What are the salient factors that have influenced residents' level of engagement on wildfire preparedness?

Project Deliverables

2

ARC GIS Story Map

The Story Map will summarize key findings from interviews and community visioning workshops. This will be a community-facing synthesis of our research and engagement efforts.

Where do Nederland community members and local decision making authorities perceive the source of wildfire risks to Nederland come from?

3

Comprehensive Report

This final report for the Boulder Watershed Collective will synthesize findings from our research and workshops. It will include recommendations specific to Nederland's CWPP update as well as an analysis of our engagement methodology with recommendations for any updates to BWC's engagement model, based upon our experiences with the Nederland community. This report will also include recommendations for use of seed money allocated through the Living with Fire Design Challenge grant from Wonder Labs.

Acknowledgements

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