

Wildfire Risk Management: Summary of Current Programs & Planning Efforts Applicable in the Lake Whatcom Watershed

Purpose: This document provides a brief summary of wildfire hazard management planning and risk reduction efforts that apply in the Lake Whatcom watershed compiled by ICT staff to inform Lake Whatcom Policy Group members and Lake Whatcom Management Program partners. Information is current as of July 2021.

Washington State Department of Natural Resources Wildland Urban Interface Mapping Tools

- StoryMap: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7016c437623a445997c072a05e26afbb>
- GIS Open Data Portal: <https://data-wadnr.opendata.arcgis.com/maps/wadnr::wadnr-public-wd-wui/explore>
- Web Map Application: <https://data-wadnr.opendata.arcgis.com/maps/wadnr::wadnr-public-wd-wui/explore>

Whatcom Conservation District Wildfire Risk Reduction Program

- Staff contact: Jenny Coe, Whatcom Conservation District
- <https://whatcomcd.org/wildfire>
- Funding:
 - City funding (new 2021) focused on properties in Lake Whatcom watershed adjacent to city acquisition properties
 - County funding (started 2019) focused on communities in wildland-urban interface
 - New federal grant (through Coalitions and Collaborative) \$75,000 to broaden program in Whatcom and Skagit Counties

Whatcom County Parks Forest Management Plan for Lake Whatcom Watershed

- Staff contact: Mike McFarlane, Whatcom County Parks and Recreation
- Parks is initiating the consultant selection process in June 2021. The plan will include a fire resistance component along with wildlife management, water quality, and forest health. The long-term goal is older growth forest conditions, which is a fire management strategy in addition to providing other watershed health benefits.

City of Bellingham Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP)

- Staff contact: Analise Burns, City of Bellingham Public Works
- The focus area is city limits and UGA. A consultant is conducting a wildland-urban interface (WUI) analysis.

Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management 2021 Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan

- Staff contacts:
 - Wallace (Wally) Kost, WC Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management
 - Liz Coogan, City of Bellingham
 - Justin Clary, LWWSD
- <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3569/2021-Natural-Hazards-Mitigation-Plan>
- Every five years, Whatcom County submits a Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan for review and approval by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
 - Compiles information from other public agencies/jurisdictions in Whatcom County
 - 2021-2025 plan includes new, updated wildfire risk assessment that is coordinated with the new WDNR map/risk assessment tool (see page 1)
 - In June 2021 public comments were incorporated and the plan was submitted to FEMA
 - FEMA approves the plan then each agency/jurisdiction adopts and approves their agency-specific portion of the plan
 - County Council adopts entire plan as last step

Whatcom County Climate Action Plan

- Staff contact: Chris Elder, Whatcom County Public Works
- This plan includes a Forestry Chapter that addresses forest health and climate resilience including a wildfire management component.
 - Key relevant strategy states, "Increase forest health, survival and climate resilience through forest management practices that reduce wildfire risk, increase soil moisture and stream flows, and preserve wildlife habitat"
 - Numerous identified actions to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk

City of Bellingham Climate Adaptation Plan

- Staff contact: Clare Fogelsong
- This plan overlaps with the City of Bellingham 2021-2025 Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is a section of the Whatcom County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan includes a section on wildfire and establishes climate change as a contributor to the increase of wildfires.
 - Identifies actions that can be taken to decrease the potential and impact of wildfire in the wildland urban interface
 - May seek grant funding to implement actions in the plan

Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer District Wildfire Hazard Planning

- Staff contact: Justin Clary, LWWSD
- Wildfire has been identified by the District as a natural hazard it should plan for.
- Actions identified within the District's section of the countywide Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan include firewise critical facilities (water treatment plants, water reservoirs, water pump stations, sewer pump stations, etc.); however, action completion is listed as dependent upon receipt of external funding.