

# Community Wildfire Protection Plan

For

**Weston Volunteer Fire Departments Jurisdiction  
Within Collin County, Texas**

**Established 2022**



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## **Executive Summary**

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are documents that are designed to be developed by a local group of stakeholders invested in the wildland fire threat in their community. The group of stakeholders typically consists of a representative from fire departments, the state government, any local governing bodies, and property owners. Each of these representatives should bring their concerns regarding wildland fire to the discussion and work to propose solutions. The Weston Fire Protection District Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is developed in compliance with federal, state, and local laws with the helpful cooperation of their departments and representatives. This document was augmented by the select citizens of Collin County within the Weston Volunteer Fire Departments jurisdiction who are interested in wildfire risk mitigation.

While reducing the risk of high intensity wildland fires is the primary motivation behind this plan, managing the larger landscape to restore forest health, more resilient conditions, and improving fire response capabilities by all fire agencies will be addressed in this plan. Continued efforts have been made by county, state and federal land management agencies to reduce the threat of high intensity wildland fires through education and fuels reduction activities on public lands. Private residents, with recommendations from this plan and local departments, will create defensible space, reduce hazardous fuels, and develop emergency plans. All of these activities will allow the areas of Collin County within the Weston Volunteer Fire Departments jurisdiction to become a more Fire Adapted Community.

Wildland fire is a natural and necessary component of ecosystems across the country, with North Central Texas being no exception. Historically, wildland fires shaped the forests and rangelands valued by residents and visitors. These landscapes are now significantly altered due to fire prevention efforts, modern suppression activities, and a general lack of large low intensity fires. This has resulted in overgrown forests with dense fuels that burn more intensely than in the past. In addition, the recent increase in population has led to a swell in residential development into the wildland urban interface (WUI), an area that borders urban areas.

The 2021 Weston Fire Protection District Community Wildfire Protection Plan within the Weston Volunteer Fire Department's jurisdiction will assist all agencies and the City of Weston area residents, those in the City of Weston's ETJ, in the identification and prioritization of surrounding lands, including federal and state lands, which are at risk from high intensity wildland fire. The Weston Fire Protection District CWPP identifies priorities and strategies for reducing hazardous wildland fuels, improving forest health, supporting local industry and economy, and improving fire protection capabilities.

Addressing these goals in a cooperative, collaborative manner maintains alignment with the goals; outlined in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy)—resilient landscapes, fire adapted communities, safe and effective wildfire response. For more information on Cohesive Strategy, visit <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/>.

This CWPP was developed by and for community members to enhance understanding of local factors and landscape and how these influence the wildfire risk. Each risk assessment and recommendation in this plan has been made after careful consideration by the Steering Committee. Specific recommendations for homeowners to reduce their risk and to achieve more fire resilient landscapes can be found within this CWPP.

The key points of the document are summarized below.

- The Weston Fire Protection District CWPP is written for the unincorporated area of Collin County within the Weston Fire Departments jurisdiction and related community interests.
- The CWPP purpose is to identify the infrastructure and values at risk that are important to the county, define the key assets with vulnerabilities that need protection, outline the likely wildfire threats, and propose education, outreach, and fuels mitigation measures to reduce those risks.
- The most significant wildfire risk to the Weston Fire Protection District is from a grass fire and flying firebrands (airborne burning embers) landing on receptive fuel beds near or next to unmaintained properties and dilapidated wooden structures inside the city limits. Wildland fires also pose a risk to infrastructure including watershed, communications towers, and electrical power lines.
- The key infrastructure elements needing protection are located inside the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) boundary within the Weston Volunteer fire Departments jurisdiction. The defined WUI area includes the City of Weston, Collin County, and the Trinity River watershed; the critical communication towers at CR 203 just south of CR 204, CR 175 between CR 134 and FM 455, CR 290 1.75 miles west of I-75; the electrical substation for GCEC on Chambersville road, natural gas transmission lines running east to west near FM 455; the transportation egress routes via FM 543, FM 455, FM 2478, and Collin County Road 168.
- The County is well protected from the threat of unwanted wildfire by the Weston Volunteer Fire Department staff. However, this is dependent on resources being available to respond to incidents



- An aggressive education and outreach program is needed to bring wildfire awareness to the community and to promote beneficial wildfire hazard and risk mitigation measures. In addition, wildfire hazard mitigation measures need to be taken to protect the important natural resources of our watershed and critical communications assets within the area of the community.
- The Weston Fire Protection District CWPP is a living document designed to be used as a guide for reducing the community's wildfire risk. When approved, it becomes the foundation and guiding document to be used for future grant-applications for fuels reduction projects and other critical infrastructure projects. The CWPP is to be periodically updated with a total review and republication every five years.

## Declaration of Agreement

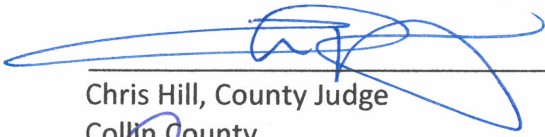
The Healthy Forests Restoration Act requires that the applicable local government, the local fire department, and the state entity responsible for forest management agree to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The Weston Fire Protection District Community Wildfire Protection Plan was initiated by resolution and signed by the Fire Department and County Commissioners.



Bart Chambers, Fire Chief  
Weston Fire and Rescue

02/28/2022

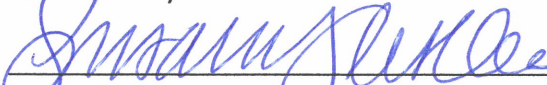
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Chris Hill, County Judge  
Collin County

4-6-22

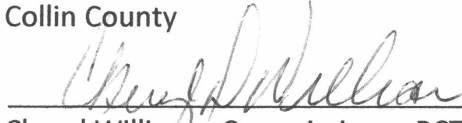
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Susan Fletcher, Commissioner PCT. 1  
Collin County

4/11/22

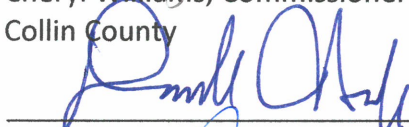
Date



Cheryl Williams, Commissioner PCT. 2  
Collin County

4/11/22

Date



Darrell Hale, Commissioner PCT. 3  
Collin County

4-7-22

Date



Duncan Webb, Commissioner PCT. 4  
Collin County

4-4-22

Date

## **Introduction**

The Weston Fire Protection District Community Wildfire Protection Plan, is a result of a district wide planning effort that includes data gathering, the compilation of existing documents and GIS data, scientifically based analyses, and recommendations designed to reduce the threat of wildfire related damages to values at risk. This document incorporates new and existing information relating to wildfire which will be valuable to citizens, policy makers, and public agencies in Collin County and the Weston Fire District. Participants in this project would include the Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS), the United States Forest Service (USFS), The Weston Fire Department, residents within the district, HOA groups, and stakeholders. This document meets the requirements of the federal Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 for community fire planning.

The assessment portion of this document estimates the hazards and risks associated with wildland fire in proximity to our community within the Weston Fire District. This information, in conjunction with identification of values at risk, defines “areas of concern” for Weston Fire District and this specific area of Collin County and allows for prioritization of mitigation efforts. From the analysis of this data, solutions and mitigation recommendations are offered that will assist homeowners, land managers, and other interested parties in the process of developing short-term and long-term fuels and fire management plans.

For the purposes of this report the following definitions apply:

**Risk** is considered to be the likelihood of an ignition occurrence. This is primarily determined by the fire history of the area.

**Hazard** is the combination of the WHR ratings of the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) neighborhoods and the analysis of Fire Behavior Potential, as modeled from the fuels, weather, and topography of the study area. Hazard attempts to quantify the severity of undesirable fire outcomes to the values at risk. In essence, hazard represents the vulnerability of values at risk to negative impacts from wildfire.

**Values at risk** are the intrinsic values identified by the citizens and stakeholders as being important to the way of life in the study area (e.g., life safety, property conservation, access to recreation, and wildlife habitat).

## **Healthy Forest Act–Guidance and Requirements.**

This document is written in response to the federal Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003. This legislation established unprecedented incentives for communities to develop comprehensive wildfire protection plans in a collaborative and inclusive process. Furthermore, this legislation directs the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to address local community priorities in fuels reduction treatments on both federal and non-federal lands.

The HFRA emphasizes the need for federal agencies to collaborate with communities in developing hazardous fuels reduction projects and places priority on treatment areas identified by communities through development of a CWPP. Priority areas include the

wildland-urban interface (WUI), municipal watersheds, local values at risk, areas impacted by windthrow, insect, or disease epidemics, and critical wildlife habitat that would be negatively impacted by a wildfire. In compliance with Title 1 of the HFRA, the CWPP requires agreement among local government, local fire departments, and the state agency responsible for forest management, in Texas this is Texas A&M Forest Service. The CWPP also must be developed in consultation with interested parties and the applicable federal agency managing lands surrounding at-risk communities.

### **Texas Minimum Standards for CWPPs**

The HFRA also required the Texas A&M Forest Service to establish minimum standards for development of CWPPs in Texas, and the Texas A&M Forest Service must approve any and all CWPPs to ensure that they meet these minimum standards.

### **Purpose**

The mission of the Weston Fire Protection District Wildfire Protection Plan is *to protect against loss of life, property, and natural resources as the result of unwanted wildland fire.*

Reducing the risk of high intensity wildland fire is the primary motivation behind this plan. To accomplish this reduction, we will remove build ups of hazardous fuels in the landscape. Residents and visitors desire healthy, fire-resilient forests and wildlands that provide habitat for wildlife, recreational opportunities, and scenic beauty. By creating a more fire-adapted community and reducing hazardous fuels on private property we can create a more fire-resilient landscape.

The purpose of the Weston Fire Protection District Community Wildfire Protection Plan is:

- Protect lives and property from the effects of unwanted wildland fires;
- instill a sense of personal responsibility and provide steps for taking preventive actions regarding wildland fire;
- Increase public understanding about the importance of living with wildfire in a fire-adapted ecosystem;
- Increase the community's and fire personnel's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from wildland fires;
- Restore fire-adapted ecosystems;
- Improve the fire resilience of the landscape while protecting other social, economic, and ecological values.



This outlines the priorities, strategies, and action plans for hazardous fuel reduction treatments in the wildland urban interface. This plan also identifies and addresses special areas of concern such as evacuation routes and prioritizes recommendations for reducing structural vulnerability in at-risk communities. This CWPP is designed as a living document and will prioritize fuels reduction projects, education and outreach, and other critical projects to decrease overall loss from wildland fire.

## **Planning Summary**

The Collin County Commissioners Court identified and supported through resolution the Weston Fire Protection District Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Efforts will be made by the Weston Fire department, with state and federal land management agencies assistance to reduce the threat of high intensity wildland fires through education and fuels reduction activities on public lands. In addition, private residents will be able to participate and hopefully respond enthusiastically to the defensible space and preparation guidelines and recommendations to reduce hazardous fuels on their own properties.

In keeping with the strategy of the Weston Fire Protection District CWPP, the Steering Committee will follow the planning outline in *Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities* (Communities Committee, Society of American Foresters, National Association of Counties, and National Association of State Foresters 2005);

Eight steps are outlined to help guide Steering Committees through the planning process:

### **Step One: Convene the decision makers.**

Collin County and the Weston Volunteer Fire Department established through a County Resolution, a partnership laying the groundwork for the Weston Fire Protection District CWPP. The Weston Volunteer Fire Department Chief made the recommendations that the Steering Committee be comprised of the Fire Chief from Weston Volunteer Fire Department; representatives from Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS), Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD); representatives from Collin County, Interested City of Weston Council Members, other stakeholders, and members of the public. This would establish and review the work within the City, its ETJ and adjacent to the WUI boundaries on public and private lands; and reevaluate the priorities for future fuels reduction treatments.

**Step Two: Involve state and federal agencies.**

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) directed communities to collaborate with local and state government representatives, in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties in the development of a CWPP. State Agencies represented will be Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS), Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD).

**Step Three: Engage interested parties.**

Representatives from the Communities at Risk are encouraged to be on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee also can include members of local businesses, road districts, homeowner/neighborhood associations, and other organizations and individuals. This Steering Committee would be encouraged to develop a collaborative environment for the stakeholders to accomplish the Weston Fire Protection District CWPP. Collaboration and coordination between agencies, community members and landowners is the fundamental goal of the Cohesive Strategy.

**Step Four: Establish a community base map.**

The Steering Committee would work to establish the needed maps and boundaries for the Weston Fire Protection District CWPP. The group would approve the CWPP boundary and identify the rating areas. The Steering Committee would be able, with this base map, to include the area of Collin County within the Weston Volunteer Fire Departments jurisdiction, the City of Weston and its ETJ along with, additional structures and lands in the risk assessment process.

**Step Five: Develop a community risk assessment.**

The Steering Committee would rely on the TAMFS Assessment of Risk Factors and the structural vulnerability factors for the communities at-risk.

**Step Six: Establish community hazard reduction priorities and recommendations to reduce structural ignitability.**

Based on the assessments, the Steering Committee would establish groups of priorities for fuels reduction treatments on public and private lands. The Steering Committee would also make recommendations to reduce structural ignitability based on information in the assessments and local knowledge.

**Step Seven: Develop an action plan and assessment strategy.**

The Steering Committee would identify an action plan for key projects; roles and responsibilities for carrying out the mission of the CWPP; potential funding needs and the evaluation process for the CWPP itself.

**Step Eight: Finalize the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.**

A draft of the Weston Fire Protection District CWPP would be available for public comment for 30 days prior to the final signing and approval of the plan. The Weston Fire Protection District Community Wildfire Protection Plan would be mutually approved by the Weston Volunteer Fire Department, the Texas A&M Forest Service, and Collin County will be demonstrated in the Declaration of Agreement.

**Collaboration**

In 2002, President George Bush established the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) to improve regulatory processes to ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

In 2003, the US Congress passed historical bi-partisan legislation: the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). This legislation directs federal agencies to collaborate with communities in developing hazardous fuels reduction projects, and in the prioritization of treatment areas as defined by a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). It further provides authorities to expedite the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review and approval process for fuels reduction projects on federal lands. The Act further requires that 50% of funding allocated to HFRA projects be used to protect communities at risk of wildland fire.

Since the enactment of this legislation, communities have had the opportunity to direct where federal agencies place their fuels reduction efforts. HFRA also allows community groups to apply for federal funding to make communities safer against the threat of wildland fire.

Although some of the authorities under HFI and HFRA have been subsequently challenged in federal courts, all have been successfully appealed and the original intent and authorities under each remain the same.

In 2009, Congress passed the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement (FLAME) Act and called for a National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy to address wildland fire related issues across the nation in a collaborative, cohesive manner. The Cohesive Strategy was finalized in 2014 and represents the evolution of national fire policy:

*To safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a Nation, live with wildland fire.*



The primary, national goals identified as necessary to achieving the vision are:

**Resilient landscapes:** Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.

**Fire-adapted communities:** Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.

**Wildfire response:** All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.

As a Steering Committee, community members from the area within the Weston Volunteer Fire Departments jurisdiction of Collin County would come together with representatives from Weston Volunteer Fire Department, the interested parties from the City of Weston, Texas A&M Forest Service, Collin County, and Project Wildfire to establish the Weston Fire Protection District Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

To assist in maintaining this living document 4 members from the Weston Volunteer Fire Department have been to the National Fire Academy in January, 2022. While at the National Fire Academy they attended and participated in the Wildland Urban Interface: Fire Adapted Communities course. The Weston Fire Chief along with three of his members worked in conjunction with other agencies throughout the country that developing or who have developed a CWPP for their community's safety. The Weston Fire Department worked side by side in this class with Cedar Hill Fire Department in Texas, who has an established and successful CWPP. This class and the cooperative interaction will enhance financial support from the federal government to assist our community and residents with their specific needs on the threat of wildland fires as a fire adaptive community and a model for the region in this part of our great state of Texas.



