



Social science builds relevant, usable knowledge of how communities can better live with wildfire through research on human behavior, institutions and governance, community dynamics and social networks.



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CoMFRT

Co-Management of Fire Risk Transmission Partnership

Identifying strategies to address cross-boundary fire risk

Wildfire Does Not Recognize Boundaries

Fires in the U.S. burn across large, diverse landscapes, crossing geographic and political boundaries. We increasingly acknowledge the need to “live with fire,” but increased development in fire-prone landscapes, the growing intensity of fires, and fragmented approaches to managing fire risk make that challenging. Fire cannot be managed by any one actor; instead, we need to understand how homeowners, communities, non-profit organizations, and local, state and federal agencies can best interact and make decisions that affect fire and risk.

Helping Communities Better Live with Fire

The CoMFRT Partnership studies what makes people and institutions work successfully together across scales and circumstances to best mitigate fire risk. Using innovative scientific approaches and data, the Partnership finds ways for communities to better live with fire by:

- Identifying innovative, cross-boundary methods to co-manage risk in fire-prone landscapes;
- Highlighting ways that improve capacity to co-manage risk in different social and geographic conditions; and
- Providing science-based recommendations to inform strategic investments that will improve the wildland fire system, sustain communities, and conserve the land.



Managers, community groups, and the CoMFRT social science team get on the ground in North Central Washington.

What's Unique about CoMFRT?

- The CoMFRT team is a partnership doing research hand-in-hand with stakeholders across scales to identify strategies to address cross-boundary fire risk.
- The partnership brings together a coordinated coalition of experienced social scientists to provide a deep understanding of the social components of the fire management system in key fire-prone landscapes.

Vision

Wildfire is no longer seen as disastrous or catastrophic for communities, but becomes “more like rain”—normal and expected, but sometimes problematic in its intensity.

Research Snapshot

CoMFRT partners gained insights from surveys and interviews in North Central Washington. These data begin to paint a picture of strategies to pilot in other communities.

- Over 500 people, across 100 organizations constitute a network of professionals working on wildfire prevention and mitigation in North Central Washington.
- Forest Service staff reported fewer relationships than NGO staff, who reported being more connected to a broader array of people working to mitigate fire risk in the area.
- In some high risk communities language barriers can impede efforts to build relationships and engage in wildfire mitigation activities.
- Communities prefer to use their own words rather than adopting terminology common among fire professionals (e.g, firesheds, co-management).
- Communities' negative perceptions of Forest Service responsiveness and responsibility weaken the Agency's legitimacy with collaborators, decreasing opportunities for interaction.

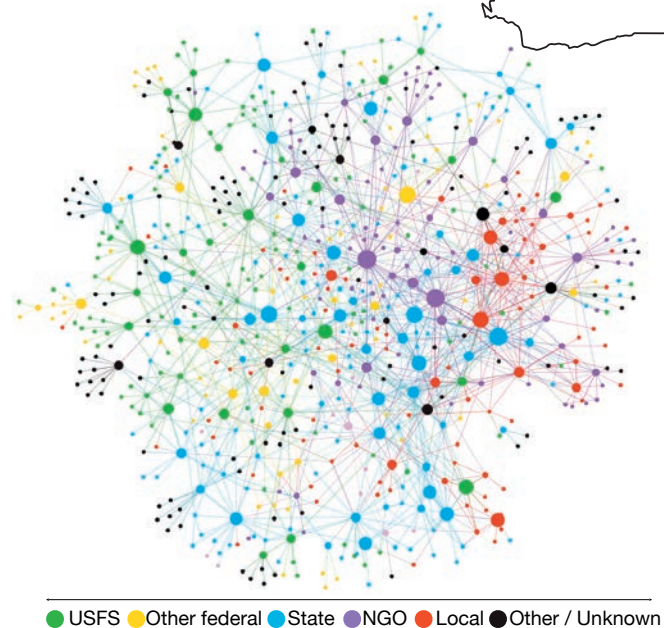
Science-Based Recommendations

- Formal coordination positions have been shown to be a highly effective way to ensure stable leadership and communication required for effective cross-boundary management.
- These positions should be located both in and outside Agencies and focus on risk mitigation more than suppression related activities.
- Communities can target wildfire risk reduction activities to those who might be most vulnerable such as, non-English speakers and non-home-owning residents.

Key 2019 Activities

- Complete additional stakeholder interviews and workshops in North Central Washington.
- Launch first focus group in the Wasatch area of Utah.
- Incorporate and refine lessons learned from study sites.
- Integrate data to surface new findings.

North Central Washington Wildfire Risk Management Network



The figure above shows relationships (lines) between individuals (dots) engaged in wildfire risk management in North Central Washington. Bigger dots represent individuals with more professional relationships in wildfire risk management.