



**Julie O'Berg**  
FIRE CHIEF

## **City of Spokane Community Wildfire Protection Plan**

### **District Summary:**

Spokane City limits and various service areas, including heavy, medium, and light commercial/industrial areas, a densely populated urban core area (downtown and Browne's Addition), mixed residential areas, suburban and urban/wildland interface & Intermix areas. As an events/destination center, Spokane hosts various significant events and their visitors (Bloomsday, Hoopfest, conventions, etc). Spokane also hosts Fairchild Air Force Base and an important medical and academic community, playing an increasing role in the local economy and vitality.

The Spokane Fire Department is a professional, paid department with 375.63 employees (350 uniformed positions and 25.63 civilian positions). The Service area is 69.46 square miles, and the population is 229,447. With 16 fire stations, the Spokane Fire Department provides fire, emergency medical, regional hazardous materials, technical rescue, Fire Prevention, and other emergency response services for the community, in addition to participating in mutual aid response to neighboring districts.

### **Issues of Concern:**

- 1) The City of Spokane continues to grow and has added 30,000 residents since the 2014 CWPP was developed. Spokane continues to grow as housing expands into the Wildland Urban Interface and Intermix areas. Spokane has over 58,409 homes in the Wildland Urban Interface & Intermix. Additional Plats are planned or approved to add approximately 10,000 homes in the next 5-10 years. Some areas of the City have a more significant response time due to the City's (infrastructure) inability to keep up with development (i.e., development occurring too far from fire stations). Increased population and development in the WUI areas, matched with increased service calls, will continue to be chief concerns.
- 2) Numerous places within the Spokane Fire Department jurisdiction are high-risk Wildland Urban Interface. The parcels range from large tracts down to fragmented parts of an acre. There are three large City of Spokane and Spokane County tracks of land that have been main focuses for fuel reduction—the Bluff on the South hill, which encompasses approximately 700 acres; Palisades Park and adjacent, which encompasses approximately 1000 acres; and Beacon Hill, encompasses about 1000 acres. The primary focus has been on these three targeted areas, but other work has been done throughout the City's jurisdiction.
- 3) Most outdoor burning is not allowed within the city limits. Recreational fires less than three feet in diameter and/or less than 2 feet in height such as a cooking fire and campfires using charcoal or firewood that occur in designated areas or on private property for cooking, pleasure, or ceremonial purposes are allowed. Fires used for debris disposal are not considered recreational fires and are prohibited.

### **Active outreach and Mitigation for Spokane:**

The City of Spokane owns approximately 11,500 acres of land in Spokane County, of which approximately 4,200 acres are unimproved forested property that needs fuel reduction or forest health work. In 2021, the City adopted the 2018 Wildland Urban Interface Code (WUIC). In August 2022, the Spokane Fire Department hired a full-time Wildland Resource Planner. The planner's three Major focus areas are Fuel Reduction on untreated landscapes, education on Home Ignition Zones, and public outreach and education throughout the city.



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The Spokane Fire Department Community Risk Reduction (CRR) team works alongside our Wildland Planner to provide education and outreach to identified high-risk areas in our jurisdiction. Our CRR team is led by two Master of Social Work educated staff who provide person-centered education unique to the needs of the individual. Content is informed by national standards from the National Fire Protection Association, Department of Natural Resources, and FEMA with a focus on wildfire resilience, evacuation planning, To-Go kits, where to get up-to-date information during an event, proactive measures to take on your property before a wildfire incident (defensible spaces). The team works with neighborhood councils, local media, and preexisting groups to disseminate relevant information.

In 2022, the Spokane Fire Department applied for and was awarded the Community Wildfire Defense grant, CWDG, for 1.5 million dollars. This grant had a match of \$375,000 in match. Four entities funded this grant match. First, Avista Utilities agreed to give \$25,000 per year for 5 years, equaling \$125,000. Second, Conservation Futures agreed to give up to \$50,000 towards the total. The City of Spokane decided to fund the remaining \$200,000; however, based on an in-kind match that has been given through partnerships with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR), there will not be any more match needed.

During 2023 and 2024, the Spokane Fire Department has been fortunate to collaborate with the WADNR to accomplish approximately 730 acres of fuels reduction including thinning, pruning, and slash disposal by chipping or masticating at a cost of roughly \$24,000 to the City of Spokane. Currently, using that same partnership and Spokane Fire Department CWDG Grant, we have an additional 609 acres of fuel reduction in progress during the winter of 2024-2025.

In addition to the Risk associated with large numbers of residences, there are a multitude of other extensive infrastructure located in the Wildland Urban Interface and Intermix including a Sewage treatment plant, water department pumping stations and water towers, a community college, over a dozen schools and a large number of high voltage transmission lines.

### **Partnerships:**

1) The City of Spokane is part of the new Spokane County Wildfire Mitigation Coalition (SCWMC). Each month, collaborative meetings are held with Federal, State, and local agencies and fire districts to identify, coordinate, update, and develop new mitigation projects. These meetings allow reviewing and discussing projects to ensure they are consistent with the CWPP goals and objectives. The SCWMC Coalition was formed in 2024 and has already started collaborating on several hundred acres of fuel reduction projects in 2024 and 2025.

2) We work closely with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources as they, too, have similar objectives. WA DNR service forestry program is the lead for the private landowners, but we often collaborate to ensure cross-boundary treatments. We have used DNR Inmate crews for fuel reduction. This also adds value to society, saving the taxpayers money and teaching offenders skills and abilities, which benefits society. We have used the WA DNR's Post Release crew for fuel reduction, which is offenders still on community protection who are transitioning back into society. It gives skills and abilities to a population that overwhelmingly needs more attention and resources. We have used DNR Wildland fire Crews for fuel reduction. This keeps firefighters employed longer with less layoff time.

3) The Spokane City Parks Department has allowed the Spokane Fire Department to treat most unimproved city ownerships, most of which fall under City Parks jurisdiction. This is helping the City of Spokane treat thousands of acres of unimproved parks land for wildfire fuel mitigation, making Spokane more resistant to catastrophic wildfires. The Fire Department is also working with Avista Utilities, the leading Gas and electric company in our jurisdiction, to do cross-boundary work to mitigate fuel reduction under and adjacent to the right of way, around power and transmission lines. Another partnership is Burlington Northern Santa Fe. We have fuel-reduced BNSF-owned and adjacent property along



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high-risk rail lines. This benefits the community from a high-risk ignition point and mitigates fuels that would otherwise be ignored. We have partnered with the Department of Ecology (DoE) to find ecological ways to thin high-risk riparian zones in the wildland-urban interface. We are also working with the DoE, Washington Conservation Corps (WCC). This hand crew is reducing fuel on city ownerships under the Spokane Fire Department CWDG grant. Another partner that the Spokane Fire Department has teamed up with is Riverside State Park. Washington State Parks owns 10,000-plus acres, mostly west of Spokane. We have mapped and laid out units that benefit each other's ownership. It's these working relationships that will make Spokane more resilient.