

# Existing State and Local Resources Related to Wildfire Risk and Management

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## State Agencies

- **Maine Forest Service (MFS):** The primary state agency responsible for wildland and forest fire management. MFS oversees fire prevention, detection, suppression, and investigation across Maine's forests and wildlands.
- **Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA):** Coordinates statewide emergency response, including large-scale wildfire incidents, and supports local agencies during major events.

## Local Agencies

- **Municipal Fire Departments:** Local fire departments and volunteer fire companies respond to wildland fires within their jurisdictions, especially in rural and forested areas.
- **County Emergency Management Agencies:** These agencies may assist with coordination and resource allocation during significant fire events.

## Collaboration

- State and local agencies often work together, especially during large or complex fires. The Maine Forest Service provides training, resources, and support to local fire departments. Mutual aid agreements are common, allowing agencies to share personnel and equipment.

# Maine Forest Service: Prevention and Response Roles

## Prevention

- **Education & Outreach:** The Maine Forest Service (MFS) conducts public education campaigns about wildfire risks, safe burning practices, and fire prevention strategies. They provide resources to landowners, schools, and communities.
- **Permitting & Regulation:** MFS oversees the issuance of burn permits and enforces regulations related to open burning, debris burning, and campfires. They monitor compliance to reduce accidental ignitions.
- **Hazard Reduction:** The agency works on fuel management projects, such as controlled burns and vegetation thinning, to reduce wildfire risk in vulnerable areas.

- **Training & Support:** MFS trains local fire departments and volunteers in wildfire prevention and suppression techniques, ensuring readiness across the state.

## Response

- **Detection & Dispatch:** MFS operates lookout towers, aerial patrols, and uses technology to detect wildfires quickly. Once a fire is reported, they coordinate the initial response.
- **Fire Suppression:** MFS leads and supports firefighting operations, deploying specialized crews and equipment to contain and extinguish wildland fires. They often work alongside local fire departments.
- **Incident Management:** For larger fires, MFS establishes incident command structures, coordinates resources, and manages logistics to ensure effective response.
- **Investigation:** After a fire, MFS investigates the cause, documents impacts, and may pursue enforcement actions if regulations were violated.

## Collaboration

- MFS collaborates with local, county, and federal agencies, sharing expertise, equipment, and personnel during major incidents. They also participate in mutual aid agreements and regional wildfire response networks.

## Resources and Recommendations For Private Landowners

### Defensible Space and Property Maintenance

- Create and maintain defensible space around structures by reducing or removing flammable vegetation and materials. This includes:
  - Keeping roofs and gutters clear of leaves, needles, and debris.
  - Storing firewood at least 30 feet from homes or camps.
  - Trimming tree branches that overhang roofs.
  - Maintaining isolated, well-pruned, and watered landscaping near homes.
  - Keeping a garden hose (at least 100 feet) attached to an outside faucet if water is available.

### Participation in Risk Assessments

- The Maine Forest Service (MFS) offers free wildfire risk assessments for homes in the wildland-urban interface. These assessments evaluate factors such as access roads, building materials, and defensible space. The results can help prioritize mitigation actions and may support eligibility for federal funding for firebreaks and fuel reduction projects.

### Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs)

- Private landowners can participate in the development of CWPPs, which identify local wildfire risks and outline mitigation strategies. These plans are often required for grant eligibility and can guide community-level hazard reduction efforts.

## **Resources and Recommendations For Towns and Municipalities**

### **Community Planning and Collaboration**

- Towns are encouraged to develop or update CWPPs, often with support from the MFS and federal grants. These plans help prioritize risk reduction projects, such as creating fire breaks and conducting hazardous fuels mitigation (e.g., brush removal, prescribed burns).
- Municipalities can apply for Community Wildfire Defense Grants to fund planning and mitigation projects. Projects must be community-based and directly address hazardous fuel reduction.

### **Regulations and Enforcement**

- Maine has adopted building codes and vegetation management regulations to reduce wildfire risk. Towns may enforce defensible space requirements and restrict outdoor burning during high fire danger periods.
- Local fire departments and the MFS conduct inspections and provide education to ensure compliance with mitigation regulations.

### **Risk Assessment and Data Tools**

- The Office of State Fire Marshal provides community risk assessment data and mapping tools to help towns identify and prioritize wildfire risks. These resources support emergency preparedness and targeted mitigation efforts.

## **Resources and Recommendations For Public Land Trusts**

### **Best Practices and Collaboration**

- Land trusts are encouraged to collaborate with the MFS, local fire departments, and other stakeholders to implement wildfire risk reduction strategies. This may include:
  - Participating in or supporting CWPPs.
  - Engaging in hazardous fuels management (e.g., thinning, prescribed fire).
  - Maintaining access for firefighting and emergency response.
- The Maine Land Trust Network provides resources and sample documents to guide land trusts in developing policies and practices for hazard reduction and land management.

### **Grant Opportunities**

- Land trusts may be eligible for federal and state grants to support wildfire risk reduction projects, especially those that benefit at-risk communities or protect critical infrastructure.

## Key Takeaways

- The Maine Forest Service is the primary resource for technical assistance, risk assessments, and grant guidance for all landowners and managers.
- Creating defensible space, participating in community planning, and maintaining access for emergency response are universal recommendations.
- Collaboration between private landowners, towns, and land trusts is essential for effective hazard reduction and wildfire preparedness.

**Federal Community Wildfire Defense Grants (CWDG)** help communities and Tribes plan for and reduce wildfire risk and implement the [National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#).

Launched in 2022, the \$1 billion five-year competitive grant program funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act prioritizes communities that:

- Are in an area identified as having high or very high wildfire hazard potential,
- Are low income or,
- Have been impacted by a severe disaster within the previous 10 years which increased wildfire risk and/or hazard.

## Office of the State Fire Marshal Data Tools

### 1. Community Risk Assessment Data Tools

- The Office provides a suite of tools for assessing community risk, including dashboards and mapping resources. These tools help local agencies and communities identify fire risks, analyze incident data, and prioritize prevention efforts.
- Examples include:
  - **Maine Incident Data Dashboards:** Summarize fire incidents, fatalities, and trends by county and community.
  - **Home Risk Fire Map:** Allows users to zoom into their county or locality to view home fire risk scores.
  - [Northeast-Midwest Foresters Alliance Community Exposure Dashboard: A wildland fire tool for assessing exposure and risk.](#)
  - **Demographic and Socioeconomic Data Visualization Tools:** These help communities understand social vulnerability and resilience factors that may affect fire risk and response.
  - **FEMA National Risk Index and NFPA Data:** National resources are integrated for broader risk analysis.

- **Training Demo Videos:** Available for learning how to use these tools effectively.
- **Census Visualization Tools:** For exploring community resilience and demographic profiles.
- **Fire Fatality and Incident Summaries:** Detailed breakdowns by year, county, and incident type.

## 2. Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Planning Tools

- The State Fire Marshal's Office offers guides and templates for developing local CRR plans, including:
  - **CRR Development Guide and Schedule**
  - **Community Risk Assessment Workshop Syllabus**
  - **Department CRR Plan Template and Worksheet**
- These resources support fire departments in strategic planning and risk reduction efforts.

## 3. Fire Incident Reporting System

- The office maintains a Fire & EMS Incident Reporting System, which collects and analyzes statewide fire incident data. This system supports research, planning, and public education efforts.

## 4. Annual Reports and Dashboards

- Annual operations and fire reports provide comprehensive data on fire fatalities, incident types, mutual aid activities, and reporting by county. These reports include dashboard summaries and trend analyses for multiple years.

## How These Tools Are Used

- **Local Agencies:** Use these tools to assess risk, plan prevention strategies, and report incidents.
- **Community Leaders:** Leverage data for resource allocation and emergency preparedness.
- **Public:** Can access certain dashboards and maps to understand fire risk in their area.

## Additional Findings from Public Sources

### Massabesic Region CWPP:

There is clear evidence that a CWPP has been developed for the Massabesic region of York County, Maine. This plan covers the towns of Hollis, Waterboro, Alfred, Lyman, Dayton, and Kennebunk. The CWPP was collaboratively developed with support from local emergency response personnel, large landowners, and organizations such as the Forest Stewards Guild and the York County Emergency

Management Agency. Public meetings have been held to gather community input and prioritize wildfire mitigation actions for these towns.

#### **York County Wildland Fire Academy and CWPP Development:**

Recent initiatives, including the York County Wildland Fire Academy, have advanced wildfire risk reduction and CWPP development in the region. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to build local capacity and implement wildfire mitigation practices, particularly in the fire-adapted Massabesic landscape.

#### **Hazard Mitigation Planning:**

York County also maintains a Hazard Mitigation Plan that addresses wildfire risk among other hazards. While not a CWPP in the strict sense, this plan demonstrates ongoing county-level commitment to wildfire preparedness and mitigation.

### **Summary**

- **Towns with CWPPs:** Hollis, Waterboro, Alfred, Lyman, Dayton, and Kennebunk are confirmed to be part of the Massabesic Region CWPP.
- **Collaborative Approach:** The CWPP process in York County involves local government, emergency management, landowners, and regional organizations.
- **Additional Planning:** York County's Hazard Mitigation Plan complements CWPP efforts by addressing wildfire and other risks.