

5 Community Engagement

Each community within Nevada County has its own unique identity and wildfire risks. Community members and interested parties have a wealth of local knowledge regarding their open spaces, wildfire hazards, defensible space, fire prevention activities, resources, and evacuation routes. Therefore, public and interested party outreach and engagement are foundational to successful community wildfire planning processes.

The County aimed to maintain a transparent and inclusive process for community engagement in the development of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), including consideration of the interests of diverse social, cultural, and economic elements of the population within the County. This process assisted the County in making the CWPP more effective by increasing public buy-in, promoting cooperation, and enhancing the quality of information on which the CWPP is based. Community engagement also helped guide decision-makers in communicating goals and outcomes and ensuring efficient implementation of policies, programs, and projects.

5.1 Community Engagement Strategy

As part of the CWPP process, the County developed a Community Engagement Strategy to guide outreach and engagement efforts during the development of the CWPP. The desired outcomes for community engagement were as follows:

- Provide the public, agencies, land managers, organizations, and interested parties with accurate and up-to-date information on components of the CWPP development and opportunities to participate.
- Obtain involvement and information from the public and stakeholders early in the CWPP development process.
- Incorporate input from the public and stakeholders in the development of the CWPP where possible.
- Develop a responsive and well-supported CWPP.

The Community Engagement Strategy included a variety of engagement opportunities. Engagement activities conducted to date include the following:

- **Website:** A CWPP page included on the County's website (ReadyNevadaCounty.org/CWPP) provides a central location for project information. The site includes information about the CWPP process and defines the four FZs. It also hosts community and public workshop announcements, registration, and recordings. The website was updated throughout the CWPP development process and will function as the County's primary website for the final CWPP.
- **Public Survey:** OES distributed a survey in English and Spanish virtually and in person from June to August 2023. The survey included questions to gain an understanding of the community's wildfire concerns, actions they would like to have included in the CWPP to reduce the risk of wildfire, and experience with evacuation (refer to Appendix C for a summary of survey responses).

- Lunch and Learns:** Four virtual meetings were held in August 2023 to inform the community of the CWPP process and discuss opportunities for community involvement in the CWPP process. An additional Lunch and Learn was recorded with Spanish captions and made available on the CWPP website.
- Community Risk Reduction Workshops:** Public workshops were held in person and virtually (via Zoom) throughout January and February 2024. Nine community workshops were held to share initial WRA findings, Project Priority Areas, and gather public input. Public workshops resulted in region-based discussions on fire protection and response strategies. Individual workshops were held for each of the four FZs. Table 18 below displays the emerging themes from each workshop. Please refer to Appendix D for a full write-up of the community workshop results.

Fire Zone	In-Person Dates & Times	Virtual Dates & Times	In-Person Count	Virtual Count
Higgins/Penn Valley	Wednesday January 17th, 2024 6:00-7:30 pm Sierra College Multipurpose Center 250 Sierra College Dr., Grass Valley, CA 95945	Tuesday January 23rd, 2024 6:00-7:30 pm Zoom	1/17	1/23
Grass Valley/Nevada City	Thursday January 18th, 2024 and Tuesday January 30th, 2024 6:00-7:30 pm Sierra College Multipurpose Center 250 Sierra College Dr., Grass Valley, CA 95945	Wednesday February 7th, 2024 6:00-7:30 pm Zoom	1/18 & 30	2/7
Tahoe National Forest Area	Wednesday January 31st, 2024 6:00-7:30pm Nevada County Government Center Board Chambers 950 Maidu Ave Nevada City, CA 95959	Tuesday February 6th, 2024 6:00-7:30pm Zoom	1/31	2/6
Truckee/Donner	Monday January 29th, 2024 6:00-7:30pm Alder Creek Adventure Center 15275 Alder Creek Rd, Truckee, CA 96161	Thursday February 8th, 2024 6:00pm-7:30pm Zoom	1/29	2/8

Community Risk Reduction Workshop flyer

5.1.1 Survey Results Summary

The wildfire survey was administered to Nevada County residents (defined as someone who lives, works, or owns property in Nevada County) to gain a better understanding of how residents and community members are impacted by wildfire. The 15-question survey was open from June 1, 2023, to August 31, 2023. The survey was available in English and Spanish was administered online via Microsoft Forms and in person via printed copies. The survey received 2,267 responses. It covered a variety of wildfire topics, asked respondents to rank High Value Resources and Assets (HVRAs), identify their perception of the County’s wildfire risk, their perception of their own wildfire risk, and their experience with evacuation. The following summarizes the survey findings at the County scale:

- Eighty-one percent (81%) of survey respondents were primary homeowners and lived in and owned their own home in Nevada County and 48% of survey respondents were over the age of 65.
- When asked to rank the four HVRAs, the survey respondents ranked them in the following order from most to least important: Community Lifelines, Community Health, Natural Resources, and Economic Resources.
- Ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents reported that they thought the County’s wildfire risk was either high or very high, with 54% of respondents reporting that their personal wildfire risk was either high or very high. The biggest challenges for people to lower their personal wildfire risk were hazardous fuel on neighboring properties (57%), the cost of fuel reduction or defensible space (35%), and the cost of home hardening (33%). Respondents felt that the top priorities for Nevada County should be improving evacuation routes (55%), defensible space assistance (53%), and roadside vegetation removal (51%). Activities that were seen as less of a priority were

enforcement of fire safety laws (28%), year-round green waste disposal options (22%), and wildfire education programs (9%).

- When asked about previous experiences, 57% of respondents had never evacuated from a wildfire in Nevada County and 41% of respondents had been evacuated between 1-3 times. Regarding general evacuation behavior, 49% of respondents said they would leave as early as possible and 26% said they would wait until an evacuation order was issued. The main concerns expressed by respondents regarding evacuation during a wildfire were getting trapped on the road (71%), losing their home or property (42%), and getting out early (34%).
- Common themes expressed in the “do you have any additional comments” question included in the survey included concern that local jurisdictions were not doing enough to address wildfire risk, a lack of information and education for visitors regarding wildfire risk, a desire for backup communication options if the power goes out, more enforcement for non-compliance with fire risk reduction regulations, and what to do with animals during an evacuation.

More information on the CWPP survey results can be found in Appendix C.

5.1.2 Community Workshops

The community workshops included a brief overview of the CWPP process followed by self-guided and active engagement activities aimed at prompting discussion and gathering input from community members. A summary of the activities and community input received is provided in the following sections by FZ.

5.1.2.1 Self-Guided Activities

The self-guided activities included a map activity and a bead activity.

Map Activity

The map activity allowed for community members to identify specific geographic areas of concern by placing pins on a map and noting the main concern in these areas, including limited evacuation routes, hazardous vegetation, and areas where structural hardening is needed. Results from this activity can be found within each FZ’s section.



Community members engaged in self-guided activities at the Grass Valley/Nevada City Risk Reduction Community Workshop

Bead Activity

The bead activity allowed residents to identify their answers to two different questions:

1. What risk reduction methods do you think should be a priority in your community?
2. What vegetation management techniques do you want to see utilized in your community?

Community members identified their top answers to the above questions by placing a bead in a corresponding jar to record their answers. The number of beads were then counted to determine the number of responses per question.

Exhibit 3 presents the results comparing which wildfire risk reduction methods workshop attendees want to see in their communities, by FZ. The data presented reflects the number of beads that each risk reduction method received.

Exhibit 3. Preferred wildfire risk reduction methods, by Forecast Zone

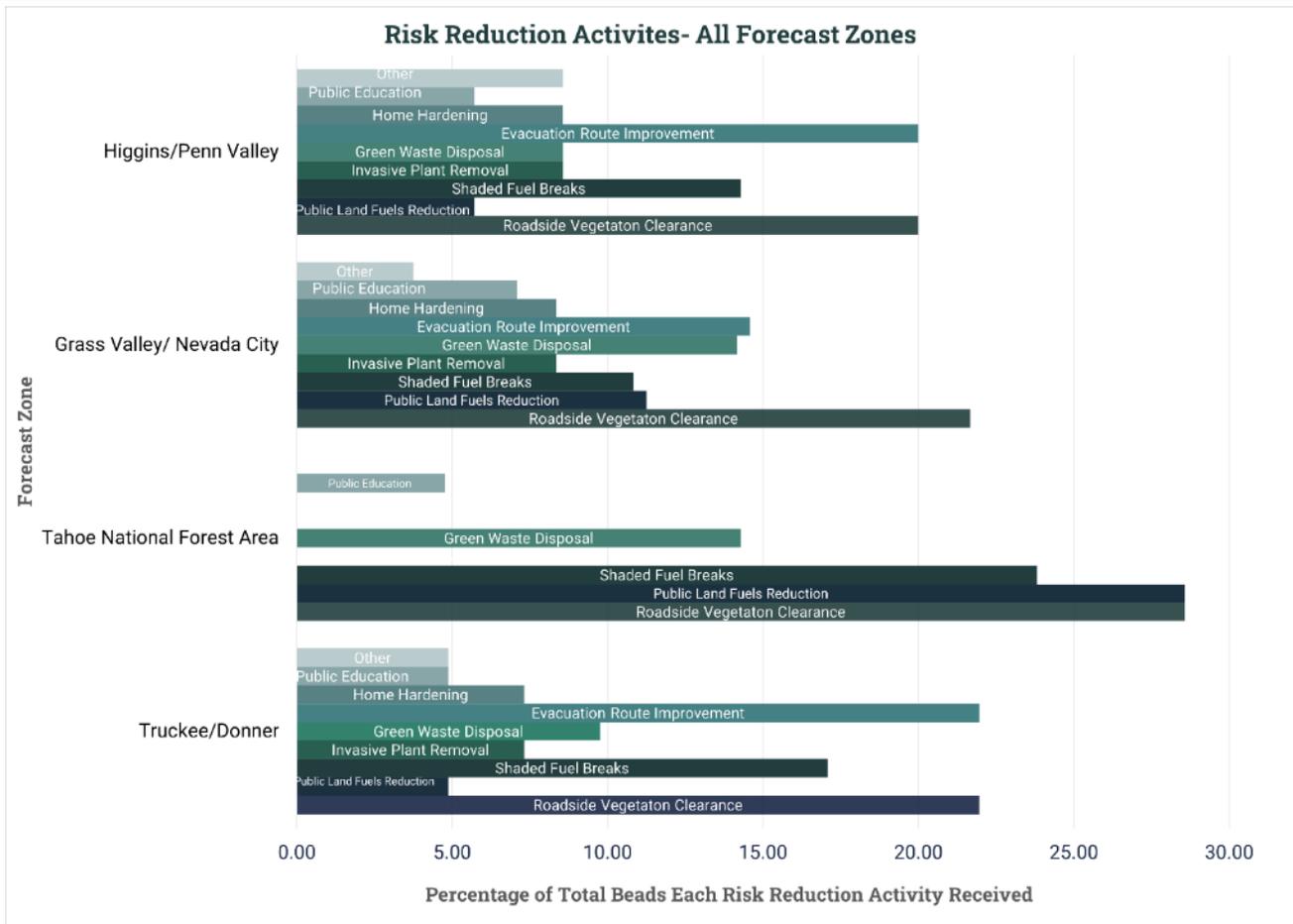
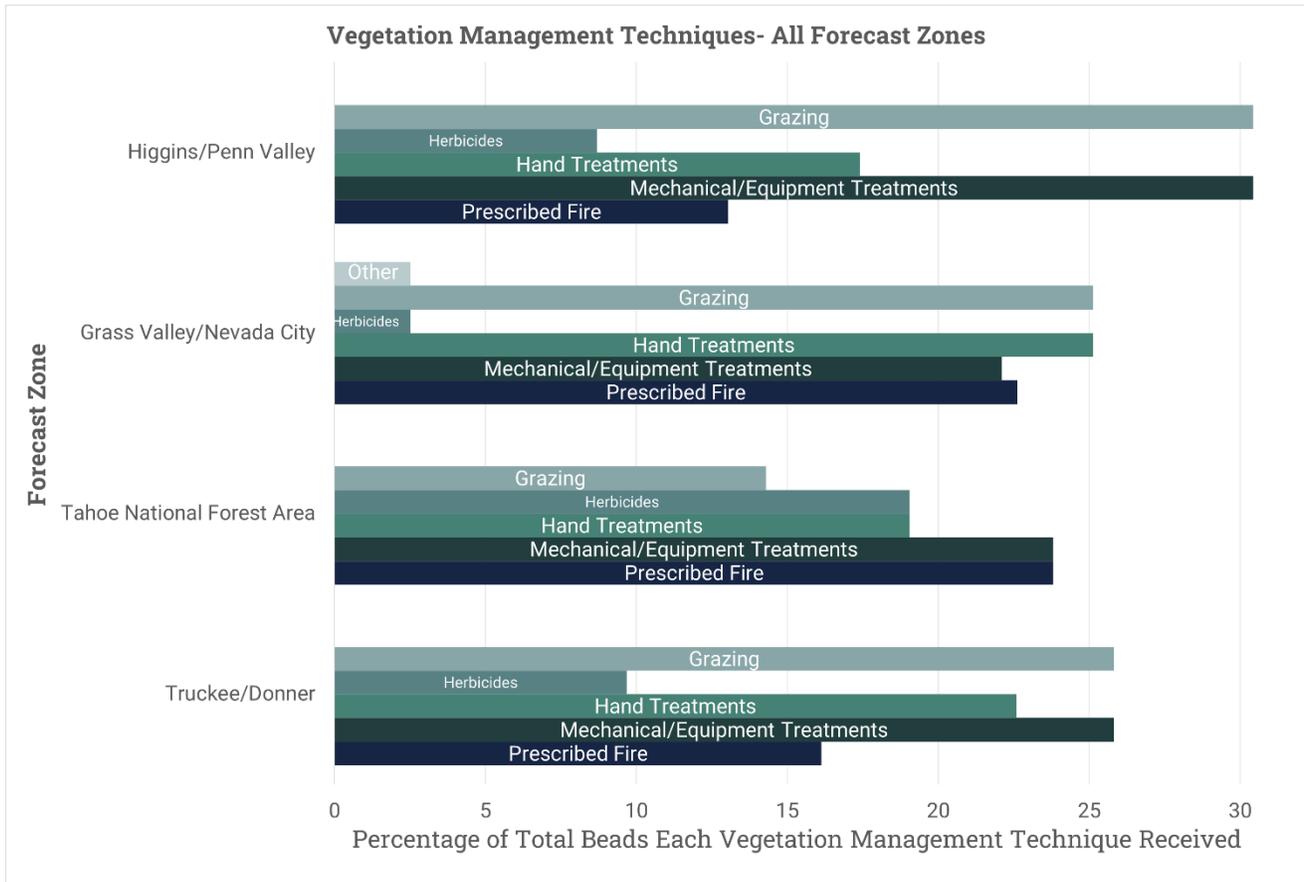


Exhibit 4 presents the results comparing which vegetation management techniques workshop attendees would want to see in their communities, by FZ. The data presented reflects the number of beads that each vegetation management technique received.

Exhibit 4. Preferred vegetation management techniques, by Forecast Zone



5.1.2.2 Community Group Discussions

The community workshops included small group discussions, conducted in a roundtable format with small groups rotating to different discussion topics led by a facilitator. The group discussions were a key feature of the community workshops to learn more about the community members’ experience with wildfire. The discussion groups were divided into four topics:

1. Home Hardening
2. Wildfire Planning
3. Defensible Space/Vegetation Management
4. Evacuation/Community Response

Each group discussed every topic with the responses from previous groups being hidden at the start of each discussion section to allow for each group to think independently. These discussions were framed to think about each topic in terms of challenges and opportunities. This framing helped solicit input that

could feed into the action plan of the CWPP. Once the challenges and opportunities were compiled for each topic, the data were compiled and assigned a category. The categories were as follows:

Challenges:

- Individual Behavior
- Resource Limitations
- Homeowner Maintenance
- Public Infrastructure
- Targeted Education
- Outreach
- Community Action



Group discussion at the Higgins/Penn Valley Risk Reduction Community Workshop

Opportunities

- Funding
- Outreach Materials
- Multijurisdictional Cooperation
- Communication Infrastructure Upgrades
- Community Action
- Resources
- Targeted Education

Results from this activity can be found within each FZ's section.



CWPP Presentation at the Truckee/Donner Risk Reduction Community Workshop

Table 18. Community Risk Reduction Workshop Summaries

Workshop	No. Attendees	Emerging Themes
Higgins/Penn Valley Forecast Zone	In-person: 14 Virtual: 8 Total: 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members expressed that this forecast zone contains many potential evacuation issues. • There is a need and desire for cross-jurisdictional coordination. • There is a need for more resources including grants, defensible space training, broader wildfire education, and staff capacity to do this work. • Individual behavior (e.g., not leaving during an evacuation order, neighbors not implementing defensible space or home hardening) was identified as a major challenge for residents. • Community members are seeking guidance for prioritized lists of what actions homeowners should take first that will get them the most value for their money. • Community members are seeking guidance for lists of contractors that can do home hardening and defensible space work. • Many citizens are unable to implement wildfire risk reduction strategies due to physical and/or financial reasons. Suggestions included considering a volunteer program to assist them.
Grass Valley/Nevada City Forecast Zone	In-person: 62 Virtual: 15 Total: 77	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members expressed that this forecast zone contains many potential evacuation issues. • There is a need for improved access and more established evacuation routes, as well as coordination with private landowners for the use of their roads during an evacuation. • Need for more regulations ensuring that pertinent fire information is passed on to temporary residents, renters, and realtors. • Need for regulatory streamlining for new buildings/homes that are compliant with Chapter 7A building requirements. • Need for more emphasis on planning before a fire including recovery planning, better evacuation signage and communication plans, evacuation training, etc. • Need for more oversight on large events that happen in the County; require them to have a fire safety plan. • The desire for more community collaboration including workdays, more meetings with presentations from experts, and close cooperation with Firewise Communities. • Suggested types of outreach: use all mediums (e.g., online, print, TV, etc.). People are more receptive to in-person outreach, graphics, and pamphlets, rather than just social media.

Table 18. Community Risk Reduction Workshop Summaries

Workshop	No. Attendees	Emerging Themes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A major barrier to wildfire safety is the financial cost. Many communities in this forecast zone cannot afford to implement or maintain home hardening or defensible space.
Tahoe National Forest Area Forecast Zone	In-person: 10 Virtual: 6 Total: 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The desire for more multijurisdictional cooperation. • Infrastructure in this area is limited including lack of cell towers, which makes getting evacuation information difficult, as well as limited water supply. • The desire for more large-scale environmental reviews and aligning reviews with actual treatment sites. • Barriers to wildfire safety include finances, disinterest, age, and lack of knowing what to prioritize. • Many senior citizens do not have the ability (physical or financial) to implement home hardening or defensible space.
Truckee/Donner Forecast Zone	In-person: 13 Virtual: 4 Total: 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The desire for more community collaboration including workdays, more meetings with presentations from experts, and close cooperation with Firewise Communities. • Community members are seeking guidance for prioritized lists of what actions homeowners should take first that will get them the most value for their money. • Community members are seeking lists of contractors that can do home hardening and defensible space work. • Desire to have signage and outreach before and during a potential wildfire event to discourage visitors from adding unnecessary congestion to the roads. • The desire for more shaded fuel breaks. • More focus on educating residents about Zone Zero • Suggested types of outreach: community education, signage, and educational information on home hardening. • Existing efforts to engage the community in educational outreach have proven difficult.
Full County Spanish (virtual)	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Spanish workshop was scheduled to be held however there were no registered attendees. In lieu of the workshop, a separate virtual workshop recording was made with Spanish captions and available on the OES website.