Community Hazard Planning Program

WESTERN WATER ASSESSMENT
A NOAA RISA TEAM

In recent years, communities across Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming have faced historically unprecedented levels of drought and wildfire. Last winter season (2025-2026) was the worst snow drought on record for all three states, causing regional drought plan activation and local water restrictions. In summer 2026, over 900,000 acres burned in regional wildfires and suppression costs exceeded $600 million. **Communities like yours are making decisions now to understand hazard risk and prepare for a changing future.**

Western Water Assessment (WWA) is excited to launch the second phase of our **Community Hazard Planning Program (CHPP)** to support **four communities across Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming** as they plan for drought or wildfire during 2027. The program is designed to connect communities with locally-relevant scientific information about hazard incidence and risk, and to **help communities identify hazard impacts and specific actions they can take to build hazard preparedness.**



From 2017-2024, six communities across the region participated in the first phase of this program. Each community identified and advanced hazard preparedness actions that were unique to their location and context. You can learn more about the program's impacts here: ***wwa.colorado.edu/community-hazard-planning-program***.

How it works

The CHPP consists of a centerpiece **community hazard planning workshop** that is co-organized with community partners, and a **series of follow-up meetings** to share findings and help prioritize and implement actions that participants would like to take to increase hazard preparedness.

The workshops are two five-hour meetings held over two days that convene community decision makers and municipal staff directly involved in planning, response, and mitigation of hazards. During the workshop, a WWA scientist provides a brief presentation to share local-scale information about hazard incidence and risk. This serves as introduction for participant discussions to identify the hazard's impact on their community and strategic short and long-term actions their community can take to prepare.

Month 1-2

Initial planning conversations

Schedule workshop, identify participants, and identify hazard

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Month 2-3

Collaborative workshop planning

Understand community needs, priorities, and concerns

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Month 3

Workshop

Held over two half-days to share climate info, explore hazard impacts, and identify actions to build resilience

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Month 4-10

Share findings and follow-up

Provide summary report and schedule follow-up remote meeting

We ensure that our workshops are grounded in a community's hazard needs by working with a community "champion" to provide local insight and make connections with community members. We begin with ***initial planning conversations*** with the local champion to select a key hazard of concern (either wildfire or drought) and to identify management issues or upcoming decisions related to that hazard. The local champion helps select 8-12 participants (often elected officials, municipal staff, extension agents, and others involved in hazard planning, response, and mitigation) to participate in the workshop. We will ***share our findings*** with the workshop group in a summary report. If requested by the workshop participants, WWA will work with your community for an additional year to support continued planning and action implementation.





What you get

- A facilitated workshop that convenes people from across your community to **collaboratively identify local impacts** of wildfire or drought and **strategic actions to increase preparedness.**
- A customized summary of the **best available scientific information about trends** in wildfire or drought for your community.
- A **motivated and informed community group** that can use their experience to build resilience. Other communities have used the process to kick off a hazard planning process, identify spending priorities, apply for grants, and establish a water conservation program.
- An **ongoing relationship** with access to other services from the Western Water Assessment staff team.
- All provided at **no direct cost** to a community.

What you provide

- A person in the community who can actively participate as our **local champion** and will:
    - Identify key workshop participants and encourage their participation
    - Participate in meetings to scope, plan, and conclude the project
    - Provide feedback on both the workshop agenda and the draft summary
    - Assist in planning and participate in post-workshop meetings
- Provide a **meeting venue** with basic equipment and supplies for the workshop. This is often a conference or meeting room in a community center or municipal building.
- **Commitments from participants** to attend and actively participate in the workshop, and to continue meeting after the workshop to make progress on actions.

How to get involved

If you are interested in participating in **the Community Hazard Planning program,** please complete the brief application ***here***.

Priority will be given to communities that apply by **January 20, 2027**.

Please contact Benét Duncan (benet.duncan@colorado.edu), Managing Director of Western Water

About Western Water Assessment

Western Water Assessment is a university-based applied research program that works closely with communities, resource managers, and others in Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado to help them make the best use of science to manage for extreme weather and natural hazards. We are based at the University of Colorado, the University of Utah, and the University of Wyoming.

You can learn more at ***wwa.colorado.edu***.

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