

# POST-FIRE NAVIGATORS & ROADMAP

Prepared by Coalitions and Collaboratives, Inc

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the last 38 years, wildfires have burned an average of 5.2 million acres annually in the United States. Much of the cost of recovery and restoration is borne by state and local entities, and those residents and businesses who live and work in and around the fire scar. There are communities across the country that have been working hard on improving how we live better with fire for many years, yet the work has been especially slow within the post-fire sector.

## PROPOSED SOLUTION

COCO seeks to formalize the Post-Fire Navigators and Roadmap Program to:

- Increase capacity across the West to help communities respond and recover from wildfires
- Strengthen post-fire response in order to reduce impacts to communities and ecosystems.

We will:

- Establish a national level trusted source for fire recovery resources
- Create an online roadmap platform with the agencies to guide access to recovery resources
- Develop a cadre of trained navigators across the country who will help communities chart their post-fire recovery course.
- Provide funding support for navigators to provide assistance to communities impacted by fire

## BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

- Increase post fire learning and community capacity
- Improve post-fire skills at all levels
- Better fire recovery outcomes for communities

## COSTS OF THE PROJECT

- Direct Cost: \$1,000,000
- The project is scaleable and can occur in phases. See detailed budget below.



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## BACKGROUND

Wildfires continue to burn large amounts of land across the globe. Many fires remain small, and inconsequential, but each year some wildfires become newsworthy conflagrations, that burn large landscapes (most recently exceeding 400,000 acres). Those are accompanied by the need to rebuild homes, businesses, and infrastructure, and the long-term costs to communities and ecosystems of post-fire flooding, debris flows, and long-term impacts that incur costs well beyond the year of the burn. Post-fire loss of homes and infrastructure to flooding, fisheries and drinking water system degradation and valued ecosystem services decline are examples of the profound impacts wildfire can have on people, communities, and economies. According to the Western Forestry Leadership Council the true cost of wildfire (including Impacts to watersheds, property losses, flooding and erosion impacts, air and water quality damages) can range "anywhere from 2 to 30 times...suppression costs".

Often unprepared local, and state entities, and those residents and businesses who live and work in and around the fire scar, are left picking up the pieces. Wildfires, like other disasters, have a disproportionately negative impact on the most vulnerable such as the poor, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Unlike the fire that is fought by elite resources, the post fire fight is left to the local people regardless of the funding, staff and experience they have. This unfair fight is fought round after round, flood after flood.

## A NEW APPROACH & INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

We know the current fire-management paradigm is not getting us the results we need. At the national level we're spending more money, getting worse ecological outcomes, and losing property and lives—both during the fire, and after. There is a better way to respond to the continuum of wildfire—from pre-fire mitigation to post-fire recovery—that redefines our relationship with fire, and the roles people play in that system.

In order to increase community resilience, we must develop and invest in durable local capacity. To reduce the catastrophic impacts associated with wildfire we must change the existing culture and approach to the wildfire continuum, and empower communities at a grass-roots level, with support from leadership. There are communities across the country that have been working hard on improving how we live better with fire for many years, yet the work has been especially slow within the post-fire sector.

Over the last few years, the Wildfire Leadership Council (WFLC) and the Western Governors Association (WGA) have convened subject matter experts to begin developing an Interagency Wildfire Disaster Response Framework. This framework, as laid out by the experts, provides the backbone for this proposal.





# WHAT ARE WE PROPOSING?

COCO, will work collectively with WGA and WFLC to accelerate learning, sharing knowledge, and increasing the use of best management practices to improve social and ecological outcomes following wildfire. We will implement a national project to create an online roadmap platform with the agencies; we will develop a cadre of trained navigators across the country; we will provide funding support for navigators to provide direct post-fire assistance. We believe that this program of work will improve efficiency and accuracy of short- and long-term post-fire risk assessment; increase safety for those working to assess and restore burned areas; improve inter- and intra-agency relationships; develop more cohesive strategies for post-fire response; and most importantly, provide recovery strategies, tactics and hope to communities impacted by fire .

The development of the WFLC/WGA Road map and Framework concepts are an amazing accomplishment within the sector; however, the strategies presented require significant tactical level components. As a key partner and contributor of the Road Map and Navigators concepts COCO proposes operationalizing the collaboratively developed approach immediately.



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## THE ROAD MAP

The roadmap would aggregate information on federal — and to some extent, state assistance programs that address wildfire risk and post-wildfire restoration activity in a web-based application. The primary purpose is to inform and guide local communities impacted by wildfire, providing eligibility criteria and contact information for post-wildfire assistance. A secondary purpose is to provide a reference guide for federal agencies to both increase their familiarity with the full-range of assistance programs available to wildfire-affected communities, and to orient individuals and community decision makers on the programs available in post-fire circumstances.

We provide 1 simple example of how federal programs would be organized and described on the roadmap website. Information contained in the examples borrows liberally from the September 2018 Oregon Post-Wildfire Flood Playbook.

A website and associated support, could be developed in about 30 weeks, making it available for the 2023 fire season.



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# THE ROADMAP -SAMPLE WEB RESOURCES- POST-WILDFIRE

## Example 1: Post-Wildfire, Non-Federal Lands

**Program:** Emergency Watershed Protection Program

**Administered by:** USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Purpose:** The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program provides financial and technical assistance to communities responding to natural disasters, such as floods, wildfires, and debris flows. Activities covered under the program include but are not limited to: debris removal from stream channels, culverts and bridges; streambank protection; channel and grade stabilization; vegetation establishment; and levee repair. Projects must reduce threats to life and property; be economically, environmentally and socially sound; and must meet NRCS engineering standards and specifications.

**Type of assistance:** Financial and Technical Assistance.

**Financial Match Requirements:** Local Project Sponsors must provide 25 percent of total project funding in cash or in-kind services. NRCS can pay up to 75 percent of the cost for eligible emergency projects.

**Eligibility Requirements:** Public and private landowners can apply for EWP assistance through a local Project Sponsor. Eligible Project Sponsors include cities, counties, town, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, irrigation and water control districts, or any federally-recognized Native American Tribe or tribal organization. Project Sponsors must have a legal interest in, or responsibility for, the areas threatened by a watershed impairment resulting from a natural disaster.

**Application Process:** The Project Sponsor submits a letter that includes information on the nature, location, and scope of the problem for which assistance is requested. NRCS staff can assist with letter preparation and offer additional information on EWP program eligibility. Project Sponsors must provide land rights and any required permits.

**Application Timeframe:** For situations that pose an imminent threat to life and property, a request for assistance must be submitted to NRCS within 10 days of the disaster. For situations that do not pose an imminent threat to life and property, a request for assistance must be submitted to NRCS within 60 days of the disaster.


**Project Process and Timeframe:** After receiving a request for assistance, NRCS staff will conduct site visits with potential Project Sponsors to determine eligibility and complete Damage Survey Reports.

For projects that pose an imminent threat to life and property, work must be completed within 10 days from the time the site is accessible, and funding is approved.


For projects that do not pose an imminent threat to life and property, work must be completed within 220 calendar days from the date funding is approved.

- For more information: contact [this office]
- To begin the application process: contact [this person]

### Emergency Watershed Protection Program



#### OVERVIEW



Wildfires ravaged a hillside, turning all trees and vegetation into piles of ash and leaving the soil exposed and vulnerable to the next heavy rainfall.

A tornado flattened homes, businesses, and other infrastructure, depositing the debris in local creeks, streams, or drainage ditches.

A major snowstorm dumped two feet of snow on a community and the resulting runoff from a rapid melt flooded everything in its path, even eroding local streambanks.

Torrential rains from a powerful hurricane scattered debris into drainage ways, causing waterways to overflow their banks and wreak havoc in coastal areas.

**The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program**, a federal emergency recovery program, helps local communities recover after a natural disaster strikes. The program offers technical and financial assistance to help local communities relieve imminent threats to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters that impair a watershed.

[Emergency Watershed Protection \(EWP\) Program Fact Sheet](#)

## POST FIRE NAVIGATORS

The roadmap will aggregate the information available and provide a needed, consolidated resource for communities, while the Post-Fire Navigator will act as the liaison and trained guide. Modeled after the successful Community Mitigation Assistance Team, post-fire navigators will be recruited, trained and assigned to communities that need/request assistance.



1. Develop Post-fire Navigators Training program/curriculum and Navigators Network program that addresses:
  - a. Community needs after fire.
  - b. Post-fire program navigation for communities and citizens.
  - c. Best practices for reducing post-fire flooding and debris flows.
  - d. Best practices for managing post-fire relations between various classes of stakeholders in the post-fire landscape.
2. Development of regional/local Post-fire Subject Matter Navigators available to support communities impacted by fire.
  - a. Navigators will be developed with long term relationships in mind. Development will focus on a regional focus.
3. Host annual After the Flames workshop
4. Engage with Scientists and Universities to to provide communities updated science rooted in on the ground realities and recovery examples.
5. Continue working with the science community to develop better tools and accessible communication of those tools for post-fire recovery.

**GIVEN THE VARIATION OF POST-FIRE NEEDS BASED ON SITE-SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES, A NAVIGATOR MUST BE ABLE TO CALL UPON THE EXPERTISE OF A WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS, ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR, TO SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATE AVAILABLE RESOURCES IN SUPPORT OF RESTORATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES. THE ROLE REQUIRES A BROAD RANGE OF SKILL SETS: PROJECT MANAGEMENT; ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS; STRATEGIC, FINANCIAL, AND TACTICAL ACUMEN, AND PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION.**





## BUILD OUT STRATEGY AND BUDGET

COCO will host the Post-fire Roadmap and Navigators resources on the After the Flames website, which already has a large post-fire resources area. <https://aftertheflames.com/resources/>

**Funding.** An initial estimate for the development of the Post Fire Roadmap and Navigators program is provided below. COCO is actively seeking funding to support the program.

**Continuity.** The roadmap cannot be a static document or website: it will require constant updating to ensure affected communities have access to accurate information and researchers have a place to post accurate information. The project will need to be financially supported over time.

**Avoiding Duplication.** Many entities are developing post-wildfire guides. For example, the states of Oregon, Montana, New Mexico and Colorado have existing guides or are developing them. Federal agencies also have playbooks for post-fire activities. Our proposal seeks to create a one-stop inclusive, resource available for all states. We will reference these other efforts to ensure reduced waste and encourage collaboration and cooperation between federal agencies, states, local governments and private entities.

### BUDGET

Task	Cost
Develop & Maintain Roadmap Website ( \$100k Website development - contractor and SME support. \$50k per year maintenance cost. \$50k per year staff support, outreach and marketing)	\$200,000
Post-fire training Development / Delivery (\$100K development, \$50k annual training update and delivery, \$50K After the Flames Workshop)	\$300,000
Navigators (\$100k per year supporting 5 contracted resources)	\$300,000
Engage Science - (Includes at least two grants to scientists for most critical work identified)	\$200,000
Total	\$1,000,000

For more information:  
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