



Post-Fire Science Communication

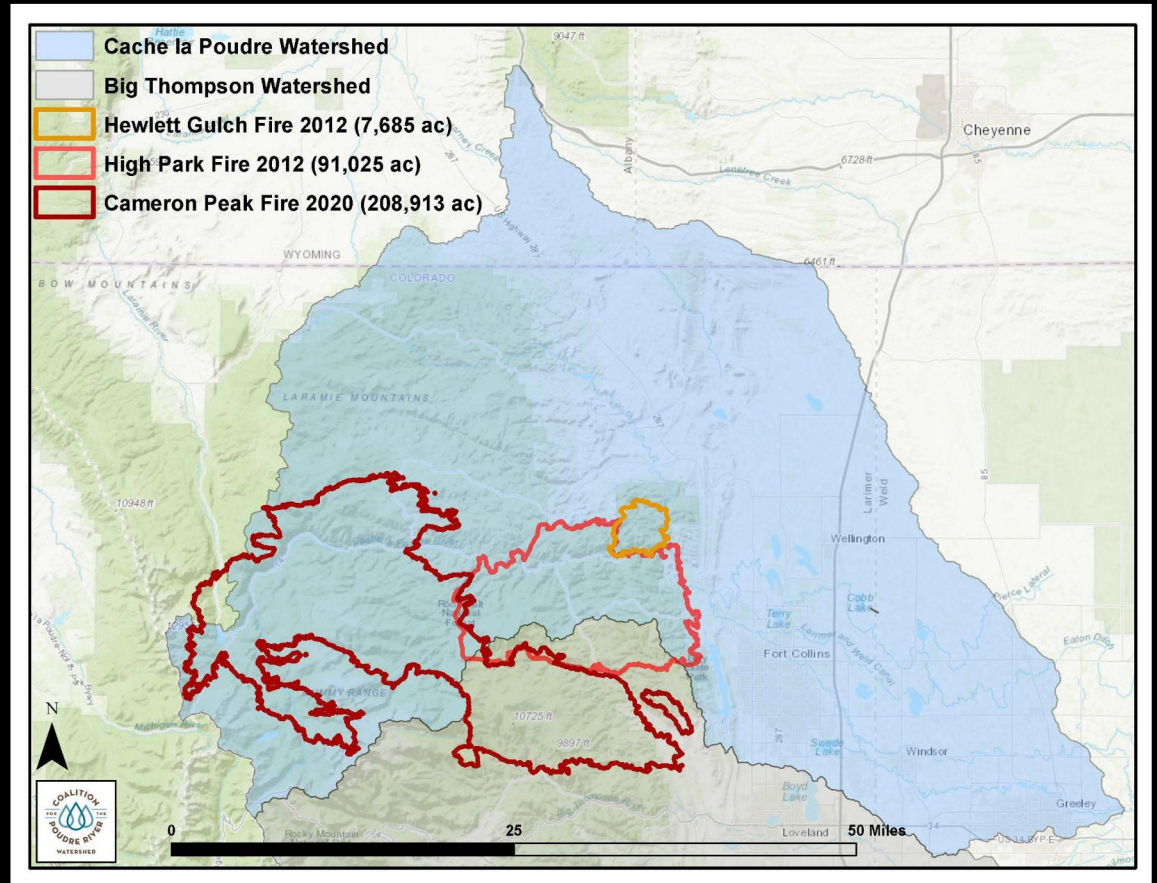
Creative Approaches + Practices

After the Flames • April 15, 2024

Our Perspectives

- Evan Barrientos – Fireforest
- Hannah Brown – Colorado Forest Restoration Institute
- Megan Maiolo-Heath – Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed
- Anika Pyle – Radical Open Science Syndicate, Colorado State University

We live in a landscape where 60% of our forested watershed has burned in the past 11 years.





Our Outline

- Audience
- Messages
- Why it Matters
- Strategies
 - + Collaboration
 - + Holistic fire cycle
 - + Creativity
 - + Funding
- Implementation



What Are Your Needs?

- How many of you are researchers? Communications professionals? Fire survivors?
- Why do you want to communicate to the public?
- What do you want people to understand about this work? Share a challenge.

Practices & Approaches

WHO

- Define your target audience
- Tailor your message and approach to each target segment
- Wildfire Research (WiRē) Approach
 - + Get to know your audience in advance
 - + Integrate local social science into education and mitigation
 - + Sensitivity, inclusivity, relevancy



Children experiment with the CPRW's watershed model at the Poudre RiverFest in Fort Collins, CO to learn about post-fire impacts to water quality (Eric Tokuyama).

Example: From Burn to Bloom

- Creative public engagement
- Honoring diverse ways of knowing
- A new entry point



BREAKOUT! WHO?

- Who are you communicating with?
- How can you learn about them and their values?
- What assumptions are you making about your audience and how can you acknowledge and move past those assumptions?

WHAT

- De-simplify fire
- Three key messages
- Convey hope



Cameron Peak Fire burn mosaic. Photo: Evan Barrientos

Example: Fireforest Photo Monitoring



fireforestphoto.com





















BREAKOUT! WHAT?

- What is the main purpose of your communication?
- What do you want your audience to feel/think/do?
- What are the three most important things you need to say?

WHY

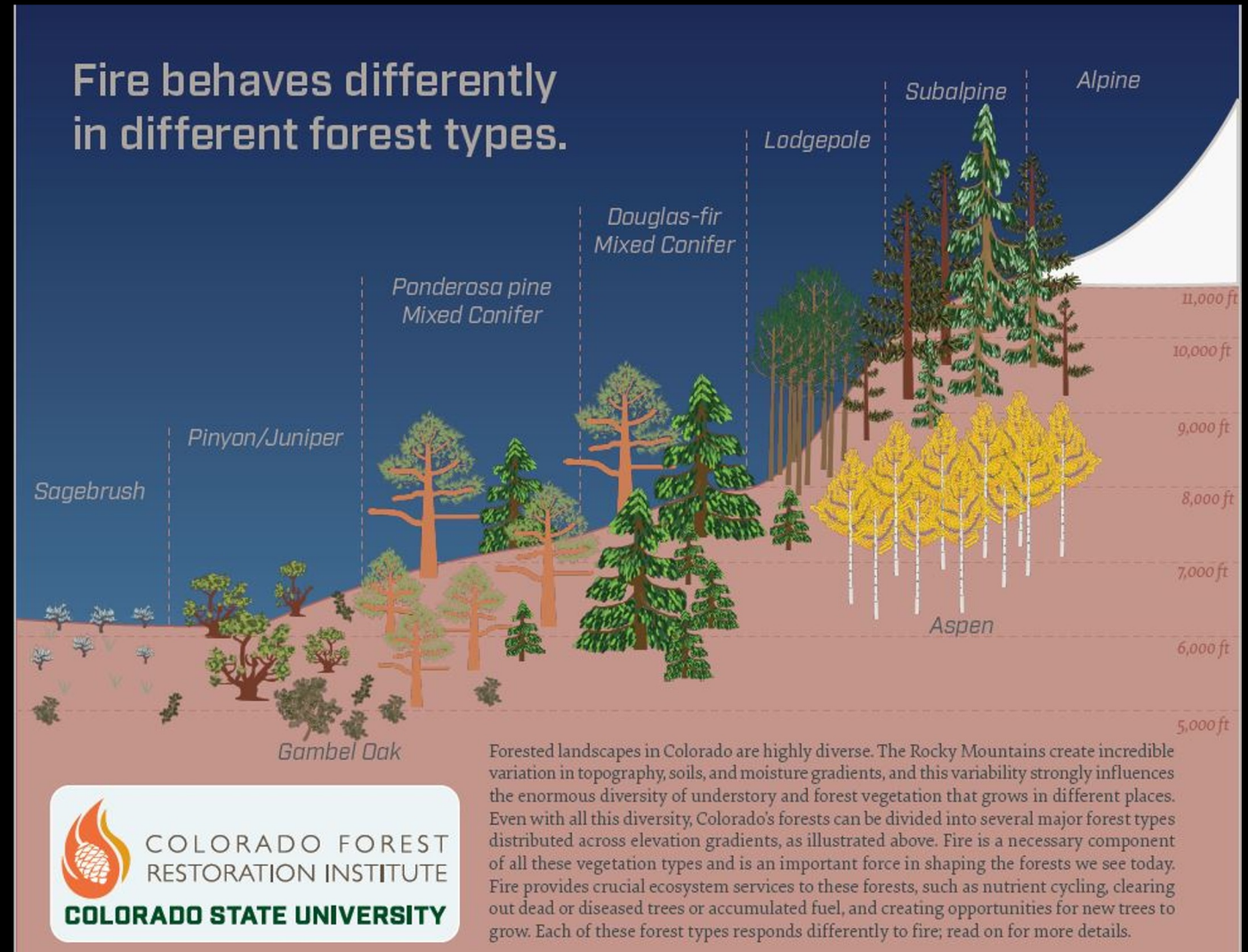
- “Unique Value Proposition”
- Why does this matter?
 - + For scientists, why should the public care about this?
 - + Invite your audience into your world!
- So what?
 - + What is the broader impact/implication
 - + What would happen if they didn't know?



From Burn to Bloom attendees hold up algae watercolors while wearing their river resiliency necklaces.

Example: Fire in Different Forest Types

- Multi-use: most shared product on social media, 4 print runs, presentations
- Clear need and use (“why”)

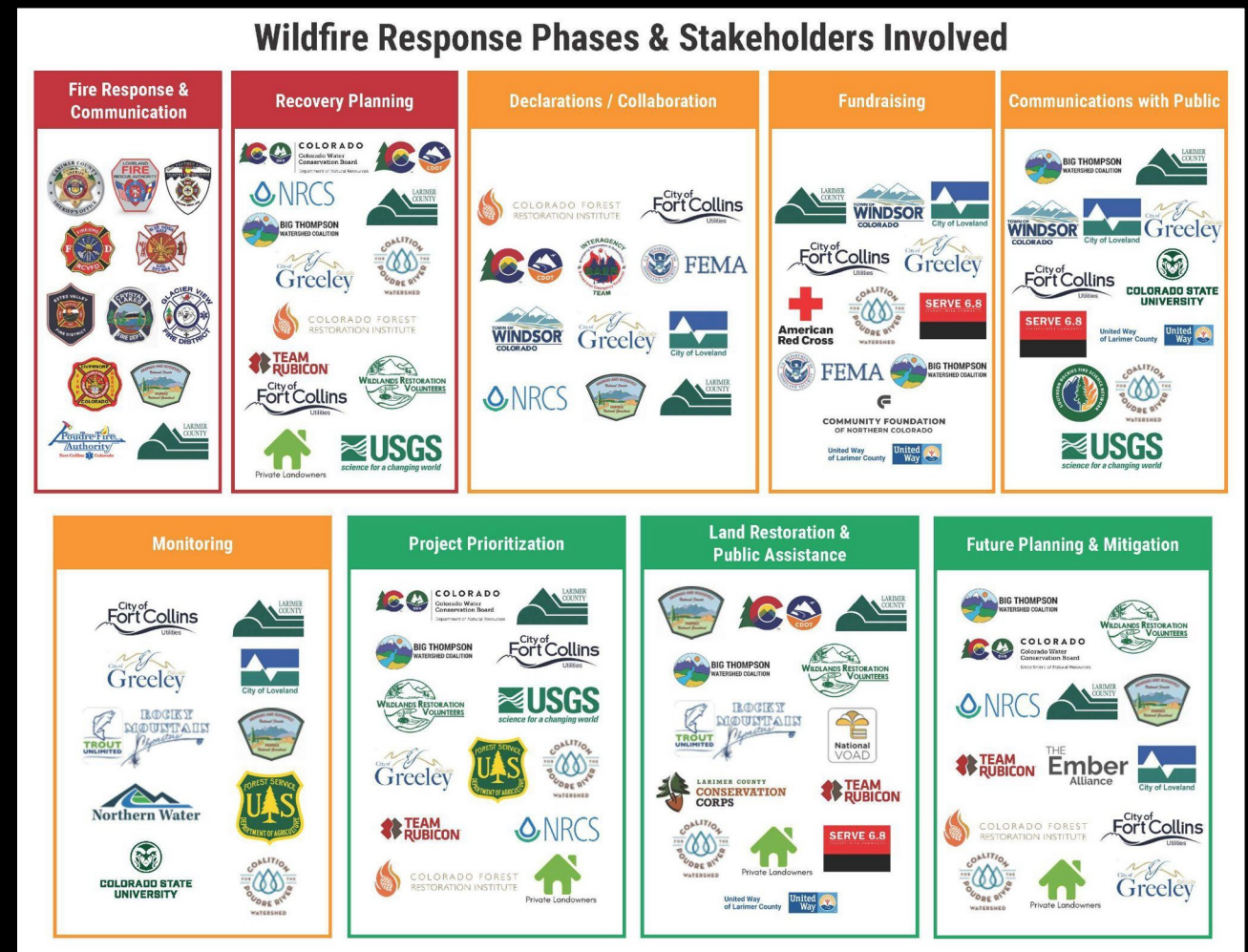


BREAKOUT! WHY?

- Why should your audience care?
- How will this message impact your audience?
- What need is this message meeting?

HOW 1: Collaboration, Collaboration, Collaboration!

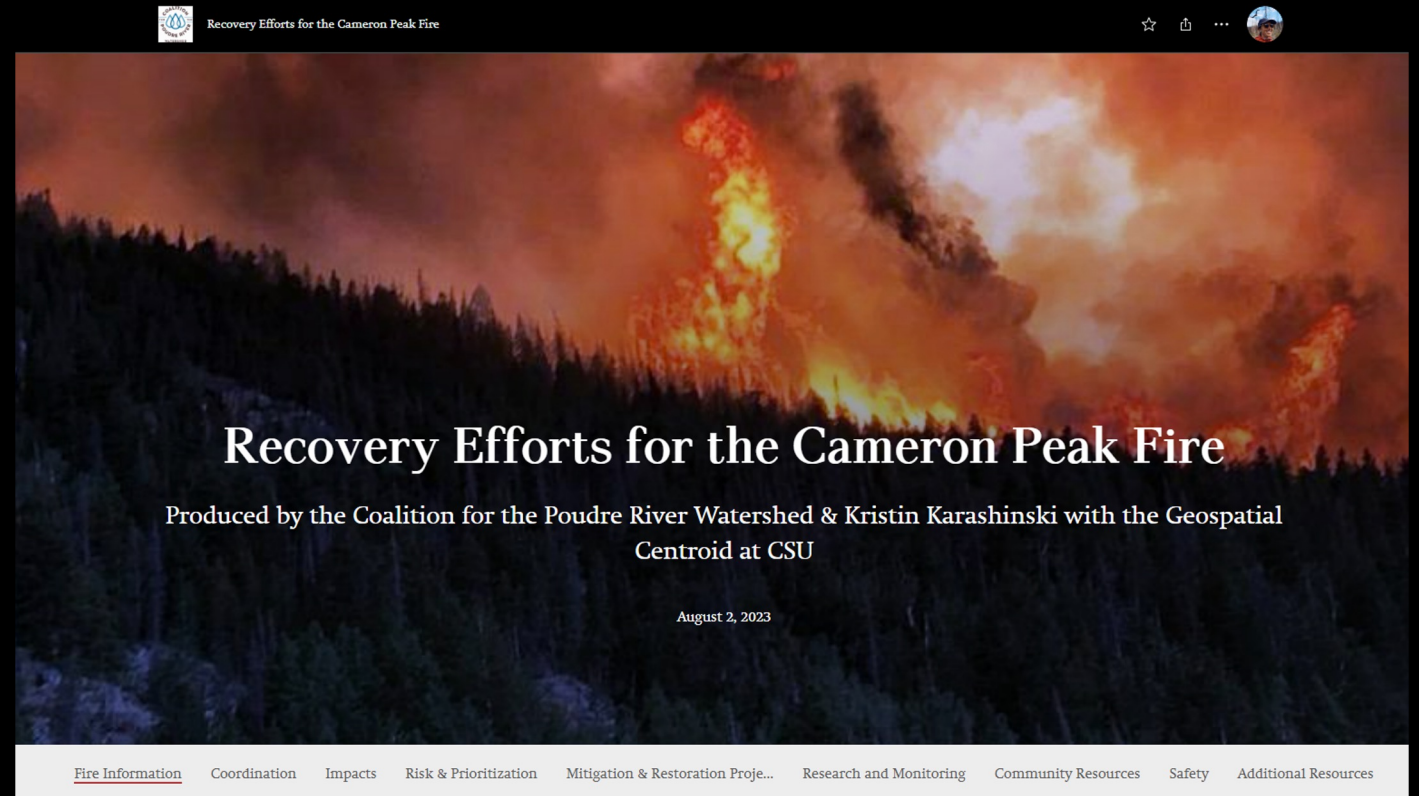
- Fire knows no boundaries - communications shouldn't either
- Forests recover from the ground up, start with your grassroots, community-based orgs
- Collaboration is critical to post-fire support & response - who will be in your local recovery group (LRG)?
- Build trust with meaningful engagement - communication is a two-way street



Cameron Peak Fire, 2020 - phases and stakeholders

Example: Cameron Peak Fire StoryMap

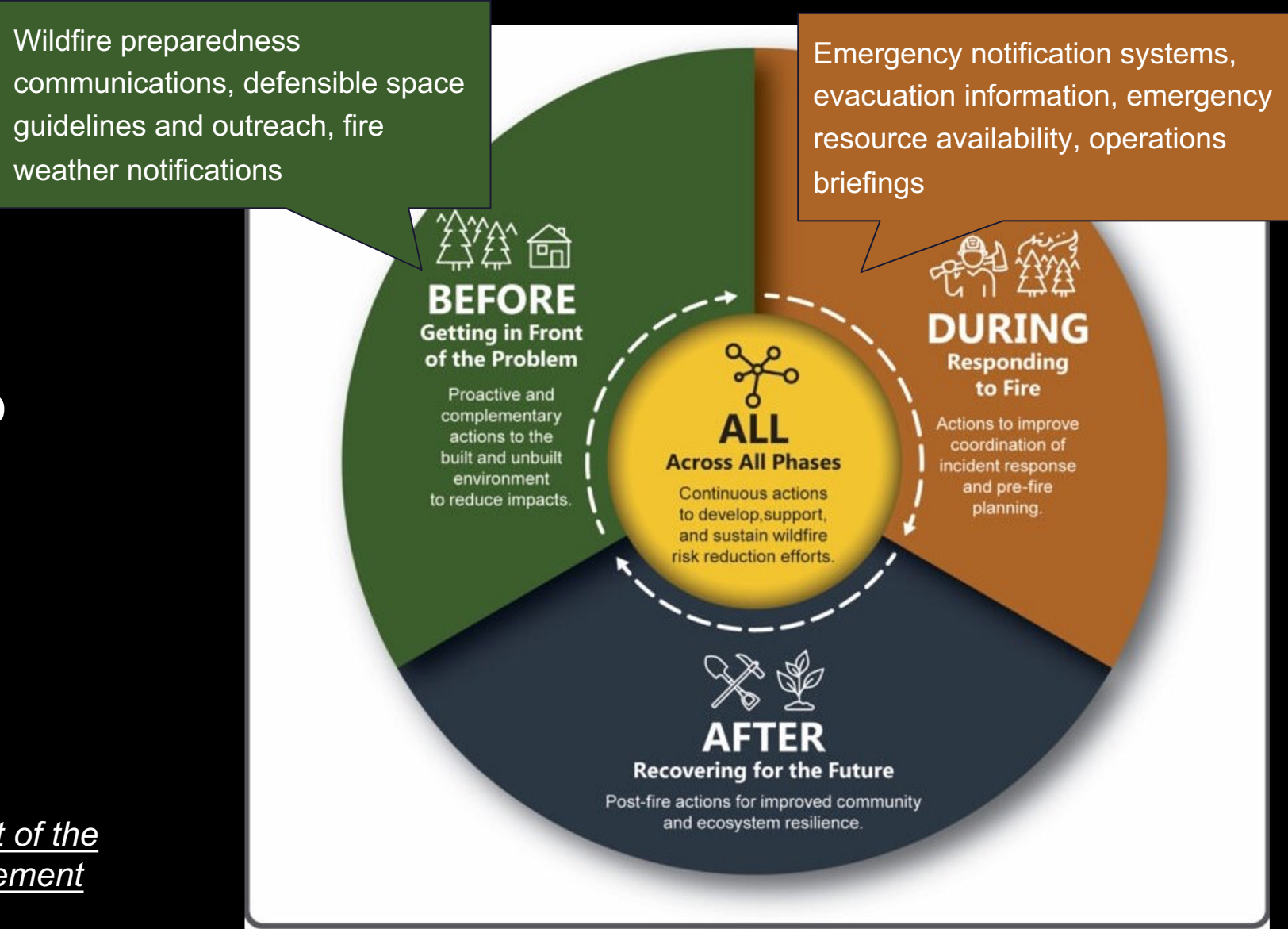
- Develop a “one-stop-shop” for post-fire resources and knowledge transfer
- Includes: Fire info, coordination, impacts, risk & prioritization, mitigation & restoration project info, research & monitoring, community resources, safety and more
- Need to have a “keeper of the vision” who can manage and update regularly over a multi-year period
- 14,000+ views



<https://arcg.is/rKzbP>

HOW 2: Holistic Fire Cycle

What can you do
Before and **During** to
prepare for **After** fire
communication?



Graphic 1 Source: On fire: The report of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, USDA

HOW 2: Holistic Fire Cycle – Strategic Communications Planning

- Scenario planning for multiple outcomes
 - Seek opportunities for engagement with pre-fire planning
- Questions for strategic planning:
 - How do people view fire in ecosystems?
 - What about within your own group?
 - Scale of communication effort?
 - What are you best at?
- Co-producing knowledge and co-developing products
 - Builds in your “why”



Figure 9.1 FEMA/SAMHSA phases of disaster collective reactions model. SAMHSA, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Source: <https://www.samhsa.gov/programs-campaigns/dtac/recovering-disasters/phases-disaster>

McGee, T. K., McCaffrey, S., & Tedim, F. (2020). Resident and community recovery after wildfires. In *Extreme Wildfire Events and Disasters: Root Causes and New Management Strategies* (pp. 175-184).

AFTER

Recovering for the Future

Post-fire actions for improved community and ecosystem resilience.

HOW 2: Holistic Fire Cycle – After

- Address negative perceptions of burned areas
- What about **After After**?



Kelsey Newton, CFRI

<https://czo-archive.criticalzone.org/national/blogs/post/how-does-fire-change-a-forest/>

HOW 3: Creativity

- In-person experiences are invaluable
 - Prioritize community-building: field tours, in-person meetings, one-on-one interactions
 - Meet the community where they're at
- Take art/visuals seriously
- Use data, but think beyond it
- Visual narrative increases accessibility and action



From Burn to Bloom collaborative art

HOW 4:

Funding: Get money, be prepared for a lot of \$\$

- You will need a lot of resources (people + time = money) over a long period of time (5+ years)
 - Make sure to write comms and outreach into all grants!
- What resources are needed to tell the story?
 - Photography/videography, graphic design, art, event planning, in-person tours, social media expertise, web design, etc.
- These are valuable staff positions
 - Outreach that local communities want and is most effective is time and resource intensive (in-person communications)



Magic Feather Prescribed Burn community tour

BREAKOUT! HOW?

- What needs or available information are you aware of pre-fire?
- Who is funding these kinds of efforts?
- What's the wildest way you could think of sharing this information?



Emily Fairfax, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAM94B73bzE&t=20s>

Implementation

- Is the problem existence or access?
- Meaningful field tours in post-fire areas
- Create meaningful volunteer opportunities for community members
- Maps, images, video, art
- High interest topics
 - erosion/debris flows
 - replanting
 - stories
 - actionable specifics
- Personalize scale of information to increase engagement
- Clarity about messenger



Kelsey Newton,
CFRI

CONNECTIONS + RESOURCES

- [Fireforestphoto.com](http://fireforestphoto.com)
- [CFRI Forest Type Illustration](#)
- [Cameron Peak Fire StoryMap](#)
- [WiRē Community Reports](#) (16 from CO counties, 6 within last 5 years!)
- Webinar: [Effective Communication about Wildfire Management](#)
- [After Wildfire: A guide for New Mexico Communities](#) (& after wildfire toolkit)
- [Understanding Fire Severity Story Map](#)
- [Literature review for this presentation](#)

- [Post-Fire Playbook](#)
- [Agreed-upon terms glossary](#)
- [Poudre Portal Interactive GIS Map of Post-Fire Research Projects in the Poudre River Watershed](#)
- Communicating With The Public About Wildland Fire: [Infographic](#) and [Report](#)

Upload yours here:

[Download the list here.](#)



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Poudre River seasons timelapse composite. Photo: Evan Barrientos/Fireforest