

# THE COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION ACT of 2023

Senator Jeff Golden

## **I) Direct OSFM to establish a Community Risk Reduction Program (CRRP)**

- **Purpose:** Reduce wildfire risk in Oregon communities (consistent with SB 762, Section 9), by expanding the Community Risk Reduction functions mandated by SB 762 (2021 session) to broadly support and coordinate the efforts of Oregonians to protect their properties and neighborhoods
- The CRRP shall include a Neighborhood Protection Cooperative Program (NPC) and a Home Hardening Assistance Program (HHAP)

## **II) Neighborhood Protection Cooperative Program (NPC)**

- OSFM shall inventory and, to the extent possible, coordinate, streamline and improve existing programs in Oregon that assist citizens in reducing wildfire risk on the landscapes surrounding buildings on their properties and in their neighborhoods through onsite consultation and organization of cooperative practices.
- OSFM will draft rules for the program through a process emphasizing substantial public input, including public hearings in not fewer than six separate communities around the state with significant exposure to wildfire hazard.
- All state agencies and personnel with authority to support community wildfire risk reduction are directed to engage with OSFM in the development and implementation of the CRRP. Interaction among entities may be codified through interagency MOUs. Existing and future non-state funding, including from the federal government, will be coordinated among CRRP-participating organizations to maximize efficiencies in receipt, processing and expenditure of said funds.
- Rulemaking and program implementation under OSFM authority shall be achieved through collaboration with groups including but not limited to
  - local governments and service districts
  - tribal authorities
  - fire departments and districts
  - NGOs involved with vegetation management or community organizing
  - ODF
  - OSU Wildfire Extension
  - BCD—DCBS
  - DFR
  - HECC
  - the SB 762 Wildfire Programs Advisory Council
- To optimize efficiency and cost-effectiveness of NPC services, OSFM will take steps to coordinate similar existing activities, including
  - activities of this nature already administered by OSFM
  - Firewise USA programs under the auspices of the National Fire Protection Association
  - programs initiated by local municipalities and fire departments, districts or associations
  - services offered by OSU Extension
  - relevant activities of the Oregon Conservation Corps (SB 762, Section 21)

- NPC activities will primarily be implemented through a grant program for local municipalities (counties, cities, rural fire districts). OSFM will create rules for grant procedures, including criteria, rating protocol and reporting requirements.

### **III) NPC consultant standardization**

- OSFM will designate best-practice standards and rules for reasonably optimizing risk reduction and achieving adequate defensible space on landscapes surrounding buildings.
- Based on these standards OSFM will develop and publish a training curriculum for individuals to qualify to be NPC on-site consultants to property owners wanting to develop or improve NPCs
- OSFM may conduct the training or contract with a third-party trainer, or local municipalities to do so.
- With explicit OSFM approval, local municipalities may use standards/rules that differ from those supplied by OSFM.
- Onsite consultants will be made available assist citizens in developing a workplan to become NPCs

### **IV) Grants to execute on-the-ground work**

- OSFM will create a needs-based grants program to support the implementation of community risk reduction workplans, to be funded by the Community Risk Reduction Fund (SB 762, Section 9)
  - Grant could be in-kind services (e.g., from the Oregon Conservation Corps).
- Amounts of grants, and percentage of matching non-state funds required if any, will be determined on the basis of total funds available for the program
- OSFM may administer individual grants directly or distribute community grants to municipalities to administer according to rules and reporting requirements determined by OSFM
- Municipalities may be offered opportunities to leverage more state funding by providing matching funds of their own.

### **V) Home Hardening Assistance Program (HHAP)**

- A Home Hardening Fund is established with DCBS is created to support hardening of homes, for both rebuilding after wildfire and proactively in areas prone to wildfire.
- In consultation with OSFM, DCBS shall develop a Home Hardening Assistance Program to retrofit and harden homes in areas with high exposure to catastrophic wildfire, or in the footprint of recent community wildfires.
- DCBS shall designate a list of retrofits and materials/practices that reduce vulnerability of buildings to wildfire and flying embers, including an assessment of the relative cost effectiveness of different measures.
- OSFM rulemaking and grantmaking authority for program eligibility, prioritization, and distribution will be established in coordination with the development of the CRRP. Criteria for grants/loans shall prioritize
  - Geographic location in high wildfire exposure areas
  - Applications from communities with social or financial barriers to reducing risk
  - Applicants with significant economic need
  - Applicants whose homes have been significantly damaged or destroyed by wildfire
  - Specific improvements with the highest ratio of benefits to cost

- Projects with highest potential for leveraging federal or philanthropic funds
- Properties in, or slated to be in, Neighborhood Protection Cooperatives (described above)
- OSFM may develop and establish matching-fund or low/no-interest loan programs with the same objectives as the HHAP grant program, but less emphasis on financial need criteria.
- The Home Hardening Assistance Fund is established
  - Pilot programs will be established in up to six counties, selected by OSFM on the basis of their relatively high exposure to catastrophic wildfire. \$\_\_\_\_\_ allocated to OSFM to create the program, \$\_\_\_\_\_ allocated to each county to fund the grants to property owners.
  - County programs to be administered by Community Action Agencies or other NGOs as determined by OSFM.
  - CAAs or other grant administrators report three times to OSFM in format designed by OSFM, with final report due 11/1/24.
  - OSFM report evaluating the HHAP will be delivered to relevant legislative committees by 12/1/24.

## **VI) Reporting**

- OSFM will submit a minimum of three status reports on the CRRP, including recommendations for improvement, to the Governor, relevant legislative committees, the Wildfire Programs Director and Wildfire Programs Advisory Council, as follows:
  - First report: on or before Dec 1, 2023
  - Second report: on or before Sept 1, 2024
  - Third report: on or before Sept 1, 2025
  - The reports shall include but not be limited to:
    - Information about the quantity, monetary value, geographic distribution, and categories of awards of financial assistance made under the CRRP.
    - An evaluation of the overall wildfire risk reduction achieved through awards of financial assistance under the CRRP.
    - An evaluation of the effectiveness of NPC consultant training, coordination and on-site performance
    - An evaluation of the adequacy of coordination for receiving and processing funds from the federal government and other non-state sources.
    - Information about the sources and amounts of funds appropriated or granted to the CRRP, including other state, private, and federal matching funds secured
    - Recommendations for enhancing leveraging opportunities for non-state funding
    - Information about barriers encountered to completing work supported by CRRP funding, including permitting or regulatory requirements.
    - A review of fire prevention organizational or capacity deficits within the CRRP
    - Recommendations for improving regional capacity and collaboration among locations and entities eligible to receive CRRP funding.
    - Recommendations for advancing the objective of securing benefits for NPC residents in the cost and availability of relevant insurance coverage

## **VII) Public Communications, Data Collection and Tracking**

- OSFM will expand its current online presence to include a central user-friendly website that clearly describes all programs, grant opportunities and citizen input processes related to the CRRP, with the aim of maximizing convenience for citizens seeking relevant information and services across multiple agencies and organizations.
- Elements of the central website include but are not limited to
  - description of all opportunities for accessing resources to support CRRP activities, including links to relevant application materials
  - dates and internet connection information for all scheduled public meetings discussing CRPP activities
  - opportunities to be added to any lists to receive announcement of future relevant grant opportunities and public meetings
  - instructions on how and when to submit comment in rule-making and other decision processes related to activities described in this act
  - maps and other graphic materials relevant to activities described in this act
  - current and developing building code and defensible space provisions that impact CRRP activities
  - insurance information related to wildfire risk reduction
  - information for organizing NPCs
  - links to relevant informational and educational material
- An interagency data collection system will be created to enable cooperation on risk reduction investments related to services and activities described in this Act. The system shall be designed to
  - enable more effective planning, monitoring, and CRRP evaluation
  - improve communication, outreach, and education between state agencies, legislators, and public recognizing the investment of landowners in community risk reduction work
  - guide future policy deliberation and investments in wildfire programs