



Board of Supervisors Memorandum

May 6, 2025

Wildfire Mitigation Plan

Background

This Wildfire Mitigation Plan addresses the critical and increasing concern of wildfire within Pima County. In response to the Board of Supervisors' request on February 4, 2025, prompted by significant wildfire events in California and Hawaii, a comprehensive Wildfire Mitigation Plan Draft has been developed. This plan outlines strategies for wildfire prevention, mitigation, emergency response, and readiness, acknowledging that wildfire occurrence is now a year-round concern due to factors such as prolonged drought, climate change, and the spread of invasive species. The plan specifically recognizes the challenges presented by the Wildland-Urban Interface/Intermix (WUI), where developed areas and wildland vegetation meet or comeingle.

To address these threats through collaboration, an executive working group comprised of Directors and Deputy Directors from key Pima County Departments and County Administration has been established and meets weekly to develop this plan. This group focuses on identifying current efforts, evaluating existing programs, addressing gaps, and mapping response systems across various county departments, jurisdictions, and partner agencies to ensure efficient and effective wildfire management.

This Memorandum serves as a formal introduction to the foundational steps for an actionable Wildfire Mitigation Plan. The initial activities represent only the beginning of a scalable, collaborative, fluid plan.

As outlined in the March 20, 2025 Memorandum to the Board of Supervisors, robust efforts by Pima County Departments and partner agencies have already laid important groundwork in reducing wildfire risk and response capabilities throughout our region.

In support of evidence-based planning, after-incident reports from major wildfires like Lahaina, Hawaii have been reviewed for recommendations. These reports underscore the necessity of proactive planning, community engagement, and interagency coordination in wildfire mitigation efforts. Implementing these recommendations can significantly enhance the effectiveness of emergency responses and improve community resilience against future wildfires.

Risk Reduction Category	Projected Cost Range
Public Education/Prevention	\$20,000-\$50,000
Mitigation	\$215,000-\$275,000
Emergency Response	\$125,000-\$175,000
	\$360,000-500,000

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Among these findings, the clearest priority is prevention. The most effective action we can take is to promote Firewise educational principles across communities throughout the County and increase enrollment in emergency alert notification systems to maximize readiness before a fire begins.

As we advance mitigation planning, it's essential to recognize the distinct nature of wildfire risk across different environments throughout Pima County, particularly between urban intermix fires and traditional rural interface wildfires.

Urban wildfires, most likely vegetation fire incidents that occur within densely populated areas where dry vegetation, such as buffelgrass, stinknet, or unmaintained green spaces (e.g., washes, alleys, and open lots), act as a conduit for fire. The proximity to homes and infrastructure significantly heightens the complexity and speed of response. These fires are often unpredictable, fast-moving, and directly threaten people, property, and urban assets. Evacuation logistics and emergency alert systems are critically important in these contexts.

In contrast, rural wildfires typically occur in more open areas, forests, grasslands, or remote desert areas. While these fires may spread over larger areas and require extensive containment strategies, they often occur farther from dense human populations. However, they can still pose significant threats to rural communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems particularly when conditions are dry, windy, or involving steep terrain.

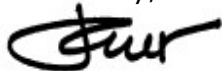
Recognizing these differences allows us to tailor prevention, mitigation, and response strategies. Urban areas may require more focused outreach on Firewise landscaping, building code compliance, and notification of alert system enrollment, while rural areas benefit from fuel break planning, interagency coordination, and landscape-scale vegetation management. This understanding informs ongoing efforts to prioritize resources where they will have the greatest impact, especially in areas with high vulnerability and complex community wildland fire interface.

Please consider this a living framework, as we will be monitoring and evaluating efforts to adjust as needed for resources allocation. We welcome continued collaboration as we move this draft plan forward.

Recommendation

I recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

Sincerely,



Jan Leshner
County Administrator

JKL/dym – April 23, 2025

Attachment

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c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Sandra Espinoza, Director, Office of Emergency Management
Kris Gade, Director, Conservation Lands and Resources Department
Eric Shepp, Director, Regional Flood Control District
Sarah Davis, Senior Advisor, County Administrator's Office
Amaris Vasquez, Senior Advisor, County Administrator's Office

Pima County Wildfire Mitigation Plan

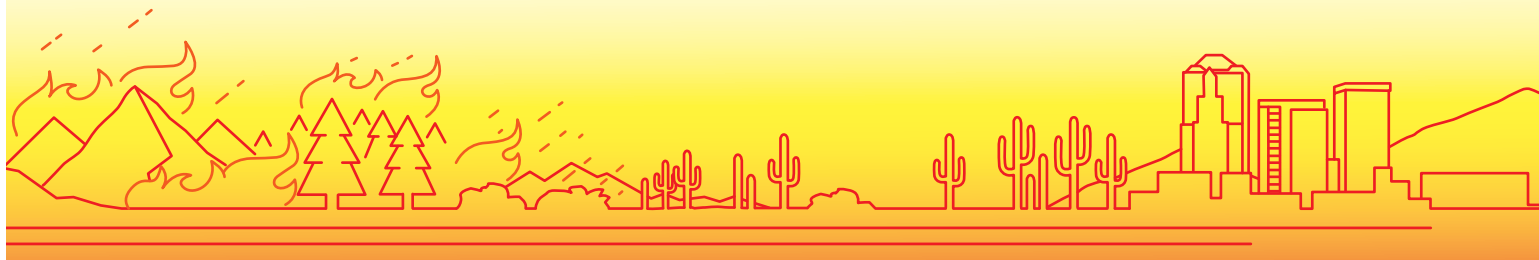


PIMA COUNTY

Introduction

This Wildfire Mitigation Plan outlines Pima County's approach to wildfire prevention, mitigation, emergency response, and readiness, in response to the Board of Supervisors' request on February 4, 2025. Wildfire occurrence in Pima County is now a year-round concern due to prolonged drought, climate change, and the spread of invasive species. The plan recognizes the critical challenges posed by the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), where developed areas meet or intermingle with wildland vegetation.

An executive working group comprised of Directors and Deputy Directors from key Pima County Departments as well as County Administration has been established and meets weekly to create a plan which address wildfire threats through collaboration. This group is focused on identifying existing efforts, evaluating current programs, addressing gaps and mapping response systems across county departments, jurisdictions, and partner agencies to prevent duplication and fill service needs.



Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives highlight critical efforts and opportunities, based on input from internal and external stakeholders that work in the realm of wildland fire. Goals and objectives are categorized into three strategic areas; prevention, mitigation, and response which are aligned with the six lanes of effort, outlined below, and collaboration with external stakeholders throughout Pima County.

GOAL 1 Public Education/Prevention

GOAL 2 Mitigation

GOAL 3 Response

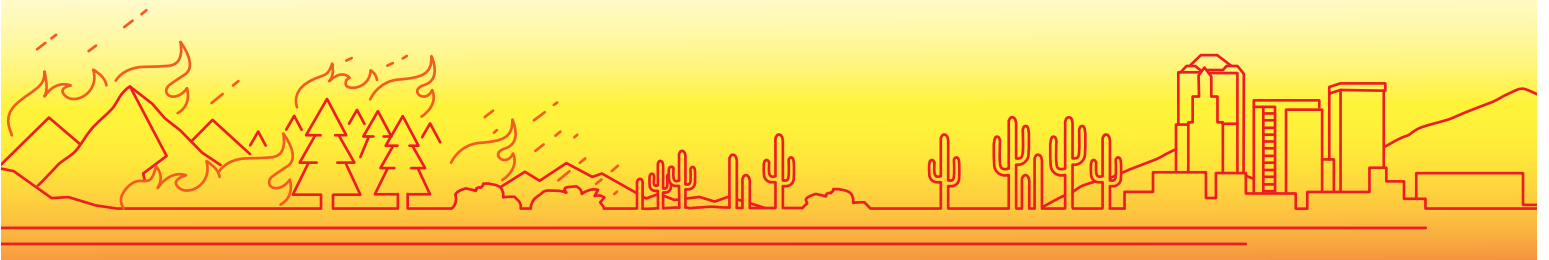
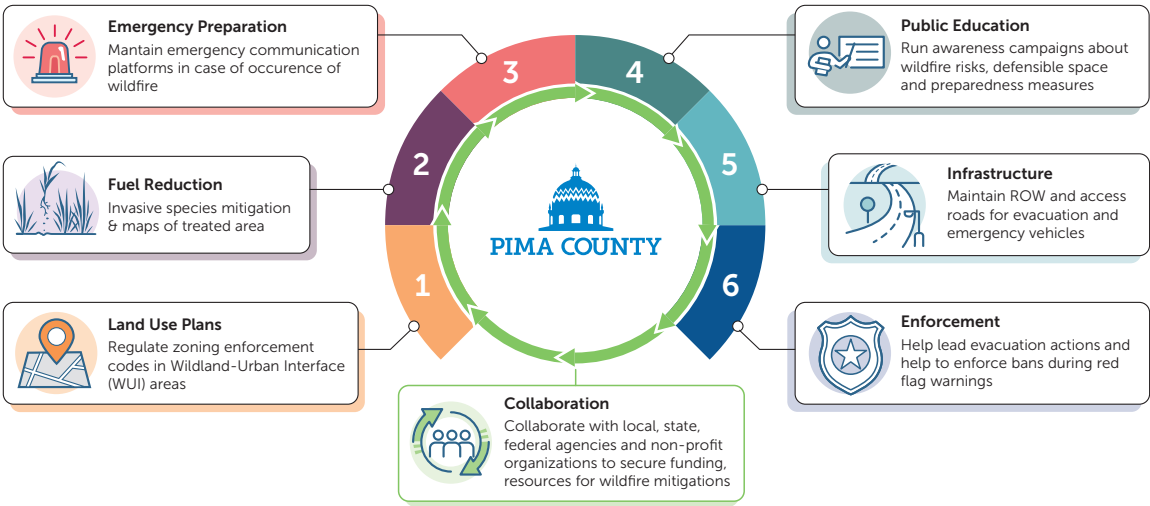


Table 1

WILDLAND FIRE: What is in Pima County's lane?



Land Use: Using mapping tools to identify Wildland Urban Interface and Intermix locations, and helping our community grow and develop safely while keeping risk to wildfire in mind.

Fuel Reduction: Focusing on managing vegetation and removing invasive plant species to reduce wildfire fuel loads, which accelerate fire spread. This effort looks at innovative ways of supporting and scaling manual and chemical mitigation or prescribed burns.

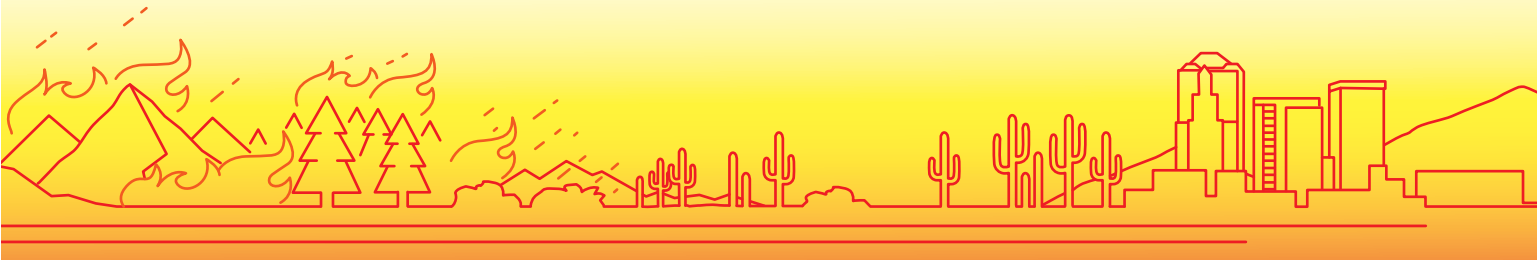
Emergency Preparation: Developing and maintaining collaboration throughout agencies in Pima County for robust emergency communication systems to respond, notify and direct the public in the event of a wildfire. Establishing protocols for alerts, evacuations, and recovery information if needed. Coordinating messaging across departments and jurisdictions.

Public Education: Raising awareness through community outreach and educational campaigns. Teaching residents about defensible space, evacuation routes, emergency preparedness and building community resilience by helping constituents take proactive steps like principles from the National Fire Protection Agency's Firewise USA program.

Infrastructure: Maintain and adapt critical systems like roads, so that response efforts are strengthened.

Enforcement: Enforcing public safety measures during high-risk periods like Red Flag Warning and wildfire events. As well as supporting law enforcement and fire officials in enforcing evacuation orders and public safety closures.

Collaboration: Partnering with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies is crucial to these functions to coordinate planning and access and scale funding opportunities.



GOAL 1

Public Education/ Prevention

Objective: Improve communication and collaboration between government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and communities for wildfire preparedness, invasive species education, and emergency readiness. Improve collaboration to ensure residents can access vital information and resources.

OBJ. 1.1 Develop a collaborative communication strategy for year-round, consistent wildfire safety messaging, including National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) prevention education and Firewise emergency preparedness (Table 2). Share multilingual public education materials with all stakeholders.

OBJ. 1.2 Create a central wildfire repository website with interactive tools (i.e. risk maps, emergency checklists, real-time alerts). Categorize information by topic (i.e. Prevention, Mitigation, Response, Insurance) and include Frequently Asked Questions.

OBJ. 1.3 Increase MyAlert registrations. Ensure residents can locate evacuation information easily especially Ready, Set, Go alert messaging. Promote sign-ups via outreach campaigns, community events, and public service announcements.

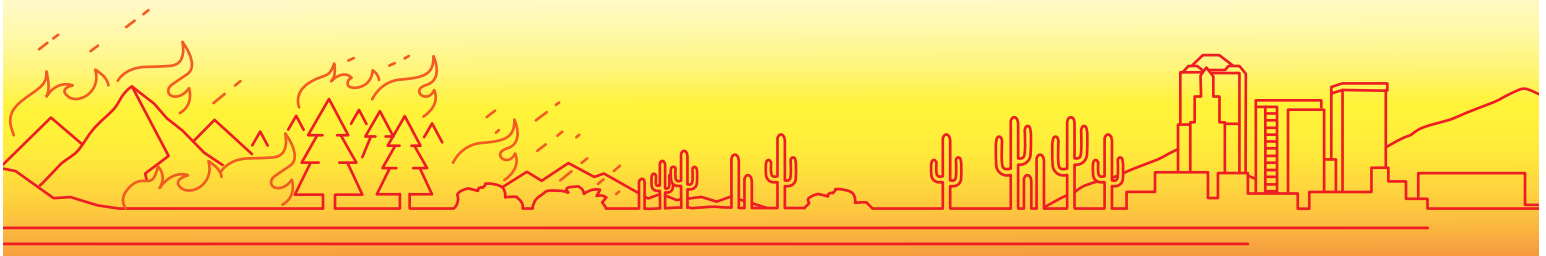
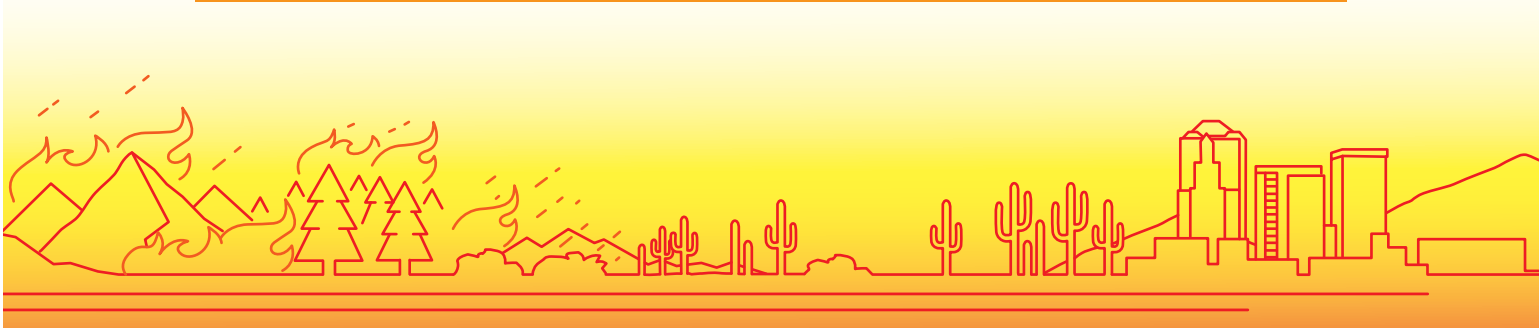


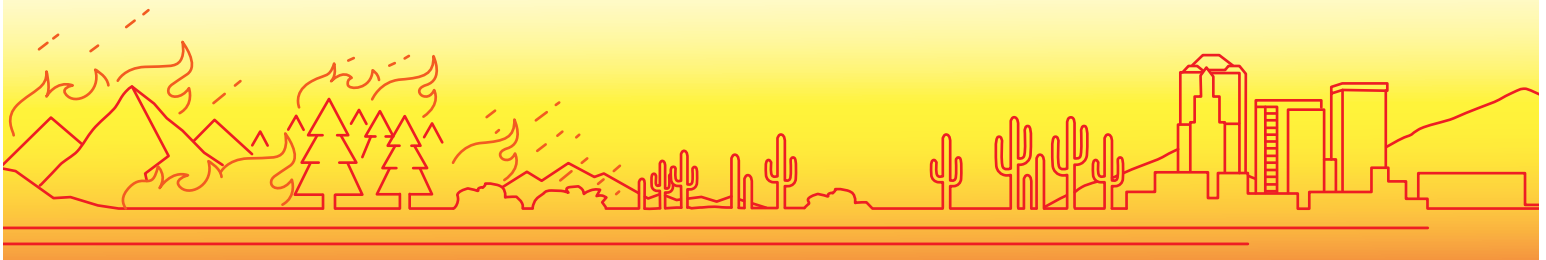
Table 2

<div>Wildfire Messaging Calendar</div>		
<div>JANUARY</div> <div>DEFENSIBLE SPACE MESSAGING</div>	<div>FEBRUARY</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VOLUNTEER INVASIVE SPECIES MITIGATION RED FLAG WARNINGS </div>	<div>MARCH</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VOLUNTEER INVASIVE SPECIES MITIGATION RED FLAG WARNINGS </div>
<div>APRIL</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEFENSIBLE SPACE FIREWISE INFORMATION </div>	<div>MAY</div> <div>WILDLIFE AWARENESS MONTH</div>	<div>JUNE</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MYALERT SIGN-UPS READY SET GO EVACUATION </div>
<div>JULY</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FLOOD AWARENESS CAMPING/WILDFIRE SAFETY </div>	<div>AUGUST</div> <div>DEFENSIBLE SPACE</div>	<div>SEPTEMBER</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MYALERT REMINDERS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH </div>
<div>OCTOBER</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIRE PREVENTION MONTH FIREWISE INFORMATION </div>	<div>NOVEMBER</div> <div>INVASIVE SPECIES VOLUNTEER SIGN-UPS</div>	<div>DECEMBER</div> <div>GO BAG PREPARATION FOR EVACUATION</div>



Public Education/Prevention Tasks

Tasks	WMP Objective	Progress Status	Effort Category	Projected Cost
Wildfire Yearly Prevention Calendar	1.1	Completed	Public Education	Absorbed by Dept.
PIO Wildfire Coordination	1.1	Completed	Public Education	Absorbed by Dept.
Increase education outreach Firewise principles	1.1	Planning	Public Education	\$5,000
Multilingual Firewise materials	1.1	Planning	Public Education	\$5,000
Insurance coverage FAQ	1.1	Discovery	Public Education	TBD
Wildland Invasives FAQ	1.2	Planning	Fuel Reduction	\$5,000
Catalog map information	1.2	Planning	Land Use	TBD
Central Wildfire Education Repository	1.3	Planning	Public Education	\$5,000



GOAL 2

Mitigation

Objective: Promote innovative strategies for invasive species management through coordinated data sharing. Align mitigation efforts with collaborators across jurisdictions.

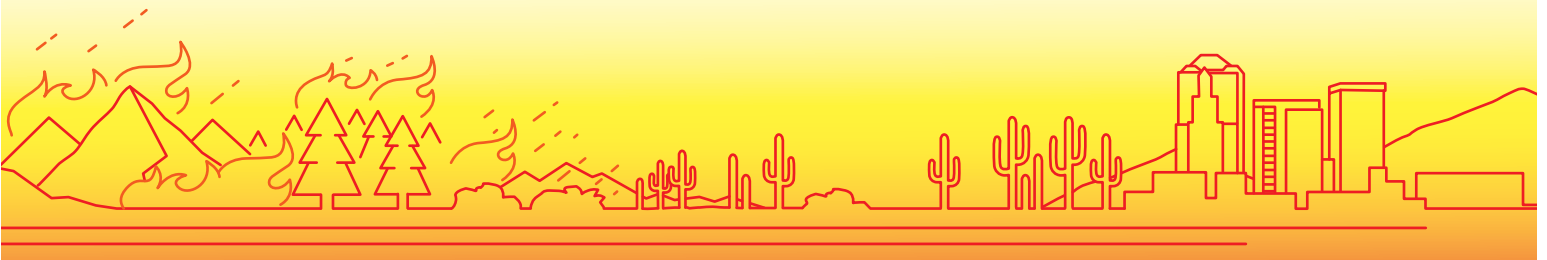
OBJ. 2.1 Coordinate mapping of high-priority areas impacted by invasive species, WUI, and drought, and streamline educational material to the public. Continue to grow training for staff and contractors in invasive species identification and treatment. Establish expectations for more stakeholders to use GIS tools for treatment tracking. Provide education on riparian habitat for flood issues after a fire.

OBJ. 2.2 Pursue grants, partnerships, and shared resources for large-scale mitigation (e.g., prescribed burns, defensible space). Expand brush and bulky item removal opportunity in unincorporated areas, encourage residents in incorporated areas to use this service to create defensible space.

OBJ. 2.3 Update Administrative Procedure on Invasive Species mitigation to guide internal departments in addressing invasive species like Buffelgrass and Stinknet in their areas of responsibility.

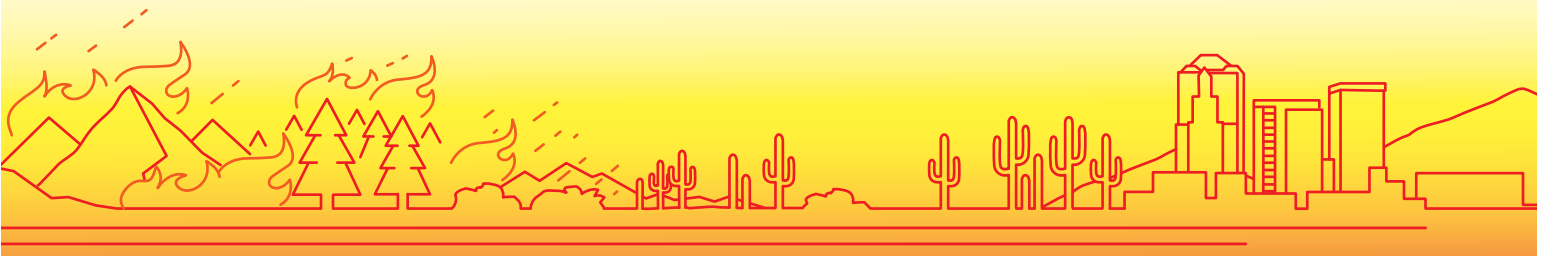
OBJ. 2.4 Pursue new opportunities for invasive species mitigation such as encouraging County employees & other stakeholders participation in invasive pulls through volunteer hours, pilot targeted grazing for vegetation control, select sites for drop off pile locations for brush and bulky items in unincorporated areas and use a prescribed burn of these materials as training for local Fire Departments and Districts.

OBJ. 2.5 Incorporate mitigation into zoning/code ordinances updates for WUI areas.



Mitigation Tasks

Tasks	WMP Objective	Progress Status	Effort Category	Projected Cost
Expand UA Cooperative Extension Collaboration	2.1	Monitoring	Fuel Reduction	\$75,000
Create invasives material coordination calendar	2.1	Planning	Fuel Reduction	\$5,000
Mitigation funding match with collaborators	2.2	Execution	Fuel Reduction	\$25,000
High risk WUI map drone imagery	2.1	Discovery	Land Use	Absorbed by Dept./ Collaborators
Drop off brush locations	2.4	Discovery	Fuel Reduction	\$40,000
Defensible space rebate program	2.4	Discovery	Fuel Reduction	\$30,000
Brush & Bulky vouchers	2.4	Discovery	Fuel Reduction	\$20,000
Permit contacts for Fire Departments	2.5	Discovery	Land Use	TBD
Riparian area FAQ	2.1	Execution	Fuel Reduction	Absorbed by Dept.
Coordinated construction site policies	2.1	Review	Infrastructure	TBD
Repository for invasive species maps	2.1	Planning	Land Use	Absorbed by Dept./ Collaborators
Prescribed burns	2.2	Monitoring	Fuel Reduction	\$10,000
AP for invasive mitigation	2.3	Planning	Fuel Reduction	No new cost
Tucson Clean & Beautiful Collaboration	2.4	Planning	Fuel Reduction	Collaborator
Targeted grazing for invasive species	2.4	Review	Fuel Reduction	TBD
Employee Be Well hours for mitigation efforts	2.4	Discovery	Fuel Reduction	TBD
Riparian wash ordinance	2.5	Planning	Fuel Reduction	TBD
Complimentary WUI building codes	2.5	Planning	Enforcement	\$10,000



GOAL 3

Emergency Response

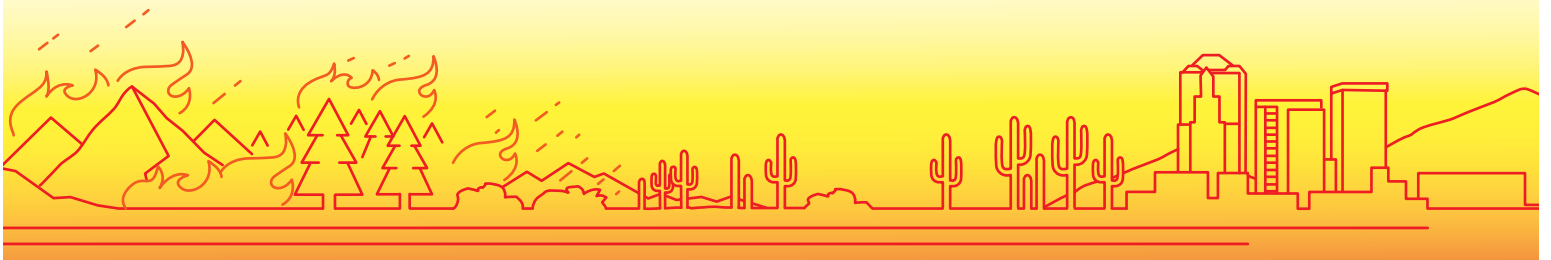
Objective: Improve emergency response coordination, clarify agency roles, and enhance response systems throughout Pima County.

OBJ. 3.1 Conduct regional tabletop exercises with dispatch, emergency responders, and other response and recovery partners to assure clear guidelines for roles during wildfire response, as well identify any gaps in service. Host biannual regional task force meetings and possibly a regional wildland fire training course in Pima County. Develop up to date wildfire response flowchart, and agreed upon Wildland Urban Interface/Intermix map.

OBJ. 3.2 Update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

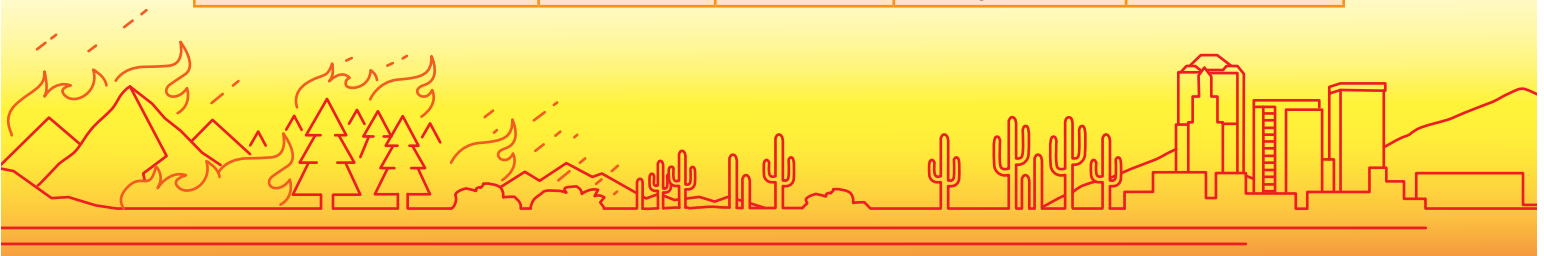
OBJ. 3.3 Public utility response during wildfire. Create and keep updated detailed water resource maps for fire response. Also, partner with local utility companies to pursue new ideas for early response like panoramic cameras for early detection in remote areas, as well as be aware of electric public safety power shutoffs in emergency situations.

OBJ. 3.4 Pre-identify evacuation routes, make sure work to with Department of Transportation to have evacuation signage ready for peak wildfire season. Coordinate with regional law enforcement entities on evacuation response.



Emergency Response Tasks

Tasks	WMP Objective	Progress Status	Effort Category	Projected Cost
Update Community Wildfire Protection Plan	3.2	Planning	Land Use	Absorbed by Dept.
Wildfire First Responder overview	3.1	Completed	Emergency Preparation	No New Cost
WUI map identification	3.1	Completed	Land Use	No new Cost
Increase evacuation alert registration	3.4	Review	Emergency Preparation	Absorbed by Dept.
Enhance Regional Dispatch Center Coordination	3.1	Planning	Emergency Preparation	Collaborators
Tabletop wildfire scenarios	3.1	Planning	Emergency Preparation	\$5,000
Severity Patrols for Red Flag Warning Days	3.1	Discovery	Emergency Preparation	\$60,000
Wildland Fire Training	3.1	Discovery	Emergency Preparation	\$40,000
Predeveloped evacuation routes	3.4	Planning	Emergency Preparation	Absorbed by Dept.
Right of Way maintenance	3.4	Execution	Infrastructure	Absorbed by Dept.
Evacuation signs created DOT	3.1	Planning	Infrastructure	\$20,000
Responder data tool repository	3.1	Discovery	Emergency Preparation	Absorbed by Dept./ Collaborators
Regional Taskforce Workshops	3.1	Discovery	Emergency Preparation	Absorbed by Dept./ Collaborators
Utility plans during wildfire	3.3	Review	Infrastructure	Collaborators
Drone opportunity for emergency response	3.1	Discovery	Emergency Preparation	TBD
Identify and map water supply sources in County	3.3	Review	Emergency Preparation	Absorbed by Dept.
Preauthorize response use agreements	3.3	Planning	Emergency Preparation	Absorbed by Dept.
PANO cameras in remote areas	3.3	Planning	Emergency Preparation	Collaborators
Fund Heliwells	3.3	Discovery	Emergency Preparation	TBD



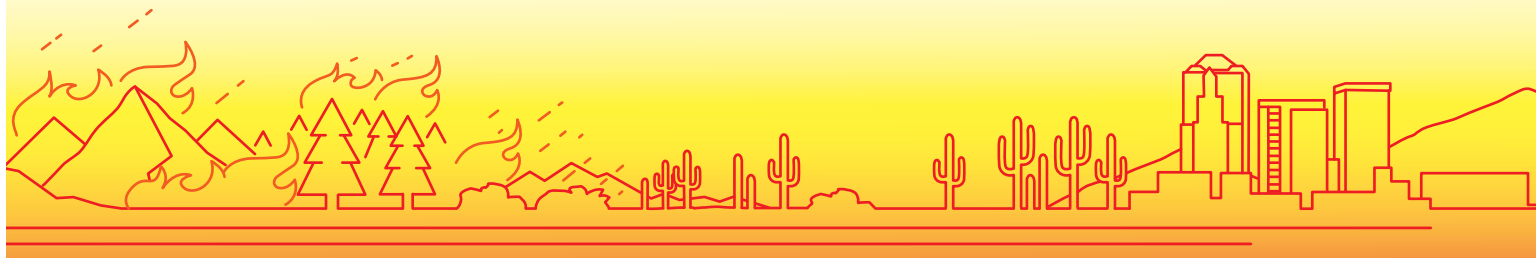
Implementation Strategies

The Pima County Wildfire Executive Group will oversee plan implementation, with members from County Administration, Conservation Land Resources, Office of Emergency Management, Flood Control, and Development Services. The Wildland Fire Working Group and Regional Taskforce will support regional coordination. This plan will be fluid and scalable to be able to adapt to changing needs.

Implementation includes expanding Firewise education, promoting defensible space in WUI, using a unified public messaging calendar, increasing MyAlert usage, and collaborating with research institutions on invasive species education and volunteer opportunities. Additionally, working with Development Services to determine how best to integrate wildfire code considerations into planning and permitting.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Number of Firewise-designated communities | ■ Community participation in prevention programs |
| ■ Number of presentations provided with Firewise Principles | ■ Regional partnership collaboration |
| ■ Increase MyAlert evacuation registration numbers | ■ Policy adoption in Wildland Urban Interface areas |
| ■ Number of pre-identified evacuation routes | ■ Integration into broader climate adaptation plans |
| ■ Area treated for vegetation management | |



Budget and Resource Allocation

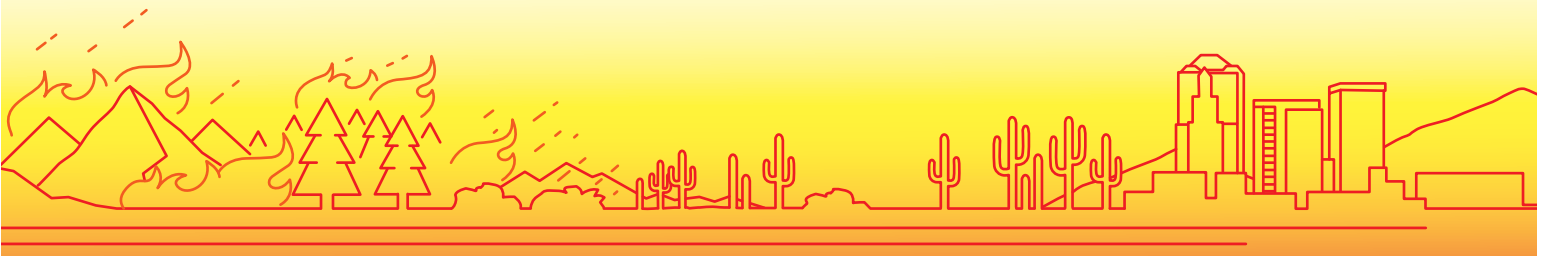
Preliminary budget estimates have been strategically outlined to prioritize initiatives that are immediately actionable or scalable within the framework of existing wildfire mitigation efforts during the first year. Funding will initially support high-impact, low-barrier projects while remaining flexible to accommodate future expansion based on community needs and risk assessments.

The plan will actively pursue additional funding sources, such as grants, public-private partnerships, and interagency collaborations to unlock new opportunities for investment. Innovation pilots and community-based mitigation strategies to explore scalable, cost-effective approaches.

A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis will be conducted to ensure that all expenditures deliver measurable risk reduction and long-term value. This analysis will guide future resource allocation decisions, with a strong emphasis on funding high-return mitigation strategies that protect lives.

Appendices

- List of external collaborators
- WUI area maps and wildfire history
- Sample Firewise and invasive species outreach materials





PIMA COUNTY