

Climate and Environment Policy Advisory Committee (CEPAC)

Draft Minutes

May 14, 2026, 5:00 – 7:00 PM

51 Winburn Way Ashland, OR 97520

1. Call to Order

- **COMMITTEE MEMBERS-** Mark Morrison, Sharon Dohrmann, Gary Shaff, Maya Baerg, Sidney Brown
- **ABSENT:** n/a
- **CITY COUNCIL:** Bob Kaplan, Jeff Dahle
- **STAFF:** Chad Woodward

2. Consent Agenda.

- Minutes- Approved.
 - *Motion to approve by Brown, seconded by Morrison. Approved by Dormann, Baerg, Morrison, Brown, and Shaff. Passed 5-0.*

3. Updates/Announcements

- CEPAC Update – Morrison:
 - Committee member Christopherson has moved out of Ashland and is no longer eligible to serve on CEPAC.
 - Morrison introduced a new CEPAC applicant to the group.
 - He then shared about the previous days work session discussion, which covered instances where equipment replacements may not have followed administrative policies. This led to a discussion and group identified the need to plan for end-of-life equipment replacements to support decarbonization goals. They also discussed the importance of accurately calculating real fuel costs for electric equipment, particularly considering the city's ownership of its electric utility.
- Staff Update – Woodward:
 - City staff reported on various initiatives. Currently working on 8 new EV chargers (4 at Second Street and 4 at utility pole mounts) that should be done this month. So far 16 package terminal heat pumps (PTHP) have been installed, with 20 more planned for installation. Home Energy Scores have 80 assessment completed showing potential emissions reductions of 84 metric tons. The car share program has generated 1,245 hours of usage and 13,000 miles driven since its inception, though a decision is pending on whether to continue it beyond August 31st. The carbon pollution impact fee on new residential construction shows \$6,614.40 likely due from 24 of 33 qualifying applications, primarily from gas water heaters, ranges, and fireplaces. Ashland's upcoming priorities

include developing an on-bill finance loan program and completing a SEEP report.

- Council Update:
 - Discussed the city's facilities maintenance budget and that a facilities fund is being reestablished after being discontinued in 2014. The conversation then shifted to the current water situation. The city is implementing voluntary water conservation measures, with mandatory curtailment expected to begin in June, as predicted in the previously approved water management conservation plan.

4. **Presentations:**

- **Charisse Sydoriak – Stimulating Climate-Smart Adaptation in Ashland, OR**
 - The discussion covered both Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP) and the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The conversation focused on balancing mitigation and adaptation in both CEAP and the CWPP, using a “climate-smart” lens to navigate uncertainty and address the region’s intertwined risks of extreme heat, water scarcity, and wildfire. The conversation emphasized scenario planning and forward-looking investments in infrastructure, energy systems, and urban forestry to build resilience consistent with both CEAP and CWPP priorities. Finally, the wildfire risk management discussion underscored the need for agile planning, geospatial risk analysis, and user-friendly tools to support residents—reinforcing the importance of integrating community-driven strategies across CEAP and the CWPP.
- **Rob Head – Fire Resilience Software Application:**
 - The discussion focused on demonstrating a new fire-safe landscaping tool developed during a code-a-thon. Rob presented a GIS-based application that helps users assess plant safety near buildings, showing how it can provide recommendations and flammability information for different plant species. The tool is not yet publicly available but will be further developed.

5. **Unfinished Business:**

- **Review of Signed Avista Franchise Agreement and Committee Next Steps:**
 - The committee discussed concerns about the city council's recent decision to enter a 10-year franchise agreement with Avista Utilities, which some felt limited the city's ability to implement climate goals. The conversation ended with discussions about how to address these concerns through formal comments to the city council.
 - Motion presented by Morrison, but not voted on due to time constraints:
 - *“CEPAC moves to formally denounce the City Council's April 7, 2026, decision to enter a ten-year Franchise Agreement with Avista Utilities.*

We find that this decision abdicates the City's role as an active steward by trading the dynamic regulatory control of an Ordinance for an inflexible contract. This action creates a decade-long policy lag that directly contradicts the 2017 Climate Energy Action Plan, and effectively turns a vital municipal lever of control into a passive platform for a fossil fuel utility."

6. Meeting Adjourned at 7:00.

Climate and Environment Policy Advisory Committee (CEPAC)

Work Session – Draft Minutes

May 13, 2026, 2:00 – 3:30 PM

51 Winburn Way Ashland, OR 97520

1. Call to Order

- **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**– Mark Morrison, Sharon Dohrmann, Gary Shaff, Sidney Brown
- **STAFF**: Chad Woodward

2. Topic: City Buildings Electrification

- The discussion focused on reviewing the Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) spreadsheet to identify buildings with aging energy systems, especially those still using natural gas and likely candidates for conversion to electric or heat-pump alternatives. The group discussed how to determine the city's top energy emitters and noted complications in locating data for certain facilities, as well as cases where natural-gas equipment may have been installed under earlier contractual exceptions. They reviewed the possibility of strengthening the administrative policy by converting it into an enforceable ordinance. The discussion also addressed how to calculate operational costs, potential revenue retention through the city's electric utility, and the long-term financial benefits of electrification. Additional conversations focused on asset replacement planning for major facilities, incorporating carbon-impact considerations into decision-making, and clarifying how fuel costs are allocated across departments. The meeting concluded with plans to analyze conversion costs, update documentation, post relevant materials for the committee, and schedule follow-up discussions on facilities and energy-transition planning.

3. Meeting Adjourned at 3:00.



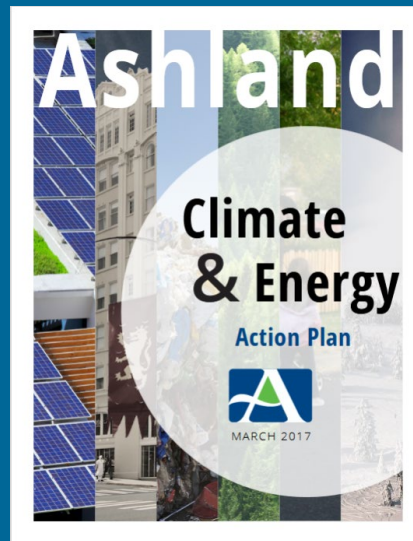
Stimulating Climate-Smart Adaptation in Ashland, OR

**Invited presentation on May 14, 2026 for the
Ashland Climate and Environment Policy Advisory Committee
Charisse Sydoriak, Presenter/Facilitator**

How Ashland's 2017 Climate and Energy Action Plan Aligns with Climate-Smart Principles—and other observations/ideas

GOAL #1

Reduce community greenhouse gas emissions



GOAL #2

Prepare Ashland to be more resilient from climate change impacts

CEAP Strengths

- Reasoning is based on science
- Clear structure
- Mitigation + adaptation (limited)
- Monitoring + progress reporting

Other Strengths?

Why Focus more on Adaptation?

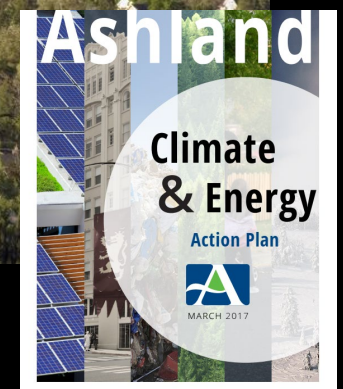
- Climate is changing quickly
 - Future \neq past
- Mitigation alone is not enough
- People feel threatened by change

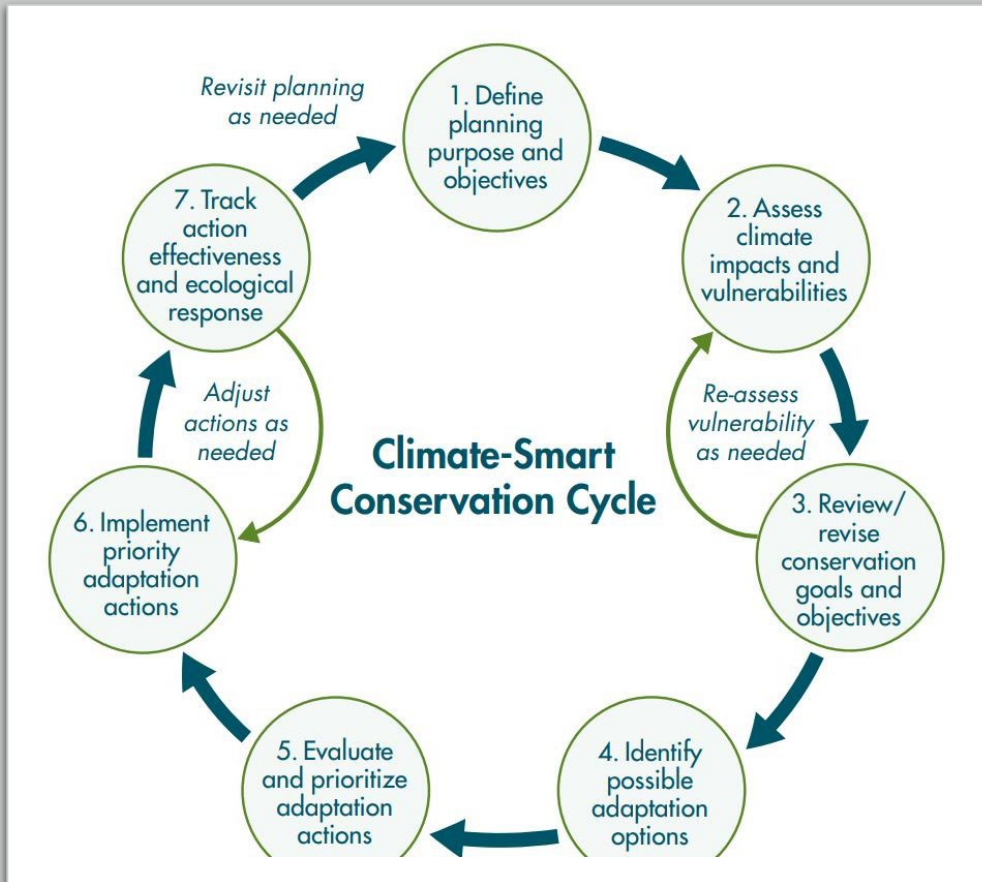
Other reasons?



Introduction to the “Climate-Smart Approach”

Presentation prepared by Charisse Sydoriak for
Ashland's Climate Policy Commission_April 8,
2021







Being “climate-smart” is “the **INTENTIONAL** and deliberate consideration of climate change...realized through adopting forward-looking goals and explicitly linking strategies to key climate impacts and vulnerabilities” (Stein et al 2014).

Being “climate-smart” means making a transition from a paradigm of protection and restoration (resisting change), to one that is open to anticipating and actively managing for change.

Climate-Smart is not Business as Usual

How does the Ashland CEAP address the Trifecta of Climate Impacts?

-  Heat — rising temperatures, health & infrastructure impacts
-  Water — drought, supply variability, watershed stress
-  Fire — increasing wildfire risk & urban conflagration potential

Selected Key Characteristics of the Climate Smart Approach

- Forward-looking
- Risk-based (vulnerabilities are assessed)
- Adaptive & experimental (nimble)
- Avoid unintended harm = maladaptation
- Manage for acceptable outcomes, with uncertainty clearly in mind
- Enable transformational public understanding

Traditional planning frameworks typically do not grapple effectively with charting a way forward in the face of uncertain future conditions. The climate-smart approach is designed meet this challenge head-on.



GOAL #2

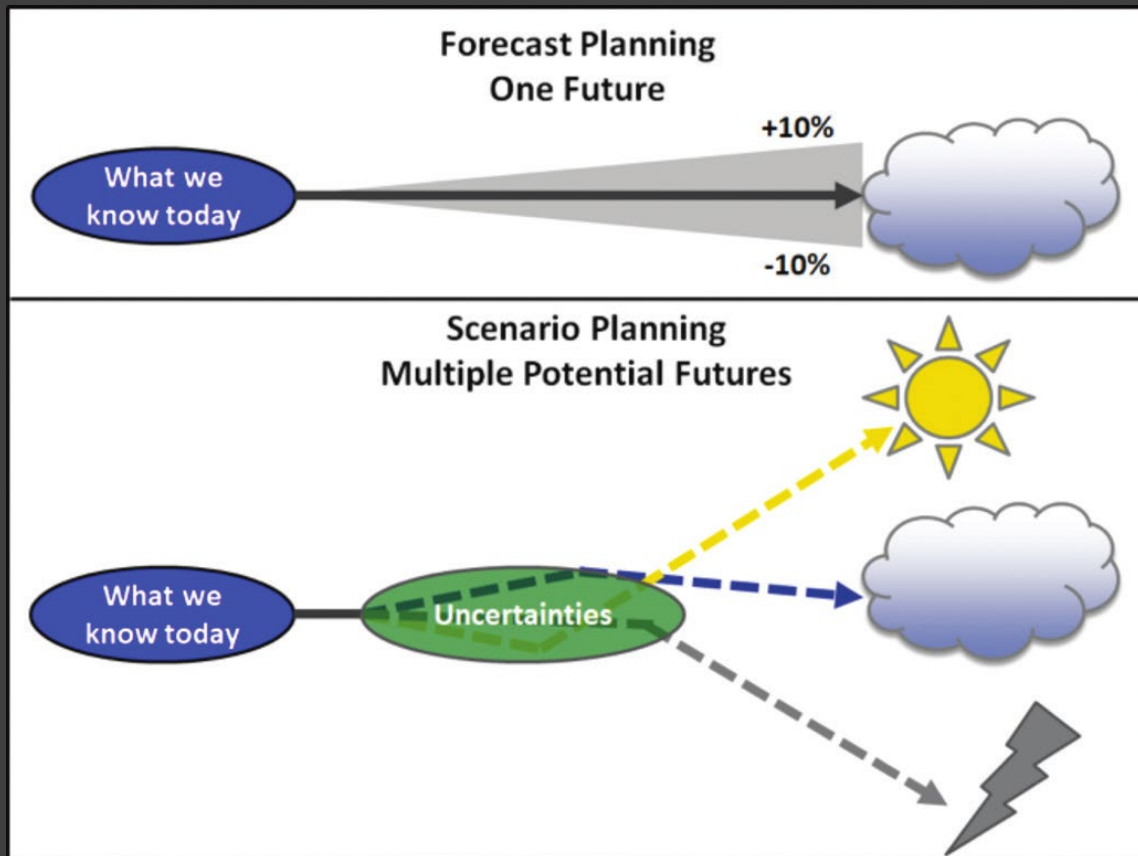
Prepare Ashland to be more resilient
from climate change impacts

2. Embrace forward-looking goals

- *Adaptation goals focus on future, rather than past, climatic, social, and ecological conditions.*
- *Strategies take a long view but account for near-term challenges and needed transition strategies.*

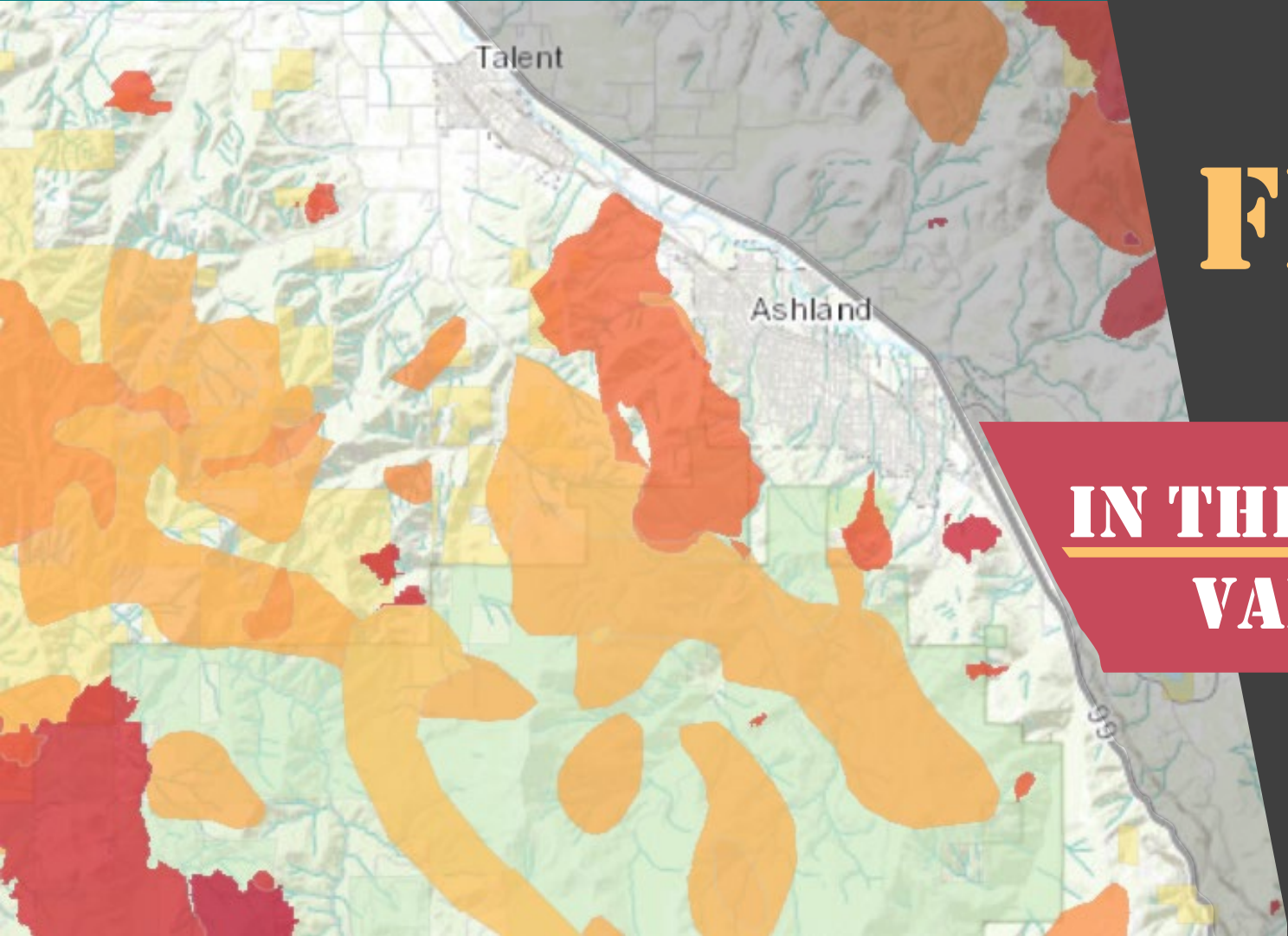
Is Goal #2 in the CEAP “forward-looking”? What does resilience look like?

4. Adopt strategies robust in an uncertain future



Strategies and actions ideally provide benefit across a range of possible future conditions (including extreme events) to account for uncertainties in climatic conditions, and in ecological and human responses to climatic shifts.

Which strategies in the CEAP are robust to an uncertain future? How do you know they are?



FIRE

IN THE ROGUE VALLEY

A Necessary Paradigm Shift

5. Employ agile and informed management

Adaptation planning and resource management is capable of continuous learning and dynamic adjustment to accommodate uncertainty, take advantage of new knowledge, and cope with rapid shifts in climatic, ecological, and socioeconomic conditions.



Can the CEAP/CEPAC meet its goals when there are rapid shifts in socioeconomic and environmental conditions?



Ashland has a **very high risk** of wildfire—higher than 97% of communities in the US.

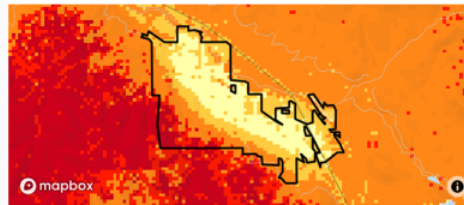
↓ Choose from the topics below to learn more

Understand your risk

Risk to Homes

Where are homes at risk of wildfire?

Very High



Wildfire Likelihood

How likely is a wildfire in this area?

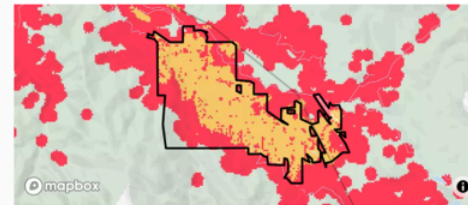
Very High

Reduce your risk

Risk Reduction Zones

Which actions are most effective to reduce risk?

Very High



Vulnerable Populations

Who is most at risk and how do you reach them?

Low

No surprise,
Ashland is in
the middle of
the target

Does it make sense for the CEAP to be intentionally adjusted to integrate CWPP initiatives? What could change and why?

Community Survey Findings



Selected Findings



Outreach Gaps: Traditional communication methods fail to reach many socially vulnerable residents; hands-on, trusted community engagement is essential.

Renter Challenges: Nearly half the community rents, yet tenants have little control over wildfire risk, face resource gaps, and are vulnerable to displacement and rising rents.

Barriers to Action: Financial constraints, limited knowledge, and physical limitations prevent many from reducing wildfire risks.

Resilience Challenges: Workforce gaps, misinformation, and weak accountability hinder effective wildfire risk reduction efforts.



9. Avoid maladaptation

Ensure that proposed actions to address climate impacts on human communities or natural systems do not exacerbate other climate related vulnerabilities or undermine conservation goals and broader ecosystem sustainability.

Can you think of any past city policy decisions or regulations that made things worse relative to making the community more resilient to climatic change?

Plan Implementation Realities

- Language matters
- People feel threatened by change
- Capacity constraints
- Coordination/cross disciplinary challenges
- Limited progress can be discouraging
- We don't have the luxury of lots of time
- *What else?*

Opportunities for Improvement?

- **Adaptation** = scenario planning; visualize geospatial risk to invest better
- **Language matters** = what does it mean to be resilient?
- **Vastly expand and empower community**
- **Collaborate more across disciplines** to avoid conflicting action advice (e.g., “waterwise” vs “firewise”)
- **Demonstrably support the CWPP initiatives**



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

*What has the CEPAC done to catalyze
community driven solutions?*

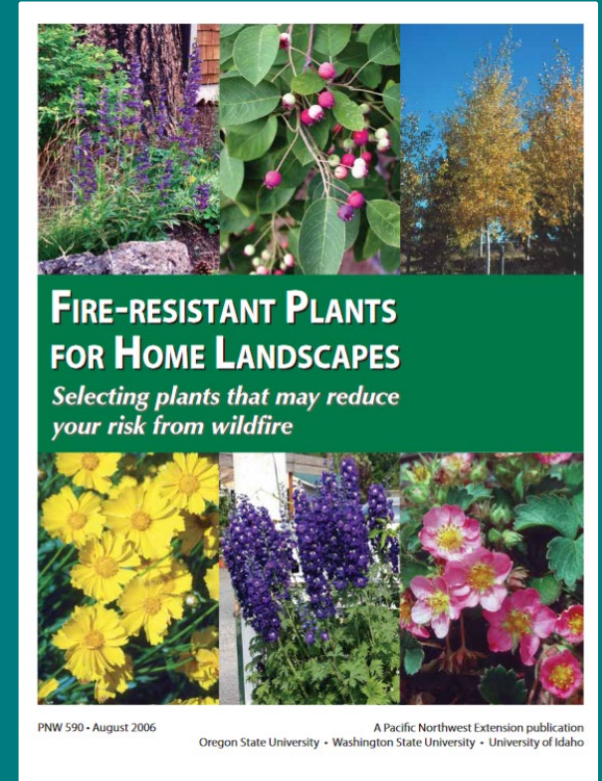
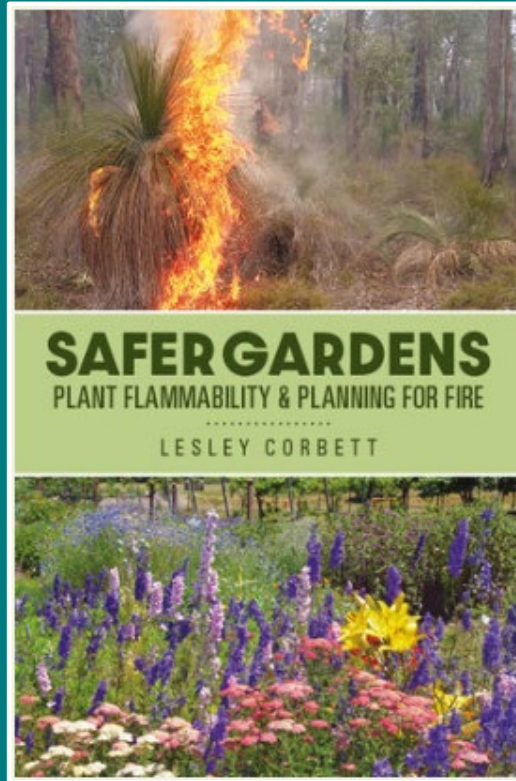


March 3, 2026: Session 4 COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

Local/neighborhood strategies – what works and what doesn't...and why

Wildfire Resistant Homes & Gardens

Densely Built Environments & Aesthetic Challenges



Key Strategy: Empower people to make informed choices. People need to feel a sense of control.



For suggestions on relatively fire-resistant plants for Zone 0, consider using **Charisse's plant list generator**.

Choosing Plants for Fire-Prone Yards

Fire-adapted gardens use **low-fuel groundcovers and bulbs** rather than woody shrubs within 10 feet of the house

These plants tend to have **higher moisture content and less accumulated dry material**, making them slower to ignite than woody shrubs. ([UC Agriculture and Natural Resources](#))

They are often planted in **stone mulch or gravel beds**, which help interrupt fire spread.

Choosing Plants for Fire-Prone Yards

This tool helps you choose plants that are appropriate for your home or business by comparing characteristics such as how easily plants ignite, how much water and sunlight they need, whether they support wildlife, and how well they fit your site.

[Generate Plant List](#) 

[Search Plant Database](#) 

Quick Plant Lists

[HIZ: 5-10 ft - Consider](#)

[HIZ: 5-10 ft - Charisse's List](#)

[HIZ: 10-30 ft - Consider](#)

[HIZ: 10-30 ft - Charisse's List](#)

[Oregon Native Plants](#)

[Deer Resistant Plants](#)

[Ashland Restricted Plants](#)

[Native, Deer Resistant, Low Water](#)

[Low Water Need Plants](#)

[Low Hedge - Driveways and Walks](#)

[Noxious Weeds \(Unsuitable\)](#)

[Fire-Resistant Landscaping Guide](#)



Further thoughts?

“In the line of fire: a behind the scenes look at the efforts to stop Alameda” by Trish Glose (News 10) Thursday, November 19th 2020

Final Thought

“We have the tools and knowledge to reduce community [*probable climate impacts*]/wildfire risks. But we must address the profound and deeply rooted misalignment of political and social expectations regarding what it means to live with [*climate change impacts such as*] wildfire. Now is the time to invest in long-term, economically efficient solutions, rather than short-term, risk-averse tactics. We have to live with [*climate change impacts such as*] wildland fire. We don’t have to live with fire in our communities.” (Calkin, et. al, 2023).

