

21 - Resources for Community Wildfire Protection Plans

Student Mentors:

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In what region will the student be working (county/region/state)?

Routt County/Western Region

Please describe the proposed internship goals, scope, and objectives.

The goal of the internship is to help with the development of resources for community wildfire protection plans (CWPP) in at-risk rural Colorado communities. To accomplish this, interns will work closely with a team of Extension, campus faculty, Colorado State Forest Service, and county staff to develop resources and information to respond to the needs and priorities defined by the Routt County Wildfire Mitigation Conference. The Conference is a two-day event to take place in early May 2019 and will bring together natural resource managers, decision-makers and the general public. The developed resources and information will be used to work with key stakeholders and landowners in Routt County with the goal of building opportunities for collaborative forest management efforts that lead to wildfire mitigation in the area. Among other things, the intern will learn to develop mapping products that prioritize treatment locations based on projected fire risk and danger. When not in the field, interns may also participate in data entry, data analysis, and development of educational resources. Interns will gain field experience and participate in a collaborative effort to develop cost-share agreement proposals targeted at reducing wildfire hazards in remote communities. Applicants should be able to hike several miles a day over uneven terrain while carrying up to 30 pounds. Applicants with interest in forest management, forest and fire policy, GIS, or community development are preferred.

What student learning outcomes do you anticipate and are there opportunities for professional development (e.g., attending conferences or stakeholder convenings)?

This internship provides the opportunity to connect data collection with real-world manager concerns. Interns will have the unique experience of connecting field data collection, existing data, forest fire hazard modelling, and stakeholder needs and concerns for practical applications in ecosystem management.

By the end of the internship the intern will have the opportunity to develop the following skillsets based on personal interests and abilities:

- Collect forest inventory data using straightforward methods and state-of-the-art techniques;
- Preliminarily model fire hazard in management units;
- Learn to map management units and respective potential fire hazards;
- Communicate professionally and effectively with landowners and natural resource managers;
- Identify strategic areas for forest management efforts; and
- Collaborate with landowners to develop a simple community wildfire protection plan

Upon successful completion of the internship, there will be opportunities to analyze data, and support outreach and engagement activities resulting from the project.

How does this internship support identified stakeholder needs in the county/region?

Fire risk is a constant concern for rural communities in and around forest ecosystems of western North America. Although numerous cost-share agreements are available to match management of private holdings with larger-scale forest management efforts, these agreements rely on strategic plans that prioritize treatment areas. Accordingly, such plans are developed by collaborations between landowners, technical experts, and forest management agencies. Upon completion of a community wildfire protection plan, communities can begin to leverage their planning efforts to acquire funding resources for treatments through both state and federal programs. Currently, six community wildfire protection plans have been developed in Routt County, including a countywide plan, all developed in 2010 and all need to be updated. There is also considerable opportunity for greater integration of forest management into future efforts towards a general plan for the county. Creating scalable tools to be widely used by a diversity of stakeholders will improve their utilization and feasibility.

Are travel funds available? Opportunities to provide student assistance with housing?

Housing assistance is available and depending on securement of additional funds, some travel funds may be available.