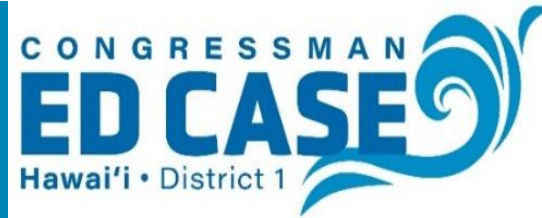


Hawai'i Wildfire Prevention/Mitigation/Response

Federal Resources and Assistance

February 2024



Goal

Strengthen, modify and where necessary create federal programs to assist Hawai'i in preventing, mitigating and responding to wildfires.

Key Entities

Federal

- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):** Lead federal agency to fund and implement disaster prevention, mitigation, response and recovery.
- **U.S. Fire Administration:** Lead federal agency for fire data collection, public fire education, fire research and fire service training.
- **U.S. Forest Service:** Supports funding for wildfire mitigation and risk management, forest health and other wildfire issues, primarily but not exclusively on federal forest lands.
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/National Park Service:** Lead federal agencies for fire risk/response on federally managed lands in Hawai'i.
- **Federal firefighters:** Federal employees engaged by federal services for firefighting prevention, mitigation and response on federal lands, often military-owned or managed.
- **U.S. Army Hawai'i:** Retains firefighters trained to combat wildfires as well as equipment such as helicopters available for such purposes.

State

- **Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA):** Plans for and responds to both natural and human-caused emergencies; also the coordinating agency on emergencies of all kinds between federal and local agencies, including the four county emergency management agencies.
- **Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources – Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW):** The primary responder for wildfires on state lands managed by

DOFAW, which is some 26% of land statewide; co-responds with county fire departments and federal agencies on an additional 32% of land statewide; resulting in DOFAW fire response for nearly 60% of land statewide. Funding for DOFAW Fire Management comes through the state general fund and federal cost share programs through the U.S. Forest Service.

County (here the City and County of Honolulu, but comparable entities in other counties)

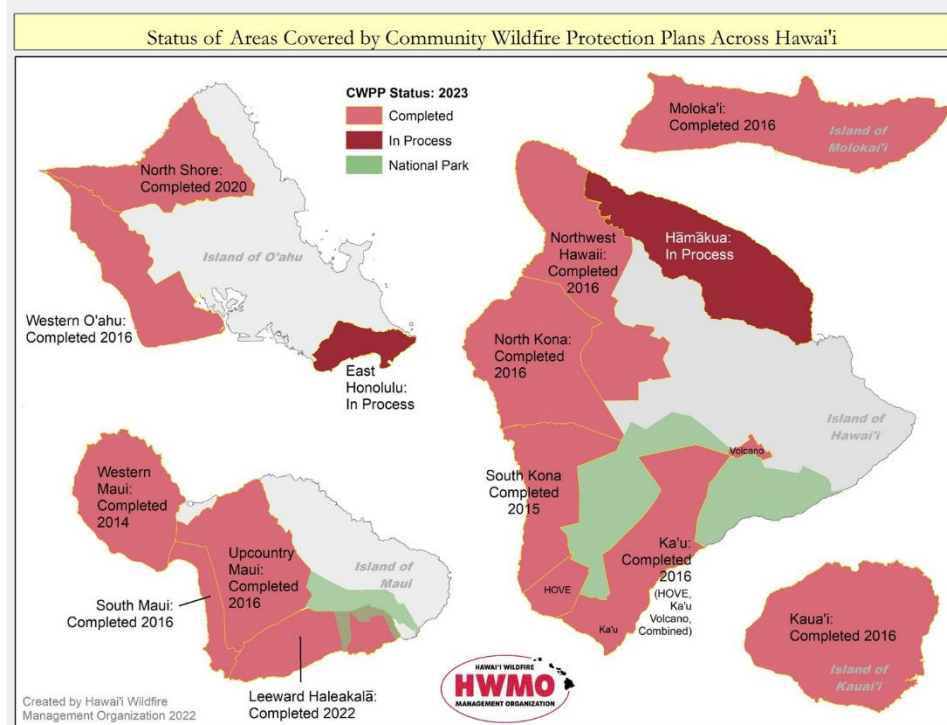
- **Honolulu Department of Emergency Management:** Coordinates preparedness and response plans, programs, and initiatives with city, state, federal, private, corporate and non-government entities.
- **Honolulu Fire Department (HFD):** Shares responsibility and response for various wildfires.

Non-Government Entities

- **Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization:** Works with communities across Hawai'i on wildfire prevention, mitigation and response planning activities.
- **Natural Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC):** The Center is a member of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC), which was expanded in 2007 to address all-hazards capabilities. The NDPTC is authorized to develop and deliver training and educational programs related to homeland security and disaster management, with a specific focus on natural hazards, coastal communities, and the special needs and opportunities of islands and territories.

Key State, County and Community Assessments, Plans and Recommendations

- **State Hazard Mitigation Plan:** The 2023 State Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies the major natural hazards that affect Hawai'i, assesses the risks that each hazard poses, analyzes the vulnerability of people, property and infrastructure to the specific hazard, and recommends actions to reduce risk and vulnerability to the hazard. The State Hazard Mitigation Plan also contains a description of programs, policy, statutes and regulations applicable to hazard mitigation.
- **Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs):** CWPPs are collaborative, community-driven, hyper-local frameworks that outline local priorities for wildfire risk mitigation. There are 16 CWPPs currently in place in Hawai'i (see figure below), although only two for O'ahu (West O'ahu and North Shore). East Honolulu is currently developing a plan. Federal funding is available through the U.S. Forest Service to develop, revise or implement CWPPs.



- **City and County Multi-Hazard Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan:** The multi-hazard mitigation plan provides a strategy to reduce loss of property or life caused by natural hazard events for the City and County of Honolulu. The multi-hazard strategy presented in this plan addresses the relationship among various types of hazards, evaluates the effects of climate change, and prioritizes mitigation policies, actions and projects.

Key Areas for Federal Government Assistance

- Invasive grasses management
- Land management coordination
- Funding to implement practices for hazard mitigation
- Federal competitive grant opportunities
- Local capacity for grant management
- Technical assistance navigating both federal funding and implementing best wildfire management practices
- Lack of wildland fire training
- Personnel and equipment shortages

Existing Federal Programs

- **FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Funding:** FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Post Fire, and Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program provide funding to state and local governments to reduce or mitigate disaster losses in communities.

- **U.S. Forest Service State Fire Assistance:** The State Fire Assistance account provides financial and technical support directly to the states, to enhance firefighting capacity, support community-based hazard mitigation and expand outreach and education to homeowners and communities concerning fire prevention. This not only includes assistance to local fire agencies, but also community-based wildfire hazard mitigation efforts, fire plan development and fire adapted ecosystem restoration. This is a formula fund.
- **U.S. Forest Service Joint Fire Science Program:** This program supports the Joint Fire Science Program Fire Science Exchange Network, a national collaboration of fifteen regional fire science exchanges that provide the most relevant, current wildland fire science information to federal, state, local, tribal and private stakeholders within ecologically similar regions. The network brings fire managers, practitioners and scientists together to address regional fire management needs and challenges. In Hawai'i, this takes the form of the Pacific Fire Exchange which is co-led by the Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.
- **U.S. Forest Service Volunteer Fire Assistance:** The Volunteer Fire Assistance Program helps to organize, train and equip fire departments. This grant program is designed to enhance rural wildfire management and response to help protect homes, families and the natural environment.
- **U.S. Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program:** The Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program was authorized and funded in the 2022 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and provides grants to communities at risk from wildfire to develop or revise their community wildfire protection plans and carry out projects described within those plans. Funding is available for a five-year period, from Fiscal Year 2022 through Fiscal Year 2026. Funding can be secured for \$250,000 for the creation or updating of a community wildfire protection plan or \$10 million for a project described within a community wildfire protection plan less than ten years old.
- **U.S. Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration:** The Landscape Scale Restoration Program is a Forest Service State and Private Forestry competitive grant program that promotes collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes and furthers priorities identified in State Forest Action Plans or equivalent restoration strategies. Landscape Scale Restoration projects cross multiple jurisdictions, including Tribal, state and local government, and private forest land, to address large-scale issues such as wildfire risk reduction, watershed protection and restoration, and the spread of invasive species, insect infestation and disease.
- **U.S. Department of the Interior Grants for Voluntary Restoration:** Administered through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, this broad program includes broad priorities to strengthen ecosystem and community resilience. Funding can be used to conserve and restore natural systems that help ecosystems and/or communities respond to, mediate, and recover from disturbances such as floods, wildfire, drought (e.g., enhancing a wetland to improve coastal resilience, invasive species prevention or removal to reduce wildfire risk, restoring fire resilient stand structure and species composition in fire prone forests, water conservation to address drought, expansion of

wetlands to protect from flooding, grassland restoration to promote natural prairie ecosystems).

- **U.S. Department of Agriculture Regional Conservation Partnership Program:** State and local governments, non-profits and others can apply to obtain targeted conservation funding to certain geographies to address specific natural resource challenges. A majority of RCPP funding is provided directly to producers and landowners who implement conservation measures or place conservation easements on private lands. This funding can be used creatively for land management to reduce fire risk.
- **FEMA Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program:** SAFER provides federal funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to help them increase or maintain the number of trained, "front line" firefighters available in their communities.
- **FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program:** These fire safety grants fund critically needed resources to equip and train emergency personnel, enhance efficiencies and support community resilience.

Congressional Action Items

Appropriations (annual federal funding)

- Increase funding for key programs.
 - Interior – U.S. Forest Service Joint Fire Science Program
 - Interior – U.S. Forest Service Volunteer Fire Assistance
 - Interior – U.S. Forest Service State Fire Assistance
 - Interior – U.S. Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program
 - Interior – U.S. Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration
 - Interior – Department of Interior Grants for Voluntary Restoration
 - Agriculture – Regional Conservation Partnership Program
 - Homeland Security – FEMA Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program
 - Homeland Security – FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program
 - Homeland Security – FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
- Provide congressional directives (language) to improve key programs.
 - Homeland – Clear timelines for FEMA grants.
 - Homeland – Provide technical assistance to states on the Safeguarding Tomorrow Revolving Loan Fund.
 - Homeland – Increase the State and Tribal Set Aside for the BRIC program.
 - Interior – Encourage partnerships between federal agencies and local communities for invasive grass management.
- Community Project Funding (project-specific Congressionally-directed funding).
 - Work with the City and County Wildfire Preparedness Working Group and the State agencies involved (HFD; DEM; Office of Climate Change, Sustainability

and Resiliency; DOFAW) to develop a Community Project Funding Request for wildfire mitigation activities.

National Defense Authorization Act (annual defense measure)

- Through an NDAA amendment, support wildfire sensing technology for high-risk areas. The amendment would direct the DOD to study sensing technology at locations at high risk of wildfires, which can be followed with funding in later years.
- Through an NDAA amendment, leverage military-civilian joint training opportunities and Army expertise. This starts with NDAA legislation directing the DOD to study options of creating a wildfire training institute similar to the firefighting training center at PTA.

Other Policies

- Require FEMA to provide clarity on grant adjudication timelines for Hazard Mitigation Grant Funding programs.
- Support robust evacuation planning and training for the institutions that care for the elderly and people with disabilities.
- Support measures to fund and assure maintenance of fire mitigation activities such as fire breaks.
- Advocate for lowering the matching cost thresholds for Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG) in Hawai'i or for FMAG specifically for the Maui disaster.