

# Oregon Wildfire Recovery Toolkit

## Recommendations for Community-Level Actions

Drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater services are largely inoperable for residents after a disaster for as long as planning and construction of new water infrastructure is underway. Without these essential services, no community can rebuild safely or sustainably. An early focus on bringing water infrastructure back after a catastrophic wildfire can anchor and accelerate recovery, but the process must be much faster than the traditional infrastructure planning process to ensure a reasonable recovery timeline for these communities.

The *Oregon Community Wildfire Recovery Toolkit* aims to **help fire-affected communities rebuild faster** by recommending actions that can expedite the recovery of water infrastructure systems. This document shares learning and recommendations for those working locally in fire-impacted counties and cities to implement recovery efforts. State government partners, including state agencies that are actively involved in recovery work, and those in the executive branch and legislature that can implement needed administrative and policy changes, are addressed in this Toolkit's companion document, the *Oregon State Wildfire Recovery Toolkit*.

By highlighting recommended actions that state and local leaders can take, we hope to help lay the groundwork for more supportive disaster recovery efforts. Details on each recommendation can be found in the full version of this Toolkit.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### CAPACITY

- 1. Create and fill the Recovery Manager position first.** A single point of contact to coordinate recovery efforts is needed to help manage and prioritize tasks and funding to go where it's most needed.
- 2. Hire or train existing staff to be Permit Navigators.** Reduce permitting timeframes and improve relations between residents and their county.
- 3. Assign or hire a single local government point of contact for FEMA's Public Assistance Program.** Streamlines communication with FEMA staff and increases the success and speed of reimbursement for rebuilding public infrastructure.
- 4. Establish agreements with neighboring communities and external service providers.** Save time contracting to get support on the ground faster, save money through equipment sharing between jurisdictions, and support the continuity of critical infrastructure services.



2020 Wildfire Impacts

## PLANNING

- 5. Develop a Long-Term Recovery Plan.** Clarify and test the assumptions that underlie recovery decisions critical to a) planning for infrastructure recovery, b) updating Comprehensive Plans, and c) the Transportation Growth Management (TGM) process.
- 6. Hire contractors to perform assessments within the first year.** Helps identify and prioritize assessment needs and potential barriers to recovery and makes the case early for federal, state, and private investment in recovery projects.
- 7. Begin a Comprehensive Plan update within the first recovery year.** Integrate TGM planning to ensure code changes align with the Comprehensive Plan and inform the evaluation of water infrastructure options.
- 8. Apply for federal and state wildfire mitigation funding.** Communities that have already experienced wildfire, but are still at a heightened risk, can be more competitive than pre-fire to receive grant funding.
- 9. Develop a “Barriers and Strategies” Memo during rebuilding.** Creates a solutions-oriented plan for resolving unexpected recovery challenges and sustains the recovery momentum.



## COORDINATION

- 10. Build a collaborative group around local issues in blue-sky days.** Establishes working relationships across sectors and jurisdictions and develops a process for making coordinated decisions.
- 11. Counties should cultivate local advisory groups in unincorporated communities.** By empowering a community’s residents to guide their community’s recovery, it can remove some of the decision-making and larger administrative burden from the county and increase the speed in which infrastructure recovery decisions can be made.
- 12. Plan for a structured and strategic transition from response to recovery.** Aids the transition from emergency response to long-term recovery by mitigating any confusion around capacity, coordination, and communication.

## CONCLUSION

Today, many Oregon communities are still struggling to fully recover. While we can’t go back and change our recovery trajectory, we can learn from it and implement what we know now as we plan for the future.

By implementing changes and incorporating our recommendations from this Toolkit, local governments can improve coordination, build timely and sustained capacity, create paths for expediting funding and other resources, and prepare for recovery ahead of disaster. [As the cost of natural disaster recovery](#) rises, this proactive approach will save taxpayer dollars, reduce displacement of rural people, and potentially save historic places and cultural treasures.

Visit [willamettepartnership.org/wildfire-toolkits](https://willamettepartnership.org/wildfire-toolkits) to read more on the Oregon Wildfire Recovery Toolkits

