

Wildfire Mitigation Working Group

2024

Energy Resilience & Emergency Management Office

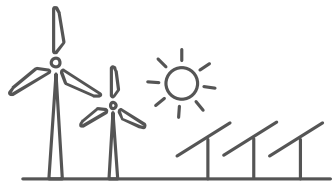
JOHANNA HANSON

OPERATIONS MANAGER



Washington State
Department of
Commerce

Energy Division strengthen communities



CLEAN ENERGY FUND



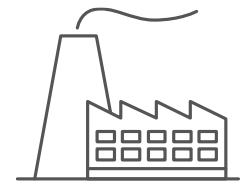
**STATE EFFICIENCY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PERFORMANCE (SEEP) OFFICE**



ENERGY POLICY OFFICE



WEATHERIZATION



GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION



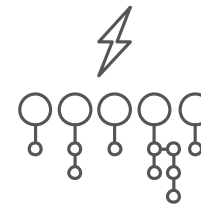
CLEAN BUILDINGS



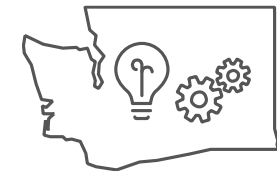
ELECTRIC VEHICLES



RESOURCE ADEQUACY



**ENERGY EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT OFFICE**



STATE ENERGY STRATEGY

The context



A Short History

- **2018**, CA¹. The Camp Fire ignited and spread into developed areas destroying homes. The fire was attributed to a faulty transmission line. The fire caused 85 civilian fatalities and cost an estimated \$16.65 billion. Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) was held liable.
 - This event triggered legislation in Ca to hold utilities liable for fires that their equipment sparks.
 - That caused utilities and citizen groups to ratify the “Public Safety Power Shutoff” concept which has spread to other wildfire-prone states.

A Short History

- **2020**, WA² . Babb Road Fire ignited by electrical infrastructure destroyed the towns of Malden and Pine City.
 - Notable because the fire occurred in areas not historically known to be high risk.
 - Triggered state movement toward Wildfire Mitigation Plans
- **2022** Wildfire season AAR meeting: WA Utilities raise concerns about needing more guidance for PSPS triggers

A Short History

- **2023**, HI³. Lahaina Fire ignited by electric lines blown down onto dry grass, caused widespread damage and killed at least 101 people.
- **Apr. 2023**. HB 1032 signed in to law requiring DNR, Commerce, and the UTC to develop a utility wildfire mitigation plan template
- **Dec. 2023**. PSPS Working Group established in WA.
- **Mar. 2024**. Utilities request to change PSPS Working Group to Wildfire Mitigation Planning workgroup

Statistics

- **2.2%** of WA wildfires attributed to electrical equipment by DNR in 2023.

2023 Year-To-Date (January 1st - October 1st)								
DNR Fires by Region and General Cause Category								
Data as of 10/03/2023 from Fire Incidents Reporting System (FIReS)								
General Cause Category		Northeast	Northwest	Olympic	Pacific	South	Total	
					Cascade	Puget		
					s	Sound	Southeast	
Arson		9	0	1	4	0	0	14
Debris Burn		101	44	9	36	17	23	230
Railroad		3	0	0	0	1	1	5
Recreation\Ceremony		30	7	12	25	1	2	77
Undetermined\investigating		121	79	19	36	149	40	444
Minor with Fire		1	1	1	0	0	0	3
Natural (Lightning)		63	3	1	10	2	24	103
Fireworks		11	12	3	11	0	0	37
Other		12	1	1	5	2	4	25
Equip/Vehicle		31	8	5	14	1	8	67
Power		15	2	2	1	1	2	23
Smoking		1	3	1	0	0	0	5
Firearms\Explosives		4	2		1	1	1	9
Total		402	162	55	143	175	105	1042
Total acres		39140.57	239.66	191.78	234.41	519.4	62615.7	102941.5

The plan



Wildfire Mitigation Plan

- **Purpose:** to “reduce the prevalence and intensity of...wildland fires...” through documentation of mitigation and coordination practices.
- **Required for:** any electric utility operation fully or partially in the State of Washington
- **Due: October 31, 2024**, and every three years after that.
- **Public facing** (to be hosted on DNR’s website)
- **A flexible template** which acknowledges the vastly different fire risks across the state.

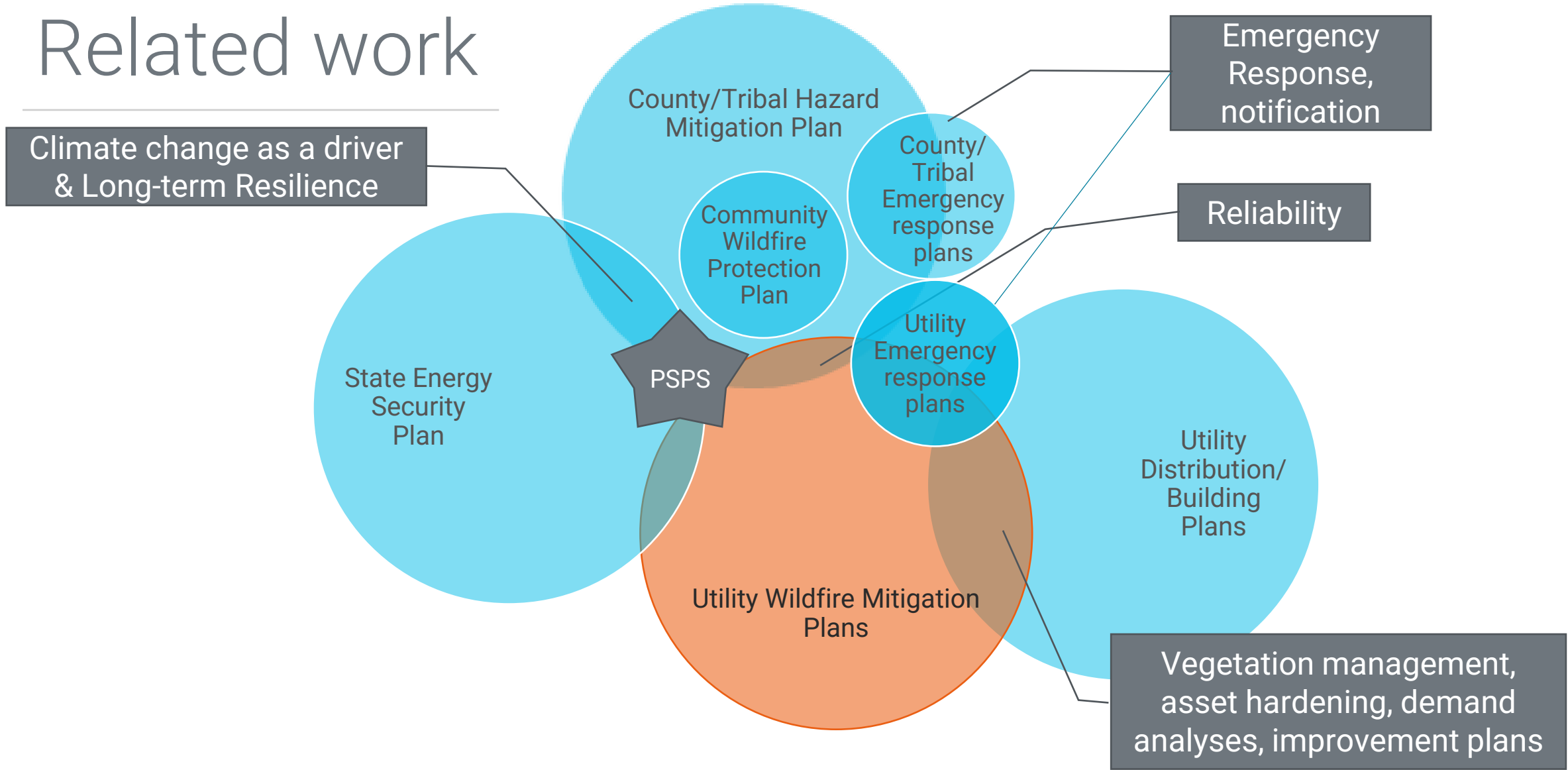
The group



The Wildfire Mitigation Planning Workgroup

- **Facilitator:** EREMO
- **Members:** Washington State electric utilities
- **Purpose:** deliver technical assistance to WA utilities writing Wildland Fire Mitigation Plans which will
 - improve knowledge of best practices within the state
 - identify and address obstacles to wildfire mitigation in the state
- **Meeting cadence:** monthly (and at will)
- **Deliverables:**
 - Decision making support for developing PSPS programs or alternatives.
 - Mapping and risk assessment support
 - Sharing of planning language and mitigation tactics
 - Other as determined by workgroup

Related work



Related Work

- **Community Wildfire Protection Plan**
 - Voluntarily written by county or city or collection of cities
 - Find on DNR website: [Wildfire Resources | WA - DNR](#)
- **Includes:**
 - Risk Assessment of geography, population, climate
 - Landscape-specific risk assessments (Grasslands, riparian, shrub, etc)
 - Mitigation activities and recommendations
 - List of planning participants—good collaboration opportunity

Related Work

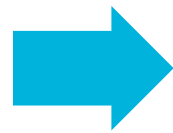
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The Timeline

Q1 2024

Understand needs

- Collect feedback from utilities
- Prioritize questions / target areas
- Develop technical assistance strategy



Q2-Q3 2024

Technical assistance

- Conduct workgroup meetings
- Cross pollinate best practice
- Develop guidance and/or mapping tools

We are here



Q4 2024

Reassessment

- Support publication of plans
- Document feedback
- Develop process improvement strategy
- Determine next steps for group

Q2 Topics

Month	Plan Section	Topic
May 9 Office Hours 2:00-3:00	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpreting the plan requirements• Scoping the plan work• Developing timelines
May 14 1:30-3:00pm	5. Roles and Responsibilities 8. Community Outreach...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder engagement scoping• Planning coordination with Whole Community• Response coordination with Whole Community
June Office Hours	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal consultation time
June 11 1:30-3:00pm	6. Wildfire Risk and Drivers...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessing risk• Decision points for mitigation activities• Peer learning

Q3 Topics

Work in Progress

Month	Plan Section	Topic
July Office hours	6. Wildfire Risk and Drivers... 7. Wildfire Prevention Strategies 10. Evaluating the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation Prioritization • Choosing metrics
July 9 1:30-3:00pm	7. Wildfire Prevention Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSPS issues and alternatives
August 13 1:30-3:00pm	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External review guidance (how does stakeholder engagement work) • Current and future mitigation strategies • Opportunity for peer feedback
September 10	<i>Tentative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Executive/Internal review</i>
October 8	<i>Tentative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Plan submission Oct 1</i> • <i>Next steps</i>

Work in Progress

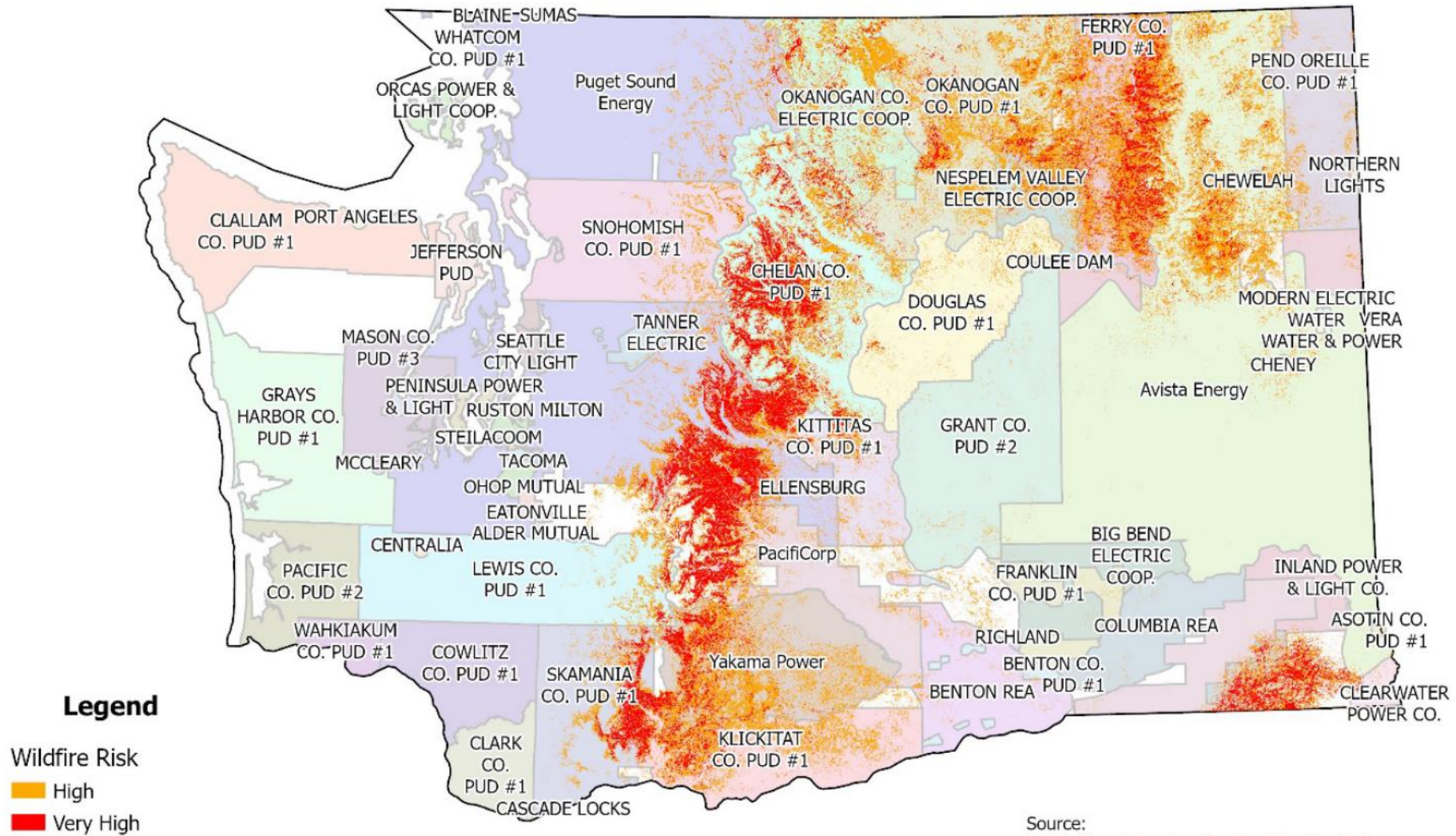
Current Work

Work in Progress



Questions

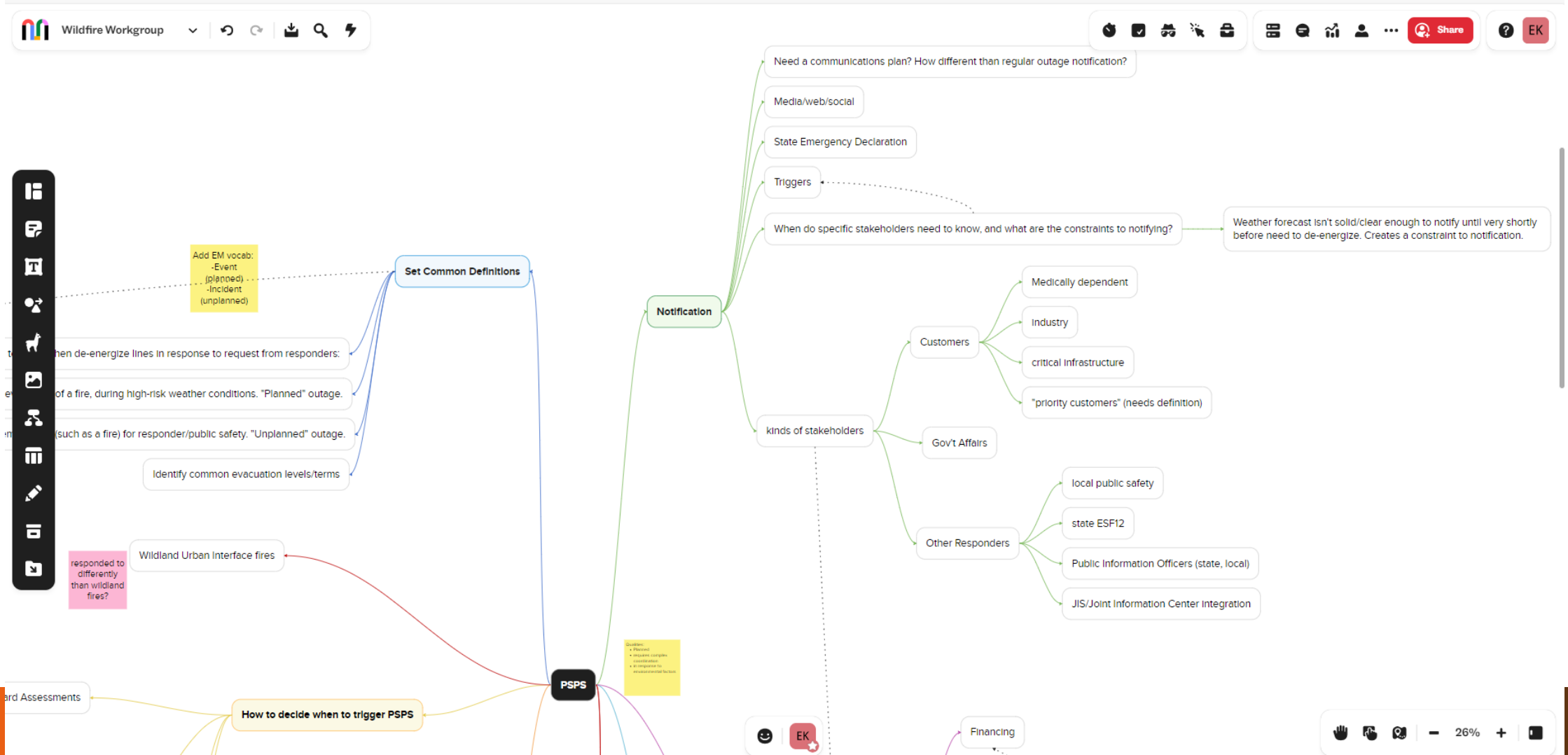
High Wildfire Hazard Potential and Electric Utility Service Areas



Previous Work



Using Mural to brainstorm issues



Research themes collected for discussion

- **Need common definitions**
- **How to decide when to trigger PSPS?**
 - Hazard assessments/ environmental thresholds
 - Situational assessment
 - Coordination and process of decision making
- **How to notify of a PSPS?**
 - Communication methods
 - Types of stakeholders: medically dependent, industry, critical infrastructure, priority customers, gov't affairs, public safety, responders
- **How to identify critical infrastructure partners?**
- **What would incentives for ignition-resistant improvements look like (Wildland Fire Commission recommendation #7)?**
- **What are community support best practices?**
 - Financing
 - Shelters
 - Generators
 - Mutual aid
 - Medically vulnerable populations
 - Livestock
 - Community education/awareness
- **What other resources would utilities need to support PSPS programs:**
 - Internal/contractor staff to patrol
 - Local fire district assistance
 - Mutual aid between utilities
- **What alternatives are there to PSPS practices?**

Public Safety Power Shutoffs Qualities

- planned (notice event), which can be within 24 hours notice or less
- temporary de-energization of select transmission and distribution assets
- done in response to environmental factors which raise the risk of wildfire ignition
- initiated by the utility (proactive) instead of by a request from responders or for the safety of crews (reactive)
- requires complex coordination with stakeholders and local emergency management
- should consider critical infrastructure and medically-dependent customers
- helps the utility avoid liability from equipment sparking fires during dry and windy conditions.
- “a tool of last resort” in the mitigation planning tool box

PSPS definition

- Need consensus on a definition
- Need the definition to distinguish between de-energization due to crew/responder safety and due to weather conditions because the processes and justification are different

PSPS definition

- Utilities requested state consensus on a definition
- Need the definition to distinguish between de-energization due to crew/responder safety and due to weather conditions because the processes and justification are different

A Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) is a safety measure initiated by utilities to proactively de-energize specific powerlines during critical fire weather to reduce the risk of electrical system ignition of wildfires.

Pre Wildland Fire Season Workshop

- April 4, 9am-5pm
- Wanapum Dam, near Ellensburg.
- Hybrid option available
- Agenda:
 - BPA – Situational Awareness/ GIS
 - EREMO – GIS and universal outage map
 - EREMO – Grant opportunities
 - EREMO – PSPS wildfire workgroup (?)
 - DNR – Wildfire Mitigation Template Q&A, Operational updates
 - PSE – PSPS Program
 - Tacoma Power – community connections: placard ID Program, etc
 - CA wildland fire SME panel – PSPS Alternatives
 - Pierce Co–Wildfire Preparedness/CWPP
 - Volunteer group – ASL/Emergency Messaging