Wildfire Woes
Social Inequalities Present in Vulnerable Communities Threatened by Wildfires

Jamie O’Reilly
Red Rocks Community College, Trefny Honors

Motivation and background
This research facilitated through the Geo-Launchpad internship program at UNAVCO, a non-profit organization funded by the National Science Foundation, and completed in partnership with Western Resources Advocates (WRA), a non-profit working across seven states in the Interior West to protect our climate, land, air, and water. This research was completed with the Lands teams at WRA and began to assess the disproportion impacts wildfires have on various communities. The research evolved and narrowed to explore these main focal areas:

- disproportion impacts wildfires have on qualified vulnerable and traditionally marginalized communities
- the inequities experienced in wildfire mitigation and education
- recovery and rebuilding efforts.

This research found that many of the identified negative impacts, built upon the already existing social inequalities faced by these communities.

Methods
1. Personal Application
2. Background
3. Primary and Secondary Literary Research
4. Consultation with Field Related Experts
5. Topic related Webinars & Education

Findings
- Social Vulnerability Factors
- Environmental Risk Factors
- Current Initiatives
  - Community prevention planning & education mapping
  - Land use planning
  - Philanthropic organizational support reliance for restoration efforts
  - Controlled burns

Discussion
What do these communities need right now?
- On-the-ground evaluation
- Recognize community diversity/needs
- Defensible space – fire wise landscaping
- Planned resources for restoration & rebuilding
- Access to programs for smoke protection, support, education
- Acknowledgement of present day & historical barriers that contribute to vulnerability or at-risk status
- Community investment as a primary focus of wildfire planning

Recommendations
1. Community Focus- connection, trust, liaisons, advocacy, accessibility
2. Direct implementation of community planning & resources
3. Financial Budgeting with clear, specific funding allocation for natural disasters, including wildfire, prioritizing climate justice issues
4. Guidelines & Requirements for Insurance Companies
5. Funding, Subsidies, and Programming
6. Luxury taxes to offset specific costs & increased inequalities

Acknowledgments
Research Supported through Dr. Jamie O’Reilly acknowledges that, with respect, the lands that our campus occupy are the unceded ancestral and traditional homelands of the Arapahoe (dāh-ah-ho), Cheyenne (-chei-han), and Dakhóta (lah-dah-ho) nations. We further recognize that this workshop is held on the unceded land of the Shoshone (sho-shon), a primary focus of wildfire planning.

In counties with the highest wildfire risk there are more than:

- 27 million acres burned
- 880,000 homes exposed
- 5.7 million acres to be burned
- 4.4 million acres to be burned
- 19 million acres burned
- 2.5 million acres exposed
- 790,000 acres to be burned
- 100,000 acres to be burned
- 25,000 acres exposed

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant Nos. 1724794 and 2117397. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.