2027 Wildfire Mitigation Awards

Criteria and Guidelines

OVERVIEW

The Wildfire Mitigation Awards are the highest national honor one can receive for outstanding work and significant program impact in community wildfire mitigation.

Supported by:

The National Association of State Foresters
The International Association of Fire Chiefs
The National Fire Protection Association
The USDA Forest Service

Guidelines and Criteria

Only applications submitted through the electronic
2027 Wildfire Mitigation Awards Nomination Form will be accepted.

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GUIDELINES

The National Association of State Foresters (NASF), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and the USDA Forest Service invite nominations for the 2027 Wildfire Mitigation Awards. These national awards recognize outstanding work that reduces wildfire risk to communities on the ground.

Nominations are due **Friday, January 8, 2027**. Awards will be presented on Wednesday, March 24, 2027, at the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Conference in Austin, Texas.

Selection Process

Winners are selected by the Wildfire Mitigation Awards Committee. The committee has seven members: three from NASF; one each from IAFC, NFPA, and the USDA Forest Service (WUI Program Manager); and one at-large member appointed by the committee.

Eligibility

Individuals, organizations, and federal, state, or local agencies are eligible if they have made outstanding contributions that significantly reduce wildfire risk to communities. Nominators are responsible for confirming that their nominee is eligible.

The following limits apply:

- Work must benefit a community or larger area; single-property projects are not eligible.
- Posthumous nominations are accepted if the work took place within the last three years or still has significant, measurable impact.
- These awards are not intended as retirement or departure recognition.
- Prevention projects covered by the National Smokey Bear Awards are not eligible.

Award Designations

There are three wildfire mitigation awards offered, the National Wildfire Mitigation Award, the National Wildfire Mitigation Hero Award, and the National Wildfire Mitigation Legacy Award. The committee is not obligated to give awards in any category if nominations are not high enough quality to meet requirements. The award descriptions are listed below.

1. **National Wildfire Mitigation Award** - Sustained community fire adaptation doesn't happen by accident. Community wildfire adaptation starts with empowered residents, informed and active elected officials, engaged land managers, forestry agencies, and proactive fire departments. The National Wildfire Mitigation Award recognizes the efforts of organizations and individuals who have implemented successful and sustainable wildfire mitigation projects on the ground in their communities. Because of their leadership and vision, their community has embraced the philosophy of community fire adaptation and is actively engaged in sustained risk reduction

projects. Please indicate if you are nominating an organization or an individual.

Nominees must:

- Play an active role in community wildfire risk reduction or fire adaptation on the ground.
- Show quantitative evidence of leading **at least two sustained mitigation or fire adaptation actions over at least 24 months**. Examples include community-level defensible space and home hardening, hazardous fuel reduction, local coalition building, implementation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), codes and ordinances that produced measurable mitigation, and fire department mitigation programs.

Active, on-the-ground mitigation is given priority over messaging-only efforts.

- Nominations of state forestry agency employees must show endorsement of the State Forester, either by signature or letter of support (e-mail message is sufficient). All federal agency nominations must submit a letter of recommendation from their partners or state agency.

Nominations compete in one of three categories:

- **Category 1:** Communities, career or volunteer fire departments, government agencies, or nonprofits in communities of more than 30,000 people.
- **Category 2:** Communities, career or volunteer fire departments, government agencies, or nonprofits in communities of 30,000 people or fewer.
- **Category 3:** Individuals who lead or enable mitigation on the ground.

2. **National Wildfire Mitigation Hero Award -** (one award per year at the discretion of the committee; can be nominated with or without WMA application): Individuals and organizations involved in mitigation are seldom, if ever, singled out as heroes, but the work they do often saves communities, homes, and lives. The effectiveness or value of a community fire risk reduction project is not fully appreciated until the community and the mitigation work is tested by wildfire. This award recognizes an individual or organization whose community-wide mitigation project reduced damage and risk to a community when a wildfire impacted the community.

Qualifications:

- The individual or organization was responsible for the community-level mitigation project that protected or reduced damage from a wildfire.
- Clear documentation regarding:
  - Where and how the mitigation work was done.
  - When and how the incident (name incident) impacted the community.
  - How the mitigation project reduced the damaging impact of the wildfire (testimonials, eyewitnesses, before and after photos, maps, documentation of the mitigation work).

3. **National Wildfire Mitigation Legacy Award –** (given at the discretion of the committee): This award is designed to recognize an individual's outstanding contribution to the larger world of mitigation. It is meant to acknowledge those who have flown the mitigation banner over a long period of time, persisted in vocalizing the mitigation message, spoken truth to power, and helped create the tools and best practices that make up fire adaptation today. This is not a retirement award but recognition of a major investment and impact on mitigation through long-term

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achievement.

The committee selects Legacy Award nominees and does not accept outside nominations. The award is given at the committee's discretion. Nominees must:

- Be a wildfire mitigation professional with a career-long commitment to community wildfire risk reduction.
- Have made a major, sustained contribution to mitigation tools, methods, and implementation at the local, state, or national level.
- Be able to demonstrate that contribution through examples, testimonials, and documentation.

Required Elements of the Nomination Package

Nominations packages will stand on their own merit. Please make sure they are complete. Nomination packages must include:

- A completed online nomination form.
- A narrative description, including impact, of the outstanding mitigation effort(s) or project(s) being nominated that answers each element of the award criteria (see below).
- A quantitative description of mitigation actions on the ground (e.g., number of structures hardened, number of properties with defensible space, number of acres treated, amount of brush removed from a site or neighborhood, etc.)
- At least one strong letter of support from someone other than the nominator, such as a partner agency, local government official, community leader, homeowners' association, etc. Additional letters are welcome but not required. Letters should demonstrate the writer's firsthand knowledge of the project's impact and value and explain how the nominee went above and beyond their normal job responsibilities.
- Supporting documentation is strongly recommended and can help strengthen the nomination by providing additional evidence of the project's impact and success. Supporting documentation should demonstrate the impact of the work, such as before-and-after photos, news coverage, project materials, or other relevant examples.
- Nominations of state forestry agency employees must show endorsement of the State Forester, either by signature or letter of support (an e-mail message is sufficient). All federal agency nominations must submit a letter of recommendation from their partners or state agency.

Award Criteria

Submit nominations through the 2027 Wildfire Mitigation Awards online form at https://www.stateforesters.org/wildfire-mitigation/. The committee evaluates each nomination on the criteria below. Address the points that apply to your nominee; not every point applies to every nomination.

1. **Basic Requirements: Scope and Impact**
   - Easily recognized as a wildfire mitigation effort: Describe tools or methods used, long-term outcomes of the service or project, what objectives were met or exceeded, how many people or communities it impacted, the specific impact the work will make on a community in the event of a wildfire. There must be at least two sustained mitigation/fire adaptation actions.
   - Effort covers at least a 24-month period.

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- Nomination includes appropriate supporting documentation
- Mitigation activity is replicable and could be applied beyond its geographic area or audience.
- Efforts must be quantifiable through cubic yards or truckloads collected, number of homes hardened, properties with defensible space, acres treated, or other measurable means.

2. Qualities

- If mitigation is part of the nominee's job, explain how the nominee distinguished themselves above and beyond normal job responsibilities.
- Describe the leadership, creativity, or innovation that was exhibited.
- Describe how the project/service targets or complements national audiences, themes, messages, and goals.

3. Partnerships

- Describe how the project or activity engaged groups, organizations, or agencies, and whether these participants were new to this activity.

4. Other Factors

- Include any documentation that mitigation efforts reduced damage caused by wildfires.
- Describe any local, regional, or national recognition that was received for the project or activity.
- Explain how the project was funded, including approximate percentages of local, county, state, and federal funds that made up the budget.