Hot Take: The Best Ways to Promote Resilience in the Threat of Wildfires

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BACKGROUND
• Wildfires are increasing in numbers and becoming more unpredictable, even in mild regions like Western WA (see Fig. 1).
• Many of these unexposed communities are unprepared to fight and recover from devastating fires.
• Wildland-urban interface (WUI): transitions between undeveloped land and human occupied land.

RESEARCH QUESTION
What are the best practices for wildland-urban interfaced counties like King County to implement to build wildfire resilience?

INTERNSHIP AND METHODS
• I interned with the King County Climate Action Team, and posed question to 30 groups of interviewees: “What three things would make a positive difference toward wildfire resilience in King County?”
• I also conducted scholarly research regarding resilience efforts in the Western U.S.

RESULTS
• Most common interview responses included: increasing education/awareness and communication with communities & agencies.
• From articles, forest thinning is recommended for forest health treatments in milder climates.

SUMMARY
• By standards of WUI communities, agencies, and research, best practices currently for mild-climate WUI regions include:
  • Socially – better communication, collaboration, education, awareness, and more funding (see Fig. 3).
  • Ecologically – forest thinning.

SIGNIFICANCE
• These results set foundation for 2021 King County Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy.
• Communities become proactive instead of reactive regarding preparedness measures (see Fig. 4).

RESEARCH QUESTION
What three things would make a positive difference toward Wildfire Resilience in King County?

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