

The four cosponsors of the National Wildfire Mitigation Awards have named the individuals and organizations chosen to receive honors this year for their exemplary commitment to community wildfire risk reduction.

WASHINGTON—The Wildfire Mitigation Awards committee has named five recipients to receive the 2025 Wildfire Mitigation Awards (WMAs). This year's WMA recipients come from Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, and Florida, where their local efforts have made national impacts, earning them the highest commendation for innovation and leadership in wildfire mitigation. They are:

AARON JOHNSON
Ridgway, Colorado

Aaron Johnson is a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist for the nonprofit West Region Wildfire Council. Aaron has gone above and beyond his responsibilities of conducting wildfire risk assessments and created the Wildfire Ready Home certification program. This initiative captures data, science, and regulations from insurance groups, building councils, local governments, and fire agencies. His impressive work is underscored by his tech-savvy data management, making wildfire risk assessments easier for the nonprofit to deliver and simple for homeowners to track progress. Aaron furthers his work by providing training and presentations to homeowner associations and fire departments on how to conduct assessments and available resources.

HAWAI'I WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION
Kamuela, Hawai'i

Hawai'i Wildfire Management Organization (HWMO) has led wildfire mitigation and preparedness across the state for 25 years. Following the devastating Lahaina wildfires in August 2023, HWMO stepped up to provide immediate technical support and guidance to impacted communities across three islands. The organization became a trusted source for wildfire preparedness information during red flag warnings and provided expertise to elected officials drafting wildfire-related legislation. In 2024 alone, HWMO supported over 10,000 residents through wildfire preparedness workshops and webinars, multimedia information campaigns, home ignition zone (HIZ) assessments, and community projects. HWMO sustains and expands their work by connecting community leaders and volunteer ambassadors through their Hawai'i Firewise Peer Network.

TYRE HOLFELTZ
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Tyre Holfeltz is a Fire Hazard Mitigation Program Manager for the Idaho Department of Lands. In his work, Tyre has visited every county in the state and worked with over half of them to develop and update Community Wildfire Protection Plans. He collaborates with dozens of public agencies and has established new partnerships with utility companies to implement vegetation management programs to protect critical infrastructure. Tyre has also strengthened partnerships with the Idaho Department of Lands by working with GIS specialists to develop detailed risk assessment maps and co-designed a geospatial

database to track all fuel-reduction treatments and watershed restoration projects. At the national level, Tyre is a working group member developing all three Grant Accomplishment Reporting Portal modules.

ALEESE MAPLES

Southport, Florida

Aleese Maples is a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist at the Chipola Forestry Center, which covers seven counties across the Florida Panhandle. After Hurricane Michael, Aleese was tasked with expediting mitigation projects in the region to manage the damage and debris. She created a unique contractor bidding process, procurement process, and landowner agreements. Aleese helped facilitate 206 mitigation projects for 1,847 acres of defensible space for thousands of homes. Aleese's leadership and dedication are exemplary models for mitigation projects critical to disaster recovery.

NOFLOCO FIRE MITIGATION POSSE AND DONALD MOORE JR.

Teller County, Colorado

Don Moore founded North Florissant, Colorado (NoFloCo) Fire Mitigation Posse in 2019 after seeing a desire for hands-on learning about fire mitigation to improve and protect private property. The group uses entirely volunteer labor instead of highly mechanized methods to prevent ecosystem disturbance and keep mitigation costs low. Nominated by one of the hundreds of NoFloCo Mitigation Posse volunteers, Don leads NoFloCo intending to develop friendships and knowledge amongst volunteers and communities. NoFloCo rewards volunteers and builds community through a social potluck meal after volunteer days and awards a shiny purple mitigation hard hat for volunteers who have participated in five mitigation events. Moore and all the volunteers with NoFloCo are recognized for their outstanding efforts to accomplish meaningful mitigation projects on private lands, often for homeowners who cannot complete the work themselves, all the while expanding the knowledge base through training opportunities for volunteers and of residents and communities fortunate to receive their mitigation support.

The Wildfire Mitigation Awards program was established in 2014 by 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 to help demonstrate the tremendous societal value wildfire mitigation efforts provide.

"The individuals and organizations selected for this year's Wildfire Mitigation Awards are shining examples of how to effectively apply knowledge, leadership, and innovation to generate measurable results and progress," said Michele Steinberg, director of the NFPA wildfire division. "I commend all of them for their unwavering determination and commitment to tackling today's wildfire threats."

"From technological advancements to disaster relief and grassroots volunteers, this year's Wildfire Mitigation Award recipients demonstrate the vast nature of mitigate work—and how we all can play a role in combatting the wildfire crisis," said NASF President and Maine

State Forester Patty Cormier. “These outstanding awardees epitomize the hard work, leadership, and creativity of the tens of thousands of folks working in forestry and wildfire across the country.”

“Amidst ongoing challenges posed by climate change, our firefighting teams are increasingly tackling wildland-urban interface and extensive suburban fires,” stated IAFC President and Board Chair Chief Josh Waldo. “I am thrilled to extend my congratulations to Aleese Maples, Tyre Holfeltz, Aaron Johnson, Donald Moore and NoFloCo Fire Mitigation Posse, and Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization for their well-earned accolades. As we adapt to the evolving nature of wildfire incidents, this year’s awardees are at the forefront, establishing innovative collaborations within government and communities to proactively diminish the impact of future wildfires.”

"We're pleased to be joining our partners in recognizing these outstanding contributions to wildfire mitigation," said Sarah Fisher, Director of Fire and Aviation Management for the USDA Forest Service. "Congratulations to each winner for their dedication to community wildfire protection."

HONORABLE MENTIONS

The Wildfire Mitigation Awards Committee was so impressed by the powerful nominations this year that it would be remiss, not to mention some great people and projects making strides in wildfire mitigation. For example, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District completed 103 projects in their county and are recording all projects in a virtual dashboard. In South Carolina, the State Forestry Commission held their first “WUI Summit” with community leaders and emergency managers to discuss potential ways to reduce wildfires. The WMA partners look forward to seeing what they accomplish next.

The 2025 Wildfire Mitigation Awards will be presented at the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, on March 28, 2025. This year, the WMA partner organizations are proud to host a virtual meet and greet between the WMA winners and partner leaders prior to the WUI conference. The nomination period for the 2026 Wildfire Mitigation Awards will open this summer. For more information about the awards program and how to nominate your mitigation hero for national recognition, visit stateforesters.org/wildfire-mitigation.