



Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project Biannual Report

January-June 2018

Background

In the November 2012 election, City voters overwhelmingly approved (74%) a \$10 million dollar bond to fund the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP). This forest treatment effort, involving City, State, and Federal lands, is reducing the risk of severe wildfire and subsequent post-fire flooding in the Rio de Flag and Upper Lake Mary watersheds.

FWPP receives bid for Dry Lake Hills Phase 1

Dakota Logging LLC, a Phoenix based logging company, successfully placed a bid to take over a timber sale contract along the base of Mt. Elden and the Dry Lake Hills. The 642-acre timber sale area is adjacent to several neighborhoods including Shadow Mountain, Swiss Manor, and the community along Mt. Elden Lookout Road. The contractor has moved equipment into the area and operations have begun. Expect to see heavy equipment and logging trucks in the area. Dakota Logging will have one year from the time of contract award to finish the work associated with the timber sale.

FWPP Phase 2 contracts are out for bids!

The USFS staff in the Flagstaff Ranger District have been working swiftly to complete all necessary project layout and contract preparations for FWPP Phase 2. As a result of several years of hard work, the FWPP Phase 2 contracts are now released to the timber industry for bidding! This is great news for FWPP and marks a significant milestone for our project. After the selection process, work in Phase 2 can begin as early as summer of 2019. The operations will require the coordination of complex contracts, and managing disturbance to Mexican Spotted Owl (MSO) habitat areas. Thank you to all the USFS staff who have worked very hard to bring FWPP to this stage of the project!



Thinning efforts in the FWPP Observatory Mesa project area

FWPP hand thinning implementation

The Flagstaff Fire Department City Crew 1 completed approximately 60 acres of hand thinning in the FWPP project areas across Observatory Mesa. American Conservation Experience (ACE) is currently training their first FWPP hand thinning crew of the summer. They will begin operations in late July, with two additional crews to deploy in August. ACE will be working in and around Brookbank Meadow and the Dry Lake Hills.

Outreach



FWPP Field tour for the Portland State Executive Seminar Program

Over the last six months, FWPP hosted or participated in 15 different events! The outreach events include; a monitoring workshop, several field tours, multiple presentations at conferences and professional seminars, a film screening followed by a question and answer panel, educational outreach at Earth Day, participation in a City-wide Wildfire Preparedness Day event, and a presentation during a joint Special Meeting with the Flagstaff City Council and Coconino County Board of Supervisors. See a recording of the joint Special Meeting presentation here: <http://flagstaffaz.swagit.com/play/06042018-1720/#12>

Monitoring

The fourth and last FWPP hydrologic monitoring station has been installed within the FWPP footprint. The monitoring equipment installation occurred on federal land in the “Spruce Avenue Wash Upper Dry Lakes” area. The four hydrologic monitoring stations contain precipitation gauges and stream flow transducers, which are used to record information related to precipitation and watershed flow events coming out of the FWPP project area footprint.

NAU School of Forestry undergraduate and graduate students utilized FWPP project areas on Observatory Mesa for research purposes. One project is assessing drying rates and insect activity of mechanically harvested trees left in the forest for extended periods. The goal of another research project is to model wood quality metrics across a gradient of study locations within the ponderosa pine ecosystem.

Undergraduate forestry students have established permanent forest plots across Observatory Mesa to collect long-term monitoring data project tracks a range of biophysical data that will help managers understand the effectiveness of FWPP treatments over time. A new 2018 update to the City Monitoring Report is now finalized, and is posted on the FWPP website. Read the updated Monitoring Report and learn more about the specific monitoring activities across the FWPP project area on our website: <http://flagstaffwatershedprotection.org/monitoring/>



Monitoring activity within FWPP Observatory Mesa

Grants and Leveraged funds

FWPP in partnership with American Conservation Experience, the Coconino National Forest and the City of Flagstaff has been awarded multiple grants to support thinning work in 2018. These grants have brought in nearly \$258K of outside funding. Currently FWPP has several additional grant applications in review which, if successful, could potentially bring in an additional \$261K of outside funding for thinning work in 2019.

In addition to outside grant funding, FWPP has received other cash contributions and in-kind services from its various partners. As of June 30th 2018, FWPP has raised \$5.2 million in leveraged funding. This comes in addition to the City’s \$10 million commitment. The majority of this additional investment has come from the USFS, and numerous other partners are contributing to the effort.