**Moving Forward!**

Several milestones have been achieved over the past few months, and forest treatment work is on-going in the area immediately north of town.

First, Phase I, the area around the base of Mt Elden adjacent to Schultz Creek and Mt Elden Roads is complete. This encompassed 145 acres of hand-thinning work, and another 662 acres of traditional ground-based mechanical harvesting. Limbs, tree tops, and other debris from this work was piled, and will be burned as it dries and conditions allow. Smoke will be visible at times in this area this winter.

Second, Phase II, the steeper-slope areas in the Mt Elden and Schultz Creek areas, has started. Although 105 acres were hand-thinned this past summer, the bigger news, and what will be most noticed, is that both ground-based and helicopter operations are now underway.

Steep-slope ground and helicopter operations are not common in the southwest. In each, hand-felling of tress will occur first, followed by removal of the material. As conditions allow, both these efforts will continue throughout the winter. Residents of and visitors to the neighborhoods near Schultz Creek and Mt Elden Road can expect to hear noise as operations occur, particularly from helicopter flights as wood is picked-up and moved to decking sites.

As this work progresses, Closure Orders restricting public access into the area will be implemented for community and operator safety. This includes roads and trails, such as the popular Rocky Ridge trail.  The exact duration of the Closure areas will vary, but none will be removed until it is safe for the public to venture into the area. Ground-based work will continue throughout 2019, but Helicopter work is expected to wrap-up by late spring. We urge all to respect the Closure Orders: ***Be Smart, Be Safe!***

As these operations continue, some of the material will be temporarily decked in the Schultz burn scar along Forest Road 420. Removal will occur later as the material is either sold or disposed of through other means.  More information will be forthcoming in the next few months.

Finally, moving into next summer, hand-thinning operations will continue in the Brookbank Meadow area, and will likely also occur in other areas throughout Dry Lake Hills.

SIDEBAR STORY:

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| FWPP highlights include:   * Completion of all environmental analysis and boundary surveys. * Construction of nearly three and a half miles of temporary roads. * Rebuild/resurface of nearly eight miles of existing roads. * Completed tree marking on nearly 3,300 acres. * Completed thinning/harvesting on over 4,000 acres. * Distributed over 3,000 cords of firewood to area residents, and provided wood to local forest operators. * Chipped nearly 1,500 acres of debris, supplying Salt River Project with material used for their electrical generation test at the St Johns power-plant. * Completed nearly 3,000 acres of pile and broadcast burning. * Over 14,000 hours of volunteer labor, * Installed four streamflow gauge stations. * Created the City’s Monitoring Plan. * Hosted over 60 public events/field trips. * Completed field tests of an emerging tablet technology to replace tree paint. * Engaged NAU students in this outdoor living lab. * Trained 32 American Conservation Experience crew members as sawyers. * Employed 75 seasonal crew members, many from the immediate area. * Secured over $7 million in non-city funds (in addition to that approved by the voters). |