



# Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project Biannual Report January-June 2015



## **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 designed to reduce the risk of severe wildfire and subsequent post-fire flooding in the Rio de Flag (Dry Lake Hills) and Upper Lake Mary (Mormon Mountain) watersheds. This report highlights significant accomplishments from January - June 2015.

## **FWPP WINS THE SOLUTION SEARCH AWARD**

*Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project wins \$25,000 for the Solution Search - Reducing Our Risk - People's Choice Award*



This award recognizes FWPP's innovation in disaster preparation. The Solution Search Contest is a national contest that seeks to spotlight solutions to conservation and environmental issues with demonstrated success at the local level on the national stage.

Mark Brehl, the City's FWPP field operations specialist traveled to Washington, D.C. to accept the award. Brehl said of his experience, "This award is a direct result of our community's continued commitment and support to reducing our risk to wildfire and long term post-fire flooding impacts, improving forest and watershed health and restoration initiatives, and resilience to climate change." Funds from the award will benefit forest and watershed health and restoration initiatives within the Flagstaff area. For more information visit: [www.solutionsearch.org/contest/reducing-our-risk](http://www.solutionsearch.org/contest/reducing-our-risk)

## **PROJECT PLANNING - SIGNED DRAFT RECORD OF DECISION**

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, Coconino National Forest Acting Forest Supervisor Scott Russell signed the draft Record of Decision (ROD) for federal lands within the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project. This was a result of an accelerated planning effort by Forest staff and partners to meet the urgency expressed by City voters.

Russell said, "We listened to the concerns brought forth during the DEIS comment period and have not only incorporated but also relied on public input in the formation of this decision. The draft ROD will meet the purpose and need for the project while also addressing concerns related to large tree retention, effects on the view shed of Flagstaff, and impacts to the Mexican spotted owl."

The final ROD is expected late September of this year. Implementation on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands is expected in 2016.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Since January, crews have completed 110 acres of thinning, largely in the City-owned Observatory Mesa Open Space that is part of the FWPP project. Additional work is planned on the Mesa throughout the summer and fall.

## **OUTREACH**

In April, project managers from the City and USFS hosted 20 international watershed and resource management professionals from a dozen countries who came to Flagstaff to learn about FWPP. FWPP also participated in Earth Day to continue to inform the public about FWPP and current and expected accomplishments.



**Watershed and resource management professionals visit FWPP**  
Photo courtesy City of Flagstaff

## **MONITORING**

A City Monitoring Plan has been finalized and is posted on the FWPP website. The plan contains four capacity monitoring frameworks: 1) Fire Behavior, 2) Hydrologic Response, 3) Socioeconomic, and 4) Other Ongoing/Potential Monitoring Projects. Flowtography stations, designed to measure water flows, are planned for installation in the Lake Mary watershed in the coming months. The City is holding a workshop later this summer to review progress and update the Plan.

## **TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT**

Tribes in northern Arizona, including the Hopi Tribe, have been consulted as part of the USFS planning process. City and USFS project managers will remain in close contact with the Navajo Nation as treatment implementation continues in Brookbank Meadow, a 140-acre in-holding located within the Dry Lake Hills.

## **FINANCIAL INVESTMENT AND LEVERAGED FUNDS**

To date, through either cash contributions or in-kind services, various partners have provided over \$2.3 million to FWPP; this is in addition to the City's \$10 million commitment. The bulk of this additional investment has come from the USFS, but 12 other partners have also contributed to the project, demonstrating the widespread support the project has received.

## **SUMMARY**

We continue to make steady progress in our quest to reduce the threat of severe fire, protect two critical watersheds, and enhance community well being. We are looking forward to the release of the final Record of Decision. This will mark a project milestone leading the way to full-scale implementation in 2016. We thank you for your support and we are devoted to the success of this innovative project for the betterment of our community.



**Newman Canyon/Lake Mary watershed**  
Photo courtesy GFFP