



Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project

Biannual Report

January - June 2016



BACKGROUND

In November 2012, City voters overwhelmingly approved (74%) the \$10-million-dollar 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 2016.

IMPLEMENTATION

In the Dry Lake Hills, City Crews burned 480 acres of piled debris and completed another 25 acres of hand thinning trees. Planning for an additional 500 acres of mechanical treatment on the City owned Observatory Mesa Natural Area has been completed, with harvesting expected to begin later this summer. This type of operation is the first step towards promoting a fire adapted ecosystem where future low intensity surface fires can play their historic ecological role that minimizes excessive debris on the forest floor and recycles nutrients into the soil. The remaining wood chips from last summer's operations on the Mesa has been transported to a biomass energy facility in Snowflake and firewood was distributed to tribal members. Meanwhile, on the National Forest, 263 acres on the Orion Task Order in Dry Lake Hills have been mechanically thinned and another 30 acres have been hand thinned. In preparation for "Phase I" mechanical thinning along the base of Mt. Elden, temporary road construction has begun and is expected to be completed early fall. Finally, on state land, AZ State Forestry has completed 149 acres of hand thinning near Lake Elaine in east Flagstaff.



*Temporary road in
Dry Lake Hills*

OUTREACH

FWPP hosted two international groups this spring – a Forest Service International Seminar on Watershed Management with 27 international leaders representing 19 countries in the land management field and an Indonesian delegation looking to bring a larger group of forestry professionals to visit this fall.



USFS International Seminar Watershed Symposium Group in City Council Chambers



*Field tour with residents
who live near the project area*

We also installed a new FWPP project road sign on Schultz Pass Road. In addition, FWPP continued to offer outreach opportunities to residents in the area through face-to-face meetings, field tours, direct mailings, and through various forms of electronic communication. FWPP also participated in a Harvesting Methods & Firewise Preparedness Open House that was held at the City Aquaplex; even Louie the Lumberjack and Smokey Bear showed up! Lastly, FWPP participated in Earth Day and shared our project's progress with many visitors and residents.



*Smokey Bear and Louie the Lumberjack
compete in logging sports*

MONITORING

The City Monitoring Plan, a community-driven strategy, 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. FWPP is supporting hydrologic monitoring this year, conducted by the City Utilities Department in the Dry Lake Hills and on Observatory Mesa. Instruments will be installed that will measure precipitation and stream height in the project areas.



Looking down from Dry Lake Hills

FWPP "IN THE NEWS"

Cronkite News featured FWPP in a recent article entitled, *Flagstaff wildfire prevention cited among 'best in class' for nation*. The article stated, "The report by the [National Wildlife Federation](#) cited Flagstaff's wildfire prevention program as one of 12 in the country recognized for the practice of using natural resources to help avert damage from floods, fires, coastal erosion and storms." FWPP also published project updates in the summer edition of [City Scape](#) and the [Coconino County May 2016 Report to Citizens](#). KNAU, Flagstaff's public radio station, featured a story recently, "[Flagstaff Watershed Protection Ramps Up.](#)" Visit the project's website for current project information (see below).

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT AND LEVERAGED FUNDS

To date, through cash or in-kind service contributions, partners have provided approximately \$3 million to the project; this is over and above the City's \$10 million commitment. The bulk of this additional investment has come from the Forest Service, but 13 other partners have also contributed to the project, demonstrating the widespread financial support the project has received.

SUMMARY

We continue to make steady progress, and our committed to the goals of reducing the threat of severe fire, protecting two critical watersheds, and enhancing community well-being. We are excited to begin full-scale implementation on the National Forest this year. We are devoted to the success of this innovative project that is designed to maintain the quality of life of our community. Thank you for your support!