



Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project Biannual Report

July-December 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 Operations in the Dry Lake Hills Phase I

Dakota Logging LLC, a Phoenix based logging company, successfully completed a timber sale contract along the base of Mt. Elden and the Dry Lake Hills. The active logging operations took place over the late summer and fall with the 642-acre timber sale being completed in winter of 2018. This marks a great achievement of FWPP work on the Coconino National Forest, and the first major FWPP mechanical thinning work on Federal Land. Thanks to the USFS for working diligently to move the Phase I timber sale to completion!



Log trailers staged and awaiting loading and removal from FWPP Phase I

FWPP Phase II steep slope contract awarded and work has started

The FWPP Phase 2 contracts are awarded! Smith Forestry, based out of Oregon has started work on the steep slope contract. Logging crews have hand felled approximately 120 acres across four different cutting units. The contractor will be moving heavy equipment into the project area to begin skidding, processing, and hauling operations. Operations continue this winter in the approximately 400 acre project area.

FWPP Phase II helicopter contract awarded and crews are mobilizing to Flagstaff



Ryan Conner is the owner of R&R Conner Aviation, the subcontractor implementing the FWPP helicopter logging operations.

Helicopter logging operations are now active in the Mount Elden and Dry Lake Hills areas. Markit! Forestry Management, the contractor responsible for managing the 500 acre helicopter operation, has moved crews and equipment into the project area. Ground crews have been engaged in preparation work, and hand-felling operations. The helicopter flight operations will be visible in the area as the helicopter lifts and transports bundles of felled trees from the project area to established landing sites. The work will occur during daylight hours, seven days a week, and for three to five months depending on operational conditions.

FWPP hand thinning and prescribed fire

The Flagstaff Fire Department City Crew 1 completed approximately 45 acres of hand thinning in the FWPP project areas across Observatory Mesa. American Conservation Experience (ACE) completed 105 acres of hand thinning in the Dry Lake Hills and Brookbank Meadow area. The work in Brookbank Meadow is especially exciting! It extends forest-thinning work the City did several years ago, and continues to remove small trees that have encroached into the meadow. The City of Flagstaff Fire Department conducted two prescribed burns this Fall for a total of 110 acres, and 52 acres of pile burning. The City also collaborated with the Arizona State Department of Forestry and Fire Management to complete approximately 500 acres of pile burning in FWPP project areas in East Flagstaff.



Prescribed fire managed by Flagstaff Fire Department

Outreach



FWPP Field tour for Senator Kyl and Vice-Mayor Whelan

Over the last six months, FWPP hosted or participated in 11 different events! The outreach events include; a fundraiser at Dark Sky Brewery, door-to-door outreach, First Friday and Farmers Market table events, multiple presentations, and the annual Flagstaff Science in the Park event. FWPP also hosted Senator Kyl and Undersecretary of Agriculture Hubbard during a tour of the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project. The event was part of a three-stop forest tour orchestrated by Dr. Wally Covington and Diane Vosick of NAU's Ecological Restoration Institute. Hosted by Laura Jo West, Coconino National Forest Supervisor, Erin Carey, Acting Ranger of the Flagstaff District, Vice-Mayor Jamie Whelan, and City FWPP staff, the site visit allowed the visitors to see first-hand on-going operations and learn about status, plans, and needs moving forward.

Community Safety and Forest Closures: Looking ahead through 2019

As the helicopter, steep slope, and other FWPP forest thinning work progresses, forest closures restricting public access into the Mount Elden and Dry Lake Hills area will be implemented. These closures are for public and operator safety. The closures also ensure that the FWPP contractors can perform their work, without public safety concerns, in a fast and timely manner. The closures will include areas along the Mount Elden Lookout Road, and portions of popular trails like the Rocky Ridge, Sunset, Shultz Creek, Elden Lookout, and Oldham trails. These area and trail closures will change as operations progress, and will be strictly enforced. Warnings and tickets may be issued to those that violate the Closure Order. Please respect the closure areas, and do not approach logging machinery, helicopters, or heavy equipment at any time. Be Smart, Be Safe! Please visit the FWPP website for project updates, and join our project email list to receive the most current information.