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| **S:\Fire\Wildland Fire\Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project\Pictures and Videos\FWPP Logo\Logo\2017 High Resolution  FWPP Logos\FWPP Logos\FWPP Logos_JPG\FWPP Logo_color_no type.jpg** | **Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project**  **and Museum Fire**  ***Do You Know?***  **Paul Summerfelt**  **3 January 2020** |

There’s been some on-going chatter about the impact of last summer’s Museum Fire and the status-and-future of the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP). Project-wide, before the fire, FWPP Managers had:

* Completed:
  + Nearly 3,300 acres of tree marking.
  + Just over 5,500 acres of cutting,
  + Chipped nearly 1,500 acres of debris,
  + Nearly 3,500 acres of pile and broadcast burning;
* Provided over 3,000 cords of firewood to area residents and supplied wood to local forest operators;
* Installed four precipitation gauge stations to monitor streamflow;
* Hosted local area volunteers who had contributed nearly 20,000 hrs of labor.
* Held over 75 events/field trips;
* Employed 90 seasonal crew members, many from the immediate area; or
* Leveraged the City’s financial commitment to raise an additional $7.5 million in non-city funds, primarily from the US Forest Service but also involving over a dozen other entities.

Specific to Dry Lake Hills (DLH), the area in which the Museum fire did burn:

* Initial cutting work, involving multiple contracts, was less than half completed: Hand thinning was roughly 65% completed, Helicopter units were nearly 90% done, Steep-Slope work hovered around 45% completed, one traditional Ground-based area was 100% complete, and work within two other traditional Ground-based units was not set to begin until this summer;
* The helicopter and steep-slope operations were the first-of-their-kind in AZ;
* Slash had begun to be moved out of certain areas, as planned;
* In other areas, slash piles were drying for burning this winter; or that
* One log deck had been sold-and-removed, two others were to be sold July 23rd, and plans were in-place for sale/disposal of the remaining five decks.

To-be-sure, the fire did impact and damage some of the completed and underway treatment units and the aftermath has affected our community. However:

* Although the fire did burn 1,961 acres, 1,225 acres of this total (62%) was in areas outside any FWPP treatment areas;
* Only 736 acres (38%) of what people witnessed or have read about was inside of actual Project work areas;
* 12% of the area did burn at high-severity, but upwards of 60% burned at low severity; or that
* 3.530 acres – 83% of the DLH Project area – was entirely untouched by the fire.

Make no mistake - the fire was an extremely unfortunate event and I am not attempting to lessen the real magnitude of the incident. But it could have been much, much, worse. How? Consider that:

* Temp roads constructed in the months preceding the fire allowed quicker access to portions of the fire and in-places served as control features.
* Areas that had been thinned, thus reducing tree canopy density and cover,
* permitted aerial retardant to more effectively reach the ground fuels that were burning,
* reduced ladder fuels thereby reducing full-involvement of the tree crowns (In many areas, trees were killed but they did retain needles. These needles in-turn have fallen but in so-doing have helped provide needed ground cover to soften precipitation impact and reduce potential post-fire flood impacts, and,
* in some places actually helped slow/stop fire spread.

Despite the fire, there is much Project work remaining within the DLH to complete. Why? To prevent a worse tragedy from a future fire, to ensure our forests remain green and healthy, and to protect our community.

The good news is that our partnership with the Coconino National Forest remains rock-solid and working together:

* We’ve been successful in advocating for federal funds to be awarded to construct diversion dams and catchment basins in the Elden Creek area, work slated to be completed prior to the 2020 monsoon season;
* Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) work, focused on chipping and spreading wood debris on exposed and vulnerable burned slopes, has been completed;
* American Conservation Experience and the AZ Conservation Corps, both locally-based organizations, are once again engaged in hand-thinning selected sites in the Schultz Creek drainage area;
* Smith Forestry has resumed Steep-Slope operations, work that will continue into this next summer;
* Contracts to repair trails that have been damaged, remove hazard trees along the Mt Eldon Road, and continue the slash removal work will be issued by spring;
* Road stabilization efforts on the Mt Elden Road will be underway by summer, and one-of-the two traditional Ground Based areas not yet started will begin;
* We hope to provide firewood to local residents, as well as those on the Navajo and Hopi Reservations next fall/winter, and finally
* We’ve begun the process to secure needed additional funding to initiate and complete the roughly 3,000 acres of the Project found in the Lake Mary/Mormon Mtn area.

FWPP is a complex, long-duration, adaptive operation involving many partners and stakeholders, and all involved appreciate the support and vision shown by the Community. You have our commitment to see this through.

**To learn more about this truly unique, first-of-its-kind project in the country, visit:**

[***www.flagstaffwatershedprotection.org***](http://www.flagstaffwatershedprotection.org)