

Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project – A Year in Review

One year ago, Flagstaff voters approved a 10 million dollar bond to fund the Flagstaff Watershed Protection Project (FWPP) to protect forest health, water quality and supply, and the community in the greater Flagstaff area. Work is well underway to plan and soon begin project-scale implementation of forest treatments, on primarily steep slopes. Treatments are designed to reduce the risk of severe wildfire and subsequent post-fire flooding in two crucial watersheds, the Rio de Flag and Lake Mary. If portions of the Rio de Flag watershed were to severely burn, particularly in the Dry Lake Hills north of town, the potential subsequent flood impacts would be widespread and devastating to our community. Likewise, similar events on Mormon Mountain, within the Lake Mary Watershed south of town, would render useless nearly 50 percent of our city's drinking water supply. The financial impact of these potential fire and flood events is estimated to result in cumulative long-term costs reaching up to nearly one billion dollars, not to mention the potential loss of life, and a drastic change in Flagstaff's character that makes our town such a unique and special place to live.

Like an athlete preparing for a race, an immense amount of work is required before they are ready to step up to the starting line. During our first year, project staff from the City, US Forest Service (USFS), State of Arizona, Coconino County, Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership, NAU's Ecological Restoration Institute and other partners have been working together to prepare for the "main event" and the start of full-scale implementation of FWPP forest treatments. Our *Annual Report* will soon be available on our website to provide current project status and details of our accomplishments. We are pleased to share our progress with key events that have occurred in our first year:

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- Agreements formed between the City, USFS, AZ State Forestry Division and AZ State Land Department.
- Environmental analysis process (EIS on USFS lands)
 - Proposed Action development and release
 - Solicitation of public comments and response
 - Formulation of treatment alternatives and effects analysis
- Public Outreach and Education
 - Website creation
 - Public meetings, open houses, community events, displays and field tours
 - Creation and distribution of informational literature
- Development of a monitoring plan
 - Hosted public workshops to develop a framework for addressing voter's expectations in Socioeconomic, Hydrologic response and Fire Behavior
- Demonstration Site
 - Tested capacity of regionally available logging equipment and impacts on steep slopes
- Plan and Implement re-surfacing on portions of Forest Road 420 (Schultz Pass Rd)
- Identification and prioritization of treatments on key AZ State Trust Lands
- Hand thinning of key project locations near homes along Mt Eilden Look Out Road.

We encourage you to be involved.

For additional project information and to view the *Annual Report*, visit our website at:
www.flagstaffwatershedprotection.org.

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Photo Caption: Testing of equipment capacity and debris disposal options on the steep rocky slopes common in the FWPP project area.



