

## **Landowner Guide to Fuels Reduction Funding**

The treatment of hazardous fuels is one of the most proactive ways to reduce potential loss of life and property in the event of a wildland fire. By following Firewise™ practices, creating defensible space, and treating fuels, you can lower your fire risk while increasing the chances that fire protection agencies can effectively deal with a wildland fire should it occur. Cost-share funding is available now in some areas to help landowners with the cost of reducing their hazardous fuels.

*GETTING STARTED* – for general information and to find out if your property is in one of the current priority treatment areas, contact us at:

***MWED Hazardous Fuels Program***  
***Contact Carrie Johnson***  
***44 Second Avenue West, Kalispell, MT 59901***  
***Phone (406) 257-7711 Ext. 7***  
***Email [carrie@dobusinessinmontana.com](mailto:carrie@dobusinessinmontana.com)***

### ***HOW DOES THE COST-SHARE PROGRAM WORK?***

- After you contact us, we'll send you a short form to fill out giving us some basic information about you and your property.
- Upon receipt of the initial contact form, one of our Community Foresters will contact you to discuss your wildfire mitigation concerns and let you know if current funding programs are available for your location. The Community Forester may then visit your property for a more in-depth evaluation and discussion of general forest health issues. The Forester will recommend an appropriate treatment, prepare a reimbursement cost estimate, and explain the cost-share guidelines. Recommendations generally involve thinning and pruning trees and disposal of woody fuels. There is no charge for this site evaluation.
- If you elect to participate in the Fuels Reduction program, the Forester will draft a project agreement specifying the work required to be performed and other terms and conditions, including cost-share requirements.

The Forester will review the options for the cost-share match and how you will satisfy the match requirement. The match can be satisfied by cash payments to contractors, by in-kind calculations, or by a combination of the two. In-kind contributions include the value of work that landowners do themselves as part of their projects (examples, limbing, piling, brush removal). Some projects may require the removal of sawlog-size trees, although grant funds cannot pay for such removal. However, contract work obtained in exchange for those trees can be used as part of the landowner's cost-share requirement. It is important to discuss these match options with your Forester prior to beginning work, to make sure all requirements of the Agreement are met.

- You will then be responsible for completing the work – doing it yourself, hiring a professional contractor, or some combination thereof. Upon request, the Forester can provide a list of contractors who have indicated an interest in doing such projects. Inclusion on the list does not constitute an endorsement of

any listed contractor or their qualifications and experience levels. It is highly recommended that you obtain competitive bids, check references, and look at contractors' previous work prior to signing a contract. For your own protection, you should (at a minimum) make sure that the contractor you hire has full and proper liability insurance and workers compensation coverage.

- Once you have selected a contractor, you will need to arrange for a meeting with the Forester and Contractor *prior to* the start of any work. The purpose of this meeting is to make sure there is a shared understanding among all parties of the work to be performed and the specifications to be met. If questions regarding the treatment prescription arise, or if unexpected events or conditions are encountered while work is on-going, the Forester should be notified immediately so that any necessary clarification or modification of the project agreement can be made.
- After the prescribed treatment work has been completed, you should request an on-site inspection. The Forester will identify any incomplete work items that need further attention. Otherwise, they will verify that the agreed-upon work has been completed according to the specifications in the project agreement and will sign off on the project completion form.
- Once the MWED Hazardous Fuels office has received the project completion form, documentation of cost-share requirements being met (receipts, paid contracts, etc.), and completed IRS W-9 and USDA AD 1048 forms, a cost-share reimbursement check will be issued.

#### **WHAT WILL MY PROPERTY LOOK LIKE WHEN THE WORK IS COMPLETED?**

- Each property will have its own unique look. The underlying intent, however, is to space trees so that fire will not spread from crown to crown and a fire on the ground will not climb into the crowns.
- Generally the work involves thinning, pruning, and slash disposal. Trees will be thinned so that there is 10 feet between the crowns. Tree trunks may be 12 to 20 feet apart, depending upon their size. Lower tree branches will be removed 8 to 10 feet above ground level. Woody fuels on the ground and slash greater than two inches in diameter will be removed from the property or disposed of through burning, chipping, or mulching on-site.
- Looking at other properties where thinning and other hazardous fuels treatments have been conducted may be helpful to you in visualizing the post-treatment appearance. The Forester also may have some "before" and "after" pictures from previously completed projects.

You can also get more information on fuels reduction from our community partner websites.

FireSafe Flathead <https://www.firesafeflathead.com/>

FireSafe Montana: <http://firesafemt.org/?s=northwest+montana+hazardous+fuels>