

Community Wildfire Defense Grant Hazardous Fuels Program Conditions

Columbia Falls, Hungry Horse, Martin City, Hungry Horse, Coram and West Glacier, MT

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 due to less intense fire behavior. Funding is available now in the above communities to help landowners with the cost of reducing their wildfire hazard through forest fuel reduction.

GETTING STARTED – Fill and return **application** located at the Montana West Economic Development website, forestry assistance program.

<https://dobusinessinmontana.com/forestry-assistance/>

MWED Forestry Assistance Program

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HOW DOES THE CWDG PROGRAM AND TIMELINE WORK?

Start to finish projects could be completed in as early **6 months or 2+ years** depending primarily on the following variables: contractor availability/capacity, weather and project scale. Projects can be expedited by selecting a contractor who is readily available and/or bundling projects with neighbors to increase the economy of scale for contractor mobilization.

This Community Wildfire Defense Grant **does not require a cost-share match** from landowners because the identified communities of Columbia Falls, Hungry Horse, Martin City, Coram and West Glacier are considered underserved. However, grant funding received is considered taxable income.

Once your application is **received and prioritized**, one of our Community Foresters will contact you to discuss the process and schedule a site visit. 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 fuel. There is **no charge** for this site evaluation.

If you elect to participate in the CWDG Forestry Assistance **cost reimbursement** program, the Forester will draft a project agreement specifying the work required to be performed and other terms and conditions.

Generating revenue from the **sale** of merchantable forest products (generally trees greater than 7” diameter at breast height or 6” diameter at breast height for lodge pole pine) may result in a **reduction in reimbursement**. Reimbursement in this situation should be discussed and agreed upon in the contract between the landowner and Montana West Economic Development prior to work being initiated. This grant covers the **cost** of the **non-merchantable** portion of the work which can be highly variable depending on site specific assessment.

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.

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 a call/meeting with the Forester and Contractor **prior** to the start of any work. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure 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.

Within approx. **two weeks prior** to work being completed/contractor leaving the site a visit with the Forester must be **scheduled** to determine the work meets the agreement specifications for landowner reimbursement. This will ensure that specifications are being met so the contractor does not have to come back to the site with their equipment to fix anything.

Once the MWED Forestry Assistance office has received the project completion form, documentation of contractor being paid in full (receipts, paid invoices, etc.), and completed IRS W-9 and USDA AD 1048 forms.

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 approx. 10 feet between the crowns. Tree trunks may be approx. 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 for you to visualize the post-treatment appearance. The Forester may have some “before” and “after” pictures from previously completed projects.

For additional information visit <https://www.firesafeflathead.com/> .