

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

National guidelines offer some perspective on which projects to tackle first: They suggest concentrating on High Priority Areas with the *most hazards, people, and community value*. Public comments received during this planning process suggest we focus on areas with *high-density fuel loads, limited access and High to Moderate population densities*. This fire plan does not rely on a stated formula. Instead it asks that officials from the affected fire jurisdiction and residents make these decisions at the appropriate time, so as to best fit local culture and capabilities.

Project Priorities

Concentrate fuel reduction work in areas of highest priority and effectiveness: highest values, greatest hazards, highest population density, high fire occurrence...

*Healthy Forests
Restoration Act (2003)*

The Missoula County Strategy

In general, the strategy for Missoula County officials is to continue to advocate/support programs that educate the public about individual responsibilities for preparedness and maintenance of such. In addition, this fire plan offers the following standards for prioritizing fuel reduction work within fire response jurisdictions:

- Consider the entire community (neighborhood) and apply awarded funds to projects with the greatest number of homes at risk and the greatest number of acres to be thinned.
- Recognize that implementation is dependent on funding and that a district's highest priority may not be funded first. For example, applying a \$50,000 grant towards a \$200,000 project may not offer the best cost-benefits.
- Complete projects and change predicted outcomes.

Treatment Targets

More than 22,000 acres within 1.5 miles of Missoula County populations (communities as identified by this fire plan) are rated as having a HIGH PRIORITY for Fuel Reduction Work, based on fire risk and human safety factors. Another quarter million acres—just within the project area (not the County's entire wildland/urban interface area)—is rated a MODERATE PRIORITY. It all needs treatment and then regular Firewise maintenance (compared to the routine of mowing the lawn) thereafter.

Cost Estimates—Using DNRC provided data for treatment-costs-per-acre, it could cost between \$400 and \$2000 per acre to treat all of our HIGH and MODERATE Priority Areas. In order to accomplish this in a reasonable timeframe (a ten-year cycle), the County would need about \$6 million annually. This fire plan looks to the National Fire Plan and state resources to accomplish this goal. It also acknowledges that needed fuel-reduction work and maintenance of such will also (always) require private effort to accomplish.

Plan Accountability

Accountability for project success and failures is an objective in the National Fire Plan and supporting documents. Locally, it's an important sensibility as well. The living nature of this

community wildfire plan allows for consistent monitoring opportunities. The County Office of Disaster and Emergency Services (OES) will store all project data and serve as a clearinghouse for documenting future local accomplishments. Each update will be appended to this plan and posted on the County and other applicable websites. The County will also keep a hard copy of the Seeley Swan Fire Plan.

Plan Updates/Addendums

This fire plan will be updated regularly, if not annually. The Missoula County OES will ensure that it continues to coordinate with other existing plans at the County level or within the fire community. This fire plan allows the County to spend grant funds to accomplish these updates.

All community plans created within Missoula County after the creation of this plan will be guided by and appended to this plan. They must be created through the local fire jurisdiction and should not rely on County funding for creation or implementation, although it will assist in such where/when possible.

Recommended Action Items

The National Fire Plan and Healthy Forests Restoration Act emphasize action. This fire plan offers the following tasks, generated from public meetings, to increase our public safety:

Wildfire Response – Improve Fire Prevention & Suppression

- Update mutual aid agreements within Missoula County
- Update fire response pre-plans in High/Moderate Risk area
- Create process to provide local knowledge to Incident Command Teams
- Formalize agreement for fire response in unprotected County lands

Status

Accomplished
In Progress
Accomplished
Pending

Hazard Mitigation – Reduce Hazardous Fuels

- Develop a mechanism that can assist with grant writing, education, project implementation, plan coordination, etc.
- Assist fire jurisdictions/community groups with mapping
- Post reports on appropriate websites about past fuel-reduction projects
- Encourage economic opportunities for wildfire risk reduction.

In Progress
As needed
In Progress
In Progress

Community Preparedness – Improve/promote community assistance

- Update education materials, targeting High Priority Areas
- Publicize fuel-reduction reports and other useful data

Future Action (2006)
In Progress

Structure Protection – Reduce ignitability of structures

- Encourage use of fire-resistant materials/design of non-combustible homes
- Assist planners with comprehensive planning to mitigate disasters
- Encourage review of subdivision regulations for coordination with this fire plan.
- Consider developing a County mitigation crew or enabling cross-boundary crews

Pending (2006)
Future Action
In Progress
Accomplished

CONCLUSION

The creators of this fire plan pledge to implement the above-recommended actions and to work diligently to design and implement fuels-reduction projects that can increase our ability to live safely with wildfire. Anyone who reads this plan is asked to help in this endeavor.