



Missoula Area Cohesive Strategy Wildfire Adapted Missoula

Missoula, MT

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Overview:

- Missoula County is a diverse landscape with a variety of influences—including geologic, weather, climate, fire and community development patterns. It is a total of 1.7 M acres or 2600 square miles. The Missoula Ranger District, one of five on the Lolo National Forest is 522,000 acres across three counties.
- Missoula County is bisected by 5 major rivers and is categorized at 80% forested, 10% riparian, and 6% grass and shrub.
- A group of local agency representatives met in March 2016 to begin building a Cohesive Strategy Work Group (CSWG). An interagency group with the desire to work on the three aspects of the Cohesive Strategy-Forest Resilience, Fire Adapted Communities, and Coordinated Response.
- Missoula County completed a revision of their Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) spring of 2018, with significant assistance from the USFS Fire Lab.
- In the CWPP action plan a “review of priority landscapes and potential treatment options” was identified as a high priority action item.
- The Wildfire Adapted Missoula Project is the product of that action item encompassing 454k total ac, of which Lolo NF is 167k ac, and Non-Federal ownership is 287k ac.

Joint Chief’s Project-Wildfire Adapted Missoula (WAM):

The goals of the WAM are to 1) continue on-going collaborative cross-boundary projects within the project area and 2) look ahead to the next landscape scale forest resilience project. The overarching objective is to strategically increase the pace and scale of fuel reduction in the wildland urban interface to reduce wildfire risks in our communities and to our first responders.

Projects in Implementation:

- Grant Creek Fuels-Good Neighbor Authority (GNA): Agreement fully drafted and waiting on signature. Thinning on 85 NFS acres utilizing a GNA agreement with state implementation. Project objectives are to reduce fuels near some private ownerships in Grant Creek. Contract award expected fall of 2019.
- Pattee Canyon Maintenance Categorical Exclusion (CE) July 2018-present: This decision was made utilizing the Wildfire Resilience CE authority, authorized in the 2018 Omnibus Bill. This 1725 acre vegetation maintenance project lies entirely within designated WUI. The objectives for this project are to reduce risk for emergency responders and communities by increasing forest resilience via thinning and introduction of prescribed fire. Partners in the CSWG are working directly with private land owners in this high profile area to outreach about forest resiliency and fire adapted communities. This collaborative effort is a direct result of the CSWG and other collaborative partners like the Lolo Restoration Committee. About 200 acres of hand thinning accomplished to date.
- Marshall Woods Forest Restoration Project, 2016-present: Concentrating on forest resilience, the Missoula District Ranger signed a decision for the Marshall Woods Restoration Project in



Jan. of 2016, which included vegetation treatments on approximately 3,500 ac. This priority area is located in the congressionally designated Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and adjacent to hundreds of residences. Work on the forest has included: hand thinning, pile burning, mechanical thinning, and prescribed burning. There is a lot to still accomplish in this area. This project was well aligned to work with adjacent private landowners and is now seen as a demonstration of how we can develop all-lands approaches. To date a group of about 20 landowners across about 100 private acres have come together under MT, DNRC leadership to complete fuel treatments on their adjacent private property www.fs.usda.gov/goto/marshallwoods. This project was financially supported in part by the State of Montana's Forest in Focus 1.0 as well as support from the Salish and Kootenai Tribe. We have hosted 23 field trips to date.

Landscape and Cross Boundary Look at Resiliency:

- Missoula District is working closely with National Forest Foundation to build social license for a landscape scale resilience project-WAM. We are utilizing a concept called 'learning labs' where we are engaging with various cross-sections of our community to discuss what the FS and landowners can do to actively manage and reduce risks of wildfire, see the WAM handout.
- Missoula County and City of Missoula prepared a joint proclamation of support for this larger landscape scale work, March 2019.
- The USDA, Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) is soliciting applications for EQIP grants for private land owners. This totals about \$170k per year for the next three.
- The USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Lab, has been conducting fire modeling efforts to display and prioritize communities most at risk and is the basis of the WAM.
- Missoula County is hosting a Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator as of fall 2018. He is actively working to build fire adapted communities. One of his first steps is developing neighborhood ambassadors and connecting them to work on NFS lands.
- [A cohesive strategy approach on the Missoula RD](#) is a video describing the most recent work.



Marshall Woods Thinning Unit-Before



Marshall Woods Thinning Unit-After