



MITIGATION Minute

JULY 2023

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Missoula County Hazardous Fuels Mitigation Project in Second Phase

Missoula County was awarded a grant from the Hazardous Fuels Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) to reduce flammable vegetation on non-federal lands throughout Missoula County.

The award was split into the following phases:

- Phase 1 was to create defensible space around structures utilizing existing fuel mitigation programs at Frenchtown Rural Fire Department, Missoula Rural Fire Department, and Clearwater Resources Council.
- Phase 2 of the project was to treat lands on a landscape scale, focusing fuel reduction efforts beyond the Home Ignition Zone to restore fire resilient landscapes by increasing canopy spacing, reducing ladder fuels, and removing insect/disease infested trees.

Phase 2 available funds totaled \$280,000 with the goal of treating 220 acres across 20 different private parcels throughout Missoula County. The cost per acre to treat



Hazardous Fuels Mitigation cont'd.



Before and after photos of hazardous fuels mitigation project. Photos courtesy of Max Rebholz, Missoula County DES.

these private lands in Phase 2 averaged \$1,272.73. Missoula County DES offered a 75/25 cost-share program to private landowners, where the grant would pay for 75% of the total project cost.

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“THIS FUNDING GREATLY HELPED INCREASE THE PACE AND SCALE IN WHICH PRIVATE LANDS WERE BEING RESTORED TO CREATE MORE FIRE RESILIENT LANDSCAPES, REDUCE THE SPREAD AND IMPACT OF INSECT INFESTATIONS AND DISEASE WHILE ALSO REDUCING FIRE INTENSITIES TO NEARBY STRUCTURES.”
~ WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS COORDINATOR, MAX REBHOLZ

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The selection process for funding private land parcel treatment involved several criteria such as locating areas of high wildfire risk as identified by Missoula County’s Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan (CWPP). The CWPP risk assessment components include the relative likelihood of occurrence and potential intensity of wildfire, which together are used to depict wildfire hazard across Missoula County. Other factors included locations adjacent to public lands that had been previously treated and where the treatment would impact the greatest number of at-risk structures. Phase 2 of the grant is still ongoing and will be complete in the Fall of 2023.

According to Max Rebholz, Missoula County Wildfire Preparedness Coordinator, a majority of the work occurred during the winter months to limit soil disturbance and erosion.

State & Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates

State Plan Update:

- Ongoing work on draft plan

Western Regional Plan Update:

- County annexes are being drafted and sent out to respective jurisdictions

Central Regional Plan Update:

- Draft annexes have been sent out and are pending review

Eastern Regional Plan Update:

- Draft base plan is being completed and county annexes are being drafted

HMGP DR-4655 Lock-in

The state application deadline for MT DES to have all HMGP DR-4655 project sub-applications is August 14, 2023. Current available funding for the DR-4655 HMPG program is \$8,861,073.

This FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is tied to the June 2022 flooding Disaster Declaration; therefore, the seven flood-affected counties -- Carbon, Park, Stillwater, Treasure, Yellowstone, Flathead, and Sweetgrass will receive priority application status.

The HMPG program provides funding to state, local, tribal and territorial governments so they can develop hazard mitigation plans and rebuild in a way that reduces or mitigates future disaster losses in their communities. For more information, please contact one of MT DES' Mitigation Coordinators.

Legislative Wins for Mitigation

The 2023 Legislative Session closed with some good news for those in disaster and emergency services and the communities we serve.

Significant advances in disaster mitigation legislation include an incredibly impactful, dedicated disaster mitigation account. This is a huge stride forward in emphasizing the importance of risk reduction. This state investment makes a concerted effort to prevent costly repairs following a disaster by working with communities to mitigate potential damage risk prior to natural disasters. With this fund, MT DES will work with local programs to apply for FEMA mitigation grants.

FEMA grants typically require a 25% cost-share by the local government that is applying for the grant. Using this account, the state will be able to off-set the 25% match. The legislature approved \$4 million dollars a year for the next four years. By leveraging FEMA grants, this will result in a projected \$64 million in disaster mitigation projects for Montana communities. The average disaster mitigation project has a 6:1 cost benefit, meaning this investment will save Montanan's \$384 million over the life of these projects.

Additionally, the mitigation appropriations bill will help cut red tape and increase efficiency of grant administration.

We are grateful to those who provided support or testimony, wrote letters, sponsored bills, or placed their trust in our agency by casting an affirmative vote. Our sincere thank you to everyone who helped to make the disaster mitigation account a reality.

Thank you!

Congratulations, Amanda Avard!

Amanda Avard, former Mitigation Coordinator, started her new position at MT DES as Preparedness Program Manager in late March.

Amanda has worked at MT DES for the past four and a half years, first as a Grants Coordinator, and more recently as a Mitigation Coordinator. During her time with MT DES, Amanda has taken on many different roles to support the Division throughout the response to COVID-19 and last year's flooding while ensuring the daily tasks continued to get accomplished.

Amanda shared that she is truly humbled for the opportunity to serve as the Preparedness Program Manager and looks forward to continuing work with essential stakeholders and partners across the state. "What I enjoy most in all I do is knowing that my actions make a positive impact on others."

Amanda's prior work experience includes working at MT DPHHS, running her own interior design business, and teaching classes at Helena College. While we'll miss having Amanda as part of the mitigation team, we know that she will be a great asset to the preparedness program, and we wish her the very best!



Amanda Avard, Preparedness Program Manager

Best Wishes, Shari Pool!

Mitigation Coordinator, Shari Pool will be leaving MT DES in July to pursue other endeavors.



Shari Pool, Mitigation Coordinator

Shari has dedicated the last 7+ years to MT DES and has played a significant role in our division successes. In those 7+ years, she has been a part of the preparedness and mitigation teams and has also assisted during SECC activations in multiple different roles.

She was deployed through EMAC, assisting the State of Florida in recovery efforts following the Hurricane Ian disaster event. Shari has been supportive of her coworkers and has provided guidance when necessary or sought out by others. Additionally, she has been an advocate for bettering the division through the evaluation and improvement of processes over the years.

We are truly lucky to have had Shari as a coworker here at MT DES and will miss her as she moves into this new chapter. We all wish her luck in her future endeavors.

FEMA Releases Updated Local Mitigation Planning Handbook

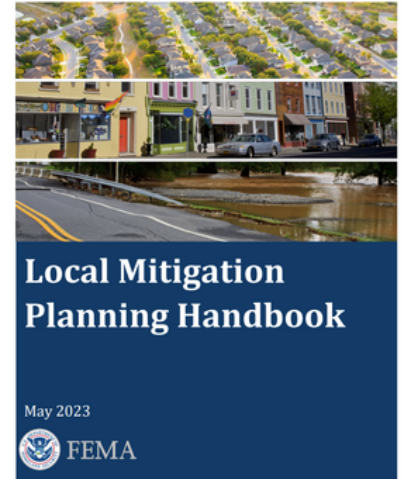
FEMA recently released an updated Local Mitigation Planning Handbook to help local governments develop and update hazard mitigation plans to meet the current local mitigation plan policy which took effect in April 2023. This new handbook - updated for the first time since 2013 - shows how communities can design a sound planning process while meeting the new requirements, including climate change considerations.

Suitable for planners of all experience levels, the handbook provides guidance on the four steps to creating a local plan:

- Organize the planning process and resources
- Assess risk
- Develop a mitigation strategy
- Adopt and implement the plan

The 253 page handbook also provides guidance, case studies, and best practices that will help communities plan to reduce long-term risk from natural disasters.

Download the Handbook at https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_local-mitigation-planning-handbook_052023.pdf



FEMA Technical Bulletin 10 Now Available

FEMA has released the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Technical Bulletin 10, *Reasonably Safe from Flooding Requirement for Building on Filled Land Removed From the Special Flood Hazard Area in Accordance with the National Flood Insurance Program (TB 10)*. This publication is the latest update to the NFIP Technical Bulletin series.



TB 10 provides guidance on the NFIP requirements related to determining that buildings constructed on filled land will be reasonably safe from flooding. Guidance is provided for the placement of fill and the parameters for the design and construction of buildings on filled land that has been removed from the Special Flood Hazard Area through the flood map revision process managed by FEMA.

Download the Bulletin at https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/tb10_ensuring_structures_built_on_fillin_near_special_flood_hazard_areas_reasonably_safe_flooding_01_.pdf

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