



FEMA FY05 PDM Grant for Urban Fuel Load Reduction in Portland, Oregon
Sub grantee: City of Portland
Grant: EMS-2005-PC-0004
Sub-grant Reference: PDMC-PJ-10-OR-2005-005
Grant period: April 04, 2006 - September 30, 2010

Final Report of Accomplishments

Portland Office of Emergency Management (POEM) Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

Key Action Items Addressed

ST-WF#3: Through the FEMA grant, funding was secured for management of vegetated natural areas with high wildfire danger. Long-term vegetation management plans and wildfire fuel reduction plans were developed for three focus areas: Forest Park, Powell Butte Nature Park, and two sites along the Willamette Escarpment: the South Bluff (in the vicinity of Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge) and the North Bluff (in the vicinity of Mocks Crest Natural Area).

ST-WF#7: Three pieces of literature, *Fire Retardant Landscaping for Portland Homes* (brochure), *Fire Resistant Structures: Construction Recommendations* (brochure), and *Wildfire Emergency Planning* (rack card) were developed.

ST-WF#17: An interagency project management team met quarterly during the grant period to coordinate all project work. Members include participants from six City agencies including Portland Office of Emergency Management, Environmental Services, Parks & Recreation, Fire & Rescue, Planning & Sustainability, and Development Services.

Public Awareness and Education Accomplishments

A press release was distributed to the media to inform Portland citizens about the FEMA grant award.

A public information plan and two wildfire newsletters were developed to inform Portland citizens about the FEMA grant, work planned, key messages, and citizen involvement. The newsletters were mailed to landowners adjacent to the three FEMA-funded project areas in 2006 and 2007.

A “Wildfire Risk Reduction” website was designed and posted on the Portland Parks & Recreation website at <http://www.portlandonline.com/wildfire>

Willamette Escarpment

A Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) met with City staff on 11/15/06 to begin an Outreach Plan for educating citizens and nearby residents about wildfire risk reduction work already taking place on the escarpment. On 02/06/07 a tour of proposed fuel reduction project sites was taken by the project partners (CAC and City staff) and on 02/15/07, the second CAC meeting was held. At the meeting, key messages were reviewed and approved, and additional suggestions for a Community Outreach Plan were finalized. This public process paralleled on-the-ground vegetation management work.

An escarpment area web page was designed and brought online, detailed project area maps were developed, and an animated fuel reduction video was developed and put on the web page.

Interpretive signs explaining the Wildfire Risk Reduction project were created and installed at five different locations along the North and South Escarpment project sites.

An interpretive fire-safe garden utilizing fire resistant native plants was installed at the South Escarpment project site.

A public involvement meeting for Sellwood residents was conducted on 08/02/06, door hangers were distributed by Portland Fire & Rescue personnel, and a press release was distributed to the media to inform Portland citizens about the “Prescribed Burn at Oaks Bottom” scheduled for 09/27/06, part of the Willamette Escarpment fuel reduction project. http://www.opb.org/newsroom/slideshow/viewer.php?theshow=oaks_bottom

Powell Butte

Trout Mountain Forestry consultants was hired to evaluate existing data, characterize fuel loads, and prioritize discrete fuel load reduction activities at Powell Butte.

A site assessment and a two-day workshop were held on 10/26/06, 12/07/06, and 12/08/06 with all project partners including Trout Mountain Forestry (consultant), a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and a team of City staff. These work sessions resulted in the development of four draft alternative plans that integrate fire risk reduction needs with the desired future ecological conditions of Powell Butte. On 12/09/06 a Public Open House was held and attended by eleven citizens. Participants commented on the four draft alternative plans and ranked project objectives for the long-term desired future ecological condition of the park. Work at Powell Butte was advertised through carrier route mailing, publications in newspapers, e-notifications, signage, and presentations. During the month of January 2007, the four draft alternative plans were reviewed by several City agencies and citizen comments were solicited. On 02/06/07 the project partners met to review/respond to citizen comments and to select a preferred alternative. The project partners met again on 03/15/07 to inspect the identified

alternative fuel reduction projects, discuss project ranking criteria, and rank projects. On 04/21/07 a prioritized conceptual fuel management map, specifications, and designs were presented to interested citizens at a public meeting. Consultant efforts culminated in a *Wildfire Risk Reduction Final Report for Powell Butte*. Soon thereafter City staff initiated on-the-ground work and the contract bid process for projects to be implemented during the summer 2007.

An interpretive sign explaining the Wildfire Risk Reduction project was created and installed at Powell Butte.

Forest Park

Trout Mountain Forestry consultants were also hired to assist with evaluating existing data, characterizing fuel loads, and prioritizing discrete fuel load reduction activities at Forest Park. The project consultants, with City staff oversight, conducted field reconnaissance work to complete data gaps and then assembled all known information and maps for a focus discussion.

On 09/15/07 the consultants and City staff organized a site assessment field trip through the park and the adjacent neighborhoods with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). On 10/17/07 and 10/18/07, a two-day workshop was conducted with the same participants to develop a plan describing the desired future conditions (DFC) for the park. The goal of this workshop was to reach consensus about a long-term plan for vegetation management within the park. After a formal public presentation of the draft plan at an open house on 11/03/07, informal presentations were given at eight Portland neighborhood association meetings and six additional project stakeholder events. The consultants, City staff, TAC, and CAC met in January 2008 to finalize the long-term vegetation management plan (Desired Future Condition), and established criteria for the selection of fuel reduction projects. After field review of potential projects by TAC members, the project stakeholders met again in March 2008 to review and rank the proposed projects. On 04/12/08 the ranked projects were formally presented to the public, concluding the public awareness and education phase of the project. Consultant efforts culminated in a *Wildfire Risk Reduction Final Report for Forest Park*. Informal presentations to eight Portland neighborhood associations followed.

A wildfire information and awareness packet was assembled and distributed by an interagency partnership of West Multnomah County Soil and Water Conservation Services (USDA – NRCS), and the City of Portland. In July 2009 the packet was sent to all residential, business, and rural landowners at wildland-urban interface around the perimeter of Forest Park.

An interpretive sign explaining the Wildfire Risk Reduction project was created and installed at the project site.

Vegetation Management – Wildfire Accomplishments

Willamette Escarpment

Contracts for professional services were secured through a competitive process and fuel reduction treatments (control of invasive species by mechanical cutting and spraying of herbicide) commenced on 187 acres of public lands in early July 2006 (139 acres North Bluff and 48 acres South Bluff). Treatments targeted climbing vines (ivy and clematis), the shrub layer (Himalayan blackberry and Scots broom), and tall non-native grasses.

Four prescribed fires covering a total of ~20 acres were conducted by the Portland Fire Bureau along the South Escarpment (August 2006, August/September 2007, and September 2008).

Powell Butte

Contracts for professional services were secured through a competitive process and fuel reduction treatments (control of invasive species by mechanical cutting and spraying of herbicide) commenced on 303 acres of public lands in early May 2007. Treatments targeted the removal of non-native trees (English hawthorn), the shrub layer (Himalayan blackberry and Scots broom), and tall non-native grasses.

Three prescribed fires on a total of 103 acres were conducted by the Portland Fire Bureau at Powell Butte (September 2007, September 2008, and September 2009). Prescribed fire was used to reduce flashy fuels, control flammable non-native weeds, and raise public awareness about the role of controlled fire as a natural process.

Forest Park

Contracts for professional services were secured through a competitive process and fuel reduction treatments (control of invasive species by mechanical cutting and spraying of herbicide) commenced on 2,218 acres of public lands in early May 2008. Treatments targeted the removal of climbing vines/ladder fuels (English ivy and clematis), the shrub layer (Himalayan blackberry and Scots broom), and tall non-native grasses. Rights-of-way, powerline corridors, and edges were ranked as top priority for fuel reduction treatments.

Volunteer Work

A total of 9,170 volunteers donated 30,948 hours on all three projects. The total number of volunteer hours far exceeded the amount budgeted and claimed as matching requirement toward this grant. 5,525 hours were claimed toward matching requirements on this grant, while an additional 25,423 volunteer hours totaled up to a value of \$305,076 (additional in-kind labor).

Volunteers performed on-the-ground vegetation treatments in all three project areas. Activities primarily focused on the hand removal of Himalayan blackberry and English ivy from 7,781 trees and 17.5 acres of ground ivy in Forest Park, the Willamette Escarpment, and Powell Butte – and replanting with fire-safe native plants and vegetation maintenance

around trails in both Powell Butte and Willamette Escarpment (South Bluff). Volunteers ranged in ages from grade school through adult. Several of the volunteer events hosted nearby school groups to perform these activities and to learn about fire-safe landscape management.

Willamette Escarpment: 3,128 volunteers; 9,360 hours (South Bluff)

Powell Butte: 563 volunteers; 2,574 hours

Forest Park: 5,479 volunteers; 19,014 hours

Gap Analysis

The completed *Portland Wildfire Readiness Assessment & Gap Analysis Report* was released and is available for review on the project website: www.portlandonline.com/wildfire. This assessment/report identifies emergency wildfire management gaps and makes specific recommendations for improving interagency cooperation for the management of large scale wildfire and related emergency access and evacuation in the City of Portland. Contributors included representatives from multiple City bureaus and regional and state agencies.

Vegetation Management – Erosion Control Accomplishments

Contracts for professional services were secured through a competitive process and erosion control treatments (seeding of native grasses) followed fuel reduction treatments (manual cutting and herbicide spraying) that exposed bare soils in the three project areas.

Long-term Maintenance Plan

Portland Parks & Recreation and the Bureau of Environmental Services have a long-standing relationship and track record for the coordinated vegetation management of natural areas throughout the Portland-Metro region. These FEMA-funded project areas have been added to the “active” natural area management portfolios of these two bureaus. The long-term maintenance plan for the three project areas includes additional vegetation maintenance treatments. These treatments are scheduled on an annual basis, during adaptive management monitoring sessions which occur in the early spring and summer. Treatments include herbicide application, mechanical cutting, and manual labor to control vegetative ladder and ground fuels. A single treatment is typically adequate to control these flammable invasive species on an annual basis for a period of three years, and every other year beyond.

Vegetation management of these sites is budgeted on an annual basis in the City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services and Portland Parks & Recreation natural area maintenance budgets. The estimated annual cost is \$180,000.

Other Accomplishments

The following accomplishments, though not funded by this grant, demonstrate the partnerships formed and collaboration needed to inspire significant changes to City of Portland’s response to wildfire mitigation:

The first meeting of the Portland/Multnomah County Wildfire Technical Committee was held on 03/15/10. This interagency committee was formed as a result of the FEMA funded *Portland Wildfire Readiness Assessment & Gap Analysis Report* and was authorized by the Portland City Council to coordinate all City/County wildfire planning and coordination in the future. In August 2010 representatives from the City/County Wildfire Technical Committee working with stakeholders from Portland, other cities in Multnomah County, Multnomah County, State of Oregon, and federal agencies began work on a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for Multnomah County, Oregon. This effort will utilize the fuel reduction plans from the FEMA/OEM funded Portland Wildfire Fuel Reduction Project and follow the recommendations of the *Wildfire Readiness Assessment & Gap Analysis Report*.