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Meade County Community Wildfire Protection Plan



Hazardous Fuels Reduction Plan

For a copy of the entire plan go to:

<ftp://ftp.mattox.biz/incoming> Meade County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.pdf

or

www.Meadecounty.org Meade County Community Wildfire Protection Plan.pdf

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The following are excerpts from the complete plan that will help landowners who wish to participate in the hazardous fuels reduction cost share program in Meade County, SD.

Meade County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

The primary goal of this Community Wildlife Protection Plan is to reduce the risk from wildfire to life, property, and critical infrastructure. The Wildland Urban-Interface, (WUI), is a set of conditions that exist when manmade fuels (e.g. structures and other human development) meets or intermingles with natural vegetative fuels. The U.S. Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Interior identified a list of communities at risk from wildfire and placed them in the Federal Register. These communities are located in the WUI and are in the vicinity of federal lands and have been identified as being at high risk from wildfire.

This plan will help develop a core group of local government, fire agencies and state officials that will then be able to collaborate with federal agencies to identify areas at risk from wildfire. Programs to reduce these risks will be developed. Possible solutions will include, but will not be limited to, providing fuels reduction programs, field assessment of existing conditions, and collaboration between the different agencies to provide communication that will help reduce the risk from wildfire across the landscape without regard to ownership or boundaries. Identifying and prioritizing areas of hazardous fuels and plans to treat these areas, which will reduce the threat from wildfire. Public education regarding firewise materials and firewise practices to reduce the chance of initial ignition of structures in the WUI will be developed. Firefighter and public safety is a major concern when mitigating for wildfire. By providing adequate survivable space we can reduce a structures chance of initial ignition during a fire event. This also provides a safer environment and allows for more efficient fire suppression activities.

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan will be flexible to provide the best product possible to reduce the threat from wildfire for people residing in Meade County. The hazardous fuels reduction portion of the plan will identify property that is at risk from wildfire and will provide aid in treatment of these areas to make them better prepared to survive a wildfire event. Fuel loads, topography, and survivable space will determine who is eligible to participate in the hazardous fuels reduction program. If the landowner will assume responsibility for the maintenance of the treated area for ten years, the cost share will be increased.

Prescription Guidelines for Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program

The intent of this prescription is to reduce the threat of catastrophic fire that would threaten a structure or property. Development or improvement of survivable space will increase the structures chance of survivability and give fire suppression crews a safer work area so they can be more effective.

All ladder fuels must be trimmed a minimum of 6 feet off the ground. This breaks the vertical continuity of the fuel and prevents the fire from spreading into the canopy. Isolated patches of volatile shrubs and regeneration can exist if they are well separated from

surrounding canopy. Under story and dead forest litter must be removed. Conifer canopy shall have a minimum 15-foot of separation between other conifer canopies.

Steep slopes require more spacing between trees to maintain canopy separation and to protect against more aggressive fire behavior commonly seen in rougher terrain. When selecting trees for removal, large dominate trees that are straight, with good form and vigor should be left providing they meet the minimum spacing requirements. Remove all storm bent or damaged trees. Also dead or split top trees or trees with stem cankers should be removed. Remove unhealthy or defective trees first, and then remove remaining trees until desired spacing is achieved. Remove, chip or pile and burn all resulting vegetation residue. If chips are to be scattered they should not be more than 4 inches deep. Chips or other residue should not be placed under vegetation that could cause a ladder affect, or generate enough intensity to cause mortality to the vegetation above it if it is consumed during a fire event. Utilize wood as commercial logs, firewood, mulch, or other forest products where practical.

Cost Sharing Program

Mitigating the threat from wildfire by reducing hazardous fuels will be accomplished through a cost-sharing program between private landowners who are interested in participating, and the Meade County Commission. The main focus of this fuels reduction program will be in the 100 to 200 foot survivable space around inhabited structures and associated out buildings.

This area may be enlarged if by treating a larger area it would be beneficial to other structures in the area. The Wildland Urban-Interface Specialist administrating the program will determine the area to be treated. Landowners will also be encouraged to consider mitigating other hazardous fuels on their property to allow the ecological sustainability of the forest. This will not only promote a healthier forest, but it will maintain the value and aesthetics of the area after a fire event.

This program will be available to land owners who qualify by having a wildfire severity assessment form 502 done on their property. Fuel loads, topography, and survivable space are the primary considerations for who would be eligible to participate. Properties with high or extreme ratings would have a higher priority to receive funds from the program than property that has a low rating. People with high or extreme ratings will be contacted and informed about the program, and will be given the first opportunity to participate. Once it has been determined that the property is eligible for the program the landowner would fill out a request for cost sharing assistance form. This would include an Internal Revenue Service W-9 form and agreement to abide by the terms of the fuels reduction prescription.

The landowner would be required to obtain and submit 2 bids from contractors to do the work. Cost share assistance will be based on the lowest bid. The landowner will be responsible for all work being preformed on the property and for the project being done to the specifications of the prescription. The landowner will track all costs, and provide documentation of such at the completion of the project. Any profit or revenue received by

the landowner as a result of the fuels reduction project will be subtracted from the total cost of a project before determining the total of all qualifying costs. Documentation of any and all revenue the landowner receives as a result of the fuels reduction must also be provided at the completion of the project.

The program will reimburse the landowner 70% of all qualifying costs from approved fuels reduction activities. The commitment to maintain this prescription for 10 years by the landowner will increase the cost share of the program to 80%. There would be no reimbursement for this maintenance after the initial completion of the project. Qualification of a property for the program will be at the discretion of the Wildland Urban-Interface Specialist. A total of \$1,500 dollars per acre will be the maximum amount allowed for calculating reimbursement percentages for fuels treatment.

Projects that will be eligible for the cost share program include; thinning dense stands of trees, thinning dense under story, slash or biomass disposal, eliminating ladder fuels and removal of volatile fuels in close proximity to structures.

Meade County will not be held liable for work that is conducted under this program on a landowner's property. The property owner will be responsible for all work being completed to the standards of the prescription. Any issues that arise as a result of the fuels project must be settled between the landowner and the contractor.

When the project is complete a certificate of completion form must be submitted to the county. The project will be inspected to insure all requirements have been met, and then the landowner would be reimbursed for the amount of the approved project. There is no guarantee that the property treated will survive a wildfire event. This program is only intended to **reduce the risk** from wildfire.

Public Education

Building materials and building practices are very important to prevent the initial ignition of a structure. More importantly is the use of fire resistive roof coverings, e.g. steel or asphalt. Removal of dead material, e.g. needle litter, leaves and cured grass, needs to be preformed regularly. This will eliminate the fuel bed required for initial ignition from air born embers that are lofted from a distant fire. Survivable space is also important to reduce the convective and radiant heat that a structure is exposed to during a wildfire event. It is evident that many homes in the Wildland Urban-Interface don't ignite from the "big flames". These large flames only last 60 to 90 seconds and then die down. With sufficient survivable space the structure will survive this duration of higher intensities. If common sense firewise practices are maintained, this will greatly reduce the chance of initial ignition, or at the very least give fire suppression crews a much better opportunity to provide protection to the property.