



Notes

Jamestown Fire Mitigation Project Kick-Off Meeting
5:30-7:30 PM, March 29th, 2022
In-Person at Jamestown Town Hall, Hybrid on Zoom

Presentation

See recording: <https://vimeo.com/694112996>

Questions and Answers

Q: Are we providing an area for fire fighters to come on to our property and fight fire from? Are we going to be focusing on clearing an area for fire fighters to use?

A: We're more focusing on creating a forest structure that lends itself to low-severity fires to make it safer in general

Q: How will we be working to create fire breaks? What will that look like? Will creation of fire breaks change the ecology?

A: Fire breaks will go along with ecological principles; meadow creation, canopy breaks. Fire suppression has created a landscape that doesn't function as it normally would. We will be aiming to return ecosystems to historical conditions.

Q: Is this in tandem with USFS management? Does it help to work on our own properties if it doesn't efficiently interface with Forest Service work?

A: We are always communicating with FS, and our desire is to work cross-boundary. This project would help to build momentum in this area that could encourage FS to do work on neighboring lands.

Q: Would this be part of our materials (info on who to contact within FS)?

A: We can provide connections to other organizations. Maybe we can also organize a site visit or neighborhood walk to help folks to understand what we're doing here – build connectivity between this treatment and future treatments.

Q: Is there a potential for an expansion of the current map?

A: There is flexibility in this project boundary, so anyone who's interested regardless of location should reach out. We can always apply for further funding if expansion is desired.

Q: The topography gets very steep behind our property. How would a fire break be formed in this situation without causing too much erosion?

A: Grasses rebound quickly once light hits the ground, and those grasses also have large root structures that hold soil in place. Other techniques to reduce erosion could involve mulching, maybe slash leftovers. Specific prescriptions will depend on property tours.

Q: How do we avoid invasive species takeover as things open up?



A: We can re-seed with native plant species. The Watershed Center and our partners have lots of experience restoring heavily disturbed areas.

Q: It would be useful for communication efforts to represent visually the profile of current forest composition and our desired future conditions

A: We have those! [Images were shown - Please see below]

- Current condition: https://www.dropbox.com/s/se9kj74coq3q210/Current_Conditions_FINAL_web.png?dl=0
- Desired future condition: https://www.dropbox.com/s/wiucv4tpa3itymc/Post-Restoration_FINAL_web.png?dl=0
- What happens if we do nothing (no action, post-fire): https://www.dropbox.com/s/n842cg1ndtyvkjb/Future-NoAction_FINAL_Web%28v5%29.png?dl=0

Q: Has the Watershed Center done this before? Are there examples we can go and look at?

A: The Watershed Center has not done forest treatments yet, but the Conservation District, who will be writing the Forest Management Plans, has done many projects and Lefthand FPD, who will be conducting the mitigation work, has also done many projects. Taylor Mtn near Allenspark is a good visual example of forest restoration.

Q: How are we accounting for erosion and land slide risk (due to higher amounts of water retention in the soil as a result of less trees / root systems)? Having a house that sits on the side of a slope, removal of trees feels like a balancing act (fire break vs erosion risk).

A: Grasses rebound quickly once light hits the ground, and those grasses also have large root structures that hold soil in place. Other techniques to reduce erosion could involve mulching, maybe slash leftovers. Specific prescriptions will depend on property tours. We can also use erosion modeling to predict how a treatment might impact erosion.

Q: When folks come out to cut down trees, is it going to be local companies doing the work? What's the plan for trees that are left? Pile burning, chipping? Does the wood left on the property belong to the property owner?

A: Lefthand Fire Protection District will be doing the mitigation. What happens to the leftover trees will depend on what we discuss here today and what landowners express as priority, although a cohesive approach will be most beneficial to the project and community as a whole. Slash removal is the most difficult part of the project, so we should all be as open to different methods as possible. It's negotiable, and depends on lots of factors.

Q: How do we determine how much material to remove?

A: Tree inventories will be performed on each property, which will provide a robust understanding of current conditions. Historical data will be referenced, along with other comprehensive information gathering, to develop a forest management plan that identifies how much material needs to be removed.



Q: Is there a certain number of property owners that have to commit to this project for it to work?

A: Depends on the size and location of properties that sign on. Not every single person has to participate for it to happen, but the more people we have on board, the more effective the project will be and the more worthwhile it will be to fund. In order to fund, the treatment needs to work substantially toward project goals.

Q: What good does our work do if we can't get USFS land mitigated as well?

A: Defensible space; our work will provide a space to fight fire from. Right now there isn't a safe enough place on the West side of town for firefighters to stand their ground. This project would also encourage the USFS to conduct work adjacent.

Q: Will recommendations on house hardening, etc. be a part of our prescription?

A: We can provide resources (checklists, guides) and connections to support home hardening, but home hardening would not be funded by this project. We recommend talking to Wildfire Partners.

Comment: Opening up a forest can look precarious at first, but truly does bring in more birds and animals. We've done mitigation and we see so many more deer and birds now, and it's beautiful.

Comment: If you high-branched all your trees and thinned out the forest, you haven't clear-cut, but you've helped to make your property look more like a garden rather than this thickly wooded area – a tree every ten inches! This kind of action can really make an area beautiful. It would be nice if the town had its own chipper. An open slash pile is very helpful to personal projects for off-loading of slash.

Q: Is high-branching trees and not cutting them down a treatment option for this project?

A: Treatment prescriptions could be as specific as tree-to-tree, but if your property currently has a high density of trees, it's less resistant to disease/pests and will likely cause a fire to hop into the canopy.

Q: It would be helpful if the project could offer services to folks outside of the prescription area. Do we have a finite budget for this project? Do we have enough funding to complete treatment in the project area to a degree that's effective? Are we limited to houses in the initial project proposal?

A: This project does have a finite budget, but it was estimated at a high cost per acre so if we have enough engagement from landowners we will be able to complete an effective project. There is flexibility in this project boundary, so anyone who's interested regardless of location should reach out. We can always apply for further funding if expansion is desired.

Q: Would we avoid spring nesting season when implementing treatments?

A: Yes.

Open discussion (question to attendees): What are your goals and priorities for this project?

A: I want to decrease our risk of fire so that we still have a town when the next fire comes through. I especially want to mitigate risk along bluff.



A: Anything coming from the west is not mitigated or controlled. I want to contribute to our community by helping to mitigate risk to the town by creating defensible space. I recognize that what I do doesn't just affect me, I want it to help everyone.

A: When fire comes again, I want to know I did everything possible to help my neighbors. Concerned that if USFS doesn't do anything on their own land, my work won't do any good. What are the assurances that this project will see completion?

- Watershed Center: We've established a budget to ensure that we are able to conduct the treatments necessary to achieve project objectives as long as we get enough participants.

A: Highlighting USFS collaboration to encourage work on their land. Our work doesn't mean much if the forest service isn't mirroring our efforts.

A: We'd like to see as many of our neighbors participate as possible so we can better mitigate risk.

A: The ultimate goal is when the next fire comes that Jamestown isn't demolished.

Next Steps:

If interested in participating, folks should reach out to Chiara Forrester, the project manager at cforrester@watershed.center or 720-745-3160.

The next step for interested property owners is to sign up for a property tour at [Calendly - Watershed Center](#) and to sign the Participation Agreement for the planning stages of this project (contact Chiara for a copy, and/or we will bring a hard copy to the property tour).