

Jette Meadows Fire Mitigation

Summary of **Apr 19, 2024** Informational Meeting

Objective

The board has discussed the need to take action in addressing the current conditions of the forested areas within our community to help increase the safety of our properties and the firefighters called to protect them. Our obligations as a board and as Lot owners can be found in the Bylaws (Article II, Section 10(a)) and the Covenants (Article VIII, Section 2(12-17)). This is a substantial endeavor, and we are seeking input from all of our members as this impacts all landowners.

Introduction

On April 19, 2024, the board of directors invited a panel of fire mitigation and forestry experts to speak with members of the association regarding the current conditions of the forested areas in our community, and the opportunities available to members to help improve individual lots as well as common areas. The panel included Carey Cooley, Lake County Fire Mitigation Coordinator, and Owen Nichol, ISA Certified Arborist. Accompanying Ms. Cooley were Shawn Morgan, DNRC, and Tim Beebe.

Ms. Cooley provided information regarding the opportunity and process to apply for a cost sharing grant, distributed handouts with helpful information on best practice for creating [Fire Resistant Landscaping - Montana State University](#), creating defensible space, and a [Montana Wildland Fire Preparedness Guide](#). She also provided Lake County [Fire Mitigation Applications](#) for Lot owners interested in having their properties assessed and included in a grant.

Mr. Morgan and Mr. Beebe provided supporting information and spoke about the recently completed project in the Finley Point area. They encouraged participants to visit Finley Point and observe what it would look like to have a fire mitigation project completed through a grant. They also discussed the different elements that have an impact on the overall health of a forest including disease, infestations, overcrowding of tree stands, and lack of water and sunlight.

Owen Nichol discussed the approaches he uses as an arborist in maintaining the health of trees as well as the process and challenges of slash and tree removal.

The panel recommended the community hold another meeting to discuss a path forward and return information to Ms. Cooley.

Concerns Raised During the Meeting

- The objective of the grant is to treat a larger area. It would be ineffective to scatter treatment areas in 2-3 acre parcels when the neighboring parcels remain untreated.
- Treating the common areas where the trees and vegetation may be on steeper slopes may be more labor intensive.
- Any Tribal Trust land must be approved through the Tribal Trust agency.
- The cost sharing of the grant may vary from 25/75 to 50/50. The grant will cover up to \$1,250.00/acre. Cost share must be at least 25% up to \$1,250.00. E.g., if the cost for work on an acre is \$1,000.00, the owner would pay \$250.00, and the grant would cover \$750.00. If the cost for work on an acre is \$2000.00 the grant would pay \$1,250.00 and the owner would pay \$750.00.
- The closing of lumber mills has severely limited where/how contractors can dispose of felled trees. Under the terms of the grant, as well as our covenants, there can be no downed trees or slash left on the ground as it creates fuel for fires. We may have to come up with a plan to remove some slash either through our own burn piles or disposal.
- The grant program has specific requirements as to the spacing of trees. While it doesn't amount to clear cutting or commercial logging, the thinning would be substantial and under control of the DNRC.
- This is a competitive grant. The process can take up to 2 years to realize funding and the grant application can be declined.

Summary

Jette Meadows Landowners are fortunate to live in a scenic area with varying landscapes, wildlife that frequents our community, and access to a beautiful lake. We are also living in a time where climate is currently having a major impact on the health of our forested common areas and individual lots. It is our responsibility as lot owners, and as an association, to maintain the area where we live. There are several elements affecting our forested areas at this point that can be addressed. We have an opportunity to apply to receive assistance through a grant to improve the health of our tree stands, the safety of our homes, and the safety of those called to protect our homes in the event of a wildland fire. The challenge in front of us is great and we all need to participate in addressing the issues if we hope to preserve the natural environment in our area as well as our homes. The question isn't if Jette Meadows will experience a wildfire, but when.

We hope you will take the time to attend the meeting scheduled for May 24, 2024 at 6:00 pm at the Four Square Church in Polson and provide input on a subject that has an impact on all of us.

The USPS has filed notice to increase the cost of First-Class mail to \$0.75 beginning July 1, 2024. If you haven't already done so and would like to receive newsletters, notices of board meetings (when permissible), and assessment billings via email please send an email to president@jmla.site with the Subject line "Opt In". This is an efficient and cost-effective way to communicate with our membership. Thank you.

Resources

[Montana Fire Info](#)

[Creating A Fire Adapted Montana](#)

[Fire-Resistant Landscaping Considerations for Montana's Wildland Urban Interface \(WUI\)](#)

[Fire Mitigation Application](#)

[Homes and Wildfires - Lessons From the Elmo Fire](#)

[Wildfire Evacuation Checklist](#)