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| Fort Tuthill Thinning Project - Coconino County - Mark Brehl |
| The Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management partnered with the Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership this past year to develop and help implement a 325-acre forest treatment project at the historic, and Coconino County’s highly visited, Fort Tuthill County Park in Flagstaff. Located on the southwest corner of town, within Flagstaff’s main fire vector, directly adjacent to homes and in overstocked stands containing excessive fuel loads, the potential for high severity fire was high. Treatment of this area has helped create a more resilient landscape, reinforced Flagstaff’s characteristics as a Fire Adapted Community and will allow for safer and more effective wildfire response should a fire ignite.  Six various collaboratively developed prescriptions were crafted to meet the county’s objectives to: increase public safety by reducing the risk of high severity wildfire; increase forest health; improve or create wildlife habitat; increase aesthetics; and improve recreational visitor experience. Treatment areas were marked and implemented utilizing an innovative GIS based approach to digitally collect location data to mark specific areas according to prescriptions and define boundaries, deferrals, sensitive sites. This data is incorporated into a digital map installed on a tablet in the equipment to guide the contractor in application of desired prescriptions. This digital approach, referred to as Designation by Prescription Plus (DxP+), allows for more rapid timber marking to help reduce the significant on-the-ground costs and time necessary to mark and prepare projects. It also yields other efficiencies including a better ability for fire staff to allow wildfires to burn within prepped areas that, if marked using a traditional painted approach, would not be permitted to burn or would otherwise incur additional cost and time to conduct new analysis and re-marking. DxP+ also eliminates the residual eyesore of painted trees that would remain visible for years after a painted leave tree mark.  The project utilized both mechanical harvesting and debris disposal complemented by hand thinning and piling completed by the Winslow and Diablo Canyon crews in mechanically inoperable areas and other sensitive locations. Most material and debris produced by this project was utilized with harvested logs sent to the mill for use as pallets. Slash was chipped for processing into landscape mulch helping offset overall treatment costs and reducing smoke impacts to the community from pile burning.  Treatment at Fort Tuthill County Park has helped tie-in many puzzle pieces of treated landscape on adjacent federal, state and privately-owned land in this crucial area of town. Despite the elevated risk of ignition inherent from such high visitation at the park, the risk of destructive fire has been greatly reduced and conditions have been created to allow the reintroduction of fire in the next several years to further reduce fuels and provide a myriad of associated ecological benefits.  The project started in the summer of 2017 and was funded through Coconino County with the assistance of Wildland Fire Hazardous Fuels grant funding. Project partners included, AZ Department of Forestry and Fire Management, Coconino County, Greater Flagstaff Forests Partnership, the U.S. Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, AZ Game and Fish, Northern Arizona University School of Forestry, NAU Ecological Restoration Institute, Campbell Global and the City of Flagstaff. |
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