

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

New Jersey's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

The Challenge

New Jersey's high population density has created land-use pressures in which more people are moving from urban areas toward the more rural areas. This is causing an expansion of the wildland urban interface (WUI) and an increase in the complexity of wildland fire preparedness and suppression. With more people living in and enjoying the state's wildlands for various forms of recreation, the number of fire starts and the seriousness of their consequences increases. A potentially explosive combination is created when the factors of hazardous wildland fuels, WUI home development, and an increased risk of human-caused ignitions come together under extreme fire weather conditions. Hazard mitigation becomes an important tool for the New Jersey Forest Fire Service to reduce the risk of wildland fires in the WUI of New Jersey.

The Solution:

Using National Fire Plan funding the New Jersey Forest Fire Service has developed a grant program for organizations and government agencies on a localized level to develop and initiate firewise education, hazard mitigation and community wildfire risk education programs. The goals of the program are to reduce the vulnerability of communities across the state to damage from wildfire; reduce excessive wildland fuel accumulations in and around areas of human development; increase community awareness of wildfire issues in New Jersey and promote opportunities to educate the public; and develop partnerships to reduce the wildfire hazards. The grant program targets organized homeowner associations, community organizations, and non-profit organizations that own open space to promote and initiate hazard mitigation projects. The program also targets local and county government agencies such as fire departments, fire prevention bureaus, public works and parks and recreation agencies. Each project can be reimbursed up to \$5000 on a 50/50 cost share basis.

Benefits:

With the Hazard Mitigation Grant program, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service is successfully engaging local



Neighbors participate in a community project funded by the NJ Forest Fire Service's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to create defensible space around homes.

Photo courtesy NJ Forest Fire Service.

communities to solve a local problem. Since 2003, 16 projects have been completed totaling \$65,300. There are currently an additional 14 projects in progress. Some of the completed and pending projects include: a 4-H youth group fire prevention and education display; projects on campfire safety and hazard fuels mitigation in and around a Boy Scout camp; home assessment project and fuels reduction clean up; projects to create defensible space and educate communities on the principles of firewise; and fuels management and mitigation projects with a homeowners association.

Sharing Successes:

With 30 projects completed or ongoing in the wildland urban interface areas of New Jersey, the Forest Fire Service is building partnerships with local community groups that will enable the agency to accomplish its goals for wildland fire protection in the wildland urban interface. Grant programs which provide funding for local projects enhance a community's ability to resolve issues at the local level.

For more information, contact:

Kathryn P. Maloney, Area Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4103
E-mail: kmaloney@fs.fed.us

Billy Terry, Assistant Director
11 Campus Blvd., Suite 200
Newtown Square, PA 19073
Phone: 610-557-4145
E-mail: bterry@fs.fed.us

Fire and Aviation Management

The New Jersey Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides funding resources for local communities to get involved in hazard mitigation and education projects.



USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry

April 2007
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