

Traprock Hazard Reduction Project

The Challenge

The central Minnesota Anoka sandplain ecosystem covers a 13-county area and is the source of drinking water for several major cities. Sandy soils, flat topography, and a shallow water table typify the sandplain. Increasing populations in central Minnesota have resulted in the expansion of the wildland-urban interface in this important area. Based on historical fire occurrence, Anoka sandplain communities were identified as a high priority for the Firewise Minnesota program, which began in 2001. The wildland-urban interface areas in and around the city of Ramsey, MN, are typically overstocked with Norway spruce and nonnative Scotch pine stands. There are also several forest health issues that are causing tree mortality including a bark beetle infestation.

The Solution

The Firewise Minnesota program provides technical assistance to communities and uses National Fire Plan funding from the USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management program to provide grants to communities to implement firewise practices. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources utilizes an established network of urban and community foresters within priority areas to help implement the program.

An analysis of vegetation, fire history, and population statistics identified high-risk areas in which communities could focus their efforts. Within the town of Ramsey, the neighborhood of Traprock was selected to receive a hazard mitigation grant. In 2004, the grant was used to complete a hazard assessment for the Traprock development; conduct a Firewise/Defensible Space workshop for residents, fire department officials, Master Gardeners, and county officials; and develop a hazard mitigation project that would thin the Scotch pine, remove ladder fuels and the “carpet” of pine seedlings, and prune branches on residential trees.

A community used National Fire Plan funding to carry out a hazard mitigation project that saved their homes from a wildland fire.



Merchantable wood that was harvested from a hazard reduction project is stacked and awaits transport to a local mill.

Photo credit: Minnesota DNR

Resulting Benefits

- Thirteen homes within the Traprock neighborhood, each valued at more than \$200,000, participated in the hazard mitigation project. The treated area was tested by a wildland fire on April 9, 2005, that was ignited by a resident burning debris in an adjacent Ramsey neighborhood. When the fire reached the firewise-treated neighborhood, flame lengths shortened significantly and the fire slowed and spread less aggressively. The threat to the homes was effectively removed and firefighters easily extinguished the fire.
- The \$13,300 National Fire Plan grant leveraged \$37,471 in local matching funds from the city of Ramsey. The total cost of the project was \$50,770.

Sharing Success

The Firewise Minnesota program uses community resources such as community foresters and fire departments to provide local expertise and help implement the program. The program is stimulating interest and action in other communities in the Anoka sandplain. Similar projects are ongoing in the community of Andover and in Pine County, MN. A wildfire risk analysis of Andover identified six high risk neighborhoods. Since 2002, Andover has also used National Fire Plan funding to complete hazard mitigation projects in three neighborhoods and is currently working in a fourth neighborhood.



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