

Funding available to help central Wasco County forestland owners reduce wildfire risk

THE DALLES — Private forestland owners in central Wasco County can reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve their forest health with conservation assistance available from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Forest Service. Applications for the current round of funding are due by April 16.

This forest restoration effort, called the Central Wasco County All-Lands Project, is funded by the Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Initiative. The Joint Chiefs initiative is a partnership between two USDA agencies — NRCS and the Forest Service — that reduces wildfire risk on both public and private forests. NRCS is offering assistance to help private landowners treat and improve their woods and forests; the Forest Service will be performing similar restoration on the federal side of the project boundary in the Mt. Hood National Forest.

"Forestland threats such as wildfire and disease

know no bounds," said Garrett Duyck, NRCS acting district conservationist in The Dalles. "Working across public and private land boundaries is key to increase forest resiliency and protect our forestlands."

"The completed work will restore pine and oak habitat and riparian areas, improve conditions for wildlife, and reduce the risk of fires spreading from public lands to neighboring non-federal lands," said Kameron Sam, Mt. Hood National Forest District Ranger for the Barlow and Hood River Ranger Districts. "We look forward to getting work done on the ground that benefits the forest and our neighboring communities."

Project funding will help forestland owners implement conservation practices, such as forest stand improvement and woody residue treatment. Project goals are to improve landscape resiliency to disease and disturbance and to restore ecological function in Oregon white oak habitats for associated plant and

wildlife species.

Forest stand improvement utilizes practices that guide or influence a forest stand to meet a particular objective, such as improving habitat for various wildlife species, reducing the risk of unwanted fire, or influencing the stand structure to meet landowner objectives, according to a press release. It can help to reduce the risk of unwanted wildfire, while also creating greater resiliency to potential stressors.

Planned woody residue treatments will move forest stands towards more historic conditions by reducing stocking levels through thinning, mastication, and prescribed burning. This project incorporates high-hazard, high-risk communities as identified in the Wasco County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

The Central Wasco County All-Lands project started in 2020 and will continue through 2022, targeting restoration on nearly 47,740 acres of state, federal and



Photo courtesy of NRCS Oregon

private forestland in Wasco County.

Collaborating project partners include NRCS, Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Elk

Foundation, Wasco County Soil and Water District, and Wasco County Forest Collaborative.

Interested landowners should submit applications by April 16 to The Dalles Service Center field office (2325 River Road, No. 3, The

Dalles, OR 97058) to be considered for the current round of funding.

For more information, contact Duyck at 541-298-8559 x113, or Garrett. Duyck@usda.gov.

Klickitat County reports latest metrics on COVID-19 vaccinations

Klickitat County has distributed 5,498 vaccines, according to the latest metrics updated on Washington state's online COVID-19 dashboard.

The breakdown for those doses results in 15.68 percent of the county now has a first dose and 4.13 percent being fully vaccinated. Vaccine shipments are being received each week and the vaccinations are on-going.

The Klickitat County Community partners have been working hard to continue vaccine distribution to everyone eligible, per the Washington State Department of Health guidelines.

Currently, the data is showing that it takes one to two weeks after the second vaccine is given to become fully protected. With that information, the county health

department is asking that all residents please continue to use social distancing, face masks, and limit gatherings to minimize the risk of spreading the virus in our county.

The health department said they are seeing a trend of relaxation, which is to be expected with the hopes of vaccination protection and things opening back up.

"However, we need to

continue taking health precautions until our county is at a higher vaccination rate to continue our downward trend in positive cases," said a press Klickitat County press release.

"The vaccine is a valuable tool needed to end this pandemic without having to see a significant majority of our family, friends, and residents struggle through the effects of COVID-19."

Resources

- Klickitat County Public Health Department, www.klickitatcounty.org/1187/Klickitat-County-Coronavirus-Response
- Klickitat Valley Health, www.kvhealth.net
- NorthShore Medical, northshore-medical.com
- Skyline Health, mysylinehealth.org
- Healthy Washington

Roadmap to Recovery, www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/HealthyWashington.pdf

- Vaccine Information and FAQs, www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/Vaccine
- Washington Department of Health, www.doh.wa.gov
- Washington Department of Health Dashboard, www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/DataDashboard

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