

Deschutes, Crook counties granted \$1 Million for wildfire prevention

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

R. David Paulison, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced Friday that FEMA has selected four risk reduction projects in Oregon to receive funding through its Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM) national competition. The PDM Program provides funding for mitigation plans and the implementation of cost-effective projects, prior to disaster events. Deschutes and Crook is expected to receive over one million dollars to reduce wildfire risk on public and private land in the two counties.

In Oregon, FEMA grant recipients include:

Project -- Federal Share

City of Salem, Fire Station Seismic Retrofits -- \$1,037,250

Deschutes & Crook Counties Wildfire Fuels Reduction --\$1,010,190

Clackamas County Deep Creek Bridge Seismic Upgrade --\$338,771

Development of City Mitigation Plans for Region 1 and 3 -- \$250,000

“Mitigation saves our nation \$4 for every dollar spent. This program encourages local leaders across the nation to look ahead and plan against what could be catastrophic events. These mitigation activities in Oregon show that the State and local communities are working together with FEMA and other partners to make mitigation happen,” said Paulison.

Of the four projects funded in Oregon, Crook and Deschutes Counties' joint project is the only one to address the risks associated with wildfire and the only one to take a uniquely coordinated, regional approach to solving a problem.

While in Washington D.C. this past February, Deschutes County Commissioner Mike Daly worked closely with the County’s lobbying firm The Ferguson Group to educate FEMA officials about the need to receive the Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant.

"We continue to recognize wildfire as the greatest threat to Crook County citizens. These valuable grant

funds will help us address this issue through on-the-ground hazard reduction and greater public awareness and preparedness," said Crook County Judge Cooper.

The total cost of the Deschutes/Crook fuels treatment project is estimated at \$1,347,935. Of that \$1,010,190 will be grant funds received from FEMA and \$337,745 will be the value of labor, equipment, and supplies provided as an in-kind contribution by Deschutes County, Crook County, Project Wildfire, Community Wildfire Planning Committee members, private property owners, and volunteers.

Properties that could be eligible to receive wildfire fuels treatment in conjunction with the grant are those designated at high risk in the Deschutes and Crook Counties Natural Hazards Mitigation Plans and Community Wildfire Protection Plans, most notably those within the Prineville Lake Acres, Indian Rock Estates, Mountain Ridge Estates, Ponderosa Pines, and South Deschutes County communities. Final selection of project areas will be based on which lots can most successfully build on current mitigation plans and efforts, owner readiness and interest, and proximity to mitigation projects already proposed or underway, critical facilities, public lands, or other significant features.

“This is an absolute interagency effort between Project Wildfire, both counties, the Central Oregon Fire Chiefs Association, the six community wildfire protection plan steering committees, past and present elected officials and administrators at Deschutes and Crook Counties. We hope to maximize our efforts with this grant money so we can receive the maximum use from these dollars to increase safety buffers between public and private lands,” said Deschutes County Forester Joe Stutler.

FEMA received 470 applications for the 2007 competition. A team of experts from federal, state, territorial, local and tribal governments evaluated all eligible applications and based their determinations on a wide range of criteria such as the technical feasibility of the proposed project, the project's cost-effectiveness, management and staffing of personnel to implement the project, hazard and risk factors, and benefits to the community.

“Our national team faced an extraordinary challenge picking out the best projects from all the applicants,” said David Maurstad, Director of FEMA's Mitigation Division. “While many projects met all the necessary criteria, we worked to choose the best projects for the amount of funds available. These projects really are the cream of the crop and they show how seriously the nation, the states and applicants take mitigation activities.”

For additional information about the FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant to Crook and Deschutes Counties, please call 322-7117. For more information about Project Wildfire, please call 382-1675.

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