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Local wildfire risk grants awarded

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Two local wildfire risk mitigation projects received grant funding support this week as part of a total \$6.4 million in summer grants issued statewide through the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation program administered by the Colorado State Forest Service.

The city of Steamboat Springs was awarded a \$34,800 matching grant for a forest treatment project located north and east of the Fish Creek Water Treatment Plant. The estimated almost \$70,000 total project will include funding from the city and Mount Werner Water District for work that will take place in summer through fall 2022.

Forest Service grant program manager Diana Selby said the city's project is intended to help protect drinking water supplies for Steamboat and will include fuels treatment via mastication in Gambel oak vegetation on 46 acres. The treatments will be implemented in a mosaic pattern across the project area to provide adequate fuel breaks, breaking the horizontal and vertical continuity of vegetation to decrease the possibility for wildfire spread. The project also will provide habitat enhancement for elk and mule deer.

The Arvada-based nonprofit Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, which has a satellite office in Steamboat, was awarded a \$20,000 grant for a Catamount Municipal Water Wildfire Risk Mitigation Project, which will reduce fuels in a high wildfire risk area within the wildland-urban interface east of the Catamount subdivision and golf course. The mitigation project will help to protect homeowner property and potable water resources for Catamount, said Sally Ross, restoration and resiliency program director at the trust, which holds the conservation easement on the land.

The total cost of the Catamount project scheduled for early summer 2022 is estimated at \$40,000, with matching funding provided by the Catamount Metropolitan District. The parcel abuts U.S. Forest Service and private lands and is critical overwintering and calving range for elk and mule deer, Ross said. The grant funds will support the implementation of defensible space around a potable water tank and creation of a fuel break on a total of 60 acres of Gambel oak vegetation. The treatment methods primarily will be mastication with some additional hand cutting and will link previously mitigated areas.

Increased funding for the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation program was secured during this spring's state legislative session to help address the growing threat of wildfire in Colorado. During this grant cycle, the Colorado State Forest Service awarded funds to 42 applicants from 25 counties across the state.

The Forest Service assists large landowners, community groups, municipalities, local fire departments and HOAs secure grants and assistance for projects that help residents and communities prepare for wildfire and improve the health of forests. More information about grant funding opportunities is available at CSFS.ColoState.edu/funding-assistance.

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