



FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITIES LEARNING NETWORK

Notes from the Field

Island Park Sustainable Fire Community

Update: Summer 2015

Earlier this summer Les Fadness took on the project coordinator role for the Island Park Sustainable Fire Community (IPSFC), and has hit the ground running. With their Wildfire Awareness Week successfully wrapped up, he shared this update on the recent accomplishments of this collaborative, which has been focusing heavily on assessing risk and helping landowners mitigate those risks.

Requests for risk evaluations continue to roll in on a daily basis. This speaks highly of the nature of the business, the outstanding efforts of Susan and Bronwyn on the outreach staff, and the behind-the-scenes efforts of committee members and volunteers! Susan and Bronwyn have been knocking on doors, staffing booths promoting the program at Wildfire Awareness Week and various other events and venues around the eastern Idaho area. We have an expanding list of 80 property owners signed up for risk evaluations, and 34 more signed up for slash pick-up days. Conservative estimates of contacts include 373 people visiting the IPSFC booths at the various Wildfire Awareness Week venues and more than 120 field contacts by the outreach staff throughout Island Park subdivisions.

In July we lost a veteran team member, Fuels Specialist Scott Waldron, as he gracefully bowed out to pursue other personal and business interests—we wish him all the best. Seth Russell is continuing the evaluation and contracting efforts. Seth and I have split the Island Park arena into manageable sections, so that I can help perform evaluations and move the program forward. Collectively, we have completed 30 home evaluations, which have resulted in six confirmed projects totaling approximately 11.5 acres for treatment. We are working with another five property owners for an additional 4-6 acres of treatment. Many of the homeowners who requested evaluations out of concern for their properties have been reassured by the results of the evaluations, with their properties requiring little or no fuel reduction work to be performed. While we haven't been



Wildfire Awareness Week events in the summer of 2015 featured something for everyone, from informational booths to games, crafts and visits with Smokey Bear.

Photos: USFS/Liz Davy

able to develop a project for each homeowner, we are meeting our goals of making public contacts and performing evaluations—our biggest accomplishment has been the one-on-one education encounters with homeowners.

IPSFC released a bid notice for five project sites and were pleased to meet with seven contractor representatives for the site tour. Of these, we received bids from three companies. It was interesting to note that all the bids came in above the amount the grant is capable of supporting. The overages ranged from several hundred dollars to an excess of \$15,000 for one project. This created a minor setback in our planning and execution, but we're working through this. We are reviewing the bid process, criteria standards, property demographics and other possible reasons for the high bids. Some property owners have stated they are willing to contract with the tree service for the amount above the grant and continue with the work, but others are not so willing to do so.

The process of releasing a bid notice for the slash pick-up days in August and September, but was temporarily grounded by language technicalities. We have been successful in clearing those matters up with the parties involved and are proceeding with the bid announcement.

ISLAND PARK SUSTAINABLE FIRE COMMUNITY VISION

Human and ecological communities of Island Park and West Yellowstone are resilient to fire, insect and disease through awareness, outreach and action.

Public response this summer has been great and even though we're quickly approaching the sunset of the Cohesive Strategy grant, we are still receiving requests. In fact, as I have been preparing this update, I've paused four times to schedule people for three slash pick-ups and two risk evaluations.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the contributions of a local group of Island Park stakeholders for their concern, compassion and generosity. The Targhee Women's Club has awarded the IPSFC an \$800 grant for the purposes of furthering the program's goals. This is a significant contribution and I want the Island Park community to know the deep appreciation we have for being selected as a recipient this year.

We have been joined by some great and valued partners in Fall River Electric Coop, *Island Park Journal*, *Island Park News*,

Standard Journal, Idaho Department of Transportation, Targhee Women's Club, Island Park Fire Department, and innumerable commercial sponsors and volunteers as well as our federal, state and local governing entities. Without them, we would not be nearly as successful as we are.

I hope this update will demonstrate the achievements of the group and encourage everyone to continue the great effort. It's safe to say, there will be more to come!



Fuels cut and ready for removal at one of the four defensible space demonstration projects completed by IPSFC in 2014.

Photo: IPSFC/Jessica Simpson

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