

The Aspen Fire Emergency Watershed Protection Program

Contents for Frequently Asked Questions

A. Contacts and Basic Information

- Where Can I Find Information About Erosion Control And Re-vegetation Assistance?
- Where Can I Get Information And Apply For Emergency Watershed Protection If I Can't Get Up The Mountain?
- Can I Apply for EWP Assistance by Mail?

B. Emergency Watershed Protection Program & Application Process

- What Is EWP?
- What Will EWP Pay For?
- Where Do I Pick Up Sandbags, Seed, And Straw?
- Do I Have To Install The Sandbags And Seed & Mulch Myself?
- What If My Property Seems Fine And I Don't Think I Need To Do Anything?
- Why Are There Three Different Forms To Sign?
- Do I Have To Sign All Three Forms If I Just Want To Pick Up Sandbags, Seed, And Straw?
- Can I Ask the EWP Program to Do Work on My Neighbor's Property If Treatments Needed to Protect My Lot Cross Over Onto Theirs?
- My Friends Can't Be Here And Asked Me To Help Work On Their Property, Can I Apply For EWP Help On Their Behalf?
- Ok, I've Laid Out Some Sandbags, Seeded And Mulched; When Does The Rest Of The Work Get Done?
- What Do Those Little Flags On My Property Mean?
- Who Will Contact Me To Approve The Site Plan?
- Can I Get Materials Through EWP and Install Them Myself?

C. Erosion Control Practices

- Why Is Erosion Control And Re-vegetation Important?
- What Safety Issues Should I Be Aware Of?
- Recovery Priorities- Where Do I Begin?
- How Do I Use Sandbags? - How Do I Use Seed And Straw? - What's In the Seed Mix?
- Should I Wait To Seed And Mulch My Property Until After The Debris Is Removed?
- Can Someone Come and Check My Work to See If I've Placed My Sandbags and Seeded/Mulched Correctly?

D. Information And Referral For Non-Ewp Issues

- Who Can I Talk To About Tree Removal?
- Can I Remove Debris On My Own?
- How Can I Volunteer or Get Help from Volunteers?
- I Am a Forest Service Lease Holder; Who Can I Talk To About Recovery Work On My Lot?
- Where Can I Report Injured or Nuisance Animals?
- Who Wrote This FAQ Document?

Frequently Asked Questions for the Aspen Fire
EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM

Last Updated 8/21/03; Pima Natural Resource Conservation District

CONTACTS AND BASIC INFORMATION

WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT EROSION CONTROL AND REVEGETATION ASSISTANCE?

The county information center for Aspen Fire recovery services is now located at the Zimmerman School at the lower end of Sabino Canyon Parkway in Summerhaven.

WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION AND APPLY FOR EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION IF I CAN'T GET UP THE MOUNTAIN?

Your primary contact for answering most questions should be your Neighborwise section leader or neighborhood leader. There is also lots of important information on the web site:

www.mtlemoncabin.com .

To find your section leader, click the link to Neighborwise:

<http://www.mtlemoncabin.com/neighborwisemap-leaders.jpg> ,

or call Neighborwise leader Judy Epstein at (520) 760-2802.

To find application forms, get updates on scheduled meetings, availability of materials and work in your neighborhood, and to find out about many other aspen fire recovery services, see the county web site: www.aspenfirerecovery.org .

If you still have general questions about rebuilding and development services from the county, try the Aspen Fire Recovery Hotline: (520) 740-6504.

For remaining questions about erosion control and the EWP program, or to have an application sent to you, the community outreach contact for Pima County is Joni Monroe at (520) 740-6509, or e-mail Joni.Monroe@dot.pima.gov .

To speak to someone from NRCS call 887-8520 ext. 3.

CAN I APPLY FOR EWP ASSISTANCE BY MAIL?

Yes. Applications are available on-line at www.aspenfirerecovery.org , or you can call 740-6509 to have one sent to you.

You may mail completed applications to: Pima County Flood Control District, Public Works Building, 201 N. Stone, 4th floor, Tucson AZ 85701.

To help speed up the process you may fax applications to the county at (520) 740-6749, but you still need to send a signed original to the mailing address above.

EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM & APPLICATION PROCESS

WHAT IS EWP?

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program helps protect lives and property from the effects of flooding and erosion resulting from a natural disaster such as the Aspen wildfire. EWP funding is administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), a branch of the USDA. NRCS is also responsible for on-site damage surveys and site plans according to EWP criteria. The Pima County Flood Control District (“the county”) has agreed to be the local sponsor that will install and maintain conservation treatments. Their sponsorship is also needed to provide legal authority to enter into contracts and to obtain permits and easements. EWP is a cost-share program providing up to 75% of the cost of emergency measures, and in this case, the county is contributing the remaining cost, so the program is free to landowners in Summerhaven. For more detailed info go to www.az.nrcs.usda.gov/ewp .

WHAT WILL EWP PAY FOR?

Six conservation treatments are approved for Summerhaven to control erosion, flooding and debris flows. These treatments are designed to protect lives and property in Summerhaven and to protect the watershed below. Treatments include seed and mulch for revegetation, run-off control structures such as sandbags or straw-bale diversions, and sediment and debris collection structures such as straw-bale check-dams.

In order for landowners to begin some work right away, the program is providing some sandbags, seed and straw for landowners to apply immediately. For more serious treatments we will first need to have a Conservation Treatment Site Plan prepared by NRCS and approved by the landowner(s).

See information handouts (available at the Zimmerman School) or web sites for a more detailed description of conservation treatments. **Visit the demonstration project at the Zimmerman School to look at examples of conservation treatments that have already been installed.** For more detailed info on EWP scope and criteria go to www.az.nrcs.usda.gov/ewp .

WHERE DO I PICK UP SANDBAGS, SEED, AND STRAW?

Check the web site (www.aspenfirerecovery.org) for updates on availability of these materials. After signing the EWP application, you can get seed for re-vegetation and vouchers for sandbags and straw mulch at the Zimmerman School on Sabino Canyon Parkway. Check at the school for locations of these materials.

Each single size lot is allowed one 5-lb. bag of seed, 5 straw-bales, and 20 sandbags. If your lot is larger, let us know and you can get more materials accordingly.

DO I HAVE TO INSTALL THE SANDBAGS AND SEED & MULCH MYSELF?

No, you can wait for the county to do the work after you have approved it on your site plan. If you need help getting the work done sooner, keep in touch with the Neighborwise network to see if volunteers are available.

WHAT IF MY PROPERTY SEEMS FINE AND I DON'T THINK I NEED TO DO ANYTHING?

Be mindful that whatever happens on one person's property usually affects other properties in the community, as the watershed rarely follows property boundaries. Erosion control treatments can protect you, your neighbors, and community infrastructure, as well as the health of the watershed downstream. EWP is a voluntary program and you are not obliged to participate. Do consider, however, that there is no cost to you, and that no work (other than evaluation and planning) will be done without your permission. You are welcome to sign up in order to take advantage of the free consultation, and you are always free to decline further assistance.

WHY ARE THERE THREE DIFFERENT FORMS TO SIGN?

1. The "Application for Emergency Watershed Protection Program" gives NRCS permission to help you, and describes the kind of help you are requesting. This is needed for NRCS to secure funding from the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. If you are not sure which treatments to apply for, it is best to check all the boxes, as this gives NRCS the latitude to recommend whatever is necessary, and if there are some treatments you don't need or want, we can cross them out later.
2. The "Right of Entry" form allows county and NRCS staff to enter your property (but not to enter buildings or footprints of burned structures) for evaluation and site planning, and to complete the work after you have reviewed and approved the site plan. Conservation treatments will not be installed without your permission.
3. The "Conservation Treatment Site Plan" will be drawn up by NRCS staff, and then the county (with the help of the Neighborwise section leaders) will contact you for your approval and signature. After you have approved the plan, the county can order the materials and begin the work.

No work will be completed without the understanding and concurrence of landowners involved in each Conservation Treatment Site Plan.

DO I HAVE TO SIGN ALL THREE FORMS IF I JUST WANT TO PICK UP SANDBAGS, SEED, AND STRAW?

If you want to get your own seed and straw you are encouraged to use the recommended seed mix and certified weed free straw for mulching.

If you want to get just these basic materials through the EWP program, and are sure you don't need any further assistance, we still need the signed "Application for EWP Program".

You are also encouraged to sign the county "Right of Entry" form, as this will allow staff to evaluate the conditions on your site, and advise you as to whether other measures might be appropriate. This can help to protect your property and the community infrastructure around you. Allowing the county right of entry will not incur any cost to you, and no work will be done on your property without your permission. Staff doing evaluations for site plans will not enter buildings or footprints of burned structures.

CAN I ASK THE EWP PROGRAM TO DO WORK ON MY NEIGHBOR'S PROPERTY IF TREATMENTS NEEDED TO PROTECT MY LOT CROSS OVER ONTO THEIRS?

No, we do need to have permission from all property owners. If you know anyone in your neighborhood who has not yet signed up for EWP assistance, it would be helpful if you could contact them to be sure that they are aware of the program.

MY FRIENDS CAN'T BE HERE AND ASKED ME TO HELP WORK ON THEIR PROPERTY, CAN I APPLY FOR EWP HELP ON THEIR BEHALF?

No, the application forms need to be signed by the actual property owner.

OK, I'VE LAID OUT SOME SANDBAGS, SEEDED AND MULCHED; WHEN DOES THE REST OF THE WORK GET DONE?

It is impossible to give a specific timeline at this point, but you can check the county web site (www.aspenfirerecovery.org) and the Neighborwise network for updates on work in specific neighborhoods, and for notices on scheduled informational meetings. Residents and landowners in neighborhoods scheduled for erosion control activities will also be notified.

To get some perspective on the timing, consider the steps that need to be accomplished:

NRCS is currently working on site plans, leaving flags to locate planned treatments, and has already completed those in the highest priority areas.

Site plans need to be approved by the landowners and returned to the County: you can help with this- keep in touch with your Neighborwise network and help get the relevant neighbors' approval as soon as possible.

The county has already ordered much of the materials and hired a contractor to help install approved conservation treatments.

WHAT DO THOSE LITTLE FLAGS ON MY PROPERTY MEAN?

A single flag that says "NRCS" with a parcel number means that NRCS has been to the site and completed a site plan. Lines of flags show where conservation treatments are recommended on the site plan and the end flags in the line tell what type of structure it would be. The color of the flags varies depending on what we have, but will not be yellow or red, which are used to mark plumbing and septic systems. Please leave flags in place as the county will need to refer to them to complete the work after you approve the site plan.

WHO WILL CONTACT ME TO APPROVE THE SITE PLAN?

The Pima County Flood Control District will be working through the Neighborwise network to contact residents after NRCS has completed their site plans. You must approve the site plan in order for the county to install the conservation treatments.

CAN I GET MATERIALS THROUGH EWP AND INSTALL THEM MYSELF?

Only the initial allowance of sandbags, and the hand seeding and mulching can be done by the landowner. For other run-off and sediment control structures, you can certainly choose to do work yourself or hire your own contractor, but EWP can only pay for measures that were requested on the "Application for EWP Program", described on an approved "Conservation Treatment Site Plan", and contracted through the county for installation.

EROSION CONTROL PRACTICES

WHY IS EROSION CONTROL AND REVEGETATION IMPORTANT?

For detailed information see materials available at the Zimmerman School or web-sites.

Burned slopes and areas below them are more susceptible to erosion, flash flooding and debris flows, due to the absence of plants to bind the soil and absorb the impact of rainfall. Severely burned soils can form a water-repellent layer which will also increase run-off. Debris can clog culverts and drainage ways causing over-bank flooding. It is expected that streams and ditches below burned areas will have much higher than average flows.

WHAT SAFETY ISSUES SHOULD I BE AWARE OF?

Be aware of monsoon weather. Try to arrive on the mountain early and leave before afternoon thunderstorms begin. Avoid drainage ways where flooding may occur. Do not try to outrun a storm by driving down the mountain, as flooding is likely to be worse downstream, especially below large burned areas. Never cross a flooded roadway.

Be aware of fire-damaged trees that may fall in high winds, and avoid trees or tall objects that may attract lightning. Watch out for “elephant holes”- places where tree roots have burned, leaving holes where the ground can collapse.

When clearing debris or working in footprints of burned structures, wear boots and gloves, and watch out for sharp objects. A long magnet on a broomstick can help collect loose nails and screws (check hardware or home improvement stores). Wear a dust mask to avoid inhaling ash or other potentially hazardous material such as asbestos. Keep children and pets away.

RECOVERY PRIORITIES- WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Stop by the Zimmerman School for information, including how to contact your Neighborwise section leader.

You can apply for the Emergency Watershed Protection program to get free seed, straw, and sandbags, and to begin the process of having other erosion and flood control treatments installed, also at no cost to you.

Note above precautions for working around burned structures- wear gloves, boots, and a dust mask. See county guidelines for debris removal.

Put a red flag over your septic system and install sandbags to protect vulnerable system components such as pumps. Yellow flag plumbing and seal pipes and drains with caps, plastic, or duct tape to keep ash and debris out.

“Hold Your Ground”:

Put sandbag traps at doorways to divert flooding and contain ash and debris.

Apply seed and straw mulch for re-vegetation to control erosion and run-off.

Clear culverts and drainage ways of debris to avoid over-bank flooding.

HOW DO I USE SANDBAGS?

For detailed information see materials available at the Zimmerman School or web-sites.

Here are some basic tips:

Use sandbags to provide a clear path to direct flooding and debris flow around structures, not to try to dam or stop the flow. U-shaped check-dams can be used in small swales and drainages to trap sediment and debris.

Use plastic tarp under sandbags for a water-tight seal along doorways.

Limit sandbag placement to 2 layers, overlapped like brickwork.
Be a good neighbor- don't direct flows toward another home site.

HOW DO I USE SEED AND STRAW?

For detailed information see materials available at the Zimmerman School or web-sites.

Here are some basic tips:

Use 25 pounds of seed per acre (about 3 lbs. per 50' X 100' lot).

Split up your seed and broadcast half at a time across your whole property.

Broadcast in two directions, e.g. first across the slope, then walking up and down slope, or if it's too steep, walking midway between previous lines of travel.

Rake seed into the soil a bit, especially if there is a crust that needs to be broken up.

Scatter certified weed-free straw AFTER seeding, until about 90% of the soil is covered.

In areas most subject to wind or water erosion, you can try to anchor the straw by punching it into the soil with a square shovel.

WHAT'S IN THE SEED MIX?

For detailed information and a list of seed vendors, see materials available at the Zimmerman School or web-sites.

The recommended mix includes barley or wheat, and native cool season grasses. If you do try to purchase your own seed, make sure it contains no noxious weed seed and no weedy brome grass seed.

SHOULD I WAIT TO SEED AND MULCH MY PROPERTY UNTIL AFTER THE DEBRIS IS REMOVED?

Put seed and mulch where you can for now, as it helps to stabilize as much soil as possible. If you're concerned about areas that are about to be disturbed for debris removal, you might try to save a little seed and straw for later. Remember, also, that seed and mulch is prescribed on the site plans for virtually every property in Summerhaven, and that hydroseeding and aerial seeding are underway for the entire community. Areas that still need more seed will probably be covered by the county when they begin work, after you approve your site plan.

CAN SOMEONE COME AND CHECK MY WORK TO SEE IF I'VE PLACED MY SANDBAGS AND SEEDED/MULCHED CORRECTLY?

If you can find an NRCS person in your neighborhood (with the orange hat & vest that say "EWP") they might be able to take a moment to give you advice. Remember they are busy trying to get site plans done as soon as possible. Also, be sure that you have read the information handouts available at the Zimmerman School, and on the web sites, which will probably answer most questions. If you know of serious erosion or flooding issues that might affect community infrastructure, bring them to the attention of your Neighborwise section leader.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL FOR NON-EWP ISSUES

WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT TREE REMOVAL?

Trees that still have some green on their needles may recover. These trees should be left in place. Trees marked with red ribbon are potentially hazardous and may fall due to fire damage. Stay away from red-tagged trees. You can direct questions about tree health, salvage, and reforestation to the AZ State Land Department, Fire Management Division, Tucson District at (520) 628-5480.

CAN I REMOVE DEBRIS ON MY OWN?

Before removing any debris yourself, you should see the “Ash and Debris Management Fact Sheet” available at the Zimmerman School or on the web site. For further questions see the web site www.aspenfirerecovery.org and click on “Debris Removal” (listed under Recovery Teams). There will be information on the criteria for aspen fire debris acceptance at landfills, finding a qualified contractor, and other updates on debris removal.

HOW CAN I VOLUNTEER OR GET HELP FROM VOLUNTEERS?

First, contact your Neighborwise section leader to ask about help needed or available in your community. You might also try checking the web site for the Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona to see if they are involved in any projects: go online to www.volunteersoaz.org and click on the “What’s Hot” link.

I AM A FOREST SERVICE LEASE HOLDER- WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT DOING RECOVERY WORK ON MY LOT?

Forest Service lessees can call their permit administrator, Rachel Hohl, at (520) 749-8700 (Santa Catalina Ranger Station), or call Bill Lewis, Special Uses Program Manager, at 670-4583. You may clean up your property yourself and remove debris according to county guidelines. Be cautious around burned trees that may fall.

WHERE CAN I REPORT INJURED OR NUISANCE ANIMALS?

Arizona Game & Fish recommends that for nuisance animals you should call Animal Experts at 531-1020, and for injured animals call the Wildlife Helpline at 903-1104. For injured wildlife you can also call Tucson Wildlife Center at 290-WILD (290-9453).

WHO WROTE THIS FAQ DOCUMENT?

This list of Frequently Asked Questions with answers was created by Art Torrance of the Pima Center for Conservation Education, with support through a grant agreement between the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Pima, Redington, Santa Cruz and Winkelman conservation districts.

Pima Center for Conservation Education (PCCE) is a non-profit education center sponsored by the Pima Natural Resource Conservation District. For educational outreach programs in Pima County related to Aspen Fire recovery and other conservation issues, see the web site www.pimanrcd.org/pcce or call Art Torrance, Director, PCCE at (520) 730-0971 or email pcce@pimanrcd.org.