USFS working on defensible space in neighborhoods

This spring, federal, state and local agency personnel will conduct defensible space inspections and provide recommendations on ways to create defensible space around homes to comply with defensible space regulations. While these regulations require residents to create defensible space on their own property, the defensible space zone often extends beyond the property line.

The Forest Service Homeowner Defensible Space and Fuels Reduction Stewardship programs allow homeowners adjacent to National Forest System lands the opportunity to work with the Forest Service to extend defensible space onto NFS lands in order to meet recommended clearance standards.

Homeowners may conduct low-impact defensible space clean up on any portion of NFS lands within 100 feet of their home. Specific guidelines are included in the Homeowner Defensible Space Agreement issued by the Forest Service or the local fire protection district responsible for conducting defensible space inspections. Defensible space treatments include removing pine needles and other forest debris, pruning trees and removing brush. Homeowners are required to follow Forest Service standards and guidelines to protect soil, prevent erosion and protect forest resources while working on NFS lands. The removal of standing trees is not allowed under this agreement. In most cases, the work is light and manageable, as Forest Service personnel already engage in large-scale fuels reduction on NFS lands. The free agreement can be implemented annually without being reissued.

When removal of trees or clearance beyond 100 feet is recommended, homeowners can clean up excessive fuels under a Fuels Reduction Stewardship permit. The Fuels Reduction

Stewardship permit authorizes homeowners to remove excessive fuels beyond 100 feet of their home and with prior approval from the Forest Service, may allow homeowners to remove standing trees at the homeowner’s expense. If tree removal is recommended, Forest Service personnel will mark trees that need to be removed.

Prior to authorizing the work, a Forest Service employee will assess the adjoining NFS land, determine if homeowners qualify for the Fuels Reduction Stewardship Program, determine the scope of work, and answer any questions. A free permit will be issued authorizing the work to occur within a specified period. The permit expires at the end of the calendar year in which it was issued.

The benefits of implementing defensible space treatments on or adjacent to, private property include reducing the speed and intensity of a wildfire, improving forest health and providing increased protection to neighborhoods and communities. With drought comes increased fire risk, so it is crucial for communities to implement these strategies to better prevent the spread of a devastating wildfire.

For more information, or to set up a free consultation with Forest Service personnel, call 530.543.2759. Provide a detailed message including name, return phone number and address.