

Memorandum of Understanding

To: Honorable Wendy Rogers
Arizona State Senator District 7
1700 W Washington ST
Phoenix, AZ 85007

From: Honorable Thomas Torres
Arizona State Forester
1110 W Washington ST Suite 500
Phoenix, AZ 85007

The Department of Forestry and Fire Management is committed to working with you, your staff, your constituents, and the Arizona Legislature. We want a balanced solution that keeps the public informed of our work with our statutory requirement of mitigating high-risk wildfire conditions. Last week the Department mailed 137 local property owners our response to the issues raised in multiple letters from Robert Grossman. Grant received this letter via email on Thursday March 21st. On Friday March 22, I travelled to the project site and met with the Grossman's and Chuck Gaccione, President of the Cedar Mountain POA. We toured the current project, known as Red Lake Phase 1 and then toured the Cedar Mountain POA, which is the location of a proposed project known as Red Lake Phase 2.

DFFM recognizes the need for public outreach and that public input is needed to successfully implement wildfire mitigation projects. My letter dated March 21st details the fire risk, project design, project impacts, project status, and how we will move forward with project communications. DFFM will share project information by emailing updates to the local home/property owners associations as well as to all individuals who wish to be notified. Individuals that wish to be notified can be placed on our project mailing list by sending an email asking for inclusion on the mailing list to the following email address: projectinfo@dffm.az.gov.

The Project

The Red Lake Phase 2 project still requires more preliminary work before we can continue with the project design. Before project design and implementation, state and federal law require that we complete surveys to assess cultural resources, sensitive species, and other concerns such as soil types and plant species. The completion of these surveys is an excellent milestone to engage with HOA/POA members because at that time we can start with the actual prescription for the treatment.

Once the required surveys are completed, the next step in the process is the actual development of the project plan and prescription, another important milestone. The plan and prescription will detail every aspect of the project, from what vegetation to remove and retain, the final state of the biomass generated by the project, and even how the existing roads are utilized.

After the design of the prescription and the project, all that remains is scheduling the work, which will be largely dependent on the conditions on the ground. Project implementation cannot proceed in wet, muddy conditions, exceedingly dry conditions, or if there is too much snow.

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Project and Communication Schedule

The following schedule is a rough timeline as additional needs are identified and steps are completed:

Now – August 2024, Initial Scope and Surveys: We anticipate that we will complete our formal compliance process by the end of this period. This will allow us to understand our legal obligations and to begin the development of the prescription and other portions of the plan. DFFM will provide notice and general survey results to interested parties via email.

August 2024 – November 2024: DFFM plans to complete field scoping and plan development in this period. We hope to have a draft of the project plan sometime in November. DFFM will provide draft plans at this point.

November 2024 – February 2025: DFFM project plan completion and development of the necessary documentation for contractor selection and operations during this period. DFFM will attend Red Lakes HOA meeting to present the plan and prescription.

After February 2025: The beginning of operations is TBD at this time. DFFM does not have enough information regarding internal capacity, contractor availability, and treatment type to provide any meaningful estimate of when the project will start.

Whereas, DFFM is committed to providing wildfire mitigation and suppression for Arizona residents and visitors. Fuels treatment projects are designed to maximize the health of Arizona's forests, woodlands, grasslands, and wildlife while balancing ecological and cultural considerations with firefighter safety and the protection of property.

Whereas, DFFM will make a genuine effort to effectively notify and communicate with affected property owners forest treatment plans in the Red Lake area.

Whereas, DFFM will provide notice and general survey results to interested parties on the Red Lake Project.

Whereas, DFFM notifications and communications on Red Lake Phase 2 will include property owners in Red Lake Estates, Chaparral Heights, Cedar Mountain Heights, Kaibab Estates, Howard Mesa, and Four Hills Ranch.

Whereas, DFFM will receive input, consider the impacts of public concerns, and adjust plans if allowable 90 days before operations begin.

Whereas, DFFM establishes this memorandum in good faith with Arizona State Senator Wendy Rogers of District 7, on this Seventeenth day of April 2024.

X 

THOMAS TORRES

ARIZONA STATE FORESTER

X 

WENDY ROGERS

ARIZONA STATE SENATOR DISTRICT 7