



PRESS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • May 6, 2019

Interested parties are hereby notified that the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) and Federal Emergency Management Agency prepared a Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) for the Statewide Wildfire Mitigation Project.

The Proposed Action is to provide funding for large-scale wildfire mitigation projects throughout the State of Florida. These actions could include hazardous fuel reduction activities and the creation of defensible spaces surrounding at risk structures.

- Hazardous fuel reduction projects involve the reduction, removal, or modification of existing vegetative fuels that are nearby buildings or structures that, if ignited, pose a threat to human life and property, especially critical facilities. Actions associated with hazardous fuel reduction projects often includes thinning vegetation, removing ladder fuels, reducing quantity of flammable vegetation, and replacing flammable vegetation with a less flammable alternative. Such activities may include, but are not limited to, the following techniques:
 - Chemical treatments, including herbicide applications with appropriate safeguards to ensure protection of human life, the environment, and watersheds
 - Grazing or biomass conversion
 - Mechanical treatments, such as disking, mulching, grinding, mowing, chopping, and removal of such material; material left onsite must meet appropriate depth practices in accordance with applicable codes and best practices
 - Biomass removal, including clearing straw, removing dead or dry vegetation, thinning, removal of brush and pine straw, or removing blown-down timber from wind throw, ice, or a combination
- Defensible space surrounding a residential or non-residential structure results in structures having a lower risk of a wildfire causing damage. Defensible space is created by reducing or removing flammable vegetation around the perimeter of a given structure, resulting in a buffer that limits the spread of a wildfire and provides firefighters with an area to safely perform fire suppression activities. This activity can include clearing tree branches, vertically and horizontally.

There are two current projects being considered under the PEA. The first project, Palm Beach County Natural Areas Wildfire Mitigation, will involve mechanical chopping/shredding of vegetation and reducing highly flammable fuel loads of saw palmetto and other shrubs that have encroached and increased in the mid-story of the habitats. The project is expected to perform vegetation management activities on 31,387 acres. The second project, Indian River County Countywide Wildfire Mitigation, proposes to implement a countywide program for wildfire management. Work activities will include pruning, chipping and mowing within the designated work areas and in general, removal or mulching of vegetative material. The project is expected to perform vegetation management activities on 527 acres, with an expected project area size of approximately 1,388 acres.

Per the National Environmental Policy Act (42 USC 4371 et seq.), other environmental laws, and FEMA NEPA regulations (FEMA Directive 108-1), FDEM and FEMA prepared a Draft PEA to evaluate the Proposed Action and its Alternatives' potential impacts on the natural or human environment. The Draft PEA includes Project Purpose and Need, Alternatives and selection process, affected environment, and potential environmental consequences.

The Public Comment period ends thirty (30) days after first Public Notice. Written Public Comments on the proposed project or related matters may be faxed to FEMA R4 Office at (770) 220-5440; emailed to FEMA-R4EHP@dhs.gov attn:

PG. 2 – PRESS RELEASE/PUBLIC NOTICE – DRAFT PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (PEA) FOR THE STATEWIDE WILDFIRE MITIGATION PROJECT

EO1988/NEPA reviewer; or mailed to FEMA R4 EO11988/NEPA reviewer, 3003 Chamblee Tucker Road, Atlanta GA, 30341-4112.

The Draft PEA may be viewed/downloaded from: <https://www.fema.gov/medialibrary/assets/documents/178673>

Based on FEMA's findings to date, we anticipate no significant adverse impacts on the natural or human environment. If new information changes that, then FEMA will issue 2nd Public Notice for more Public Comments. Otherwise, the Draft PEA will become the Final PEA, FEMA will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and this Initial Public Notice will serve as Final Public Notice. Major comments will be appropriately addressed in final documents.