

Rural Development Through Forestry

Fire Hazard Reduction in Minnesota

The Challenge

During the 1960s, large acreages of pine plantations were established in the north metro area of Minnesota. Houses built in or near these plantations have increased risk of damage from wildfires. The plantations need to be thinned and/or pruned to reduce fuel buildup and improve their overall health. The small acreage on individual ownerships often made thinning economically unattractive.

The Solution

With funding provided by both the Northeastern Area's Economic Action Program and the National Fire Plan - Firewise Program, a stewardship forester was hired to promote fire hazard reduction and improve forest health through management practices. Working with targeted landowners in or near pine stands, the forester completed a Wildfire Hazard Assessment on fire-prone properties and prepared woodland stewardship plans for all interested parties. Fuel reduction through thinning and pruning treatments, along with timber harvests, was arranged for interested landowners. Communities were provided with information and education about fire prevention principles, forest insect and disease mitigation, and wildlife habitat management.

Resulting Benefits

- There is now a reduced fire risk for some fire-prone properties in or near pine plantations, valued at nearly \$3 million.

During the project, 125 landowners were contacted, resulting in the preparation of 88 Fire Risk Assessments and 48 woodland stewardship plans. As a direct result, 42 acres of plantation were thinned and pruned, and many homes in the north metro now have greatly reduced fire risk and healthier pine stands.



Pine thinning helps to reduce fuel buildup in Lino Lakes, MN.

- Improved stewardship of privately owned pine plantations has resulted in improved forest health, enhanced wildlife habitat, and increased timber values.
- Satisfied landowners were well pleased with the results and were, consequently, more inclined to continue stewardship efforts in the future.
- The improvement in stewardship has enhanced the overall aesthetic quality of the area.
- Greater utilization of the pine resource for a variety of forest products has helped promote economic development.

Sharing Success

- The project is such a success that several communities are planning additional or similar activities in the future.
- Satisfied landowners, planners, and community officials are increasingly telling others and employing similar procedures on their property.
- Fire chiefs are now routinely educating the public about fuel-reduction techniques.



USDA Forest Service
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