



Multi-phase Summit Park forest management project nearing end

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SUMMIT COUNTY, Utah — A multi-phase forest health and fuels reduction project will be wrapping up in the Summit Park Open Space in the next week or so.

“The first year we focused on thinning some of the heavier treatment areas and staying away from the steeper slopes,” said Jessica Kirby, Public Lands Manager for Summit County, who says this year focused on mitigation in steeper areas. “We’re just focusing on taking down dead and downed fuels, creating piles with the brush that is taken out and just creating some space.”

The Basin Recreation-run project has focused on roughly 300 acres of dense forest, intertwined with hiking and mountain biking trails, butting up to the Wildlife Urban Interface and homes in Summit Park.

“This whole community is really nestled and tucked into the woods here, so it was very important for the protection of this community and homes and homeowners up here,” said Matthew Bengé, Open Space Supervisor for Basin Recreation.

This forest management treatment aims to improve forest health, protect watershed resilience, and mitigate hazardous fuels. The Parleys Canyon Fire sparked in August and encroached on the area where the fuels mitigation has been taking place. However, it didn’t fully reach the area.

“Allowing us to do some of this management, it’s not going to stop fire, we’re never going to say it’s going to stop it, but it’s going to reduce it and it gives the firefighters a chance to get the handle of it,” said Kirby, who received national recognition for the project and her commitment to community outreach and Firewise. “This is just a very small piece of a really large puzzle in Summit County and throughout Utah.”

Project treatments over the two phases included the creation of a shaded fuel break, the creation of small openings in the dense forest area as well as thinning operations.

Lots of Summit Park homes are met with thick vegetation, which has had fire officials concerned about the threat of wildfire for years.

“It’s an eye-opener, and it should be to get people to be proactive in their own homes,” said Kirby about the Parleys Canyon Fire. “Ultimately, a project like this that butts up to a neighborhood, the goal is to slow the fire down and to give those homes a chance if they’ve done their own work on mitigation efforts.”

Source:<https://www.fox13now.com/news/local-news/multi-phase-summit-park-forest-management-project-nearing-end>