

**Federal Emergency Management Agency
PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Bastrop County Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, Texas, HMGP-FM-5233-TX Project #7

Interested persons are hereby notified that Bastrop County has applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), through the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures that reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster.

FEMA proposes to provide funding to Bastrop County to conduct hazardous fuels treatment on approximately 520 acres of public and private property to reduce wildfire hazards in an 860-acre area of central Bastrop County. The proposed project area is located south of Lake Bastrop and encompasses the subdivisions of Piney Ridge, Pine View Estates, Lake Bastrop Pines, and an area of development along Hoffman Road. The main focus of this project will be on private residential lots. Some treatment of County road rights-of-way (ROWs) 15 feet from the road's edge on both sides may take place.

A skid steer with a mulching head attachment will be used to mulch vegetation which will be left on the ground at no more than two-inches depth. No fuel reduction activities will be performed within 30 feet of a structure, in the 100-year floodplain, in wetlands, or on private property without valid consent and right-of-entry from the property owner. In larger areas of continuous fuels adjacent to structures, fuel breaks will be established. In pine dominated sites, which tend to be areas of heavy fuel concentration, the treatment will include the removal of encroaching brush species and ladder fuels. Brush species to be removed include yaupon holly and eastern red cedar. In these areas dead vegetative material such as branches, standing loblolly pine, and debris will be removed.

Pine and hardwood trees over 6 inches in diameter at breast height will be removed only with the approval of the onsite wildlife biologist. The lower limbs of larger and taller trees, including hardwoods and pines, will be removed up to 8 feet above the ground. Trees would be cut at ground level and stumps left in place. Cut, trimmed, dead, and downed vegetation will be mulched daily. It is estimated that the fuels reduction and defensible space work will take 2 years to complete without seasonal restrictions.

A draft Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to assess the potential impacts of the proposed action and alternatives on the human and natural environment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500 – 1508), FEMA's Instruction 108-1-1 for implementing NEPA, the National Historic Preservation Act, Executive Order 11988, Executive Order 11990, and 44 CFR Part 9. The draft EA evaluates alternatives that provide for compliance with applicable environmental laws. The alternatives evaluated include (1) no action; (2) the proposed action described above.

The draft EA is available for review and comment at Bastrop County Office of Emergency Management at 104 Loop 150 West, Bastrop, Texas 78602, Monday-Friday, 8-5 pm. An electronic version of the draft EA can be requested from Dorothy Cook, FEMA Region 6, at dorothy.cook@fema.dhs.gov or viewed on FEMA's website at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/region/6>.

The comment period will end 30 days from the initial notice publication date on September X, 2021. Written comments on the draft EA can be mailed or emailed to Dorothy Cook, Senior Environmental Specialist, FEMA Region 6, FEMA Region 6, 800 N Loop 288, Denton, TX 76209; Email: dorothy.cook@fema.dhs.gov. If no substantive comments are received, the draft EA will become final and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be issued for the project. Substantive comments will be addressed as appropriate in the final documents.