



For Immediate Release: May 15, 2020

Firewise grants still available for Fairbanks area homeowners

(Fairbanks, AK) – Owners of Fairbanks-area homes surrounded by spruce trees may be eligible for a grant from the Alaska Division of Forestry (DOF) to make their living spaces more resistant to wildfires.

The division's Fairbanks area office has a limited number of Firewise grants available to pay for cutting and removing spruce trees to create defensible space around homes. Each qualifying homeowner can receive up to \$2,500 for removing spruce trees within 100 feet of the applicant's home or garage.

"These grants have been very popular and effective," said Fairbanks Area Stewardship Forester Jim Smith. "Over the past 10 years more than \$500,000 in Firewise grants have been awarded to Fairbanks-area landowners." The grant funds were provided to the division by the U.S. Forest Service.

Qualifying homeowners will also receive an assessment, complete with recommendations on other steps required to become Firewise. Removing nearby spruce is just one factor in protecting structure against wildfires. Others include storage practices, accessibility to emergency responders, community infrastructure, natural conditions and fuels, and home structure and practices.

Grants are based on the number and size of trees to be removed, complexity of trees to be felled, and method of disposal for branches. While a DOF stewardship forester recommends specific trees for felling, the final decision is up to the homeowner. As the grant program will end this summer and work must be done in the next few months, homeowners should contact DOF as soon as possible to see if they qualify.

Ordinarily, stewardship foresters would meet with landowners to assess their property and susceptibility to fire. But with COVID-19 concerns remaining high, homeowners seeking grants will be asked to submit photos of their property so foresters can recommend what trees to remove. Follow-up photos can document the work and clear the way for final grant fund delivery.

###

CONTACT: Jim Smith, Division of Forestry Stewardship Forester, (907) 451-2668, james.smith@alaska.gov