



Austin-Travis County Becomes a Model Fire Adapted Community Following Destructive Wildfires

The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is a national collaborative effort to bring a broad cross-section of stakeholders together to address wildland fire management challenges. The Strategy directs wildland fire planning activities and has three primary goals: restore and maintain landscapes, develop Fire-Adapted Communities, and improve wildfire response.

Activity	Impact
# attendees in workshop, Texas Fire Adapted Communities Symposium	120
Tons vegetation removed from "home ignition zone" in one Austin neighborhood	120
% city land set aside for permanent WUI conservation area	30
# Firewise Communities in Austin-Travis County (as of 2015)	17

Two destructive wildfires in 2011 brought the importance of wildfire preparation and protection to the forefront of the City of Austin, Travis County, Texas. These fires led to a multi-year, multi-faceted project to address wildland fire safety in Austin-Travis County.

The Austin Fire Department (AFD) provided the human-power, expertise, and educational resources necessary to address wildland fire issues. In 2013, the AFD, with federal, state, and local partners, developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, a plan specifically designed to reduce wildland fire risk according to the needs of Austin-Travis County. From this plan, a risk management approach was adopted, including firefighter training and community education. For example, all AFD firefighters were certified in wildland firefighting techniques. In addition, two national programs were promoted by AFD to educate the Austin-Travis County community on fire prevention and protection: Ready, Set, Go! and Firewise. Ready, Set, Go! recommended indoor fire prevention techniques for the home or business, and Firewise principles instructed communities on

specific emergency plans and property protection. A combination of these programs, with town hall meetings, led to Austin-Travis County leading the state in the number of Firewise communities. In 2013, Austin Firewise Communities united to form the Austin Firewise Alliance to assist other communities in the process of becoming Firewise.

That same year, AFD hosted the first Texas Fire Adapted Communities Symposium, attended by over 120 stakeholders. The symposium empowered residents and communities in Austin and Central Texas to reduce wildfire risk. Additional wildfire awareness and prevention workshops were offered to the public in 2013 and 2014.

The AFD investigated mitigation strategies to reduce vegetation that served as dangerous wildland fire fuel. Jester Estates, an Austin-Travis County neighborhood, removed 120 tons of vegetation from the "home ignition zone". The AFD and partners are further mitigating fuels by conducting prescribed burns within Firewise communities and on city property. Austin-Travis County has designated nearly 30% of city land

Success stories highlight regional wildland fire accomplishments that support implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy in the Southeast. The stories demonstrate how the Southeast is improving its "fire resiliency" through technology, education and outreach, forest management, collaboration, and more. Success stories also serve as a model for other communities to follow.

as conservation areas, to serve as a permanent Wildland Urban Interface. The AFD conducted a prescribed burn on 200 acres of this city property to reduce wildland fire hazard within the city.

The goal of wildland fire efforts in Austin-Travis County is to have a prepared and informed community and fire department that responds efficiently and safely in the event of a wildfire. Extensive training and educational events for firefighters and residents have led Austin-Travis County to become a model Fire Adaptive Community. Partnerships, cooperation, technical expertise, education, action, and funding have enabled the success of this project.



Community Wildfire Preparedness Workshop with over 125 attendees. Attendees learned what it means to be fire adapted. Credit: Austin Fire Department.



Firewise Landscape training held at Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center. Fire ecologist Michelle Bertelsen and the Environmental Compliance Coordinator discuss fire effects and how native and exotic vegetation behave under various conditions. Credit: Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, Texas.



Pinnacle Fire at Austin, Texas. Credit: Austin-Travis County, Texas.

Additional Information:

Website: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/wildfire-division>

Homeowner portal: <http://www.prepared.ly>

Contact: Justice Jones, Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator, Austin Fire Department, justice.jones@austintexas.gov

Partners: Austin Fire Department, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas A&M Forest Service, North Lake Tahoe Fire District, Austin Water Utility, National Fire Protection Association, Austin Disaster Relief Network, Austin Energy, Austin Parks and Recreation, Lyndon B Johnson Wildflower Center



Southern Regional
Extension Forestry

