



City of Cañon City

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Third Quarter 2014 Stormwater Management Program News

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Fremont County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan:

Fremont County is in the process of developing the County's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan. The City of Cañon City is partnering with Fremont County in this process. The purpose of the July meeting was to review and discuss hazard mitigation projects which have been submitted and to begin prioritizing the projects for the plan.

Stormwater Permit Renewal Update

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has finished reviewing the comments received on the draft renewal Phase II General Stormwater Permit. An initial draft has been written and is being reviewed by the Water Quality Control Division before being released for Public Comment. The Permits Division anticipates releasing the second draft of the permit late this summer. Stakeholder meetings will be held and the Division will be accepting comments after the draft permit is released. The draft will be posted on the City of Cañon City's website when it is available.

CURRENT CONCERNS:

Stormwater staff has been conducting inspections of various stormwater infrastructures, including detention basins and drainage channels. During the inspections they have identified a common finding on several drainage channels and some detention basins – illegal dumping of yard waste such as grass clippings and tree branches, pet waste and trash either into the channel or basin or on its banks. Items placed on the banks of drainage channels have the potential to be blown or washed into the channel where they could block the flow of water. Additionally, as grass clippings, pet waste and trash decompose they release nutrients into the waterway which could lead to algae blooms. Disposal of these types of items in this manner is against Cañon City Municipal Code 8.24 Littering of Public or Private Property and Code 8.70.050 Illicit Discharge Prohibited – Exclusions and could result in a fine. We would like to ask everyone to please dispose of these types of items properly – by placing them in your garbage dumpster, or to consider composting yard waste. If you see someone dumping yard or pet waste or trash along a drainage channel or detention basin, please contact the Stormwater Program at 719-276-5265.

ROYAL GORGE FIRE MITIGATION UPDATE AND WATER QUALITY IMPACTS:

It has been a little over a year since the devastating fire in the Royal Gorge area. The City of Cañon City and the Natural Resource Conservation Service have been conducting mitigation efforts to reduce erosion and restore vegetation to the area. These efforts included aerial seeding, planting tree seedlings, hydro-axing and construction of check structures.

Hydro-axing

Contractors were hired to hydro-axe 1,368.8 acres of land on both sides of the Royal Gorge. The hydro-axing consisted of using specialty machines which chew up dead standing and fallen trees, creating wood chips which were left in place as mulch. This helped provide cover for seeds and reduce erosion. Some of the burned trees were left standing in place to provide wildlife habitat and create visual diversity.

Aerial Seeding

A custom seed mix was used to aerially seed 853 acres on both sides of the Royal Gorge. The seed mix contained Western Wheatgrass, Side-oats Grama, Sand Dropseed, Triticale and a mix of wildflowers. As the seeds sprout and grow their roots will help stabilize the soil and reduce erosion.

Tree Seedlings

Pinion Pine seedlings were planted from May to June of this year. There were seven planting events in which 362 volunteers from the community, Cañon City employees and the Colorado State Forest Service participated. A total of 1,473.5 hours were generated by the volunteers planting 5,070 seedlings.

Check Structures

Contractors built 172 check structures in three watershed drainages on both sides of the Royal Gorge. The check structures were constructed from logs and rocks available on site. Heavy rains in August and September of last year damaged some of the structures. During reconstruction of these structures a geotextile fabric was added to bolster their strength and effectiveness.

Water Quality Impacts

The most noticeable impact on the Arkansas River following the fire was the amount of sediment and debris being carried by the river. As the vegetation grows and provides ground cover, the soil will become more stable resulting in less sediment being carried to the river by runoff. The check structures in drainages will also help to slow runoff and reduce erosion. We may still see some sediment, and possibly debris, entering the river from the burn area for some time. It can take an area up to 10 or more years to recover from a wildfire, depending on the amount and type of mitigation which was done after the fire. The Arkansas River still receives sediment from areas up river which were not in the burn area. The Cañon City Water Treatment Plant has the ability to close the raw water intake from the river in times of bad water quality. They did close the intake during and immediately after fire and have closed it a few times since due to heavy sediment in the river, although not all the occurrences of heavy sediment in the river were due to runoff from the burn area.

Special Thanks to Bob Hartzman, The City of Cañon City Water Superintendent and David Mau, Supervisory Hydrologist with the USGS for their invaluable information for this newsletter.



*"We live in a global environment, which is a closed system. Environmental contamination affects us all."
Richard Radcliff*

Please feel free to direct any concerns or questions to Glenda DeBekker, City of Cañon City Stormwater Program at either 276-5265 or grdebekker@canoncity.org. You may also write to the City of Cañon City's Stormwater Program, P.O. Box 1460, Cañon City, CO 81215-1460.