



## Miller's Reach Develops Plan to Mitigate Wildfires

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska*

**Matanuska-Susitna, AK** - The Miller's Reach Wildland Fire destroyed or damaged nearly 450 structures, and caused extensive damage to public infrastructure in June 1996. In cooperation with local businesses, several local, state, and federal entities created a Wildfire Mitigation Plan to implement aggressive fire prevention programs rather than continue to rely upon fire fighting and suppression.



The Wildfire Mitigation Plan proposed programs such as preventative land treatments that reduce fuels and break up large contiguous urbanizing fire-prone zones, the creation of defensible space around buildings, and improvements to existing buildings. Equally important, the plan emphasized the need to change people's perception of the wildland fire threat and how they see their place in a border between wilderness and urban spaces.

The Borough's Fire Mitigation Officer developed a wildfire prevention program the incorporated significant involvement from local area businesses. One national company distributed cups, banners and placemats with fire prevention methods and sponsored promotional slides shown in theatres before movies. A local insurance company provided volunteers and extensive fire prevention education materials for area home shows, and several local greenhouses and nurseries participated in a program to promote the concept of "defensible space" by encouraging the purchase of fire-resistant landscaping plants.

In support of fire damage reduction goals, programs were introduced that created firebreaks and evacuation routes; retro-fitted public buildings to increase fire-resistance; defensible space demonstration projects and exhibits; development of alternative water supplies and installation of dry hydrants, and installation of an automated weather data collection system for the Borough.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough's wildland fire mitigation efforts underline both the need for and the enormous benefits of forging partnerships. Due to the successful cooperation of numerous public and private partners, future wildland fires will result in significantly less damage.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County (County-wide)**

FEMA Region: **Region X**

State: **Alaska**

County: **Matanuska-Susitna Borough**

#### Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Wildfire**

Activity/Project Type: **Education/Outreach/Public Awareness; Vegetation Management**

Activity/Project Start Date: **06/1996**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

### Key Activity/Project Information

Funding Source: **Local Sources; Private funds**

### Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Non FEMA Cost:

### Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal  
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1119 , 06/07/1996**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

### Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.nifc.gov>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.firewise.org/>

### Main Points

- In conjunction with local businesses, several local, state, and federal entities created a Wildfire Mitigation Plan to implement aggressive fire prevention programs.
- The programs included preventative land treatments that reduced fuels and broke up large contiguous urbanizing fire-prone zones, the creation of defensible space around buildings, and improvements to existing buildings.
- In support of fire damage reduction goals, programs were introduced that created firebreaks and evacuation routes; retro-fitted public buildings to increase fire-resistance; defensible space demonstration projects and exhibits; development of alternative water supplies and installation of dry hydrants, and installation of an automated weather data collection system for the Borough.