



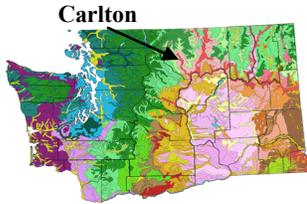
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Disaster Mitigation Working in Washington

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Protecting a Home in the Aftermath of Wildfire



Carlton, Wash. - The remote mountain home of Ann and Louis Stanton was severely threatened when the devastating 2014 Carlton Complex Fire burned 420 square miles of landscape and destroyed hundreds of neighboring homes and barns. Fires again raged in nearby areas during a second record-breaking fire season in 2015.

The couple had built their cozy home fully aware of the potential for wildfires around their 20-acre property in central Washington. As such, they used fire-resistant design and building materials on their home, and they created and maintained defensible space around it. Although the intense fires burned some of their land in 2014, the Stanton's home was saved. This, they believe, was due to a combination of hard-working firefighting crews, and their years of preparation and hazard mitigation investments.

In late 2014 the couple realized they faced a secondary threat. After the fire the steep hillside above their house had much less vegetation to soak up rainwater and hold the soil in place. This enhanced the risk of flash flooding or mudslides that could damage or destroy the house.

"After the fire, the burned trees around us were massively infested with beetles," said Ann Stanton. "We had to smile when we got the letter telling us to expect floods, too!"

With the help of an Okanogan Conservation District Emergency Watershed Protection program, the Stantons were able to create a 120-foot-long temporary dike designed to divert water and mud away from the house during periods of heavy rain or snowmelt. The 2-foot-high barrier, composed of crushed rock, was completed in the summer of 2015. As trees and other vegetation recover over time, the dike material may be moved and used for other purposes.

"We are grateful for the Washington state analysts who notified us that our home was at risk from this new hazard caused by fire damage uphill from us," said Ann. "What made us nervous was we had already experienced several small ash flows through our tractor shed and our entry road. The ash originated on property uphill from



Temporary dike protects home from flood or mudflow

ours, which had not received the state's forest thinning assistance offered in 2013. We asked to participate in the 2015 flood protection assistance program to mitigate this new risk."

The Okanogan Conservation District managed construction of the dike and "did a great job" getting it done with minimal disturbance to the natural vegetation, said Ann. The conservation district also supplied native seeds to jumpstart revegetation of those areas.

"We sleep better when it rains now the dike is in," she said.