

July 2019 - Park Views

From Short-term Problem to Long-term Benefit

This last March 4,900 residential and commercial customers of Avista were impacted by a widespread natural gas outage. The provider worked diligently for over a week to restore service to all customers. Here is a short excerpt from a communication between the President of Avista and their Ashland business customers.

We recognize that this outage was stressful due to its duration. The restoration process is a manual one and our service personnel worked to relight as quickly and as safely as possible. We would like to express our gratitude to the Ashland Community for its cooperation throughout this process. We understand the local parks are a valued part of the community, so we are making a one-time donation of \$25,000 to the Ashland Parks Foundation. Our hope is that this donation can contribute to the existing beauty of your parks and support opportunities for enjoying nature that already exists within your community.

The Ashland Parks Foundation is the non-profit extension of our Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC). The Foundation accepts donations and supports recreational programs and parkland projects within our parks system.

This donation was unrestricted and could be used for any number of suggested worthy projects. To that end APRC staff came up with a plan to use this money to address one of the most serious concerns facing our community today, *wildfire safety*.

Upper Lithia Park is some of the nearest forest land with proximity to our downtown and densely populated residential neighborhoods. The eastside of the park, up from Ashland Creek, is mostly undeveloped land with pedestrian trails. During dry conditions fire is one of the major concerns for our entire watershed, including Upper Lithia Park.

Therefore, APRC has decided to use the Avista donation to contract with Lomakatsi Restoration Project to manage a fuels-reduction restoration operation on approximately 50 acres in Upper Lithia Park. Treatment will include thinning out of suppressed trees, cutting out of fading and stressed trees and retaining trees along cutbanks to maintain soil stability. Tree species that will be part of the fuels reduction include Douglas Fir, Ponderosa Pine, Incense Cedar, White Oak and Pacific Madrone. No cut species will be Big-leaf Maple, Oregon Ash, Dogwood and Mock Orange.

Work on this project should begin this fall, 2019, soon after the fire restrictions are lifted. The “reduced” fuels will be stacked, piled and covered and then burned in the spring of 2020 by APRC’s Forestry Division.

We acknowledge that residential and business customers suffered during the natural gas outage. We also thank Avista for their donation to our greater community. We believe that this fully funded project will benefit all of Ashland and help keep the focus on making our city Firewise.

Mike Gardiner

Chair – Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission

Ashland Parks Foundation – Board Member