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## Arizona

### Creative Biomass Utilization Provides for Fire Reduction and Fish Housing

The Lake Havasu Field Office manages seventy-eight “boat in” campsites that are used heavily by visitors especially during Arizona’s fire season. In an effort to reduce the potential for fire starts, hand crews were tasked with clearing hazardous fuels in and around campsites. The fuels that are removed from the campsites are bundled and then sunk into the lake to create cover for native aquatic wildlife. Both the BLM and visiting campers will benefit from the added protection from wildfire, while anglers and native fish benefit from the creation of habitat. The Lake Havasu fisheries program helped to provide the materials, boats, and operators for the project. By employing biomass utilization as a tool, the BLM has saved money on disposal fees, personnel, and planning dollars to burn the piles.

*For more information contact Lori Cook at 928-317-3243.*

### Quigley Pond Prescribed Fire for Multi-Agency Resources Benefit

Habitat restoration is well underway at Quigley Pond, a State Wildlife Area, thanks to a cooperative effort with the BLM’s Yuma Field Office, Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Bureau of Reclamation, and Wellton Mohawk Irrigation District.

The Quigley Pond prescribed fire treatment occurred on March 7, 2006, under favorable winds and weather



*Prescribed fire treatment was performed for habitat restoration.*



*Members of a hand crew work to reduce fuels near campsites and the water’s edge.*

conditions. All ignitions went according to plan and all resource objectives were met. The wetland vegetation has vigorously regenerated and water levels have increased in the marsh. Surveys for the Yuma Clapper Rail have shown that even within a few months of the prescribed fire, the birds are once again using the area.

The goal for the wildlife area is to restore and manage riparian habitats. More specifically the focus is to maintain and enhance habitat suitability for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other riparian-associated wildlife. The prescribed fire was phase two of a larger project focused on enhancing and managing the natural habitat required for the survival of the endangered Yuma Clapper Rail. The Yuma Clapper Rail is a secretive marsh bird that relies on cattail vegetation as habitat. Historically, periodic flooding

was part of the natural process that renewed the cattail marshes of the lower Gila and Colorado Rivers. Currently, marsh areas of the Gila and Colorado Rivers do not flood and thus the reason why prescribed fire treatments are utilized. Prescribed fire treatments are able to mimic the natural habitat renewal process by removing the build up of vegetative debris within the marsh.

*For more information contact Lori Cook @ 928-317-3243.*

## Arizona's Rural Fire Assistance Grants Pay Off!

During the Black Mountain Complex Fire located outside of Kingman Arizona, several Rural Fire Departments were called upon to complete a burnout operation. This operation was intended to inhibit the growth of the Secret Fire. Firefighters and their equipment from Chino Valley, Summit, Highlands and Bullhead City Fire Departments were directed to ignite a 2.5 mile portion of unchecked fire line between the east flank of the fire and the homes in the Golden Valley subdivision. The completed burnout operation burned about 800 acres. Its success came in its ability to prevent any further advance of the fire toward the Golden Valley homes. Over the last several years, the BLM has aided several rural fire departments by supporting them with wildland fire training and the outfitting of them with wildland firefighting equipment. The firefighters who worked to successfully complete this burnout operation were some of the Departments who have benefited from the Rural Fire Assistance funding provided by the BLM.

*For more information contact Glen Burkhardt at 602-320-4920.*



*Chino Valley Fire Department engine assists in the burnout operation.*

## Colorado

### Making the Link: Community Wildfire Protection Plans, Fuel Breaks, and Fire

The Thomas Fire, which burned almost 3,800 acres of pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, and grass in mid-June, undoubtedly had the potential to burn many more acres and several homes. But thanks to fuels reduction efforts by both the BLM and the community of Greystone, that didn't happen.

“We know that cutting fuel breaks and thinning dense forests can be a big benefit to slowing or stopping a fast-moving wildfire,” said Dave Blackstun, Associate Field Manager for BLM's Little Snake Field Office in northwestern Colorado, “but we never know whether it will be one year or thirty before we put those fuel breaks to the test.”

The Browns Park area, where the Thomas Fire occurred, is located just north of Dinosaur National Monument approximately 66 miles west of Craig, Colorado. Large blocks of BLM lands are interspersed with private land. In northwest Colorado, the area records 200 natural fire starts in an average or below year. “The Greystone area can be pummeled with over 4,000 lightning strikes during one thunderstorm,” said Cathy Hutton, the Craig Interagency Dispatch Center Manager.

Conducting fuels treatment projects in the Browns Park area is nothing new to land managers with the BLM's Little Snake Field Office – they've been doing them since the 1980's. However, after the devastating fires of 2000 and the advent of the National Fire Plan, land managers became more engaged



*Two firefighters work together in safely igniting the burnout operation.*

with both Moffat County and the residents of Greystone, a small community of about 15 homes in the Brown's Park area. Both areas have been determined to be potentially at high risk from a fast-moving wildfire, like the Thomas Fire. That involvement ultimately resulted in the development of a County Fire Plan for Moffat County, which included a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the Greystone community.

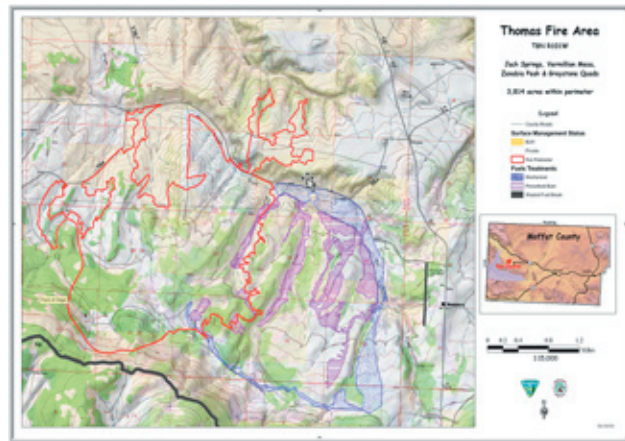
The combination of dense, continuous vegetation (such as piñon juniper trees) no viable water sources, response times of over an hour for a fire engine, and lightning have caused local fire management officials concern for many years.

Over the last several years, fuels treatment projects have moved closer to the public/private land boundary. Several Greystone residents called during the fire and thanked the BLM for putting in the fuel breaks – stressing they didn't really feel their homes were threatened – even as they watched the blaze grow to more than 800 acres with 100 foot flame lengths in just over three hours. Fuels treatment work completed prior to fire in Greystone area included:

- Mechanical treatments (brush beating and hydro-axe) in summer, 2003.
- Prescribed burning accomplished in the fall of 2003, 2004, 2005.
- Hand thinning, piling and burning accomplished along roads in area from 2003-2005 using BLM crews.
- CWPP finalized for Greystone area in December, 2004 in conjunction with Moffat County Fire Plan.
- Individual property owners in Greystone have completed a lot of work on their lands in conjunction with the BLM projects and have been supportive of the overall efforts.



*Note defensible space work done by the Greystone resident to the west of the house and driveway (Photo taken by a Greystone resident on the afternoon of June 13, 2006).*



*Fire started about 4 miles west of Greystone and burned into the west side of fuels treatment area through some of the old treatments, but with much less intensity.*

The Thomas fire, a lightning holdover, began on June 13 and was contained five days later. An Incident Management Team arrived the second day to assume management of the fire. Fortunately, the fire never reached the community of Greystone.

“Receiving the CWPP was helpful not only in establishing an initial action plan, but also in establishing a structure protection plan,” said Structure Protection Specialist Chris White. “CWPPs that describe structure locations, potential water sources, site specific mitigation plans, and which homes have defensible space aid greatly in providing for both firefighter and public safety and save reconnaissance time. Hopefully, all communities will have CWPPs someday.”

Firefighters reported the fire behavior moderated significantly when it reached the treatment area. Some observations of modified fire behavior due to the treatments included:

- Fire stayed out of the tree crowns and on the ground where initial attack crews could fight it.
- The fire was halted at one location and did not burn onto private land.
- Spot fires were fewer and easier to detect and suppress.

“It’s great when several efforts come together the way they did on the Thomas Fire.” said Blackstun. “If any one of the components – the BLM fuel breaks, the CWPPs, or the homeowner’s defensible space - hadn’t been there the situation could have turned out a lot differently.”

It’s quite possible that if the area had been left untreated, the outcome could have reflected the worst case scenario identified in the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis. That

situation would have included the fire spotting over the county road, burning many additional acres and resources, and increasing the risk to firefighter safety. The cost could have been well over \$2,250,000 instead of \$900,000. The cost of the combined fuels reduction work is about \$200,000.

“You’re mitigation program has achieved success and made a difference when landowners are calling to say thank you for the fuel break during the fire,” reported Fire Mitigation/Education Specialist Lynn Barclay. “They (landowners) want others to know these types of cooperative efforts can work when it counts.”

Department developed and implemented a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The fire department has been helping local landowners develop their own personal treatment plans as well as helping them improve the defensible space surrounding their homes.

Due to the hard work on all sides and great collaboration and coordination between all parties involved, another community will be safer from wildland fire.

## Montana

### Pine Hills Fuels Treatment

The Bureau of Land Management, in cooperation with Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the Miles City Fire Department and other local organizations, have initiated a fuels reduction project in the Pine Hills area, 10 miles east of Miles City, Montana.

After evaluation of the current fuel condition and the threat of extreme fire to surrounding subdivisions, the partners implemented a plan to reduce the risk of a catastrophic fire occurring in the surrounding community. The plan will be completed in different phases throughout the next few years. Eastern Montana Fire Zone personnel began hand thinning and piling in April of 2006. Larger material will be decked close to the roads for utilization as posts or firewood. The smaller material will be piled and burned at a later date. The goal of this project was to not only minimize fire danger to the adjacent communities, but also to restore the health and vigor of ponderosa pine stands.

Extensive planning and community outreach on this project assisted in gaining favor with the local residents. The outreach prompted the homeowners to ask what they could do with their own home and land to make it more defensible against wildfire. Under the BLM’s Community Assistance program, the Miles City Fire



*Treatment site before implementation of the fuels reduction project.*



*Treatment site after implementing the fuels reduction project where the fire risk has been reduced significantly.*