

# Snapshots 2003

February 21

## Utah

### West Mountain Wildland Urban Interface Project

Providing protection for communities and businesses situated among the sagebrush, grass and juniper of West Mountain have long been a challenge for fire managers. Urban sprawl is changing the character of this historically rural area dotted with orchards and small communities. This growth is increasing the risks to property from wildfire.

During the planning process, five treatment areas were identified around the benches of West Mountain to create fuelbreaks to protect the growing number of residences and businesses from wildfire. These treatments demonstrate to local residents techniques to use to protect private land. A contractor has completed disking a portion of the project to create a fuelbreak where less fire prone species can grow. A mixture of fire resistant and native seeds is being broadcast in those areas mainly by an imprint seeder. One unit will be aerially seeded due to resource concerns with the ground application.

BLM's Salt Lake Field Office is pursuing assistance agreements with the City of Genola, Strawberry Highline Canal and South Shore Farms. Assistance agreements will help maintain the fuelbreaks to protect private property and strengthen the effectiveness of the fuelbreaks on public land scattered along the base of the mountain. Salt Lake Field Office specialists have coordinated with the Utah County Fire Marshal and Utah County Fire Warden through all phases of the project to identify problem areas,

discuss project implementation and find opportunities to work with the local communities. Warning signs will notify recreational users of a re-vegetated area located near a special recreation management area for off-highway vehicle use. Off-highway vehicle groups were also notified to gain their support and help to protect the re-growth.

The project has received wide support from groups, individuals, and local governments. People in the area are familiar with the threats and frequency of wildland fire and its devastating effects, however, they have not always been aware of what could be done about it. To help resolve lack of knowledge, a plan for public education was devised to raise awareness and motivate property owners and local officials to take action. The county fire marshal and the county fire warden, in cooperation with fire chiefs and other community leaders will be an important part of the plan by helping to reduce fire hazards and mitigating the threats to residents and businesses. Media contacts and increased fire prevention patrols of the area will help spread the messages.



*The type of equipment used to disc sagebrush on West Mountain. Followed by seeding, this treatment will allow fire resistant and native plants to grow in areas were sagebrush and non-native grasses have encroached.*



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*Charred hills from the 400 acre Keigley Fire in 2002. Fast moving fires in the sagebrush and juniper threaten homes in the vicinity each year.*

To help deal with the rapid growth of Utah County, an ordinance was passed which provides wildland urban interface rules to regulate the construction of large developments. This ordinance has assisted fire managers in reducing the potential wildland fire problems within the unincorporated communities. Standards for access, water, and construction were included in the ordinance.

*Contact: Teresa Rigby, Fire Education & Mitigation Specialist (801) 977-4344*

## Price Canyon Recreation Area Hazardous Fuel Removal

The Price Canyon Recreation Area located just north of Price, Utah is used heavily by local residents from nearby towns. An assessment of the site by BLM specialists found thick vegetation within, surrounding, and along the one-way road in to and out of the campground. In the event of a wildland fire, visitors and employees could be trapped within the recreation area without adequate safety zones or alternate escape routes. The hazardous nature of this site became even more apparent when the 3,200 acre Price Canyon fire threatened to jump a canyon into the area of the campground last summer.

The BLM fuel specialist recommended a project to remove ladder fuels and thin selected oak brush within the campground, create a 300-foot minimum shaded fuel break around the perimeter of the campground facility and remove hazardous fuels along the narrow road to the recreation area.



*This photo shows the encroachment of fuels into the campground.*

Work began on the project on October 1, 2002, with local fire crew personnel and a contract crew from the Canyon Country Youth Corps. The fire crew cut the fuels, while the youth corps swamped and helped haul the fuels within the campground to pile sites. The youth corps worked and camped at the project for three weeks. Moab



*Canyon County Youth Corps members preparing for work projects.*



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fire personnel worked until snow fell the first part of November. The fuels removed from the campground facilities were stacked in two large piles to be burned during winter. At this point, the project is approximately one third done.



*Youth corps stack fuel into a trailer in order to haul it to the pit site.*



*Employees of the C&R Forestry contract crew in Idaho working on the Utah project.*

fuels. Four hazardous fuel reduction contracts and one aerial chemical application contract totaling \$203,770 were awarded this past year.

The second key point in the National Fire Plan is to do emergency stabilization and rehabilitation of burned areas. Cedar City awarded four contracts to apply, then cover seed on 4,167 acres. Contracts totaling \$77,250 were awarded for mixing seed, aerial seed application, and a chaining contract to cover the seed.

Seasonal crews traditionally work May through September. The latest that seasonal employees have worked in the past is to Thanksgiving. Through contracting, 16 seasonal employees have

maintained employment throughout the winter implementing wildland-urban interface and fire rehabilitation projects. They have worked on five wildland-urban interface projects and treated 1,290 acres since the 2003 fiscal year began October 1st. Types of treatments have ranged from pile burning, manually thinning pinyon and

## Contracts Get Work Done

National Fire Plan funding is strengthening the economy of southwestern Utah by issuing private contracts and retaining the majority of the seasonal workforce throughout the year. Nine contracts totalling \$281,000 have been awarded by the Bureau of Land Management, Cedar City in the past year.

One of the directives of the National Fire Plan is to increase use of local private sector services to reduce hazardous



*Rowland Yardley of Beaver, Utah is a local contractor who does chaining work.*



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juniper trees and mechanical treatment with an environmental tree cutter.

Preparedness and fire suppression strategies are also being developed during the off- season. Fire personnel have constructed two interface response trailers equipped with specialized equipment such as pumps, hose, sprinkler systems, and portable water tanks used for structure protection on interface fires. These trailers will be mobilized when the potential of fire to threaten homes in the interface is determined.



*BLM seasonal employee operates the environmental tree cutter.*



*Pilot Mike Thorton of Aero-Eagle Aviation in Parowan, Utah seeding a burned area.*

information collected an interdisciplinary team made up of fire and fuels staff, resource specialists, and line officers developed a plan to better protect the values and improvements from the effects of wildfire.

The project plan called for maintaining an existing fuels reduction treatment area implemented in the 1960's. No maintenance had taken place after the initial treatment. Without proper maintenance a dense cover of young juniper trees covered the area. It was determined that 1,000 acres of the old fuel break would be treated by physically

## Fillmore Field Office

Historic and recent wildfire activity east of the community of Meadow, Utah prompted the fire and fuels staff of BLM, Forest Service and Utah Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands to locate and collect valuable information associated with the values at risk in this area. Their findings included the presence of a small subdivision, large communication site, valuable watershed, and critical big game winter range. From the



*Landscape near Meadow, Utah.*



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cutting individual trees, then prescribed fire would be used to further reduce heavier concentrations of downed fuels.

A project specific service contract was prepared and awarded. The contractor implemented the project to achieve the crucial step in reclaiming the fuel break. Once the downed trees dry out the heavier concentrations will be burned.

The abrupt change in the fuel type that resulted from this treatment will lower fire intensity and modify fire behavior making initial attack objectives more obtainable. This fuel reduction treatment is just one step in protecting the subdivision, the communication site, the watershed, and big game winter range from the effects of unwanted wildfire.

Contact: Justin Johnson, Fuels Program Manager, (435) 743-3137

## Arizona

### Community Risk Assessment Project Underway

In November 2002, Hydrosphere Resource Consultants and Anchor Point Group met with BLM staff to begin work on a Wildfire Hazard Assessment and Mitigation Plan for communities at risk around the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. By January, these two Colorado companies had held initial public meetings in three communities near the assessment areas, delivered 4,000 packets of Firewise information to homeowners in the assessment areas, determined community hazard ratings, and completed field work including 500 individual home assessments and compiled vegetation and fuels data for the assessment areas. The consultants are currently loading fuels and home survey information into a software



Area of treatment.

program called Red Zone. The Red Zone information will be available to fire departments and communities for planning purposes.

At this stage, the contractors need to complete the written risk assessment report, as well as prepare seven mitigation plans for the communities at risk around the conservation area. Once the findings are completed the contractors will return to Arizona to present the findings to BLM field staff, Cochise County fire chiefs and the public.

Overall, the fieldwork and public meetings have been well received, although turnout was smaller



A contractor documents individual home assessment information with a personal digital assistant.



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than expected. A professional marketing consultant was hired to help increase the level of public participation at these meetings. As mitigation plans are distributed, the consultant will provide radio spots to stations in the vicinity of the study area, write articles for local community newsletters, advertise and prepare news release information for local newspapers, place flyers at heavily visited stores and public meeting places, and provide information by word of mouth.

When the mitigation plans are delivered the priority will be placed on implementing recommendations in high to moderate risk areas. Initial plans are being developed to hire contractors to complete hazardous fuels work in these communities and to purchase any necessary equipment so fire crews can assist in fuels reduction projects.

BLM staff at the San Pedro Office are continuing to mow fire breaks on the conservation area, to protect government and private structures, as well as protect wildlife habitat. This spring, a second tractor and mower will be rented with fuel project funds.

Contact: David N. Peters, Fire Mitigation Specialist, Tucson/Safford Zone, (520) 258-7207

## Teaching 6<sup>th</sup> Graders How to Properly Fight Fires

On November 21<sup>st</sup>, the Phoenix Field Office Fire Staff spent the day with the entire fifth grade class of Ishikawa Elementary School in Mesa Arizona during an annual trip to Tonto Rim Camp. This is a nature and outdoors education camp where the students learn about geology, plants and animals, outdoor survival and wildland firefighting. The students, in 6 groups of 15 to 20 each learned about what is involved in wildland firefighting through demonstrations and explanations of the tools and equipment used. This is eighth year the Fire Staff in Phoenix has participated at the outdoors camp as part of their ongoing education and outreach activities.

Contact: Ken Shaver, Fire Prevention Officer, Phoenix/Kingman Zone, (623) 580 5578



*Ishikawa students take aim at the fire.*

*Jeff Brown teaches students from Ishikawa Elementary School how to properly carry a chain saw.*



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## Smokey Bear Rides in Style

On Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, 2002, Fire Staff from Phoenix Field Office participated in the 15<sup>th</sup> annual City of Phoenix, Arizona Public Service, Fiesta of Light Electric Light Parade. The BLM Water Tender was decorated with 8,000 lights for the parade down Central Avenue in Phoenix. Approximately 200,000 people lined the three-mile parade route to watch the Parade with an additional 225,000 watching via the live television broadcast. This marked the second year of a joint effort between the BLM and the Mesa Ranger District of the Tonto National Forest to present Smokey Bear in the Parade, and the 7<sup>th</sup> year overall for Phoenix BLM participation.

*Contact: Ken Shaver, Fire Prevention Officer, Phoenix/Kingman Zone, (623) 580-5578*

## Smokey and Friends Delight Children at Thunderbird Hospital's Safety Fair

On January 18<sup>th</sup>, the Phoenix Field Office Fire Staff took part in the Thunderbird Hospital "Children's Safety Fair." The day included educational displays and information about keeping children safe. Police and Fire Departments from Peoria and Glendale, Arizona were also on hand to educate the participants. The Bureau of Land Management and Smokey Bear were on hand to spread Smokey's message "Always Be Careful with Fire" to hundreds of delighted kids, young and old.

*Contact: Ken Shaver, Fire Prevention Officer, Phoenix/Kingman Zone, (623) 580-5578*



*Smokey Bear rides in style in the BLM fire vehicle following the heavy engine that was decorated with over 8,000 lights.*



*Ken Shaver and Smokey Bear visit with a youngster about not playing with matches.*



*Smokey spends time with his friends sharing the prevention message, "Always be Careful With Fire."*



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## Eastern States

### Jackson Hotshots Carry Prescribed Fire Modules Into 2003

BLM's Jackson Hotshots have completed prescribed burning on Fish & Wildlife Refuges in the Southeast during 2003. This is the second year of activity for the elite crew. The BLM Jackson Field Office entered into a partnership with Region four of the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the purpose of fuel load reduction on national wildlife refuges. As a result of last year's efforts, hazardous fuels were reduced on approximately 25,000 acres, and Fish and Wildlife Service managers noted that this was the most successful documented prescribed fire operation ever held in Region four.

In this ongoing partnership, the Fish and Wildlife Service role is to identify refuges which are in critical need of fuel reduction. Once these areas have been identified, the BLM prescribed fire modules are implemented to perform the tasks assigned.

Currently, the Jackson Hotshots have three



*Aerial view of the Sand Hill Crane Refuge burn in Grand Bay, Mississippi. Approximately 2,000 acres were treated in the urban interface area.*



*Aerial photo of the Sand Hill Crane Refuge showing the smoke column for the burn.*

modules operating on refuges in the southeast. At this point fuel reduction work has been done on the Sand Hill Crane Refuge in Mississippi, the Savannah Coastal Refuge in Georgia, Marriott Island in Florida, the Talladega Ranger District in Alabama and the Santee Refuge in South Carolina. All of these areas are in close proximity to urban interface communities and the threat of disastrous wildland fire has been reduced in each. In addition they have been able to reduce fire risks where ecosystem risks are excessive as well as preventing low risk areas from deteriorating. To date, approximately 4,000 acres of prescribed burning have been completed.

*Contact: Duane Winters, (601) 977-5403*



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