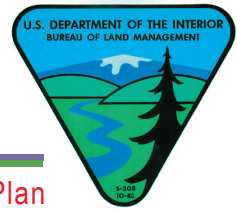


Snapshots

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Successful BLM Projects Supporting the National Fire Plan

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*Dave Vickery, editor
Sheri Ascherfeld, layout and design*

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Idaho

Foothills Learning Center Grand Opening

The City of Boise, Idaho hosted a grand opening ceremony for the new Foothills Learning Center on April 22, 2005. Located in Hull's Gulch Reserve in north Boise, the center has been an interagency effort over the past four years to develop the former McCord property into a community outdoor lab and environmental education center.

Because of its location in the wildland-urban interface, ease of public access, and

positive working partnerships with each other and with citizens and companies in the private sector.

During grand opening ceremonies guest speakers included participants from BLM's Idaho State Office and Boise District, Boise City Parks and Recreation, Boise City Mayor, Ada County Commissioners, U.S. Forest Service, Idaho Power, Boise Cascade, United Water, Golden



The crowd at the Foothills Learning Center opening.

has both indoor and outdoor classrooms and meeting space to educate audiences ranging from school children to adult neighborhood associations

Contact: Bob Narus, Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist, (208) 384-3444

Boise District BLM Sponsors FIRE-Up for Summer

Boise District BLM recently teamed up with the Meridian School District to conduct the second annual FIRE-Up (Field Inquiry Research Experience) project, which took place in Silver City during the month of June. The program is designed for high school students who want to earn high school or transferable Northwest Nazarene University college credits by researching and collecting data in the rural, historic community of Silver City, Idaho, located 60 miles southwest of Boise.

The first FIRE-Up program took place last year in June. High school students studied the BLM Pixley Basin prescribed burn area by collecting data on vegetation, geographic information and geographic positioning system information and the effects of prescribed fire on natural ecosystems. BLM employees utilized the students' data to study the effects of prescribed burning on high desert rangeland.

Fifteen biology students from Mountain View High School participated in the 2005 FIRE-Up program, which is designed to help students learn about wildland fire behavior, its effect on natural ecosystems, and what can be done to minimize rural communities' susceptibility to



The Foothills Learning Center on the old McCord home site.



Original McCord home on the Learning Center Site.

setting adjacent to an urban environment, Idaho BLM saw an opportunity to create a model wildland-urban home to include landscaping that balances Firewise concepts with aesthetics, habitat, and other wildland-urban interface fire safety concerns.

The project also provided an opportunity for multiple government agencies to create

Eagle Audubon, and the Nature Conservancy. Speakers represented the agencies and businesses that shared in the partnership of land acquisition and the construction of the center

The original McCord house was torn down to build a structure using environmentally friendly products donated by the cooperators. This facility

and other community groups. Surrounding the center are nature trails, interpretive signing, and an orchard with sample fire resistant plants. The location of the property, in Idaho's capital city and only minutes from the National Interagency Fire Center and the Capitol building, enhances the site's potential educational opportunities as a showcase wildland-urban interface facility.

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FIRE-Up students analyze Silver City structures with Boise District BLM Wildfire Mitigation Specialist Bob Narus and Fuels Module Leader Chris Cromwell.

wildfire. Students collected data on vegetation and structures, including houses and other buildings within Silver City,

mapped the city using geographic information and positioning data, and analyzed their data using Red Zone software.

Red Zone software calculates wildfire risk for rural communities by using data on map layouts, road access, GIS and GPS input, water source locations, vegetation in and around each community, slope

aspects, address locations, and defensible space. For example, Red Zone software is designed to ask detailed questions about

each individual home, such as: Is there defensible space? What type(s) of vegetation are adjacent to the home? What type of roofing material does the home have? What are the predominant building materials of the home?

The students presented their findings on June 24th, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Northwest Nazarene University Science Center in Nampa. The presentations were open to Silver City residents, teachers, BLM employees, and anyone interested in the program.

BLM employees will use the students' findings to give homeowners suggestions on improving their homes' resistance to wildfire and treatment options for fire-prone vegetation in and around the community of Silver City, which will improve the community's resistance to wildfire. BLM employees will utilize the students' suggestions on July 9th, when BLM fire crews participate in a community clean up day in Silver City.

Contact: Bob Narus, (208) 384-3444

Johnny Creek Firewise Recognition

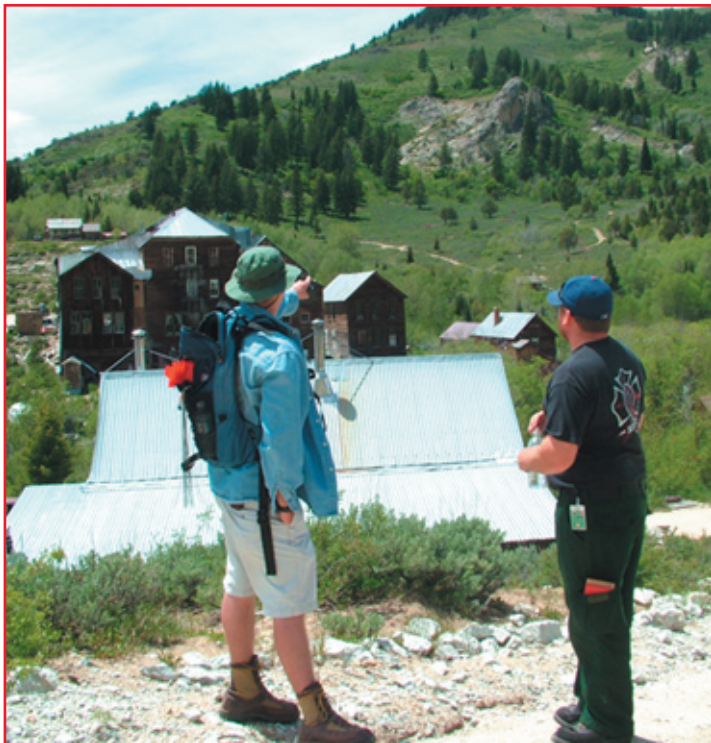
A highly-concentrated effort to create defensible space in one Pocatello, Idaho neighborhood was rewarded with national recognition in May. The community of Johnny Creek, along Pocatello's southeast bench, was named a Firewise

Community by the National Wildland Urban Interface Fire Program.

While the recognition came in May 2005, Johnny Creek was one of 58 neighborhoods nationwide to receive the "Firewise Communities USA" designation in 2004. And with more than 700 homes in the community, it was one of the largest to receive that distinction.

"This ceremony is the culmination of several years of work that the Pocatello Fire Department, Gateway Interagency Fire Front, Three Rivers RC&D, and you, the homeowners and residents of Johnny Creek, have been doing and working towards," said Roger Sears, a Pocatello City Fire Department division chief, to a crowd of residents and partners at a Firewise recognition ceremony May 21.

Sears also recognized officials of the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, which are partners in Gateway



A FIRE-Up student discusses vegetation treatment options with Fuels Module Leader Chris Cromwell.



Mobile FireWise landscaping trailer used to educate homeowners around Johnny Creek as well as other areas in eastern Idaho. FireWise plants are donated from local nurseries.

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Pocatello Fire Station #5 gets ready for FireWise Community USA dedication ceremony on May 21, 2005.

Interagency Fire Front, with fire departments from Pocatello, Chubbuck, Pocatello Valley, Inkom, and Fort Hall and Bannock County Emergency Services.

BLM Idaho Associate State Director Kurt Kotter recalled his days working on similar wildland-urban interface issues in Malad, an hour to the south of Pocatello. Kotter praised the work that the homeowners and gateway agencies have accomplished to bring this recognition to Pocatello.

The Johnny Creek subdivision is adjacent to BLM and U.S. Forest Service Portneuf Westbench Project, which was one of the original ten pilot projects using the streamlined environmental assessment process proposed under the President's Healthy Forests Initiative in 2002.

As agency specialists wrestled with implementing the 2,740 acres of proposed treatments on federal lands,

they also realized that the treatments would leave the interspersed private lands untouched.

A significant outreach effort was needed to explain the proposed project to the public, encourage public support, and motivate local landowners to participate

on private lands in order to maximize the benefits of hazardous fuels reduction.

The outreach effort was spearheaded by the Gateway Interagency Fire Front agencies, led by Pocatello City and Pocatello Valley Fire Departments. Gateway liaison Richard Wolfe, a former Pocatello City Fire

The Bannock County chipper was purchased with BLM Community Assistance funding. It was used to create mulch from woody debris for landscaping use by homeowners.



Department Chief, worked with neighborhood groups to organize cleanup days that would remove combustible debris from around the homes.

Johnny Creek residents were motivated, in part, by a desire not to repeat the events of the 1987 City Creek Fire, which burned in dense juniper on the city's west bench, destroying two homes and damaging several others.

To date, over thirty residences in Johnny Creek have participated in fuel reduction projects over the last four years. With 73 homeowners and volunteers putting in thousands of hours, close to 100 tons of chipped woody material have been removed or recycled. Most of the resulting chipped material is re-used by homeowners in their



landscaping, which avoids filling the local landfill.

Pat Durland, representing the National Wildland-Urban Interface Association, made the presentation to the neighborhood organizing committee, which included residents Sandra Thorne-Brown and Glen Blackwell. Also accepting the award were Sears, Wolfe, and Gretl Class of the Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development organization.

Residents attending the May 21 open house at Pocatello's Station 5 were treated to displays about defensible space, food provided by the local ladies auxiliary, and appearances by Smokey Bear and Sparky the Fire Dog.

Sears emphasized that the May 21 recognition was just the beginning, that there have been only a few of the 700 homes that have good defensible space. Many more homes in Johnny Creek and surrounding communities need additional work to protect the entire community.

"This is a great honor for the residents," he said, "but this is not the end, only the beginning. The goal is to have all of Johnny Creek 'Firewise.' To do this it will take a collaborative effort of all the homeowners...to continue employing the Firewise principles, and making our community a safer place to live."

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Wyoming

BLM Continues Hazardous Fuels Removal in Hoback Ranch Subdivision

BLM's Pinedale Field Office plans to resume work on a fuel break in the Hoback Ranches Subdivision this summer as part of the Wildland-Urban Interface Communities-at-Risk Program.

Hoback Ranches was identified as a Community-at-Risk for wildfire in 2001. It was determined to be the number one BLM priority in Wyoming for Communities-at-Risk. As a result of the National Fire Plan, the Wyoming Division of Forestry began offering grants for removal of hazardous fuels on private lands in the subdivision.

Summit Forestry was awarded an Indefinite Deliver-Indefinite Quality contract last year and

began working on a fuel break in the 75-acre section. Due to inclement weather, the project was not completed.

In May 2002, a contract was awarded for a Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan of the Hoback Ranches Subdivision. This plan was funded and administered by BLM and prepared by the Dynamac Corporation. The plan determined the buildup of wood, brush and grass in the area to be hazardous and identified what measures needed to be taken to prevent wildfire.

In October 2002, the completed Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan identified four needs for the area as fuel breaks and fuel reduction, water storage facilities, road improvements, and community education and outreach. The survey identified the area as a risk to lives, homes, property, wildlife habitat, recreation, potentially historic

sites, grazing, soil stability, water quality and timber due to the buildup of vegetation.

The mitigation plan identified actions to reduce hazards of wildfire as continual cooperation among state, federal and local agencies, reduction of diseased timber and fuel loadings on public lands, private lands and roads, construction of shaded fuel breaks along the borders between public and private lands, and shaded fuel breaks are areas where shorter trees and large shrubs are removed to create an area free of ladder fuels.

In 2003 the U.S. Forest Service and BLM co-funded a contract to determine if the project was in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. This was signed on June 24, 2004. A contract was awarded last year to survey the private and federal land boundaries to assist in project development. The contract was funded by the forest service and BLM.

In 2004, BLM began developing an assistance agreement with the Hoback Ranch Subdivision to fund mitigation, education and planning activities on private lands. The funds from the agreement were used to provide qualified volunteer firefighters with the equipment necessary to fight wildfire within the subdivision. The funds also began a fuel-thinning project along Rim Road.

BLM and the U.S. Forest Service committed funds last

year to begin the first phase of construction of shaded fuel breaks along boundaries. The agencies used the National Indefinite Deliver-Indefinite Quality contract for fuels contractors.

Bids for a stewardship contract under the authority of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act are being accepted. This contract would assign responsibility to complete the fuel break to the company or organization awarded the contract. Bidding continues for the stewardship contract.

BLM is currently working with the Hoback Ranches Community for further assistance agreement funding to continue projects.

Contact: Curt Yanish, BLM Natural Resource Specialist, (307) 367-5350

Fortification Creek Prescribed Burns Benefits Wildlife and Protects Sensitive Oil and Gas Infrastructure

In fall of 2004 and spring 2005, the Buffalo Field Office worked on a series of prescribed fires in the Fortification Creek area located 30 miles northwest of Gillette, Wyoming.

BLM's rangeland managers and wildlife biologists identified ten units within the Fortification Creek watershed where prescribed fire could be used to improve habitat for mule deer and elk. The primary resource



Home in Wyoming's Hoback Ranch Subdivision.

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Fall, 2004 prescribed fire operations in the Cedar Draw unit. The burn objective on this site is to use fire to reduce juniper encroachment into the sagebrush habitat.

management objectives were to use prescribed fire to create ten to 30 acre openings in dense stands of juniper, and on sites where juniper has encroached into sagebrush habitat. A secondary objective was to use prescribed fire and mechanical treatments to reduce hazardous fuels in the vicinity of oil and gas facilities.

According to Wildlife Biologist Larry Gerard, "The large stands of dense juniper provide very little habitat for wildlife, and pose a risk for catastrophic loss from wildland fire. We want to create some openings in the juniper canopy that provide high quality feed for wildlife. These openings serve as fire breaks because they contain herbaceous vegetation that burns with less intensity than juniper making it less resistant to fire control."



Post treatment image showing reduction of hazardous fuels adjacent to a natural gas production facility.

The ten treatment units cover over 12,000 acres and the ownership is private, state and BLM. According to BLM Fuels Specialist Steve Hannan, "We received excellent cooperation from the Hayden and Floyd Ranches to include their property in the treatment units. This cooperation allows us to plan fire treatments and fire control lines based on topography and fuels rather than property lines."

BLM's Eastern Zone Fire Management Officer Ken Schmidt praised the cooperative efforts between the agency and Johnson and Campbell county fire departments. "On the fall burn, we had equipment and

personnel from the counties, and BLM offices in Miles City, Montana, Rawlins and Cheyenne." Another important cooperater on the burns was the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation who provided a grant of \$5,000 for the project.

Over the past three years, BLM completed burns on over 2,400 acres within the Fortification Creek project area. A lack of fine fuels, due to drought, limited the acreage burned this spring to 57 acres. However, the area received excellent moisture in the late spring and early summer and BLM expects to have a good fall burn window.



Fall, 2004 prescribed fire operations in the Cedar Draw unit. The burn objective on this site is to use fire to reduce juniper encroachment into the sagebrush habitat. .

Arizona

Golden Valley Fire Department Puts Rural Fire Assistance Grant money to the Test

Desert areas of Arizona received up to four times the normal amount of rain this spring. With this increase in moisture, fuel loadings have responded in the same multiples.

Golden Valley Fire Department has received Rural Fire Assistance grants that were used for training and equipment to prepare themselves for this potential increase in fire danger.

Chief Harold Nystedt said if the Rural Fire Assistance grants were not available for wildland fire apparel, they would be fighting wildland fires wearing their structure turnouts. This would add 20-30 degrees to the temperature of the firefighters.

As far as equipment goes Nystedt added they would not have a Type 3 engine to respond to the recent rash of brush fires and would not have much one inch forestry type hose. This would mean using larger hoses which are heavier and more cumbersome to move during fires.

Grants were also expended for fire fighter training. Chief Nystedt said training received through Arizona State Land Department has assisted in their success with only one home lost to brush fires with over 3,000

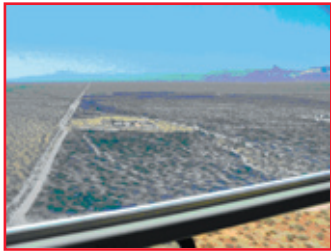
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acres burned within their district. “Yes, the grants are effective and badly needed,” he said.



Aerial view of the Golden Valley, Arizona area.

BLM Hosts National Aerial Firefighting Institute in Arizona

More than forty single engine air tanker pilots from across the United States flew to Safford, Arizona in March to attend the national Aerial Firefighting Institute. The event took place from March 7 to the 26th, bringing pilots and aircraft to BLM’s Air Operations Center to participate in one of five, four-day workshops combining classroom and in-flight training.

BLM’s National Fire and Aviation Office sponsors the institute. It requested that the Safford center to host the training, citing it as one of the premier single seat air tanker facilities in the nation.

Mark Bickham, BLM’s national single engine air tanker program manager from Boise, Idaho, traveled to Arizona to oversee the

institute training. He said, “This is the third year we have offered this type of hands-on training. It’s the only aerial firefighter training that incorporates fire simulations where pilots actually fly.”

The Aerial Firefighting Institute provides an opportunity to evaluate a single engine air tanker pilot’s knowledge of fire and aviation operations. Included is review of basic concepts related to fire behavior, terminology, operational procedures, and government oversight.

Bickham noted that studies have estimated that the majority of aerial firefighting accidents occur during a pilot’s first season. “Our real life simulations allow pilots to make mistakes in a sterile learning environment rather than on a real fire. Before our graduates go out on a real fire assignment, they will already have three fires of varying

complexity under their belt, thanks to this training,” he said.

One pilot who completed the institute this year commented that the training brought his abilities to a level of experience equal to three or four years of flying on fires.

The institute consists of one day in the classroom and three days of flying on simulated incidents. Students are evaluated on their ability to safely operate during live simulations, ranging from initial attack activities to scenarios involving multiple aircraft and aerial supervision. They must pass a written test and demonstrate their ability to be dispatched to an incident, confirm the location, coordinate with the Incident Commander, effectively communicate with other aircraft and ground resources, and work in a complex airspace environment to provide fire suppression.

Bickham said, “The training increases the expertise of individual pilots, raising their knowledge level, sharpening skills, and boosting abilities across the board. It provides them with greater capabilities, which in turn, gives land management agencies that rely on aerial firefighting resources a better cadre of pilots.”

Pilots must successfully complete the Aerial Firefighting Institute to become a Level One single engine air tanker pilot. To maintain qualifications, they must return to the academy every three years for recurrent training.

Southwest Community Wildfire Protection Plan Guide Available

The Southwest Strategy Wildland Urban Interface Task Team completed a guide designed to assist communities in Arizona and New Mexico in developing a community wildfire protection plans in areas at risk from wildfires. A community wildfire protection plan is a pre-requisite for federally funded programs for local projects. It can be used by Firewise working groups, individual homeowners, fire departments, fire management personnel in natural resource agencies and others involved in wildfire planning and mitigation efforts.

A companion handbook, “Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan” was recently prepared by several national organizations to assist



Pilots at the Firefighting Institute participate in a sand table exercise as part of training.

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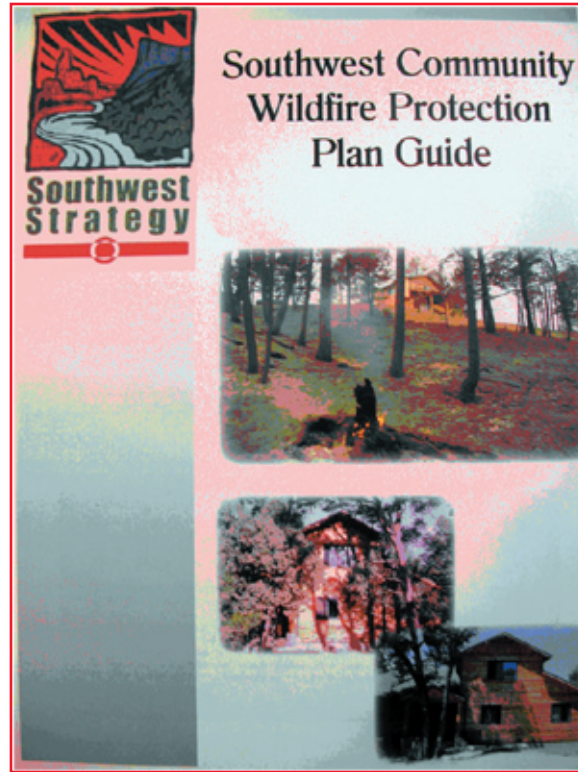
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communities in developing a community wildfire protection plan, which must be prepared in order for federal agencies to consider the local community priorities as the agencies develop and implement forest management and hazardous fuels projects. The guide will be printed this winter for distribution, and is already available on the internet at www.SouthwestAreaGrants.org. For more information on recently completed community wildfire protection plans in Arizona go to www.AzStateFire.org.

Contact: Carrie Templin,
State Public Affairs Officer,
Arizona State Office at (602)
417-9448 or David Peters,
Fire Mitigation Specialist, Gila
District at (520) 258-7207



Cover of the Southwest CWPP Guide.