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Oregon

Castle Rock Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project—Vale District

The Castle Rock area is in BLM's Vale District, Malheur field office approximately 60 miles west of Vale, Oregon. This area contains one of the few remaining stands of old growth Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir left on the Vale District. Approximately 1,200 acres of coniferous forest are located in a geographic area that is dominated by rangeland habitats.

Prior to fire exclusion and grazing, the Castle Rock area was most likely reflective of an open pine stand with a grass under story. Frequent low intensity fires acted as a natural thinning agent. Removal of fire as an ecosystem maintenance agent has resulted in the accumulation of large quantities of fuel. Dense stand conditions, as well as the presence of large quantities of dead woody debris have reduced stand vigor, dramatically increased susceptibility to disease and insect infestation, and significantly raised the potential for catastrophic stand replacement fire.

In 2003, planning began to implement a fuels reduction program, and a categorical exclusion was completed in 2004



A view of the project area from a distance.



Castle Rock project area before treatment.

under the Healthy Forest Initiative. Local ranchers and the Paiute Indian Tribe also provided input on the project. In the spring of 2004, the plan was approved and fuels reduction activities were initiated.

Initially, 850 acres of Ponderosa pine stands will be treated over the next three years using a combination of under story thinning, hand piling, and prescribed fire. To date, 200 acres of pine have received a first entry broadcast under burn. The primary objectives are to reduce existing fire hazard and improve forest health. The remaining 350 acres of North Slope Douglas fir will be considered for fuels reduction activities in the near future.



Castle Rock project area during treatment.



Castle Rock project area after treatment.

Early analysis suggests that commercial thinning in conjunction with fuels reduction activities would significantly reduce the existing fire hazard and improve forest health. Fuels reduction costs may be mitigated as a result of a stewardship contract. The Castle Rock project will be a long term resource management program requiring additional prescribed fire entries in the future to maintain fuel loadings at desirable levels.

Contact: Dale Ekman, Vale BLM (541) 523-1322

Colorado

Southwest Colorado Fire Council Launches Subdivision Ambassador Program

In southwest Colorado, land management agencies and the Fire Council now have some additional help in promoting wildfire awareness education and wildfire risk reduction efforts. Over the winter, 20 citizens from Montezuma, Archuleta, and La Plata Counties became "Subdivision Ambassadors" or liaisons between subdivisions and the firefighting and land management entities.

Their reasons for becoming ambassadors were varied. Several were already working, some needed moral support in order to work with unwilling homeowners, and some signed up just because they felt it was the right thing to do.

Ambassador Karen Aspin from Pagosa Springs said "I have held a high interest in fire mitigation on our own property since learning

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Fire Council member Nicole Smith reviews the notebook contents with volunteer ambassadors.

about seven years ago that leaving things ‘natural’ was really quite unnatural to the area. And unsafe! I started out writing letters to the editor of our local paper, and then organized a forum of regional and local experts last year.”

Knowing that some ambassadors have more time and energy to put into the job than others, the Fire Council offered two levels of participation. For both levels, the Council first asked that the ambassador’s property be an example of a home site where defensible space had been created.

At level one, the more basic level, ambassadors are expected to make contact with their local fire department or district, and also their neighbors, to let them know what they can do for them. Ambassadors are also asked to be a contact for fire information officers and others during a wildfire.

The more involved level two includes gathering contact information for all home and property owners and establishing an email tree to share information, ensuring all street signs and addresses are readable, gathering information on residents with special needs, pet information, and developing a map of the subdivision showing everything from road layout to gas lines to cultural resources and water sources.

Wearing Fire Council tee shirts and armed with notebooks full of pamphlets, videos, and idea to use in reaching out to friends and neighbors, the ambassadors left a three hour training session eager to begin work on their first task, developing an event for Wildfire Prevention and Education Month in April. Some ambassadors are sponsoring a “slash” day, others are hosting a barbeque and inviting their local fire chief to come speak, and some are developing evacuation plans.

The seed for the ambassador program was planted in 2002 when community fire plans were developed for each county. Many plans recommended a grassroots approach to defensible space and wildfire risk reduction. When the Fire Council formed in 2003, they decided that developing an ambassador program fit their purpose of bringing stakeholders together through proactive projects and partnerships.

Ambassador Karen Aspin summed up Fire Council’s hope for the program pretty well when she said, “When I was approached about the Firewise Council’s Subdivision Ambassador Program, it was hard to say ‘no.’ I really believe this program has the potential to save more lives and properties from needless destruction.”

April is Wildfire Prevention and Education Month in Southwest Colorado

A month long series of activities, radio interviews, and open houses during April designed to inform and educate home and property owners on the need to create defensible space and reduce the

threat of wildfire has become an annual event in southwest Colorado.

The theme this year, as in past years, was “What Are You Waiting For?”

Many of this year’s activities were sponsored by “Subdivision Ambassadors,” volunteers from Montezuma, La Plata, and Archuleta counties who are educating residents in their subdivisions to make them more wildfire aware. The ambassadors are sponsoring a variety of activities including slash-removal days, barbeques and open houses with guest speakers, development of evacuation plans, and working on defensible space along roadways.

Other activities during the month include information booths staffed by fire prevention experts at a health fair and homebuilder show, showings of three different defensible space videos on Durango Community Access

Television, radio interviews, and new fire station tours

“In past years, we’ve done more tours and workshops, but this year we wanted the focus to be at the ground level where things happen” said Allen Farnsworth, Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist. “We felt that residents were more likely to listen to their neighbors and peers.”

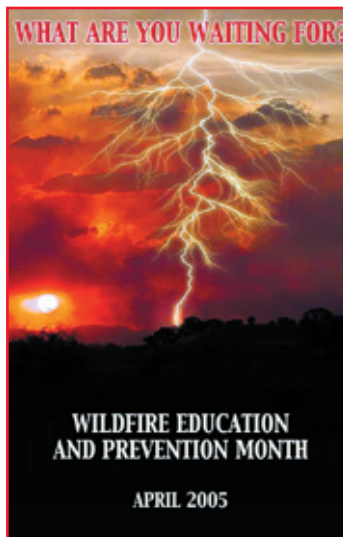
BLM and Forest Service Provide Fire Training for Southwest Youth Corps

In early April, seven participants completed the Southwest Youth Corps’ Fire Careers Training Program and were placed into competitive positions with the federal government, local mitigation companies, and other youth corps groups.

The program, which began in 2004, has two primary goals. First is to train youth from 18-25 years of age for a career in the wildland fire management industry, and second, to help reduce the threat of devastating fires by providing wildfire prevention and mitigation services.

The high cost of living in Durango and the growing mitigation industry led to the development of the program, according to Harry Bruell, Executive Director of Southwest Youth Corps. “It’s hard for high-school graduates to make a living in Durango,” he said.

“Our program provides these young men and women with structured, safe, and challenging work and educational opportunities through employment projects that promote personal growth,



Front of the insert placed in 27,000 newspapers in southwest Colorado. The events schedule was on the reverse side.

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Southwest crew working to cut beetle killed pinyon trees at the McPhee Recreation Area.

the development of social skills, and an ethic of natural resource stewardship,” he said.

Youth corps crews have helped federal agencies and others with trail and rehabilitation work, and since 2001, fuels-reduction projects on public lands.

The Fire Careers Training Program was developed in partnership with Training Advantage and the Southwest Colorado Workforce Centers with funding through the Workforce Investment Act and numerous public land agencies across the region.

“We owe a lot of the success of this program to Allen Farnsworth,” said Bruell. “He coordinated the S-130-190 and the S-212 chainsaw training that the students received, bringing in knowledgeable expertise from the BLM and Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, and the local fire departments to help.” Farnsworth is the Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist for the San Juan Public Lands Center in Durango.

In addition to the fire training, participants completed over 7,000 hours of significant fire prevention service projects from Moab, Utah to Pagosa Springs, Colorado to Aztec, New Mexico.

According to Farnsworth this was a winning opportunity for everyone. “The Southwest Youth Corps participants got some new life skills that will help them get decent paying jobs, the agencies got to assist one of our non-profit partners by providing training, and the wildland fire industry has a trained and energetic employee pool to pick from. It doesn’t get much better than that,” said Farnsworth.

Contact: www.sycorps.org, Harry Bruell (970) 259-8607 or Allen Farnsworth (970) 385-1207



Crew members hauled dead branches to piles for burning.

Grants and Partnerships Aid Grand Lake Wildland Fire Mitigation

Grand Lake, Colorado has been witness to some changes over the past few years. The community of Grand Lake is located in Grand County surrounded by the Arapaho National Forest and neighboring Rocky Mountain National Park. Homes and commercial sites are nestled among the trees, many on narrow, winding roads

An ongoing drought and infestation of mountain pine beetle has produced a forest of standing dead trees. “Due to the mature stage of our lodge pole pines growth cycle, combined with recent years of below average moisture and an extraordinary infestation of the pine beetle, we’re seeing 80 to 100 percent tree mortality in those areas hardest hit,” said Fire Chief Mike Long. “A lightning strike, an unattended campfire or a poorly managed slash burn by a homeowner could all be triggers to a catastrophic wildfire.”

The threat of such a wildfire threatening hundreds of homes and businesses is not impossible with these conditions.

Grand Lake Fire Protection District started their effort to prepare for and mitigate the hazards of a wildland urban interface fire several years ago with the acquisition of forest firefighting equipment and engines, mostly through the aggressive pursuit of grant opportunities with federal and state agencies. Chief Long stated “We’ve got a great working relationship with federal, state and local agencies here in Grand Lake. We have done a lot of training

and planning together and even partnered to accomplish project work on behalf of the community. The Bureau of Land Management and Grand Lake Metro Recreation District have helped us create shaded fuel breaks to protect egress pathways out of the Columbine Lake subdivision.”

Roads leading in and out of Columbine Lake were also narrow and curvy. Fire crews widened roads, which straightened some of the curve making the roads safer overall. BLM and Colorado State Forest Service have provided grant funding to help with the creation of the community wildfire protection plan.

Chief Long said, “Our approach to preparing for a wildfire event is multi-tiered. First, we believe that we need to educate the public through presentations at Homeowners Association meetings, our public education series at the fire house and providing brochures and videos that show the homeowners how to create defensible space around their homes and reduce what’s called home ignitability. We offer free defensible space site surveys to property owners in our fire district and tell them about fire-safe construction materials, landscaping and access that will help us save their homes.

“Second, we started an enhanced mapping project identifying primary and secondary means



A home in Grand Lake that will benefit from community planning.

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During winter, firefighters assisted homeowners with slash burns.

of egress for each subdivision in our fire district. The U.S. Forest Service helps with our mapping project. We're identifying water supplies, staging areas, helicopter landing sites and safety zones where if it gets really bad, we can protect the residents in place.

"Third, we have acquired wildland firefighting apparatus and personal protective equipment for our members and trained our volunteers and paid staff to a federal standard for wildland firefighters."

Chief Long shared that all of their current efforts are building a foundation for the community wildfire protection plan that his agency is undertaking for the 2005 fire season.



Fire department training session.

The community plan has three parts, and Chief Long is adding four more to create a working document that will not only help prepare Grand Lake for a wildfire, but will also mitigate hazards and preplan the suppression effort that may be necessary.

One of the many public outreach efforts is the observance of Wildfire Awareness Week. In conjunction with federal, state and local agencies, Chief Long is planning an open house the evening of May 17. BLM, U.S. Forest Service, and National Park Service will discuss upcoming hazardous fuel reduction projects underway in Grand County. On the following Saturday, May 21, Grand Lake Fire will offer a tour of project areas in their district between to view shaded fuel breaks and look at homes where defensible space has been created, along with some where it hasn't.

Contact Lynn Barclay, Fire Mitigation/Education Specialist, (970) 826-5096

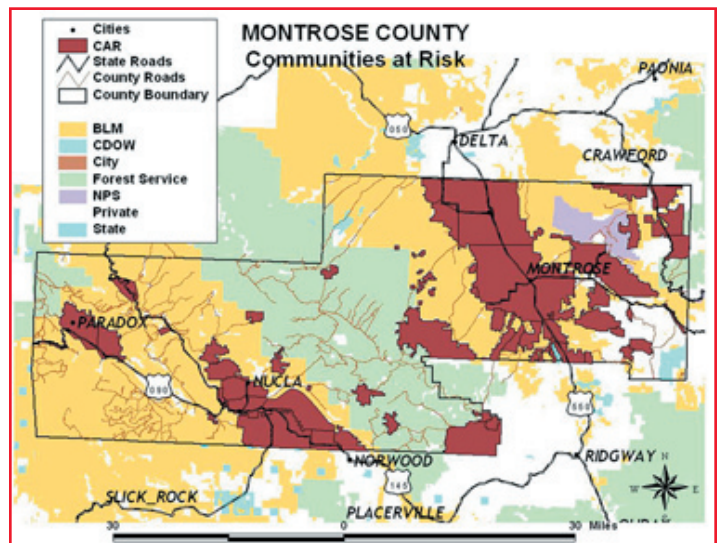
Two Western Colorado Counties Begin Developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans

Over the last two months, Ouray County and Montrose County, in west central Colorado, have begun working collaboratively with the various federal, state, and local fire and emergency management entities within their respective jurisdictions to complete the initial phases of their county wildfire planning. This entails developing a comprehensive plan that delineates how the counties will work with their partners in all aspects of fire management and collecting the basic GIS data needed for fire and fuels management across their counties. Both of these counties have received BLM community assistance grants to support this phase of their wildfire planning.

As an initial step, each of the counties has begun convening meetings with representatives from the partnering entities in fire and

emergency management within their respective jurisdictions, such as county commissioners, county emergency managers, the county sheriff, local fire chiefs, the Colorado State Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the American Red Cross. Together, the partners have defined the scope of the county plan, outlined the objectives, assigned roles and responsibilities, and begun to assemble sections to address all aspects of fire management, including fire suppression, emergency evacuation, fire rehabilitation, fire information, fire prevention, fire restrictions/closures, and mitigation and fuels management.

At the same time, the counties have begun to inventory GIS data that is already available for risk assessment. They have also identified a process for collecting the basic GIS data on private lands - such as structure location, access, and water sources - that is needed to create both tactical maps to support suppression and evacuation



Montrose County communities at risk map.

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Partners for the Ouray County fire plan meet to discuss scope and content.

activities as well as to produce strategic planning maps to support mitigation and hazardous fuels management. They are working with neighboring counties to coordinate their efforts, so the GIS data they develop can eventually be integrated. The long-term goal is to develop integrated GIS data across all ownership boundaries to support more seamless fire and fuels management among all the partners.

With the initiation of county fire planning in Ouray and Montrose Counties, all of the counties within the jurisdiction of the Montrose Interagency Fire Management unit are now in various stages of completing their county wildfire management planning. All the counties have geographically defined the social-cultural boundaries of their communities at risk. Some of the counties that have completed their plans and initial risk assessments are now beginning their scoping and public outreach process to inform the public about the county planning process and solicit public input on the values to be protected within each of the communities identified. This input will be used to develop additional GIS data identifying protection attributes on private lands and to prioritize areas for fuels management.

Contact: Maggie McCaffrey,
Mitigation/Education Specialist,
Montrose Interagency Fire (970) 240-5396

California

Finding Fire Prevention Education Opportunities

Every Thanksgiving, approximately 200,000 people visit the Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area for winter recreation. Many live in wildland urban interface areas of the BLM's South Coast Fire Management Zone, bordered by the Angeles, San Bernardino and Cleveland National Forests. These visitors use local mountain areas for summer recreation activities.

BLM Division Chief Ron Woychak, who is also the fire management officer, along with prevention specialists Chuck Robbins and Clay Howe discussed fire prevention education opportunity potential at the recreation area during past fire seasons.

Taking advantage of opportunity, Chuck and Clay established a partnership with the Cleveland National Forest and Burn Institute, a non-profit fire education and burn prevention effort headquartered in San Diego. The institute has chapters in Imperial County and the Inland Empire which covers Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in California. The institute works to help reduce

fire ignitions and burn injuries. BLM provided a travel trailer and display unit for an information center at Buttercup Campground while the Forest Service funded fire and burn prevention message banners.

One strategy used a prevention vehicle with a staff member in Smokey Bear costume to approach recreational vehicle camps to attract visitor attention. When visitor groups assembled, the Burn Institute Van containing, dry chemical fire extinguisher propane fired prop, set up a semblance of industrial fire training.

A BLM prevention patrol filled the prop with water and standby for safety purposes.



A public land dunes visitor attacks fire-job well done!

Burn Institute instructors Art Garcia and Aida Flores instructed parents in the use of the fire extinguisher until every adult in camp had performed the operation at least once. BLM prevention personnel including Student Conservation Association Fire Education Corps leaders Mike Rielly and Siobhan Girling presented burn prevention and wildland fire prevention message packets created for each family. Handout goodies were given to the children.

At the end of each presentation a rapid clean up and move to the next camp was made.



Smokey and the kids.



The Butter Cup contact station attracted attention.

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Outreach efforts were highly successful and visitor appreciation was overwhelming. Statistical information provided by the Burn Institute that over the two-day period, over 1,000 visitors at 50 camps were contacted. Of these, 98 percent of adults had never practiced with or used a fire extinguisher. Additionally 300 children were contacted by Smokey Bear, who remains a popular fire education icon.

Contact: Clayton R. Howe, South Coast Fire Management Zone, (858) 676-0894

Surprise Valley Communities Come Together in Cedarville

Over the last six years, the BLM Surprise Field Office has offered an interagency wildland fire training refresher course for local volunteer firefighters and contractors. The field office fire management team recognized a need for annual firefighter training to help address safety concerns and preparedness and worked with local agencies to develop this training program.

On March 14th through the 16th, ten instructors and more than 30 volunteers and contractors met in the evenings to prepare for the 2005 fire season. Topics discussed this year included fire behavior, fire weather, wildland urban



Wildland Fire Refresher for Volunteer Firefighters and Contractors in March 2005 at BLM's Surprise Field Office.

interface structure protection, administrative procedures for contractors, hazards of propane tanks, and electricity in wildland fires. Personal safety topics included fire orders and watch out situations, fire fighting tactics, personal protective equipment, and fire shelter drill. The interagency cadre of experienced instructors included members from the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Modoc National Forest, National Weather Service, and California Department of Forestry. Together the instructor's expertise equals more than 100 years of fire fighting experience.

The Surprise Field Office is located in one of the more remote parts of California. All of the areas of protection are in the northwest Great Basin and include both BLM Surprise Field Office lands, and area protected under an initial attack agreement with the BLM Winnemucca Field Office. Combined, the area is roughly 2 million acres.

BLM works closely with local volunteer fire departments in protecting private lands in both



Cindy McMurry from the Lassen-Modoc Unit California Department of Forestry, discussing urban interface structure protection and propane tank hazards.

California and Nevada.

Four federally listed communities at risk in Surprise Valley are Eagleville, Cedarville, Lake City and Fort Bidwell, with populations ranging from 100 to 800 people. The BLM Surprise Field Office and the local volunteer firefighters are called upon for fire suppression needs and are often the first line of defense in this remote rural area for emergency medical incidents, search and rescue missions, natural disasters, hazardous materials incidents, water rescue emergencies, and other general public service calls.

When the volunteer fire fighters and contractors complete this course they are issued an annual current wildland fire certificate which enables them to work with federal agencies on wildland fire events.

Since training has become a yearly event there has been noticeable improvement in use of personal protective equipment and local firefighting resource capability, safety and readiness.

Goals and objectives for providing training to local partners include firefighting readiness, which makes public and firefighter safety the first priority in all fire management actions and decisions. Prevention through education to reduce the risks to homes and private property is also a primary objective. Two of the four primary goals of



Arnold DeGarmo, BLM Engine Captain for 3236, and Dan Ross, Cedarville Volunteer Fire Department Chief, facilitating the fire shelter drill.

the Ten Year Comprehensive Strategy apply directly to the training by improving prevention and suppression and promoting community assistance.

Contact: Leisyka Parrott (530) 279-2726 or Garth Jeffers (530) 279-2729, Surprise Field Office

Reflective Address Markers Aid Rural Fire Department Emergency Response

The Hollister Field Office fire mitigation staff in cooperation with the San Benito County FireSafe Council, California Department of Forestry, Hollister Fire Department and San Juan Bautista Volunteer Fire Department initiated a program to assist local fire departments in locating homes in wildland urban interface areas of the county. The project meets National Fire Plan goals of cooperation and communication with agencies and communities.

To enhance community and fire department preparedness in responding to emergencies in rural parts of the county, fiberglass trail signs will be installed as

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roadside markers. These signs will include reflective address numbers, directional arrows, water sources available and animals on the property, as well as American Disability Act symbols to assist elderly people.

With highly visible reflective symbols, fire agencies can locate a residence quickly and efficiently with just a glance. Chief Coakly of the San Juan Bautista Volunteer Fire Department said, "These markers will help my folks locate a residence faster and with more information than before."

The markers will be in place by June in time for the fire season. The goal for this year is 70 to 100 residences completed with more anticipated in following years. This successful project has enhanced homeowner fire safety and community awareness over the wildland urban interface.

Contact: *Mike Chiodini, Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist, (831) 630-5029*



Showing the reflective markers are Greg Stephens of the fire department, Sandra Davidson from San Benito County Firesafe Council, homeowner Cindy Reeves, and Mike Chiodini, BLM.

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