

Snapshots

June 10, 2005



Successful BLM Projects Supporting the National Fire Plan

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Wyoming

Headwaters Prescribed Burn

The Bureau of Land Management in Rock Springs completed the Headwaters Prescribed Burn on April 15.

The area of the burn is next to U.S. Highway 191 from milepost 537 to milepost 542 on the south face of Little Mountain.

Project fuel removal began March 16. Approximately 700 acres were treated, eliminating 10,500 tons of hazardous fuel. During the burn, BLM offices from Rock Springs, Rawlins, Kemmerer and Worland worked with Sweetwater County and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

The project was funded through a Wyoming Game and Fish Grant. Headwaters Prescribed Burn Project Lead

Thor Stephenson said the BLM hopes to treat an additional 150 acres next spring if additional funding can be acquired.

CY Junior High Students Learn About Fire

In March a Bureau of Land Management Fire Crew visited the students at CY Junior High to teach them about fire.

CY Junior High seventh graders had read the novel *Fire in Their Eyes: Wildfires and the People Who Fight Them*, by [Karen Magnuson Beil](#). The class was studying mankind's technological advance. As part of the study, they asked the Eastern Wyoming Zone BLM to come to class to talk about technology used in wildland fire and how it has changed and advanced over the years.

The class was divided into three groups to learn about different aspects of fire management.



Shannon Ford shows students BLM fire trucks.



Jason Adkins talks to the class about the advances in fire fighting tactics.

The first group learned about aviation resources currently used and how they have developed over the past 25 years. Students watched video footage on air tanker and helicopter drops on fires, learned about different types of aircraft, and discussed training, safety, and personal protective equipment requirements. Communications used in fire management today was also discussed, and examples of different radios were passed around. Instructors stressed the improvements in communication as one of the most important technological advancements that has contributed to firefighter safety.

Students in the second group learned about progression of fire fighting equipment and training. Seventh graders compared a cross cut saw to a new Stihl power saw,

message droppers to radio's and satellite phones, and compasses and maps to the latest global positions systems. Evolution of personal protective equipment from blue jeans and denim shirts to nomex kevlar weave pants and nomex shirts was also discussed. The third group of students watched a video on changes in fire fighting tactics over the last 70 years. Reasons for changes in fire science, and catalysts for such changes were viewed and discussed, followed by a



Heath Serres helps a student try out one of the fire shelters.



Prescribed burn hand ignition in the head of Castello Creek, one of five headwaters streams tributary to Red Creek that were treated in the Headwaters project in April 2005. (BLM Photo by Thor Stephenson)

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brief question and answer period. After all questions were addressed, the class went outside to view the fire trucks including the new Hummer. Students even got to try out the fire hoses.



Students explore the new Hummer BLM fire fighters are trying out this season.

According to Fire Operations Supervisor Eric Fransted, "Presentations like this are important for students so they can gain hands-on knowledge about a career they may want to pursue, and it gives us a chance to meet some potential future firefighters."

Firehole Prescribed Burn

The Bureau of Land Management in Rock Springs, Wyoming resumed a prescribed burn at Firehole Basin in March.

The project began in October 2004 but unfavorable weather delayed the 7,000 acre burn. BLM Fuels Management Specialist Thor Stephenson said power line and control line protection was completed last fall and 1,500 acres were burned. An additional 1,900 acres were treated this spring. BLM plans to treat the remaining 3,600 acres in early October.



Aerial photo of hazardous fuels removal next to the 230-KV power line in the Firehole Basin Prescribed Burn. (BLM Photo by Thor Stephenson)



Heli-torch igniting sage brush on the Firehole Basin Prescribed Burn in April 2005. (BLM Photo by Thor Stephenson)

replaced at a cost of nearly \$1 million.

BLM offices in Rock Springs, Kemmerer, Rawlins and Worland worked with Sweetwater County, the Wyoming Fish and Game Department and the United States Forest Service on this burn.

Cooperators include the Rock Springs Grazing Association, Pacific Power, Anadarko Inc. and REV Inc.

Montana

Moon Creek Fuel Reduction Project

The combined effort of BLM resource staff, fire personnel and contractor made quick work of a fuel reduction project southwest of Miles City,



Part of the 148 acre parcel under an indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contract near Miles City, Montana.

Montana. Homes and property in the wildland urban interface near BLM land are now much safer from the threat of catastrophic wildland fire.

BLM used a national "indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity" contract for the 148 acre project. The contract allows use of local contractors which helps area economies benefit.

Mechanical equipment used by the contractor was impressive and included a Timppo445C and a Kobleco 200 excavator. The Timppo445C is a track-mounted-swing with a feller buncher which equipped with a hot saw cutting head for felling and bunching trees. The Kobleco 200 excavator is a track mounted swing with a rotating brush grapple for piling felled and bunched trees. Using this equipment allowed for quick completion of the project.

Crews built approximately 80 piles of slash which will be burned during the winter of 2005-2006. The hazardous fuels removed included Rocky Mountain juniper and ponderosa pine.

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Mechanical equipment working on the Miles City area project.

Interagency cooperation contributed to the success of this project. The Montana Department of Natural Resources administers land north of the project area and allowed fuel reduction crew access to BLM land using a temporary road.

This project will help prevent future catastrophic wildland fires and loss of structures and property. In the event of a wildland fire, the ratio of 25 trees per acre will make suppression efforts easier for fire crews. This ratio makes the distance between the crowns at least 60 feet, thus preventing

a ground fire from climbing into tops of trees and creating a crown fire.

South Dakota

Bringing Color Back to the Black Hills

On May 20, 2005 the Fort Meade Fuels Module participated in the Lead, South Dakota annual Arbor Day celebration. The opening ceremony was held at Manual Brothers Park in Lead where volunteers met to begin the day's events. This year's theme was "Bringing Color

Back to the Black Hills." The celebration was coordinated by the Lead Firewise Crew and included the planting of approximately 3,500 bur oak, birch, and aspen trees, all hardwoods native to the Black Hills, along the Mickelson Trail west of Lead.

The day was an educational event as well. Seventy-five 5th graders from Lead-Deadwood Elementary School were invited to participate in the tree planting along the Mickelson Trail. Employees from the BLM Fort Meade Fuels Module, City of Lead, Lead Firewise, South Dakota Division of Wildland Fire, and Project Learning Tree volunteered time to assist the students during the day's events. After being divided into small groups, the students were led by a volunteer who assisted them in planting trees while educating the students about the benefits of planting native hardwoods.

The Mickelson Trail runs a total of 114 miles through the Black Hills of South Dakota, starting in Deadwood and ending in the southern hills near Edgemont. The trail was



Volunteers help Lead-Deadwood Elementary School students plant trees for the annual Arbor Day Celebration.



Students from Lead-Deadwood Elementary School learning the benefits of planting hardwood trees.

completed in 1998 as a part of the Rails to Trails project. Many improvements to the trail have been completed since its completion. The most recent improvement project is headed by the Lead Firewise crew with funding from a BLM Community Assistance Agreement.

The Mickelson Trail Lead Trailhead project created a fuel break along the trail between numerous homes and businesses located in Lead and forested lands that have been damaged by drought, snow, and bug infestations. In addition to the necessary fuel break, the project also improves the scenery while hiking on the trail. The 3,500 trees purchased



Ponderosa pine and juniper after treatment. A prescribed burn will be applied to this area in either 2005 or 2006.

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for the Arbor Day celebration were planted along this trailhead not only to provide more fire resistant trees in the fuel break but also to vary the species of trees located along the Mickelson Trail.

The Arbor Day celebration concluded with lunch in the park and a presentation by representatives from South Dakota Senator John Thune's office.

Colorado

Deer Mountain Wildfire Simulation

Deer Mountain Volunteer Fire Station #1 of the Deer Mountain Fire Protection District near Cotopaxi, Colorado hosted a wildland fire simulation in its wildland urban interface district on Saturday May 28th.

The simulation was held within days of the third anniversary of the Iron Mountain Fire during which 88 structures were lost to a fast moving, wind driven, human caused wildfire.

With the northwestern flank of the Iron Mountain Fire in clear view, members from eight agencies practiced skills in initial attack, structure triage,



Deer Mountain has been promoting Firewise aggressively and is making progress with residents in providing defensible space.

incident stabilization, and problem solving using real homes and wildlands within the fire protection district. This was the first known simulation in the area involving multiple agencies.

Fire simulation included a start from unknown cause at 10:00 am and rapid movement in grass, pinion pine and juniper in an urban interface environment. The simulation was based on behavior of the actual Iron Mountain Fire. The initial attack resources were tasked with setting up a command structure, ordering additional resources and providing aid to local volunteers.

As additional resources arrived, Chief and Incident Commander Todd Bell assigned resources and adjusted operational tactics as needed. The fire was split

into three divisions with one division conducting a mock burnout operation. The incident had all the ingredients of an actual initial attack where all the resources needed, simply did not arrive in time to help.

Local residents cooperated by allowing firefighters access to properties to set up hose lays for structural protection. Many were rewarded by gaining the knowledge of whether firefighters would attempt to protect their homes in the event of a real wildfire.

Four designated observers jotted notes on the effectiveness of the individual tactics each crew used as well as the effectiveness of the overall operation. In addition, they presented crews with several unforeseeable problems often encountered on wildland urban

interface incidents. The scenario included problems ranging from spot fires to armed and uncooperative homeowners, firefighters used their tactical knowledge as well as diplomacy to solve problems. Even Chief Bell was thrown for a loop when the media showed up and bothered him for interviews!

After the three hour simulation, Deer Mountain's support group, The Red Suspenders, provided the firefighters with refreshments while the observers, division supervisors, and safety officer gave a critique of the operation.

The event had two major objectives, train local firefighters, and foster the multi-agency cooperation that has blossomed since the Iron Mountain Fire.

Members from Deer Mountain Stations #1, Arkansas Valley Ambulance, Tallahassee Volunteer Fire Department, Indian Springs Volunteer Fire Department, Coaldale Volunteer Fire Department, Colorado State Forest Service, U.S. Forest Service, and BLM participated in the event.

Events like these are the result



Indian Springs Fire Department engine in position at the exercise.



Structural protection at a threatened residence in the wildland-urban interface. The 2002 Iron Mountain burn is visible on the distant ridge.

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Toni Toelle, U.S. Forest Service, participates in a after action review of the simulation. Deer Mountain Fire Chief Todd Bell stands by to assist.

of improved local coordination and cooperation partly attributable to the National Fire Plan. Development of the new three-county Mid-Arkansas Wildfire Prevention Council has assisted in bringing these agencies and departments closer together. Many of these organizations have joined together to work cooperatively toward similar goals and the in-progress development of a community wildfire protection plan for Fremont County.

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Springtime Wildfire and Environmental Education in Colorado

The Royal Gorge Field Office and the San Carlos Ranger District have been working on combined education efforts this spring. Several Firewise sessions have been held by local fire departments with assistance provided by both BLM and forest service.

While people have been reached with a valuable message regarding protection

of life and property, this year's sessions have been a reminder that the window of opportunity is important in this effort and open for only a brief time in some cases.

After the 2002 fire season it was relatively easy to pack a room with wildland residents eager to hear what they could do to minimize their risks. With a welcome and long overdue wet winter and cool spring this year, it has been more difficult to corral a sizable audience. Each session this year has had attendance at about 20 percent of 2003 levels or less. The silver lining in a small turnout is ability to provide a more detailed instruction in response to specific questions from homeowners. BLM's local partner departments are each developing more varied formats in an attempt to reach more residents in the future.

The office recently held its 17th annual "7th Grade Outdoor Classroom" at the Blue Heron site located just east of Florence Colorado. This two-day event is held in conjunction with Canon City RE-1 School District. The entire 7th grade class of 300 students is



Instructor cadre for the 7th grade classroom.

bused to Blue Heron for a day of environmental education. The 275 acre site on the Arkansas River was recently acquired by BLM.

All students are given a presentation about public land uses. Then, breaking into groups of about 20 students, they rotate to several stations. This year the stations included activities on water quality, animal tracks and signs, nature sketching, macro-invertebrates found in the river and wildfire suppression and safety. At lunch the kids are treated to a one hour presentation on raptors by employees from the Greenway Nature Center of Pueblo, Colorado. The various environmental stations are staffed by representatives from the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife and some Canon City Middle School teachers. The



D. J. Chess talking to kids about wildland fire suppression. Why we do it, when it's necessary and the equipment and hazards involved.

kids have fun, learn a little and are happy to spend a beautiful spring day in a location with the river, ponds, something new to think about outside school classrooms.

Canon City recently held its 84th annual Music and Blossom Festival. Events include a parade and fun day on Main Street with informational



A young fireman tries on a bladder bag. Filled with water it probably weighs half as much as he does.

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booths and vendors. This year the San Carlos Ranger District had a Type 6 engine in the parade in celebration of the Forest Services 100th year.

Smokey Bear made an appearance and had an opportunity to ride on an unusual conveyance. The kids loved it. The Middle Arkansas Wildfire Prevention Partnership had a booth on Main Street the following day and distributed Firewise literature, discussed the up-coming wildfire season, wildfire use for resource benefit, cooperative fuel reduction projects and prevention subjects with passers by.

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Smokey Bear takes a ride around town in Canon City, Colorado during the 84th Annual Music and Blossom Festival.



The 7th Grade Classroom lunchtime presentation by the Raptor Center featuring rehabilitated birds-of-prey, in this case, a Great Horned Owl.