

Snapshots

September 16, 2005



Successful BLM Projects
Supporting the National Fire Plan

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Oregon

Central Oregon in Pursuit of Fire Mitigation Priorities

Wildland fire is a natural part of central Oregon's ecosystem where vegetation evolved with and is adapted to fire. Summer thunderstorms track across central and eastern Oregon each year bringing thousands of lightning strikes along with the name "lightning alley." Historically, fires touched off by such storms were generally small and thinned much of the forest understory and shrub-steppe habitat.

However, over one hundred years of successful fire suppression have led to a buildup of vegetation with potential for extremely active fire behavior. Growing population and visitors add potential for ignitions from recreation use, trash



Dennis Fiore, fuels specialist for the Prineville BLM discusses upcoming fuels treatments at a CWPP meeting.

burning, cigarettes, and industrial land uses. The combination of increased fuel and ignition sources means that more acres have burned in wildfires over the past five years in central Oregon than burned in the previous century. To address these issues and to identify treatment priorities, a multi-jurisdictional group of agencies, organizations, and individuals gathered to create a series of community wildfire protection plans.

As of September 2005, five community wildfire protection plans have been completed and three others are nearing completion, covering the majority of Crook, Northern Klamath, Jefferson and Deschutes Counties. Using a risk assessment model, planning committee members identified top priorities to mitigate wildfire. Priorities are risk potential for a fire to occur, hazard potential for a wildfire to spread once ignited, values at risk such as identification of key infrastructure and ecological and cultural values, structural vulnerability elements of a structure that affect the likelihood of it burning, and protection capability to prepare for, respond to and suppress wildfire.

General recommendations included developing year-round water sources, continuing to reduce fuels



The buildup of lodgepole pine on public lands adjacent to a subdivision in Klamath County demonstrates an obvious reason for concern.

on private lands, improving defensible space, and developing or improving emergency evacuation routes. However, one of the greatest concerns identified in plans is fuel buildup on federal lands adjacent to the communities.

Consequently, Prineville District BLM and the Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests will be working together to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire around the communities at risk. As part of the five year plan, forests and rangelands in the wildland urban interface in central Oregon will be subjected

to a variety of treatments including thinning, mowing, chipping, and burning. While not designed to eliminate fire, the goal of these treatments is to modify the vegetation to the point that ground fire is the norm, not the exception.

Contact: Lisa Clark, Fire Mitigation Specialist, (541) 416-6864; lmclark@or.blm.gov



Crescent-Walker Range CWPP Committee on the signing day. Members include private residents, federal, state and local government representatives, and rural fire departments.

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Prescribed Fire Project Offers Unique Partnership Opportunity

The Oregon coast range offers some of the most productive forest land in the world. With that productivity come fuel loads that include ample brush, shrub and small tree species growing below towering Douglas fir. In the midst of this forest, local land management agencies have been working cooperatively to reduce hazardous fuels at the wildland-urban interface on tribal lands.

One such cooperative project occurred this July on Samison Mountain southeast of Myrtle Point, Oregon. Fire and forestry officials from the Coos Bay District Bureau of Land Management, Powers Ranger District of the Rogue River/Siskiyou National Forest, Coos Forest Protective Association and the Coquille Indian Tribe pooled talents and resources to accomplish a 20-acre prescribed burn on Coquille Indian Tribal land.

“We appreciate all of the agencies’ help,” said George Smith, Coquille Indian Tribal Forest Manager. “Not only did the effort accomplish a needed fuels project, but it also provided



Smoke from the 20 acre prescribed fire rises from burn slash and low growing fuels.

training for those involved in planning and carrying out the burn.”

“Managers from each of the participating agencies saw the opportunity for their employees to gain valuable fire experience with this project,” said Earl Burke, Fire Management Officer for the Coos Bay BLM District.

Coos Forest Protective Association crews were able to gain controlled fire experience, Siskiyou-Rogue River National Forest’s Assistant Fire Management Officer was able to maintain qualifications as a Burn Boss Type 2, the National

Forest crew gained hand ignition experience, and BLM was able to provide additional prescribed fire experience to tender drivers and field observers. Most importantly, Tribal personnel were able to see how their project provided an interagency experience that benefits the local community.

This project was the culmination of several years of cooperative efforts between BLM and Coquille Indian Tribe on hazardous fuels projects. BLM was contacted several years ago to assist the Coquille Indian Tribe in reducing hazardous fuels on Tribal lands. Since that time, BLM has helped facilitate accomplishment of Tribal hazardous fuels projects by providing technical review of burn plans, equipment, and prescribed fire overhead, such as burn bosses.

Agencies are now enjoying partnership benefits and looking to the future. “The projects not

only improve our knowledge, skills, and abilities regarding fire and fuels, but also improve upon our ability to work and communicate with each other in future fire situations,” Burke said. “We look forward to future opportunities for this type of interagency training and fire experience.”

Idaho

Vegetation Treatment Successfully Protects Historic Museum from Wildfire

When Idaho Bureau of Land Management State Director K Lynn Bennett contacted Twin Falls District Fuels Specialist Brandon Brown in June of 2005, he had a project in mind. Bennett was concerned about the Idaho Farm and Ranch Museum, located just off the Twin Falls exit along Interstate 84. Idaho BLM has had a long-standing



Multiple pieces of historic farming equipment on display at the Idaho Farm and Ranch Museum were threatened during the wildfire. The fuels project conducted around the museum two months previous slowed fire progress, allowing firefighters to contain the blaze before artifacts were destroyed.



Fire officials gather for a briefing before the Samison Mountain prescribed burn gets underway.

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A fuels project conducted around the Idaho Farm and Ranch Museum, operated under a Recreation and Public Purposes Lease from the BLM, was successful in slowing fire progress and improving access to allow firefighters to keep the fire small and protect the historic equipment and buildings.

partnership with the Jerome Historical Society which operates the museum under a Recreation and Public Purposes Lease from BLM. The museum features historic farming equipment, as well as historic wooden buildings which could never be replaced if lost to wildfire.

Brown quickly set the wheels in motion on a small scale vegetation treatment project to minimize flammable grasses and improve access for firefighting equipment and visitors around the museum. The project directly met one of the primary goals of the National Fire Plan to reduce threats of wildfire in the wildland urban interface. In early July, with the help of a private contractor, a 100 foot buffer was mowed around the museum and visitor parking area near the interstate exit ramp. A grader was used to remove vegetation from the surrounding roads, including highly flammable weeds that had grown around some of the historical equipment on site.

The morning of Tuesday, August 30, put the vegetation treatment to the test and confirmed the timeliness of Bennett and Brown's concerns. A wildfire began not far from the museum, burning toward the historical equipment and structures. Jerome Rural Fire Department and BLM firefighting crews responded to the incident within minutes, working efficiently together as a result of the National Fire Plan Rural Assistance Program. While the quick response time certainly assisted firefighting efforts, both rural and BLM crews were quick to acknowledge that losses were prevented because of the mowed buffer zone and sufficient fire equipment access. A wildfire, which could have had devastating effect on these irreplaceable connections to Idaho's past, was held to just four acres as a result of the vegetation treatment conducted only two months earlier.

"The treatment did what it was intended to do," Brown said. "It

slowed fire progress and gave crews enough time to respond."

More preventative efforts are planned in this area in the future. During the summer of 2006, as part of an environmental assessment, a large scale vegetative treatment will be conducted to seed the area to perennial grasses thereby addressing overall rangeland health objectives, as well as providing for additional mitigation of wildfire.

Portneuf Fire Manageable Thanks to Ongoing Fuels Reduction Project

When Pocatello area BLM and Forest Service fuels specialists designed the Portneuf Westbench project, many proposed treatments were couched in theory. They recently proved those theories when a fire accidentally broke out in the treatment area.

The joint BLM and Forest Service Portneuf Westbench Project, one of ten pilot projects proposed under the President's Healthy Forests Initiative in 2002, is composed of several smaller working areas. Mink Creek is a 370 acre treatment area, where thinning thick stands of Utah juniper is the target.

The Portneuf Fire was reported on September 1, 2005 at around 3:30 p.m., and the Eastern Idaho Interagency Fire Center immediately dispatched firefighting resources. Because the fire was burning in a treated portion of the Mink Creek thinning project, flames advanced through chipped debris and remained on the ground rather than consuming the juniper canopy and becoming unmanageable.

Because fire kept to the ground, firefighters with various types of equipment were able to use direct attack methods rather than an indirect attack. "Juniper produces more flying, flaming debris, which increases spotting distance. The flame lengths on a juniper fire are usually too much for crews to directly attack the fire," said BLM Assistant Fire Management Officer Joel Gosswiller.

"The objectives of this project include decreasing the likelihood of homes burning in a wildland fire, decreasing soil erosion and



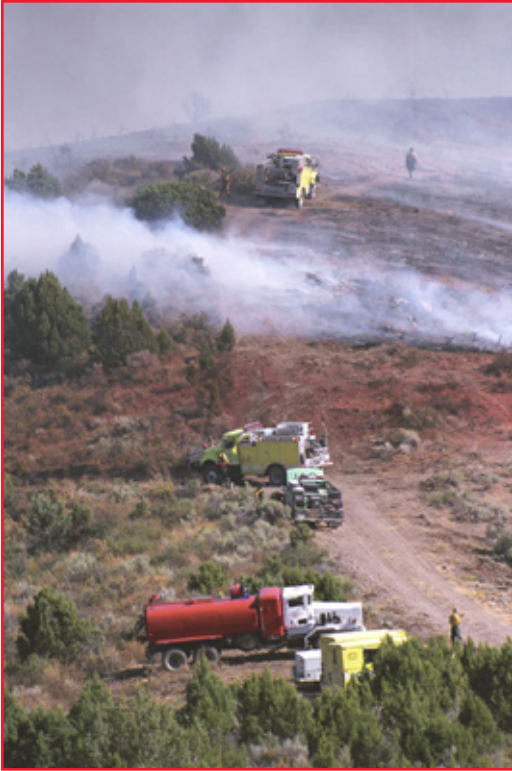
A water tender is able to lay a wet line along the ridge top, where the Portneuf Fire lost energy and died out not too far over the other side. Robert Barnes photo

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Firefighting resources are able to meet the grounded flames of the Portneuf Fire on a ridge top, using direct attack. Robert Barnes photo

enhancing wildlife habitat,” said BLM Pocatello Fuels Specialist Sarah Heide. “We want to create a mosaic of grassland, shrub land and woodland on the landscape, instead of the expanse of juniper that currently exists in the project area.”

BLM contracted a specialized piece of heavy equipment to create irregularly shaped openings in strategic locations within the Mink Creek woodlands. Fuel breaks will be built so that, in the event of a wildfire, flames can remain on the ground surface rather than climbing into the canopy and turning into a crown fire that firefighters cannot manage safely. The contracted machinery is

designed to cut and chip the juniper trees as a one-step process.

The outstanding work this contractor completed thus far helped prevent this blaze from quickly growing large. Had it not been for the previously treated acres, Gosswiller believes fire behavior seen on this fire would have been much more intense.

“The fire behavior from the junipers burning would not have allowed for ground resources to conduct direct attack tactics on the fire, and it would have become much larger,” he said.

Proof that the Mink Creek fuel reduction project is making a difference was evident to Gosswiller on Thursday afternoon. “If the fuel project had not been done, the fire would have more than likely spread into the next drainage.”

Fire officials were able to maintain firefighter safety and preserve natural resources by having a water tender place a wet line along a ridge top just over the Portneuf Fire eventually lost energy and died out.

Because of pre-existing fuels breaks, approximately 65 firefighters successfully used engines and hand tools to directly attack and contain this 54 acre ground fire in just five hours, during the hottest part of the day. Gosswiller claims that “reducing the junipers on and near the ridges allowed us to use air tankers and retardant in the lighter grass fuels on the ridge and prevent the fire from spreading into the next drainage.”

Fuels specialists consider the work of initiating and fostering fuel reduction programs not only important, but imperative. Now they have evidence in a treated area like Mink Creek to back up the theory of the positive effects of keeping wildfires on the ground and out of the crowns.



The Portneuf Fire backs into the treated area of the Mink Creek fuel reduction project. Where there once were thick stands of Utah juniper, the fire now has only chipped debris to consume. Robert Barnes photo

The Pulaski Project: “An Education in Catastrophic Fire”

The 1910 fire is often referred to as “The Big Blowup” or the “Great Fire of 1910”. It is, to date, the largest wildfire in United States history and changed the lives of the people in the Inland Northwest forever. The fire traveled at 60 miles per hour and burned an estimated nine billion board feet of timber across three million acres of land in just two days.

On August 20, 2005, BLM participated in the official dedication of the Pulaski Tunnel Trail. The dedication took place exactly 95 years to the day that the 1910 fire forced US Forest Service Ranger Edward Pulaski and his crew to seek refuge in an old mine tunnel, located on BLM administered public land.

Pulaski and his crew of 45 men were working the fire when they became trapped in the West Fork of Placer Creek on their attempted retreat to the town of Wallace. Once inside the Nicholson Mine tunnel, men started going berserk or panicking when the fire began rolling over the top of the tunnel opening. At one point, Pulaski pulled his revolver and threatened to shoot anyone who tried going past him, in hopes of taking their chances outside. The horses and men lay on the moist floor of the tunnel and spent the night waiting for the fire to blow through; many of them totally losing consciousness

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from the heat and smoke. When they finally awoke and realized the worse was over, they crawled toward the entrance in hopes of getting a drink from the nearby creek. They found the creek was still hot and that all the fish had died. Of the 45-man crew, 39 survived thanks to Ranger Pulaski's courage and foresight.

In 1911, Pulaski presented a tool he invented to U.S. Forest Service supervisors. The tool was a cross between an ax and a mattock (grubbing hoe). To this day, the Pulaski is probably the most recognized fire fighting tool known.

Senator Craig, the keynote speaker at the August 20th dedication, emphasized the national significance of recognizing the bravery and dedication of Pulaski and his crew, in addition to all past, present and future fire fighters. He also recognized the importance of the community partnership process that made this project possible and the lessons that not only the community, but the entire nation, should learn regarding catastrophic fire events that have and will occur again.

The Pulaski Project is a partnership involving the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land



Shoshone County Commissioner Jon Cantamessa addresses the audience during the Pulaski Tunnel Trail Dedication Ceremony on August 20, 2005. To his right are (seated in front row), Agriculture Undersecretary Mark Rey, Idaho Panhandle Forest Supervisor Ronatta McNair, Pulaski Project member Jim See, Wallace Museum Director John Amonson and BLM Field Manager Eric Thomson.



The mouth of the 50 foot tunnel where Ranger Pulaski and men took refuge during the 1910 fire. All survived except 5, who suffocated in the tunnel. Two horses led into the tunnel were so badly burned they had to be shot. See firefighter's clothes (left) and saddle and stirrup (below tunnel mouth). U.S. Forest Service photo

Management, HECLA, Stimson Lumber, East Shoshone County Water Company and, to a great extent, the Greater Wallace Community Development Corporation. One of the goals of preserving and recognizing the historical significance of the Pulaski Tunnel Trail is to provide an interesting and true story that the public can affix to these huge fire events. In the long-term, the project will include establishing a museum and learning center as a public outreach and education tool describing the history of fire; the mistakes that mankind has made with our past suppression efforts; and more importantly, how fire changes and restores the ecosystem.

As a result of the Pulaski Project, a new bridge has been placed across the West Fork of Placer Creek to allow access to the two-mile trail used by Pulaski and his men when they crawled out of the tunnel and down into

the town of Wallace. Improvements to the two-mile trail, along with interpretive signs, benches and a viewing platform are also being designed for the area. Once completed, the public will be able to cross the bridge, walk along the trail paralleling the creek, and reach an overlook with a view of the Nicholson Mine Tunnel, on the opposite side of the West Fork of Placer Creek.

The Placer Creek Watershed is the sole municipal surface water source for the community of Wallace, Idaho. Within this watershed, the BLM's Coeur d'Alene Field Office is involved in a very effective partnership with the community of Wallace. Several projects are planned to assist the community in reducing fuels and increasing the defensibility against catastrophic fire as well as to protect the municipal water source. According to Eric

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Thomson, BLM Field Manager, “the Pulaski Project could not serve as a better public outreach tool to illustrate the need for aggressive fuel reduction efforts within the wildland urban interface.”

Contact: Eric Thomson, Coeur d’Alene Field Manager at, (208) 769-5030

Colorado

An Industrial Urban Interface Partnership

Not all wildland urban interface involves homes. Interface also includes values such as industrial sites. This is the case in a location west of Meeker, Colorado in the Piceance Basin of Rio Blanco County.

The largest known, naturally occurring, commercial deposit of sodium bicarbonate in North America is home to Natural Soda Inc. Natural Soda is a large mining operation

producing 125,000 tons of sodium bicarbonate a year and it’s located within the Bureau of Land Management White River Field Office.

The mine recovers sodium bicarbonate using a process known as solution mining. Natural Soda produces approximately \$350,000 annually in royalties which come back to the state and county and employs over 30 local people.

Piceance Basin is a high fire occurrence area containing dense, continuous, pinon-juniper stands interspersed with sagebrush. Natural Soda has experienced 45 fires within two miles of the mine facility in the last 10 years, so there is potential for wildfire to impact the mine.

Natural Soda’s plant is powered by electricity which is supplied by a twin wood power pole line coming into the plant, then on to well locations on numerous single power pole lines. During

the development of the Rio Blanco County Fire Plan, the industrial facilities and power lines that traverse the Piceance Basin were identified as values at risk and the county’s highest priority for treatment. Access and egress were also a concern since there is only one road into and out of the plant creating a hazardous situation for firefighters as well as employees.

Wood power poles igniting during a wildland fire wasn’t the only concern. Smoke acts as a conductor and arching from the power lines is a possibility. If lines are damaged it would close the plant until repairs could be made, which would impact the county economy. The economic impact of a power outage to the county and Natural Soda could potentially be devastating.

These factors led BLM Fuels Planner Ken Holsinger, to establish a partnership between Rio Blanco County, Natural Soda, Colorado Division of Wildlife and White River Electric Association to effectively address the existing conditions. In order to mitigate dangers, a hazardous fuel reduction plan was developed.



Treated area with a stand of pinon juniper to the right of the building showing the density of surrounding stands.



A portion of the area that was hand thinned and limbed.

The plan was developed utilizing the new categorical exclusion tool provided from the Healthy Forest Initiative in order to move things along.

BLM thinned pinon-juniper stands under and around power lines and the access road to approximately 15 foot canopy spacing so that crown fire could not be supported, burned slash and pulled back heavy fuels from around mine pipelines. Thinning included widening the road corridor 50 feet on each side of the road and also thinned dense pinon-juniper stands upwind from the main power line supplying power to the plant. Mechanical treatment consisted of brush beating approximately 400 acres of sagebrush in strategic areas around the mine



Aerial picture of the Natural Soda site showing treated areas. Dark green is pinon-juniper stands, light green is mowed and thinned area.

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to break up continuous pinion-juniper and sagebrush stands.

Much of this work was done in critical winter range for mule deer so Natural Soda offered to provide native seed to supplement for the degraded sagebrush under story and to seed burned locations created by slash disposal. This project gave cooperators an opportunity to provide wildfire mitigation for the mine facility and improve declining mule deer winter range.

The mitigation work accomplished by the project provides a platform to support fire use and raise the comfort level of the participating companies.

Benefits from this project include closer working relationships between Natural Soda, White River Electric Company, Division of Wildlife and Rio Blanco County. Seeding by Natural Soda to stave off cheat grass invasion and improve browse for wildlife, safer firefighting environment, and protecting the infrastructure and economic health of Rio Blanco County were also benefits.

Contact: Lynn Barclay, Mitigation/Education Specialist, 970-826-5096 or Ken Holsinger, Fuels Specialist, 970-878-3838

Map illustrating community at risk areas and large fires in north Delta County.

A Common Goal Helps Homeowners Rally

Every county has at least one subdivision where the fire chief says "What are we going to do if we get a fire in there?"

In southwest Colorado's Montezuma County that subdivision is Cedar Mesa Ranch, which sits just north of U.S. Highway 160 at the entrance to Mesa Verde National Park. About 2,000 acres in size, the subdivision has 139 lots ranging from five acres to just under 50 acres, with over 30 homes constructed to date. A long term drought left the area parched and vulnerable, and over the last several years, the pinion pine in the area was devastated by the Ips beetle, increasing the subdivision's fire hazard.

Cedar Mesa Ranch residents are working hard to dispel fire managers fears about their subdivision. Their resident "Fire Committee" has taken several proactive steps including educating home and property owners on the potential fire danger, importance of defensible space, and applying for community assistance grant

money to reduce hazardous fuels.

Upon receipt of their community assistance grant, the subdivision developed a two-phase mitigation plan. Phase I involved hiring a local mitigation company to create a fuel break along the subdivision ingress and egress access route. The fuel break involved removing some trees and limbing others within 18 feet of either side of the main road. Phase II involved a large-scale, slash-removal project in which almost 25 percent of lot owners participated. Chips were spread in the wooded areas along the main roads.

"In addition to the mitigation plan, we also developed several educational objectives we wanted to achieve in our effort to become a model subdivision," said Fire Committee member Susan Bryson.

These efforts included creating a wildfire evacuation plan and communicating that plan to all residents and property owners, providing a list and map of structures and homes in the subdivision to the Mancos

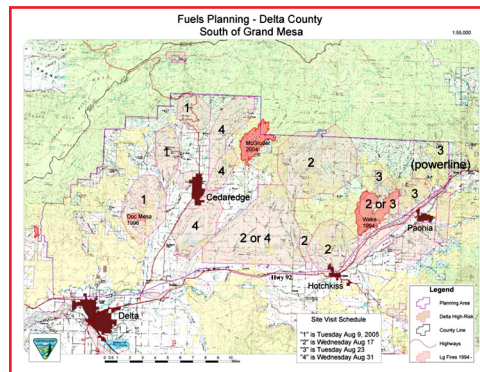


The Montrose Interagency Fire Ecologist and the Uncompahgre Field Office Fuels Team discuss potential treatment sites with the Paonia Fire Chief and Colorado State Forest Service Forester.

Fire Department, enforcing the covenant that calls for a four-inch lot number sign at each driveway that adjoins the main road, and developing an informational lending library of fire resource material about defensible space, mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and home construction in a wildland-urban interface, high-risk fire area.

In addition, the subdivision has a spokesman that attends Firewise Council of Southwest Colorado meetings and participates in the "Ambassador Program" sponsored by the Council. Ambassadors help promote wildfire awareness education and wildfire risk reduction efforts and serve as liaisons with firefighting entities if there is a fire in their neighborhood.

Homeowners also developed Cedar Mesa Ranches Home Owner Association web site on which they share an endless amount of fire resource information. They believe that



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the web site will foster stronger relationships both within the subdivision and between association members, as well as assist them in their effort to convey fire-related educational material.

BLM Works With County to Identify Fuels Treatment Areas

During three separate days in August, members of Montrose Interagency Fire and the BLM Uncompahgre Field Office fuels team met with fire chiefs in three of the fire protection districts in Delta County, Colorado to evaluate potential sites for hazardous fuel reduction treatments on BLM lands.

The federal fire and fuels team, accompanied by staff from the Colorado State Forest Service, American Red Cross, and Delta County Emergency Management visited various sites with fire chiefs to discuss and prioritize

potential hazardous fuels reduction projects. Site locations were identified using community at risk maps Delta County produced as part of their county fire planning effort.

The portion of Delta County the team evaluated was identified by the BLM as a priority area for treatment because of the high risk of catastrophic fire. There have been three large fires in the area within the last 10 years. In 1994, the Wake Fire burned 3,848 acres and destroyed three homes. In 1996, the Doc Fire burned 313 acres, and in 2004, the McGruder Fire burned 2,806 acres.

The area is experiencing continued growth, with development and infrastructure expanding into the wildland. From 1990 to 2000, Delta County's population increased by 32.7 percent. Between 2000 and 2003, the county saw a



Typical wildland urban interface area along the south face of the Grand Mesa in Delta County.

5.7 percent increase in overall population. Besides the town of Delta itself, much of this growth has been in and around the towns of Cedaredge, Orchard City, Hotchkiss, and Paonia.

Delta County also identified this area as a high priority in the initial phase of prioritizing their community at risk. The county has completed public scoping on their draft county fire plan.

As part of this process, the county sent out surveys to all residents living within one of the community at risk areas to identify the values within that community residents want to see protected from fire. The response rate for the survey was 9 percent, which indicates a fairly high level of interest in the fire planning effort. In addition, the county hosted three public meetings during August to discuss the draft county fire plan and community values. The county has tabulated the surveys, and they will now take the BLM assessments into consideration in finalizing their priorities.

On August 9, the federal fire and fuels team met with the fire chief for the Surface Creek Fire Protection District near Cedaredge and evaluated all potential BLM sites within his fire protection district. There were very few sites on BLM land that presented opportunity to reduce risk to the private land. Most of the work that needs to be done is around private property.

On August 17, the team met with the fire chief for the Hotchkiss Fire Protection District and toured his district. There were several sites on BLM lands that present opportunities to reduce the risk to private lands, primarily by slowing fire spread by breaking up the continuity of the fuels. There is also an opportunity to protect an important watershed on BLM lands that could severely impact the town of Hotchkiss. The fire chief in this district has been very proactive in promoting individual responsibility, and he has been successful in getting cost share



Cheatgrass understory in the pinyon-juniper along the south face of the Grand Mesa.

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money to support fuel reduction on private property. As a result, many landowners in his district have done fuel reduction work on their property.

On August 25, the team met with the fire chief for the Paonia Fire Protection District to evaluate the sites he identified as potential risks. They also evaluated the potential for fuels treatments on BLM lands along a major Western Area Power Administration 230 kilovolt power line that crosses the Grand Mesa and runs down into the North Fork Valley. This line links the large coal fired power plants in northwestern Colorado and northeastern Utah and the hydropower generation units in western Colorado and northeastern Utah with the western power grid. There were a few sites near private lands that presented an opportunity to reduce the risk to homes, and a few sites along the power line where the oakbrush could be treated to reduce the potential for direct impingement on the line. The greatest factor influencing treatments is the presence of cheatgrass. It is so pervasive in this area that it is changing the fire characteristics, and it will have a pronounced, long term influence on fire risk.

In conjunction with the fuels treatments on public lands, Delta County and fire districts will continue to work collaboratively with federal and state agencies and Red Cross to encourage residents to use Firewise principles in building and

maintaining homes. The Red Cross assisted Delta County in conducting their public scoping. As part of the outreach and survey process, they solicited individuals to help develop and implement community wildfire protection plans and programs. In partnership with the federal and state agencies, the Red Cross and county will work through the fire protection districts to follow up public outreach and attempt to develop local Firewise programs.

Contact: Bruce Krickbaum, UFO Fuels Team Lead (970) 240-5384, or Dan Huisjen, Fire Ecologist, Montrose Interagency Fire (970) 240-5339

Good Neighbor Project at Durango Hills - Edgemont Ranch

The San Juan Public Lands Center is in the final phase of completing a National Fire Plan fuels-reduction thinning on a 40-acre inholding within the Edgemont Ranch and Durango Hills subdivisions northeast of Durango, Colorado. The project is a joint effort between BLM, Colorado State Forest Service, and adjacent private landowners. With guidance from the Colorado State Forest Service, many of the private landowners have completed fuels reduction thinning on their properties. Realizing the importance of reducing the fuels on public land, access to the project area was granted by a private landowner.

The project area was stocked with approximately 300 trees per

acre of young, dense second-growth ponderosa pine with an occasional pre-settlement yellow bark pine. The goal was to reduce ladder fuels and create significant openings in the canopy to decrease the sustainability of a crown fire. Approximately 100 trees per acre were harvested; of these, 75 trees were less than 10 inches in diameter. Emphasis was placed on leaving the healthiest and largest trees. Some of the trees harvested will be sold as firewood and some will be sold to woodworkers for use in decorative railings. Slash was piled at the landings for later burning.

During the project several goshawk nests and an historic cabin site were found within the treatment area. The tree canopy immediately around these goshawk nests was not thinned but an understory treatment was accomplished by hand with the Southwest Youth

Conservation Corps. The old cabin site was easily avoided during the thinning. Watershed improvement included creating slash sediment traps by placing cull trees in an old roadbed that in places had become a 4-foot deep seasonal stream channel.



Treatment area prior to treatment.



Treated area.



Area of treatment around the home.