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National Office of Fire and Aviation

Reaching Out to Partners

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Thousands of visitors at the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation 21st annual convention in Portland, Oregon, had an opportunity to learn about the importance of fire to healthy wildlife habitat. A display booth provided an opportunity for staff from the Office of Fire and Aviation, supported by BLM experts from Montana and Oregon, to interact with visitors at the annual convention held February 24-27, 2005.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is one of BLM's important partners for fire



program work, and has provided significant funding and support for projects to help improve wildlife habitat. In 2004, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation celebrated its 20th Anniversary. Founded and headquartered in Montana, the organization has grown and evolved into an international conservation leader. Powered by volunteers, members, supporters and partners, the Elk Foundation has completed more than 3,800 conservation and education projects, impacting nearly four million acres of habitat for elk and other wildlife.



Gayle Sitter, wildlife biologist from BLM's Montana State Office shares information with a convention participant at the Fire and Aviation booth.



Jeff Rose, BLM fire ecologist from the Burns, Oregon district shared information on specific cooperative fire projects for the group.

BLM Fire and Aviation Director Larry Hamilton gave a presentation about the national fire plan during the foundation Spike Camp Seminars. He teamed up with Jeff Rose, BLM fire ecologist from the Burns, Oregon district, who provided an overview of specific projects done in cooperation with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Director Kathleen Clark attended the event, and signed a new national level agreement with the group.



BLM Fire and Aviation Director Larry Hamilton provided information on the national fire plan and wildlife habitat to the convention.

BLM Helps Educate During National Wild Turkey Federation Convention



More than 40,000 people attended the National Wild Turkey Federation Convention and Sports Show in Nashville, Tennessee, February 18-20. The national Fire Friend or Foe booth display was an anchor point to attract attendees and share information about BLM fire programs and prevention.

Dena Lang from BLM's Miles City, Montana field office, and Chuck Berdan of the South Dakota field office distributed packets to attendees with information about public land ethics, public land location, wildfire and prescribed burning. Teacher packets were given to interested parties. Other pamphlets were distributed on fire and wildlife habitat.

Numerous items and information were given to children. Always popular were Smokey Bear coloring and activity books, rulers, erasers, pencils and compass key chains. Posters "Bats of the Western United States", and "Walk on the Wild Side" were also popular items in high demand.

The National Wild Turkey Federation is a half million member grassroots, nonprofit organization with members in 50 states, Canada and 11 other

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Fire, Friend or Foe was highlighted as a key message at the National Wild Turkey Federation.

foreign countries. It supports scientific wildlife management on public, private and corporate lands as well as wild turkey hunting as a traditional North American sport.

Since 1985, more than \$193 million federation and cooperator dollars have been spent on more than 29,000 projects benefiting wild turkeys and other game and non-game species throughout North America.



More than 40,000 people attended the convention and sports show in Nashville, Tennessee in February.

Utah

Merit Badge Effort Heightens Wildfire Awareness Boy Scout Troop 514 Chooses to Aid Community at Risk

The year 2005 marks the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Boy Scouts of America. BLM's Salt Lake Field Office salutes the history of the ideals of the Scout Oath and Law which helps communities both small and large. The tradition of service fundamental to scouting recently came to the aid to High Country Estates, a community at risk from wildfire.

Wildfire has been a continuing challenge surrounding the subdivision of High Country Estates. Several areas in and adjacent to the rural subdivision are at extreme danger from wildland-urban fires. In fact, any significant fire threatens some structure due to the increase in development into wildland areas. Safety of the residents of the community is a shared responsibility between citizens, and local, county state and federal governments. The primary responsibility, however, remains at the citizen and owner level.

While developing a community fire plan, the High Country Wildfire Council realized a need to implement an education



Teresa Rigby (l), fire education-mitigation specialist from the BLM Salt Lake City field office presents members of Troop 514 an award for their work in raising wildfire awareness for public land visitors.

campaign to help community members prepare for and respond to wildfire. As a result, High Country Estates has distributed brochures, video tape check-outs and other informational materials to residents through a section in their newsletter and on their website. The council also created three highly visible demonstration areas as exemplary models of defensible space and appropriate building materials.

According to council member Randy Crane, "Internal education was the easy part. People that live here have witnessed wildfire at their backdoor. Early on in the education campaign it became apparent the missing link was the public land users that travel through

High Country Estates to recreate on the surrounding wildlands."

When Jace Stringham, Eagle Scout candidate for Troop 514 heard of the need to help inform the public outside of the community of wildfire danger he chose to act. Jace and Troop 514 designed, constructed and installed a large fire danger sign advertising danger levels from low to extreme. The sign is situated at a location where people traveling through the community on their way to



Wildfire council member Randy Crane checks the level on the new fire danger sign as scouts from Troop 514 work to install it.

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enjoy the outdoors will receive a friendly reminder that wildfire danger is a consideration while recreating.

The sign project is an excellent example of coordination between local residents, volunteer groups, state and federal governments working together as a team to help lessen the threat of wildfire to property and lives of Utah communities.

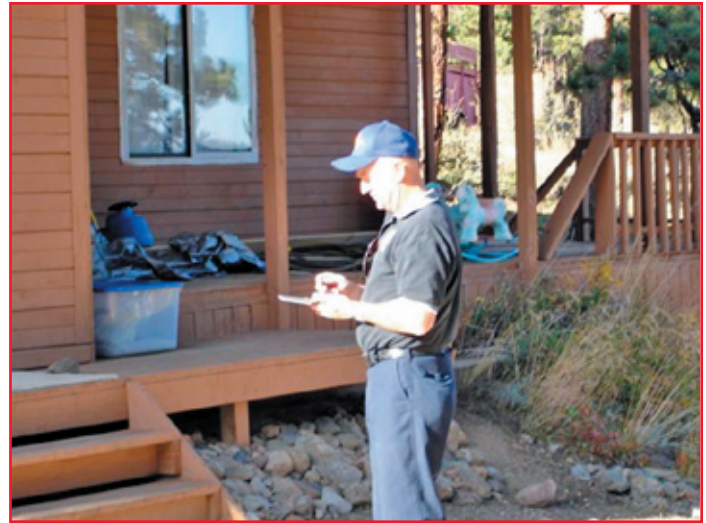
Idaho

Teton County Wildland Urban Interface Assessment

A comprehensive wildfire risk assessment of structures in Teton County, Idaho, is continuing for its third consecutive year and is scheduled to be completed this summer.

The project began in 2003 and 2004, when the Teton County Fire Department conducted 1,643 wildland urban interface home assessments within the fire district. The Teton County Fire District is a county-wide fire district serving the communities of Driggs, Victor and Teton and surrounding areas in Teton County Idaho, and the community of Alta in Wyoming. Due to its proximity to Jackson Hole and the Grand Targhee Ski Resort, the fire district is experiencing rapid large-scale growth.

The department is conducting a comprehensive inventory of structures using RedZone software and intends to incorporate the data in their geographic information system for planning for wildfires and other emergencies. The assessments are being conducted by four local high school students under the



Firefighter entering home assessment data to a personal digital assistant for transfer to computer with RedZone software.

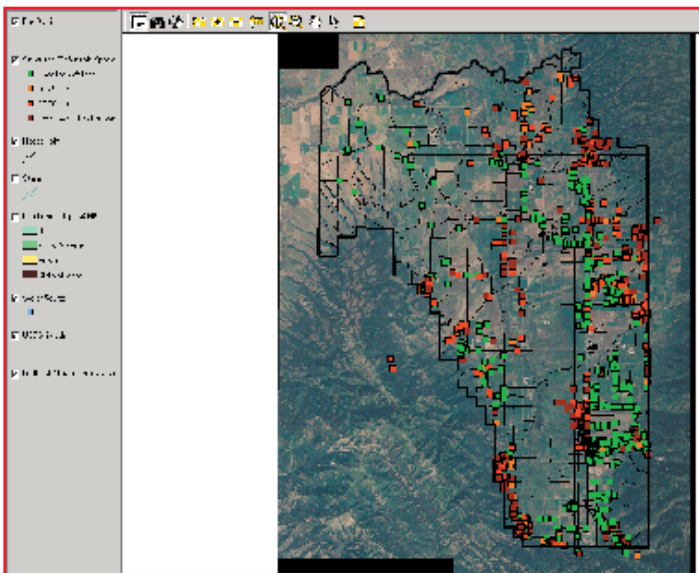
supervision of Teton County Fire Chief Gary Henrie, fire marshal Mike Hoyle, district fire commissioner Jay Hansen and battalion chief Scott Wood.

Structures are being assessed for wildfire risk, based on factors such as ingress and egress to the home, building construction materials, defensible space, water supply, topography and fuels. Each structure is mapped using geographic positioning system coordinates, and digital photos are taken of the structure. In addition to structure data, other infrastructure features such as water supply, jurisdictional boundaries and transportation layers are being incorporated to create detailed maps of the fire district.

The need for an inventory was identified in the Teton County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan, completed in 2003. Funding

was through a combination of fire district funds and grant from the Idaho Falls District BLM Community Assistance program. Teton County expects to have the entire fire district inventoried by the end of the summer of 2005. In the future, data will be maintained each time a new building permit is issued.

Fire chief Gary Henrie said, "The goal of the project is to increase the effectiveness of emergency response agencies within the county by providing them with better maps of the area, clearly identifying the location and access routes to structures, incorporating the data into the county E-911 dispatch system, and preparing evacuation and structure protection plans in advance of incidents." Data will be shared with the Idaho Falls District Bureau of Land Management and Caribou-Targhee National



Topographic map generated by RedZone home assessment software with homes color coded by their risk level.

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Forest. It will facilitate unified command for wildfire incidents and provide critical data to regional or national incident command as needed.

BLM Fire Mitigation-Education Specialist Kevin Conran in Idaho Falls, said, "This project has also provided the fire department with an opportunity to meet with homeowners and provide public education about reducing the risks of wildfire in the urban interface."

The assessment will also be used in conjunction with the county wildfire mitigation plan to identify and prioritize fuels reduction and other associated mitigation projects within the fire district.

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Curriculum Developed to Involve High School Students in Wildland Urban Interface Assessments

BLM's Boise District is establishing an environmental education pilot program with a local high school science group to engage students in fuels data gathering and conducting home assessments in the wildland urban interface. The student science group, which is called the Field Inquiry Research Experience, or FIRE-UP, will work with BLM to prepare a model curriculum that could be used to involve high school students for wildland urban interface assessments throughout Idaho. This data



FIREUP 2004 – The Fire Inquiry Research Experience Team at Pixley Basin.

would be used by BLM to identify fuels treatments and clean-up projects.

The FIRE-UP program was initiated by BLM and a team of teachers in the Meridian, Idaho school district to get students involved with field research activities. In June 2004, interested students enrolled in a workshop, "Fire Up for Summer", in which they monitored the conditions of the Pixley Basin prescribed burn, which was conducted in 2003 about 60 miles south of Boise. That information was presented to BLM managers and fire staff for their use.

In the initial project, students gathered and analyzed data and created maps to describe the effects of the Pixley

Basin burn on soil and plant conditions. The project identified several monitoring issues that needed to be addressed in future projects to ensure the collected data could be fully utilized by BLM's fire and resource management programs.

BLM and the team of teachers refined the student's monitoring techniques, and made plans to use RedZone software with inexpensive, but suitable, hardware for data collection in the field. The RedZone company offered to supply software at a reasonable price to support the pilot project.

In June of this year, students from Mountain View High School located in Meridian will collect data using RedZone around the historic mining community of Silver City, located in Owyhee County. The students will have



A structure in Silver City with an overview of the vegetation surrounding the community. The FIRE-UP Team will use RedZone to conduct property assessments in June of 2005.

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geographic positioning system and geographic information system training to prepare maps for a final written and oral presentation.

One of the products expected from this survey is individual home assessments, which residents can use to better prepare their property in the event of wildland fire. Results of assessments will also be used to help plan for the annual Silver City Clean-Up day scheduled for early summer 2005.

Students participating in the FIRE-UP program gain practical skills in field monitoring and assessment techniques and learn about fire and resource management principles. They earn high school credits and can earn optional college credits through a cooperative program

with Northwest Nazarene University, located in Nampa, Idaho.

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Nevada

Fuels Treatments on Edge of Town Protect Carson City Homes

Homes on the eastern edge of Carson City, Nevada will be less vulnerable to danger of wildland fire this year, thanks to a just-completed fuels treatment project. The project is located on the east side of Carson City in the Mexican Dam and Pinyon Hills residential areas.



Perimeter fuel treatment on BLM land near Carson City.

The BLM Carson City Field Office collaborated on the project with the Carson City Fire Department, Nevada Division of Forestry, Student Conservation Association's Fire Education Corps, and area homeowners.

Fuels treatments were funded by the Carson City Fire Department through a grant received under the National Fire Plan. BLM and Carson City worked together to complete planning for the project, which included public meetings and collaborative development. BLM and the city also worked closely with concerned landowners throughout project

development and implementation. Student Conservation Association volunteers had already completed wildfire hazard evaluations for homeowners in these areas during the 2002 and 2003 fire seasons.

A city contractor completed mechanical treatment of the site, including mowing, shredding and mastication of the built-up vegetation. Nevada Department of Forestry crews did the hand thinning work. Project work lasted from late January through early March.

Throughout the project, city, state and federal personnel worked with area residents to evaluate wildfire risk and design and conduct fuel treatments to protect individual homes, community at large, and resources on surrounding public lands.

The project area included a complex mix of private and public lands. Residential



Fuel treatments on BLM land are designed to prevent wildfires from entering or leaving the community.

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areas included both developed and undeveloped lots, which contained enough accumulated fuels to create a wildfire risk.

Brush and trees on intermingled private and public land, as well as on outlying public lands, were also susceptible to wildfire. This increased the fire risk to the community and the area's natural resources. In order to protect homes, private property and resources from potential wildfire damage, fuel treatments targeted both public and private lands.



Joe Fording of the Nevada Division of Forestry supervises crews thinning flammable fuels and creating defensible space on private property.

Fuels treatments on adjacent public lands were aimed at modifying fuel structure, reducing wildfire intensity and creating safe areas for firefighters to incorporate into fire suppression operations. These treatments were designed to help firefighters slow or stop wildfires on public lands before the flames could move into residential areas, threaten homes and private property. Conversely, the treatments would also hinder the spread of wildfires from private land to public land.



Joe Fording of the Nevada Division of Forestry supervises crews thinning flammable fuels and creating defensible space on private property.

Earlier similar fuel treatments on the west side of Carson City proved effective in protecting homes from the Waterfall Fire of July 2004, which was the worst wildfire ever seen in the Nevada state capital.

That fire burned down the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains into the western outskirts of Carson City, and not only consumed 8,700 acres of timber and brush land, but also injured several firefighters and civilians, and destroyed 17 homes, one

commercial building, and numerous outbuildings. Three fire trucks and several other vehicles were also destroyed by the blaze.

Other homes and businesses, however, were saved by fuel breaks created by the Carson

City Fire Department, the Nevada Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service. These fuel breaks weathered a wide range of wildfire behavior, including a rapidly advancing head fire, flanking fire, and fire behavior associated with a collapsing column.