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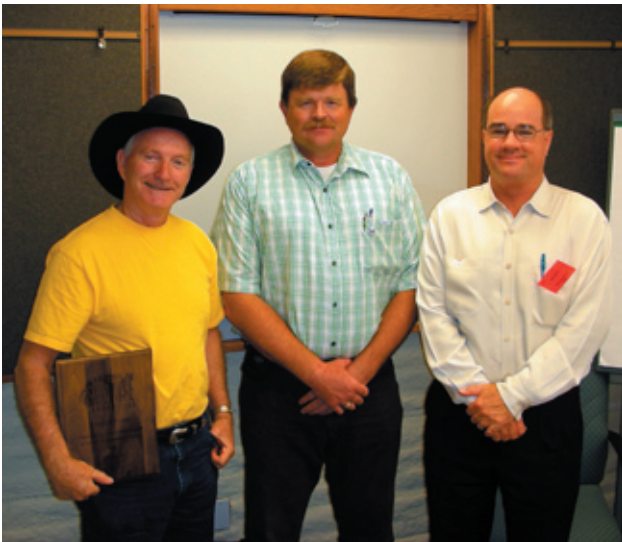
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Arizona

Community Assistance from State Historian and Local Businessman Help in Firewise Message

On August 20, Tucson Field Manager Patrick Madigan and Tucson employees hosted a lunch for two community members who have been instrumental in implementing the Arizona Firewise Program this season. One of the honored community members, Mark McArthur, provided assistance with the chipping and packaging of local mesquite from community fuel break projects, or biomass that can be utilized grilling and barbecues. Mark donated over 5000 heavy-duty ziplock bags to the cause and Firewise messages were printed on the packaging. The other community member, Marshall Trimble, appeared in over 2500 Public Service Announcements on Arizona TV and radio promoting the Firewise Program during fire season with a western personality and as an Arizona State Historian. Both individuals were presented with plaques recognizing their efforts and treated to a pizza lunch with the employees.

For more information, contact: David Peters, Gila District Mitigation Specialist @ 520-258-7207.



Marshall Trimble, Patrick Madigan and Mark McArthur at the lunch to recognize community members' efforts in Arizona Firewise Program.

Montana

Defensible Space Scores a Home Run!

The BLM Butte Field Office, in partnership with the Helena National Forest, the Tri-county Fire Safe Working Group, and a Helena radio and TV station sponsored the 4th Annual Defensible Space night at the Helena Brewers minor league baseball game on June 23. The first 500 baseball fans were gifted a stadium blanket with the educational message of "Protect Home Base with Defensible Space"!

Members of the sponsoring agencies enjoyed a pre-game BBQ with all the fixings. Several BLM employees from the Montana State Office and Butte Field Office were able to attend and support defensible space in wildland urban interface communities.

The Helena Valley is identified as one of the priority areas for wildland urban interface fuels reduction, and the baseball game is just one of many methods used to reach landowners in the area and share information on fuels reduction and defensible space. The Tri-county Fire Safe Working Group is made up of fire personnel, disaster and emergency services personnel, and law enforcement in Broadwater, Jefferson, and Lewis and Clark counties.

For more information on this project contact Terina Mullen, Mitigation and Education Specialist for the Western Zone in Montana, at (406) 533-7665.

Oregon

Fuel Breaks protect Oregon Communities from Wildfire

Early this spring, the Vale BLM District implemented 600 acres of hazardous fuels treatments in an effort to decrease the impacts of wildland fire to local communities and to improve rangeland health. Little did they know they would see the benefits of their work just a few months later. This summer, firefighters were able to utilize the fuels treatments, consisting mainly of fuel breaks, to extinguish the Jackie's Butte Fire soon after it started. The end result was the protection of communities, safer firefighting conditions, and improved ecosystem health.

The Jackie's Butte Fire was started naturally by lightning and was wind driven to the north towards outlying ranches and the community of Rome, Oregon. Before the 450 acre fire could reach the community, it ran into one of the fuel breaks the BLM had constructed. The 16 mile-long fuel break blocked the fire from continuing north and threatening

the community. As the fire continued to burn along the fuel break, firefighters were able to anchor the fire and put it out. In just three hours, the fire reached its final size of 14,650 acres and had burned along 10.9 miles of the fuel break. The fuel break played a key role in helping firefighters stop the quickly moving fire and prevented a repeat of what happened in 2001, when a wildfire in the same location grew to 64,000 acres and directly threatened the community of Rome.

For more information contact Jason Simmons, jason_simmons@blm.gov, 541-473-6336



An aerial view of the fuel break which helped stop the Jackie's Butte Fire from reaching the community of Rome, Oregon.

Fuel Breaks Provide Multiple Benefits

After completing community assessments, the Vale BLM District plans to complete a total of 950 acres of fuel breaks in the Rome and Arock areas. The fuel breaks divide the mainly grass-sage ecosystem type into manageable sections for fire suppression where 30,000+ acre fires are the usual. Large wildfires are becoming more common due to annual grasses replacing native perennial grasses.

Annual grasses (mainly cheat grass) dry out by the first week of June as compared to perennial grasses which can stay green through early-September. Since the area consists mainly of light-flashy fuels that are cured by June, wildfires can burn fast, grow large in just a few hours, and occur more frequently. This problem of invasive species has challenged the Vale BLM Districts management ecosystem management ability.

Fuel breaks are planned and implemented in strategically placed locations and adjacent to private lands for the

protection of communities such as of Rome and Arock, Oregon. The 40'-60' wide fuel breaks were created alongside existing road systems. Approximately 130 miles of fuel breaks is proposed for this project. A combination of mowing, disking, plowing and road cleanout were utilized to reduce the amount of fuel or to remove the fuel all together.

A total of 85 miles of fuels treatment was completed this spring. Private landowners, Malheur County, and local ranchers supported this project throughout its planning and implementation process. Over \$40,000 of National Fire Plan funding was utilized to fund this project. Cooperative agreements and in-kind donations will be used to re-seed the fuel breaks with native perennial grasses.

The Vale BLM District usually has an average of 57,000 acres burn annually. Thus far, fire managers have witnessed over 225,000 acres burn during the 2006 fire season. It is important for fire managers to be prepared for severe fire activity. By creating fuel breaks, the Vale BLM District has divided the project area into manageable sections. As mentioned earlier, the sections make it easier and safer for firefighters to manage wildfires. The fuel breaks have two other important benefits. Local ranchers benefit by having less of their herds impacted or displaced by wildfires. A second benefit is a reduction of impact on wild horses. It is very expensive to remove or restrict horses from large areas even temporarily, and fuel breaks are able to reduce the need for wild horse relocation or removal. The fuel breaks will need yearly maintenance, particularly at first, but their benefit is invaluable.

For more information contact Jason Simmons, jason_simmons@blm.gov, 541-473-6336



The tractor mows fuel which helps to reduce the size flame lengths can become.