

Table of Contents

Eastern States

Hotshots in Florida	2
Southern Regional Fire Training Center Officially Opens.....	2

Wyoming

Bates Creek Watershed Restoration Project.....	2
Prescribed Fire for West Barrett Ridge.....	3

Nevada

Project Aims to Restore Health to Gleason Creek Watershed.....	3
--	---

Eastern States

Hotshots in Florida

Jackson Hotshots spent a couple of days clearing ladder fuels, marking endangered woodpecker cavity trees and thinning areas of overly dense young pine at Lathrop Bayou in northern Florida.



BLM and the St. Joe Timberlands Company collaborated to prepare the site for the upcoming prescribed burn, which is planned for March 2006.

Lathrop area before and after the fuel load was reduced in preparation for the prescribed burn in 2006.



Southern Regional Fire Training Center Officially Opens

The Mississippi Forestry Commission, U.S. Forest Service and BLM collaborated on a state-of-the-art training facility with a primary emphasis on wildland fire training and support functions. The facility is being used by federal and



The Southern Regional Fire Training Center officially opened with a dedication ceremony on Tuesday, March 14, 2006.



The Southern Regional Fire Training Center is a boon for Mississippi and a training center for local, volunteer and federal wildland firefighters. Pictured left to right, Jackson Field Manager Bruce Dawson, Eastern States Director Mike Nedd, Jackson Hotshot Superintendent Lamar Liddell, and former Director of BLM Fire and Aviation Larry Hamilton.

state agencies and local volunteer fire departments throughout the Southeast to train wildland firefighters.

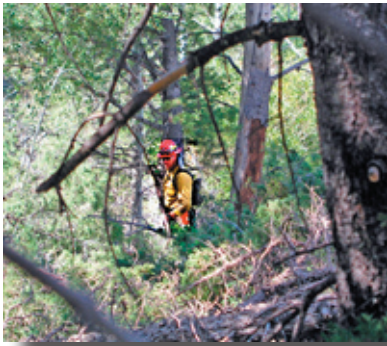
The official grand opening dedication was held on Tuesday, March 14, 2006 in Pearl, Mississippi. In addition to being a training facility, the Southern Regional Fire Training Center is a new permanent home for the Jackson Hotshots. From here, they are deployed as a national resource for fighting wildfires and responding to emergencies all over the United States.

Following landfall by Hurricane Katrina, the center played a crucial role in providing briefings, staging relief efforts and funneling resources to the Gulf Coast Region. The training facility is also playing a critical role in preparing wildland firefighters for the worse than usual fire season expected this year due to Hurricane Katrina's blow down debris and drier than normal winter.

Wyoming

Bates Creek Watershed Restoration Project

The Bates Creek Watershed Restoration Project, located in southeastern Natrona County, addresses a common issue in the Rocky Mountain West — conifer encroachment into aspen stands.



Casper fire crew member works on cutting out conifers in aspen stands.

This project involves multiple partners and funding sources working together to achieve common goals. Partners include private landowners, Wyoming State Lands, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Forest Service.

According to Acting Fire Management Officer Eric Fransted, "This project is a perfect example of what can be achieved through good interagency cooperation. It shows that we can meet multiple land use objectives and work together to improve the landscape."



Area cleared by Casper fire crew.

Project objectives are to improve the health and condition of aspen and associated sagebrush grassland communities and their diversity and structure, improve quality and quantity of wildlife habitat, achieve 10,000 aspen stems per acre above escape height in five years, and 1,000 stems per acre at mature stage in aspen stands.

Treatments are accomplished by several methods. These include use of mechanized equipment, cutting, hand piling and



Broadcast burn in Bates Creek area.

burning, broadcast prescribed burning, and harvest of commercially viable wood products. These activities were initiated on private lands in 2004, but they could take up to fifteen to twenty years to fully complete.



Aspen re-growth following the prescribed burn.

Possible treatment sites total about 17,500 acres, of which about 3,000 acres are conifer encroached aspen and 14,500 are sagebrush grasslands. To date approximately 161 acres of aspen and 554 acres of sagebrush grasslands have been treated.

Contact: Lesley Collins (307) 261-7603

Prescribed Fire for West Barrett Ridge



West Barrett prescribed burn area.

West Barrett Ridge is 1,700 acres located 13 miles northeast of Encampment, Wyoming. The West Barrett prescribed fire was conducted in the spring of 2005. This action completed a burn initiated in April 2004, to reintroduce fire into an old, decadent stands of mountain shrubs and sagebrush to improve wildlife habitat. The prescribed burn was conducted in coordination with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, and local landowners.

Nevada

Project Aims to Restore Health to Gleason Creek Watershed

Work on the Gleason Creek Watershed Health Restoration Project is slated to resume in early April, weather permitting.

The project was halted temporarily in December when heavy snowfall made roads impassable.

"We'd just finished mowing 500 acres of sagebrush when the snow started coming down in earnest," said Julie Thompson, an ecologist for the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition.

Sagebrush mowing is only part of the nearly 1,000-acre project, which is located about 15 miles west of Ely, Nevada. Nevada Division of Forestry crews had just completed about a third of a 200-plus acre pinyon and juniper thinning project when the December snows began falling in earnest.

As the name implies, the Gleason Creek Watershed Health Restoration Project' purpose is to restoring health to the 40,000-acre Gleason Creek watershed. Restoration work will include mowing sagebrush communities so they vary in size and distribution, which contributes to overall shrub-land health and resiliency.

Removing advancing pinyon and juniper trees from the valley bottoms and selectively thinning the trees along the upper benches also provides room for native bunchgrasses, forbs and shrubs to re-establish and thrive.

The project improves soil stability and biological diversity, enabling the watershed to once again benefit from natural fire and the heavy spring run-off associated with winter snows. A healthy watershed provides cover and forage for key native wildlife and game species.

The project is a collaborative effort of the BLM Ely Field Office and Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition. The mission of the nonprofit coalition is to restore private and public lands within the Great Basin on a landscape scale for present and future generations.



Local rancher and Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition member Gracian Uhalde donated time and his tractor to pull the brush mower helping open up sagebrush communities and stimulate grass and forbs regeneration.



Same location shown nine months later. Grasses and forbs have regenerated in less than nine months.



Pictured is a portion of the Gleason Creek Watershed Health Restoration Project just days after project participants opened up the vegetation to allow for the regeneration of native grasses and forbs.