

Snapshots 2003

October 31

Arizona

Interagency Education Committee Pools Resources to Deliver Messages

One of the toughest challenges for a fire mitigation specialist is finding the time and personnel to staff all the county fairs, school programs, and similar events that place demands on their schedules. That's why the fire education specialists in southern Utah and northern Arizona – "Color Country" – have combined forces to create the Color Country Fire Information, Mitigation and Education Committee.

Participants include the Arizona Strip, St. George and Cedar City BLM Field Offices, Dixie National Forest Pine Valley Ranger District, Zion National Park, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Utah Department of Forestry, Fire and State Lands.

The committee meets about four times per year to coordinate efforts. By analyzing the entire region's fire education needs, the committee can get the "biggest bang for the buck." The limited number of fire education specialists can team up to staff fairs, events and school programs.

The committee staffed a booth at the St. George Parade of Homes in February attended by nearly



Color Country Committee Firewise booth at the Parade of Homes.

27,000 visitors. The committee pooled resources to staff each eight-hour day of this 10-day event, a task far too daunting for a single specialist or office to attempt.

Contact: Tom Lund, Fire Mitigation Specialist, Arizona Strip Field Office, (425) 688-3259

Color Country Team Works to Educate Desert Community About Fire Risk

When most people think about communities at risk of catastrophic wildfire, they think of mountain communities surrounded by coniferous forests. But even communities in the Mohave Desert need to take steps to reduce the risk from wildfire.

Fire mitigation specialist Tom Lund and fire management officer Bryan Bracken of the Color Country South Zone recently took that message to the volunteer fire departments in Littlefield and Beaver Dam, Arizona, in hopes of starting a dialogue with those communities.

These Arizona Strip communities are surrounded by exotic grasses and tamarisk, which put them at high risk. But many people living there do not perceive the problem.

Lund and Bracken came to the fire departments with several objectives:

- To begin educating the community about the risk they face
- To begin educating the communities about living with fire and reducing this risk
- To start a relationship within the communities
- To learn more about how to get the Firewise message out to a greater number of people in the community
- To educate community leaders about applying for grants and other funding to reduce risk
- To coordinate what the volunteer fire department's role would be in case of wildfire

The local fire departments were the logical places to start getting the word out. Now Color Country



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Arizona Strip Fire Mitigation Specialist address the Littlefield/Beaver Dam Volunteer Fire Department about Firewise principles and their desert community.

is working with the fire departments to develop a community assessment and a community fire plan, as well as to get information to homeowners associations and nurseries.

Contact: Tom Lund, Fire Mitigation Specialist, Arizona Strip Field Office, (435) 688-3259

Arizona Firewise Team Travels to San Carlos

The San Carlos Apache Nation's fire management staff requested that the Arizona Firewise Team assist them in putting together a Firewise Communities Workshop. Coordination between several federal agencies (BIA, BLM, FS), the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension, and the tribe have made the workshop a great success. According to a regional BIA NIFC official, this was the first Firewise Communities Workshop hosted by a Native American community in the United States.

The workshop was conducted over a two-day period, and averaged 40 participants per day. A wide range of speakers gave presentations, and each day included three separate Firewise Communities group task breakout sessions. Four BLM staff members from the Safford/Tucson Fire Management Zone (S/TFMZ) attended the workshop. The S/TFMZ fire ecologist presented information on the influence of "Invasive Species and

Wildfire," and the S/TFMZ fire mitigation specialist helped facilitate the group task breakout sessions. The BLM also contributed Firewise literature and supplies to the participants, as well as workshop equipment.

Other workshop team members covered various topics important to the community, including mobilization and preparedness, fuels treatment projects, burn permits, fire department programs, forest health and Firewise, statewide bark beetle outbreak information, fire's role in maintaining grassland communities, tribal emergency response system, and community action for managing the risk of wildfire arson. Speakers included members from the local fire department, The Nature Conservancy, the BIA, BLM, FS, University of Arizona, Indian Health Service, the tribe's Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the tribal chairwoman.

Another positive program the tribe is working on this summer is their participation with the Student Conservation Association (SCA). The SCA will be assisting with community outreach programs, hazardous fuels treatments in wildland urban interface areas at risk, and completing home assessments. The Arizona Firewise Team is already discussing plans to assist the tribe with another Firewise Communities workshop in the future, for one of the outlying mixed-interface communities on the reservation.

Contact: David Peters, Fire Mitigation Specialist, Safford/Tucson Fire Management Zone, (520) 258-7207.



The Group presents Firewise information to the San Carlos Community.



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Good/Bad Fire Taught at Summer Camp

The engine crew who is based out of Sierra Vista, recently spoke to 65 kids attending a summer camp in southeastern Arizona. The campers were taught how fire plays a natural role, and what land managers and the public can do to reduce negative fire effects. The young attendees were also given the “do not to play with matches” talk.

The fire crews were outfitted in full personal protective equipment and led a tour of their engine. Following the presentation, crewmembers rolled out fire hoses, sprayed water on the campers and allowed their targets to return the favor. A highlight of the day for all involved.

Each camper received Smokey Bear materials, and their teachers were given fire education packets. Prevention materials were provided for the 35 kids, who were unable to attend the presentation, so no one was left out.

Contact: Dan Quintana, Engine Module Leader, Safford/Tucson Fire Management Zone, (520) 439-6407



Campers enjoy getting wet after their fire education presentation. The hoses were then turned on the engine crew as well.

New Mexico

Carlsbad Interagency Fire Organization.

Bureau of Land Management and USDA Forest Service employees teamed up to do one of the things that they do best, fire prevention and education. During fire prevention week, they worked together to get the word out about how to be safe with a campfire. The schools in the Carlsbad area teach the Six Pillars of Character.



Students learn about camp fire safety.

The Carlsbad Interagency Fire Organization (CIFO) educators were happy to teach character too: respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, citizenship, trustworthiness.

- Respect your public lands.
- Responsibility – make sure your campsite is left clean and the camp fire is completely out.
- Fairness – respect public land regulations.
- Caring – use the roads and trails to keep vegetation healthy.
- Citizenship – care for yourself and for others to keep public lands clean.
- Trustworthiness – when leaving you public lands trust your instincts.

All the first and second grade students in the Carlsbad area watched a video about the true story of Smokey Bear. Third through fifth graders



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Firefighters teach children about fighting wildland fires.

learned about the fire triangle - how the fuel, air and heat interact, what it takes to be a firefighter, and what firefighters do to fight a wildland fire.

The partners at the CIFO also built a fire prevention float for the parade, it is one of their favorite events of the year. The pride they have shined through as they built the float, it really lets the community know how much they care about public lands and the benefits of working together. For the event, the CIFO invited the High School Bel-Air Highlanders Pipes and Drums from El



The design featured on the float.



The Bel-Air Highlanders Pipes and Drums.



The float used in the parade.

Paso, Texas, to spice up the parade just a little.

After the fire prevention ceremony, the CIFO and the City of Carlsbad Fire Department has the first annual fire brigade competition (Battle of the Elementary Schools). This was a great event where the students would test their strength, speed, and teamwork. Throughout the event, parents cheered their kids on while they enjoyed the activities.



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Creating a Slash Pit for Wild Horse Subdivision Residents

No, Slash isn't just good for "Guns and Roses," it's good for some residents in Catron County, New Mexico. Now you may not be a fan of the rock band, Guns and Roses or could care less about the lead guitarist, Slash. If so, you may find slash pits more fascinating—at least the residents of the Wild Horse Subdivision do. Slash pits are being used in the Wildhorse Subdivision so that residents have some place to take green waste they thin from their property in the process of creating defensible space.

The Wild Horse Subdivision in Catron County, New Mexico, lies on the southern edge of the Albuquerque Field Office boundary, 140 miles southwest of Albuquerque, New Mexico. With 80 percent of the county designated public land and marketed as one of America's remaining frontiers, more homes are being built in this wildland urban interface.

This new "land rush" compels us to aggressively work to inform the public about the management needs of private lands adjoining or surrounded by federal lands, a key component to the success of the National Fire Plan. We are working diligently to improve land management practices within these urban interface areas to lessen the risk of catastrophic fires and increase the safety of the firefighting personnel that must deal with the fires within these areas.

To address these needs, BLM-Albuquerque fire personnel created a working relationship with the Wild Horse Subdivision and their volunteer fire department. We recently documented our efforts of

educating the residents about defensible space in earlier Snapshots. We created an outdoor teaching laboratory by selecting a house that could be altered to provide a model of defensible space. Bureau personnel and the Wild Horse fire chief chose a home that met several criteria. The criteria were:

1. Have excessive fuel loadings;
2. Be owned by an older couple that could not perform the work themselves;
3. Be readily accessible to others living within and those moving into the subdivision to use as a showcase of defensible space; and,
4. Have characteristics that would facilitate the process of creating both a defensible space and an aesthetically pleasing view shed.

After choosing a home, creating defensible space, and giving the residents a successful example of defensible space they could see and emulate, one issue still surfaced from the residents—the lack of confidence in using fire to remove the debris accumulated from creating defensible space around the houses within the subdivision. To address this issue, the fire management



Several members of the Grants, New Mexico Fuels Crew stand proud at the entrance to the slash pit (dump) they helped create.



The Wild Horse Slash Pit was created near the subdivision by the BLM-Albuquerque and in cooperation with the Wild Horse Volunteer Fire Department.



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officer and the fire engine foreman thought about offering residents the use of the fuel break area as a slash pit. The fuel break was so close to the subdivision that it was natural to have residents use this area as a slash pit so they could take their debris from their defensible space practices.

After consulting with the Wild Horse fire chief, a location within the fuel break was decided upon, signs were created, and the location and the purpose of the slash pit was communicated to residents through the volunteer fire department chief and a second defendable space program given by the BLM over the Fourth of July weekend.

The creation of this slash pit has been a big success. By the amount of wooden debris that has accumulated at the site, many homeowners have taken advantage of the slash pit. Robert Bastik, Albuquerque Field Office engine foreman says, "I have witnessed several people dumping their yard and thinning debris at the site; it was a simple solution to a community-wide issue."

The pit removes the responsibility of the homeowners to burn this debris and also lessens the possibility that the debris will be placed somewhere where it is unwanted. Even after the prescribed fire is completed, the idea is to keep the slash pit open for existing and future homeowners in the area.

Eastern States

Jackson Hotshots Stay Busy in Off Season

This fall is shaping up to be a busy time for the Jackson Hotshots. Following their last fire assignment, they were dispatched to Williamsburg, Virginia, to assist in clean-up efforts in the wake of Hurricane Isabel. In Williamsburg, they spend several weeks helping local agencies and homeowners by conducting "grunt work."

At the Mississippi State Fair on October 1-12, Eastern States staffed a Firewise booth. More than 600,000 individuals attended the fair this year. It turned out to be a great opportunity to reach a large portion of Mississippi's population and make sure they were aware of techniques to protect their homes from disastrous wildfires. Overall, the public's awareness for fire safety was raised.



JFO hosted a FIREWISE outreach booth at the MS State Fair which was attended by more than 600,000 during the 12 day event.

The Southeast Regional Fire Training Facility and home for the Jackson Hotshots is underway and should be completed in early 2004. The Regional Fire Training facility will be used to as an interagency center to train fire crews in fire suppression and prescriptive fire use. Federal and state crews from all over the southeast are expected to benefit from this facility.



Construction of the new Southeast Regional Training Facility and home to the Jackson Hotshots will be completed early in 2004.



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