

Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

Arizona

Yuma Field Office

Cooperation and coordination were key in achieving a joint hazardous fuels project near Cibola, Arizona last October. Approximately 112 acres of saltcedar were cleared mechanically, and cleared debris was piled for drying and subsequent burning. With the exception of some minor problems with smoke, the burn was very successful in achieving a number of goals under the National Fire Plan.



The Interagency Fire Group cleared approximately 112 acres of saltcedar on the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge adjoining the community of Cibola, Arizona.

A prescribed burn was done as part of a hazardous-fuels reduction project on Cibola National Wildlife Refuge land adjoining the community of Cibola, Arizona. The work was done through a joint effort through the Lower Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Group, a partnership of offices from the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with local fire departments from the communities of Buckskin, Hualapai, and Mohave Valley. The Bureau of Reclamation provided a helicopter and pilot for ignitions and reconnaissance activities.

Refuge staff plan to reseed/replant the area with native vegetation which is much less volatile than saltcedar. Thus, the Refuge would achieve natural resource objectives while the Interagency Fire Group contributes to the reduction of hazardous fuels in the river corridor. This project has also greatly increased the margin of safety in the wildland-urban interface for the community of Cibola by removing a significant threat of wildfire to human safety and property.



The cleared debris and dry piles were burned.

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Community members were informed of the importance of the project for ensuring their safety. Both structural and wildland fire crews were on hand to answer questions from the public while protecting their community from spot fires. Hence, objectives outlined in the National Fire Plan's 'Firewise' programs were achieved through community outreach and education.

Contact: Brian Twedt, Wildlife Biologist, (928) 317-3211

Phoenix Field Office

BLM and Forest Service Light up the Night

The Phoenix Field Office joined Smokey Bear and the Tonto National Forest for the 14th Annual Fiesta of Lights Parade. The water tender, decked out with more than 4,000 lights, delighted parade-goers young and old. The parade runs through downtown Phoenix, where more than 250,000 people lined the parade route to "ooh and aah" over the parade entries. Additionally, the parade was broadcast throughout the Phoenix area and into eastern Arizona, reaching countless households. This is the fifth year the Phoenix Field Office has participated in the parade, and the first year they teamed up with the Forest Service and Smokey Bear, who is always the hit of a parade. This year was especially touching, with many entries displaying lots of red, white and blue in memory of September 11.



Water tender decked out with lights traveled the parade route.

Contact: Ken Shaver, Fire Prevention Officer (623) 580-5578

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Kingman Field Office

Pine Lake, a subdivision in the Hualapai Mountains of northwestern Arizona, was identified as a community-at-risk after the disastrous 2000 wildland fire season. This isolated community, nestled in a ponderosa pine forest, is surrounded by BLM lands which include forest habitat and thousands of acres of chaparral. Years of fire suppression have led to a dangerous buildup of wildfire fuels, with uncertainty and discomfort being expressed by both the general public and public land managers regarding the potential for catastrophic wildfire.



Cooperative public and private efforts helped establish the fuel break.

The first step was for the BLM to meet with the Pine Lake Homeowners Association, Pine Lake Fire Department, Arizona State Land Department and Mohave County Parks to decide what needed to be done and how best to accomplish the task. The second step was to assign tasks and develop agreements to accomplish the work.

These agreements allow the BLM to construct and maintain a fuel break across private land. The private section of the fuel break is part of a larger fuel break that will provide protection from wildfire for the Pine Lakes Community. Building the fuel break on private land was logical and strategically necessary -- any other location would greatly compromise the effectiveness of providing safety to the community. The next step is to implement prescribed fire burn plans. These plans and their accompanying environmental assessments are approaching completion. The plans will allow BLM managers to use prescribed fire as an effective tool in reducing wildfire hazards to the community.

In less than a year, an effective cooperative relationship has been forged, agreements are in place, a major fire break is being constructed on public and private land and hazardous brush accumulation is being removed from private residential property with assistance from the BLM. Residents of Pine Lake are pleased with the cooperative efforts of all parties involved. These diligent efforts will help reduce the threat from future wildfires.

Contact: Mike Trent, Fire Prevention Officer (928) 692-4451

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COLORADO

BLM Supports Colorado State Firefighters Association Convention

The 2001 Colorado State Firefighters Association convention was held in Vail the beginning June 18th. Firefighters attending the annual convention come together for a week of workshops, courses and competitions. The majority of the firefighters attending represent Volunteer Fire Departments and Rural Fire Protection Districts from all across Colorado.

Vail's local fire technician Tom Talbot asked if BLM would provide an aircraft, preferably the "Grand Junction airtanker", for a June 20th static display at Eagle County Regional Airport in conjunction with the air operations course. He was assured that, fire assignments permitting, a fire fighting aircraft, preferably the "Grand Junction airtanker", would arrive at the airport for the display.

On June 20th with no fires assignments for aircraft, BLM was able to have aircraft and crews ready for dispatch from the Eagle airport, which allowed rural firemen at the convention to get a close look at aviation resources. In addition, they had the opportunity to meet pilots, crews and smokejumpers to learn about aerial firefighting.

According to Mr. Talbot, the aircraft display and the availability of the crews was a great opportunity for the firefighters, who normally feel that fire aviation is only a large fire Federal activity, to open up lines of communication and understanding in preparation for future fire seasons.

The participation of the aircraft crews and Federal firefighters brought "this show down to earth and accessible to these folks."

Contact: Ron Meyer, State Aviation Manager, BLM Colorado State Office, 303-239-3809

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Little Snake Field Office

Moffat County Fire And Fuel Management Plan

Moffat County will be first in Colorado and possibly the nation, to complete a comprehensive fire and fuel management plan that allows for seamless fire management across jurisdictional, administrative, and ownership boundaries. Decisions on how to best manage fires will be a collaborative effort involving county, federal, state and private landowners. Options will range from full suppression to fire use and include hazardous fuels reduction and fire education. This is now possible due to the passage of Bill 00-1283 by Colorado's House of Representatives which revised state statutes to give governing bodies authority to manage wildland fires and fuel loads.



BLM fire ecologist Charley Martin (left) and Moffat County fire planner Jim Andersen (right) review a project phase one map showing polygons.

The county was anxious to begin a planning process and bring all the participants to the table.

Many hours were spent with landowners developing site specific parameters for appropriate response actions on their property. The county fire plan is intentionally patterned after the local Bureau of Land Management Fire Management Plan. Using the same definitions, standards and polygon structure will allow for more efficient decision making; quicker response time and better communication during incidents.

A large element of the finished plan will be maps that are inclusive of all lands within Moffat County. These maps will show surface management status including private ownership, landmarks, and road networks. Every responder to wildland fires will work from the same set of maps, eliminating confusion and misinformation. Responders will now be able to download the maps to their data base en route to the fire which is hot linked to all the information pertinent to managing a fire on that individual land parcel. Perhaps the biggest benefit will be to the dispatchers who routinely relay site specific information to fire crews on scene.

The first phase, which is one third of Moffat County, is now finished and offers the best opportunity to incorporate BLM fuels projects and fire use. Phases 2 and 3, which include the remainder of the county, are scheduled for completion by the end of 2002.

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In addition to county funding, financial support for planning was obtained through grants from Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Park Service, and Colorado Department of Local Affairs. Materials and technical assistance were furnished by the BLM. In the initial stages of planning, the BLM GIS Specialist made data available, developed a new surface management status layer incorporating private landowners and, supplied maps and computer program training to county staff. An intern was funded by BLM to work with county employees to input new data and clean up existing information. BLM's support was a crucial element in the start-up of this project and work continues on an integrated level.

Contact: Lynn Barclay, Fire Mitigation/Education Specialist, (970) 826-5096

Montrose District

On December 1, 2001, the Montrose Interagency Fire Management program and the Colorado State Forest Service combined efforts to host a Project Learning Tree Workshop. The purpose was to familiarize local teachers, land managers, and state foresters with educational opportunities for using the BLM's new interactive multimedia CD, *Burning Issues*. Teachers from the Montrose, Telluride and Norwood areas attended the workshop, along with Montrose Interagency Fire specialists and CSFS foresters from Montrose and Grand Junction.



Participants work at computers to learn from the *Burning Issues CD*.

The participants learned fire-related classroom activities appropriate for the 6th-12th grades that reinforce problem-solving and critical thinking skills correlated to state and national reading, writing, math and science standards. They also learned the basics of fire behavior and fire ecology from the Montrose BLM fire ecologist and basic Firewise concepts and techniques from the CSFS foresters. These lessons were presented in the context of a discussion on the Log Hill mitigation demonstration site, which the class later visited to discuss field activities to use in conjunction with the *Burning Issues CD*.

These Colorado efforts are the result of a national agreement with the BLM and Project Learning Tree that enabled 9 western state coordinators to facilitate local educator workshops. By the end of 2002, approximately 1000 educators will have attended PLT Workshops and learned about the role of fire in western ecosystems and how wildland fire is managed.

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The group learns to integrate the Burning Issues lessons through field activity.

This particular workshop is part of an on-going pilot project with teachers at the Centennial Junior High School in Montrose to develop a broad-based curriculum on fire ecology. To date, three teachers in a core “team,” which includes a science, social studies, and language arts teacher, are working together to develop an interdisciplinary approach to teaching students about fire. This spring, the students in these combined classes will take a field trip to a prescribed burn project site and a mitigation project site to learn more about the design and

implementation of fuels projects. In addition, three students from the Gifted and Talented program at the junior high are working with the Montrose Interagency fire mitigation and education specialist and fire ecologist to complete their NASA project on “Rehabilitation after Fire.”

Contact: Steve Ellis, Montrose Interagency Fire Management Program (970) 240-5350

Nevada

Tamarisk treatment targets riparian-area burn scar

BLM’s Las Vegas Field Office has been treating 30 acres of the tamarisk-infested Virgin River this Fall, with hopes of eventually restoring the riparian area to health. The 30 acres are part of a burn scar from the 1998 River Fire, which burned 330 acres of tamarisk-infested riparian area along the Virgin River, about 10 miles southwest of Mesquite.



Nevada’s Virgin River in an area with heavy tamarisk infestation.

In the three years since the fire, considerable regrowth of the tamarisk has taken place. Like the cheatgrass in northern Nevada,

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tamarisk tends to create a monoculture, is more fire-prone than native riparian species, and tends to carry the fire to native species. Tamarisk fires also threaten the habitat of such endangered species as the Southwestern willow flycatcher. Treatment of the 30-acre tamarisk infestation began in mid-September with removal by a dozer-mounted shredder-chipper, which chops the trees into chips – this device has never been used for tamarisk removal before.



A riparian area heavily impacted by tamarisk.

This treatment phase continued through the end of October. When the tamarisk re-sprouts in the Spring, at about 12-inches tall, the sprouts will be treated with Garlon 4, a selective herbicide. Second or even third herbicide applications may be needed during the following spring green-ups, depending on the results from the initial spraying. Eventually, the treated area will be re-seeded with native plant species, such as quail bush and atriplex. The wetter areas along the river will be planted with cottonwoods and willows.



First stage of treatment using a shredder-chipper to chop through tamarisk.

The ultimate objective of this fire rehabilitation effort is to prevent tamarisk from re-invading the burned site, while promoting the restoration of the site closer to its native riparian condition.

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