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EasternStates

Jackson Hotshots Participate in Prescribed Fires

As part of the newly initiated interagency prescribed burn program, the Jackson Hotshots had a truly unique experience earlier this year. Even though the burn was under 1000 acres, it made up approximately one-fifth of the local land mass. The burn was conducted on the Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge. Huge impoundments and open savannah acres were being threatened by woody encroachment and in dire need of burning.



Jackson Hotshots approached the Blackbeard NWR by boat.



The undergrowth was burned in designated areas on the island.



Jackson Hotshots ignite the prescribed fire.

Logistically and operationally this prescribed burn was certainly one of the most difficult and interesting of the season for the Hotshots. Blackbeard NWR is a coastal barrier island located 18 miles off the Georgia coast, only reachable by boat. Each year the island receives over 10,000 visitors. It is famous for sea turtle and American alligator management activities. It is also famous for harboring its namesake, Edward Teach, alias Blackbeard the Pirate. Legends tell of his murderous and plunderous activities along the coast and his periodic retreats to the island for “banking” purposes. Rumors of Blackbeard’s buried treasure still flourish, however, not a single doubloon has ever been discovered as evidence of the pirate’s presence.

Even though the burn was challenging it was completed without mishap and the crew then turned their attentions to Pinckney National Wildlife Refuge, another incredible challenging island located in the highly populated area of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. This was the first documented wildland urban interface burn within the Savannah- Santee-PeeDee ecosystem. With the Jackson Hotshots assistance over 900 acres were successfully burned.

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Utah

Fire and the Community

BLM's Cedar City Field Office has taken fire to the community. Students, kindergarten to seniors, have received fire education this past year; from Smokey's message of "don't play with matches", to "how weather affects fire behavior". Even adults have been targeted on how to make their homes safe from wildfire by strategically placing an information booth at the Washington county "Parade of Homes" in an appropriate ecosystem.

A visit from Smokey Bear was the crowning event to 75 kindergartners after viewing a puppet show. The puppet show demonstrated proper safety around campfires, and what to do with matches and other items that may cause damage and hinder their personal safety.

In some southern Utah communities with high risk wildland-urban interface concerns, programs have been developed. Seventy-five third graders were instructed on fire



Teaching kids about match safety.



Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Utah State University Extension Service were BLM partners for the project.

history and the "Living with Fire" program in one of the schools gives suggestions on how to make homes safer from wild fire. This same program was presented to 70 fifth graders, in a community with many cabins in adjacent canyons, to see what age group would be more appropriate. The fifth graders went away with the better understanding, yet, the third graders were able to grasp it as well. Packets were sent home with students to give to parents with suggestions on how to make homes fire safe. Students were encouraged to explain to their parents the materials in the packets.

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A program with seventh graders was started this year that will continue through at least the next five years. Students participated in surveying wildlife and vegetation transects for a wildland urban interface project located just 15 miles from the school.



Beaver High School 7th grade class on the Greenville Bench.

To orient the students the project was described and the survey techniques were demonstrated in the classroom before going in the field. Students conducted a wildlife survey through a pellet transect and a vegetation survey by a point intercept method, analyzing ground cover and plant composition. Three 10-minute landscape discussions were given in the field as well. They covered monitoring, archeology, and vegetation with fire as a disturbance. Through the next few years, as the treatment is implemented and changes occur, the subsequent seventh grade classes will monitor those changes.

A review of weather and introduction to ecosystems was given to 150 freshmen through Earth Systems classes. During the class period demonstrations were given on science class application to the real world. These demonstrations consisted of weather as a safety feature for firefighters and how it affects the fire behavior. Discussion also consisted of fire history and the effects on soil, plants, and animals.

Adults receive education through outreach programs through the "Living with Fire" program with 10 basic steps to give guidance and direction on how to make homes safer from wildfire.

All programs were effective and will continue next year, expanding to surrounding schools and interested parties.

Richfield Field Office

Oak City

The Richfield Interagency wildland-urban interface project is a combined effort being made by the State of Utah, the Bureau of Land Management (Fillmore and Richfield offices) and the Fishlake National Forest. Employees from all agencies are working

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closely with landowners to identify, develop, and implement specific projects designed to reduce the risk of loss due to wildfires. Private structures are being inventoried, cataloged and mapped using GEO-3 Explorer units programmed to collect location, building composition, roof composition, vegetation type, access to property, and potential hazards to firefighters and/or the public. Water source and ingress/egress data is also being cataloged.



Two projects nearing completion are the Oak City and Cove Fort. The Oak City project was started in the Fall of 2001 with the State of Utah and community of Oak City. The Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service began working with them in the winter of 2002. The decision to put a fuel break around the community was brought on by the threat of wildfire experienced in the last few years. The fuel break was started on the south end of town and continued through private and state land. The community worked evenings and Saturday's to remove old stumps, trees and rocks. Following removal an 100-200 open line was disked and re-seeded with less resistant vegetation.



The BLM and Forest Service continued the fuel break along the east and north end of the town following a fence line that borders federal land with private land. The fuel break followed the same process as the state fuel break. The last of the fuel break to be completed will be the thinning and clearing of junipers and brush that bigger equipment could not reach.



Cove Fort

The Cove Fort project was started in September 2001 as BLM's Fillmore fire crew started a fuel treatment thinning juniper trees, creating a buffer zone between the heavy fuel loads and lighter fuels. Approximately 100-150 acres were treated. In the winter of 2002 the group met with

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homeowners to discuss the assessment being done and to identify possible defensible space problems. A defensible space/maintenance project along a existing fence line that separates private from BLM was completed April 2002. This project included fuel reduction of the sage brush and juniper trees that exist along the fence line and surrounding structures and outbuildings.

Employees of all three agencies have worked on and completed these projects. The wildland-urban

interface group in this area have several other projects planned, and are meeting with the surrounding towns to discuss threats of wildfire and what can be done to protect homes.

Moab Field Office

Every year during Easter weekend, Moab, Utah is “invaded” by a large group of outdoor enthusiasts who come to participate in the annual Jeep Safari weekend. Participants come from all areas of the country and all walks of life, but they all have one thing in common - they have a 4x4 vehicle and a desire to test it out in very rugged country. Twenty three guided tours - with trail names like: Metal Masher, Wipe Out Hill, Cliff Hanger, Chicken Corners, and Steel Bender, - head out on “Big” Saturday for a day of activity.



Jeep Safari newspaper banner.



Booth registration area. Tread Lightly is a partner in the event.

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Advertisement placed in the Jeep Safari newspaper.

The timing of this event is perfect for the BLM, Forest Service, and State of Utah to promote a message of fire prevention and education. Just as fire season is beginning, more than 5,000 visitors to the public land come together in one town and filter through the registration area. Along with the many vendors, a booth is set up to pass out materials and talk to the participants about fire. For two days agency specialists answer questions, talk about defensive space, pass out Smokey trinkets to the kids, and make friends with visitors to the public lands.

Salt Lake Field Office

Terra Fuel Break

The community of Terra is nestled within juniper trees, sagebrush and cheatgrass at the base of a canyon and each year fires threaten residences. The threat of fire is evident from fire scars that canvas the nearby landscape. A project will be implemented beginning this fiscal year that will tailor from past efforts to further reduce the threat of a spreading wildfire and protect residences and resources.



Contrast between dense vegetation close to the homes versus the existing fuel break.

In 1997, a fuel break was completed on BLM and private land near the community of Terra. Juniper trees and brush were removed around the community to reduce the likelihood of a wildfire burning homes and private property. The juniper trees were then piled and burned. A few piles were left for local residents to use as firewood. The fuel break was seeded with a mix of less flammable grasses to give the firefighters a place they can effectively make a stand against a spreading wildfire.

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In 2001, the Salt Lake Field Office began planning a project to do maintenance on the existing fuel break, as well as extend it an additional 200-300 feet. Private landowners received an assistance grant from the State of Utah to fund a fuel reduction project on private land. The BLM is collaborating with the State and private landowners to complete the project. A contract will be issued to complete the cutting and piling on BLM land. The edges of the fuel break will be feathered to reduce fuel density and provide a more natural look to the original work. New piles that are created and those piles that had not been burned originally will be burned by BLM fire crews during the late fall or winter when snow can help curtail any spread of fire.

Contact: Teresa Rigby, Salt Lake Field Office (801) 977-4344.

Idaho

BLM Upper Snake River District

Encroachment of Utah Juniper

The East Jim Sage project lies on the east slope of the Jim Sage mountain range in the Burley Field Office on the BLM Upper Snake River District in Idaho. This project was initiated because of the encroachment of Utah Juniper into a once-productive sagebrush steppe ecosystem. Resource staffs and interested public placed several requirements on it, including visual aesthetics, wildlife cover, wildlife forage, soil protection, native vegetative species reintroduction and archeological protection.

After National Environmental Policy Act reviews and scoping were completed, project implementation began. An anchor chain between two dozers was used to pull the



“These photos show the sagebrush steppe restoration, as well as the pre-treatment juniper domination in the background. Initially, the juniper sites had very little understory or diversity within the stands. After the restoration was completed, you can see the diverse vegetation composition, without juniper competition”

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large trees from the ground and reduce the dense canopy of juniper. The trees were then placed in windrows and burned. Finally, sagebrush, forbs and grasses (both native and cultivars) were seeded into the available soils. After the seeding was finished, a protection fence was constructed to keep undesired livestock off of the area. This continued until the vegetation was able to withstand the vigor of grazing.

Saw crews provided the maintenance on this project. Because many trees were too small for the chaining operation, they bent over and were left in the ground after the chain proceeded. The saw crews were used to remove the residual trees. They established grids then cut the available trees. They also removed the remaining green portions on the stems still persisting in the soil.

Many people participated in this project, and as a result, bighorn sheep have now been reintroduced onto the range. The area also now provides a viable firebreak for suppression crews when fighting severe fires. Through multiple treatments and planned maintenance, this project has been deemed a success and will sustain itself, provided use of the area is moderate.

Outreach, Education, Projects Take Many Forms In WUI

Foothills Literature Drop – The Boise Front provides the city a scenic backdrop of foothills and mountains. The area also provides a highly-used recreation area, a home for a variety of wildlife, and is the site of an expanding wildland-urban interface. Unfortunately, the foothills also are often tinder-dry and nearly always at risk from wildfire during the summer months. Every few years a wildfire will take hold and threaten or burn homes built on the hills and in the drainages.

It is that threat, and loss of homes and property, that brought the BLM and local fire departments together in ongoing efforts to educate homeowners about the risks of living in such an area and steps they can take to better protect themselves and their property.

This spring, as they've done in past years, BLM fire staff has joined with the Boise City Fire Department, North Ada County Fire and Rescue, and the Eagle Fire Department to take educational information door to door across the foothills interface area.



The 8th Street Fire in the foothills above Boise in 1996 heightened homeowner awareness which is now reinforced through an annual pamphlet drop, fire station open house and other homeowner education activities.

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“We visited 1600 homes in May this year,” said Randy Eardley, fire mitigation and education specialist for the BLM’s Lower Snake River District. “Each year we see more homeowners taking steps to make their homes more fire resistant, but there are still many homes at a critical risk from the next fire. As new residents move into the area, we need to continue this type of education efforts, and the door-to-door project is one tool in our toolbox to accomplish it.”

Grant for fuel break may lead to home protection

The Boise City Parks manager responsible for reserves near the base of Boise’s foothills has been concerned about wildfire for the past few years. One particular reserve is thick with vegetation and lies at the base of slopes leading right up to many homes. His concern led to several consultations with the BLM about fuels management possibilities that might provide a firebreak around the reserve but would be consistent with maintaining the natural state of the area.

This spring, when a Resource Conservation and Development community forester approached the BLM with a grant in hand looking for a place to develop a firebreak it seemed an instant match for what the city was looking for. The grant criteria required the fuel break be placed at the bottom of a 20-percent slope with at least 25 residences above and at risk, and that it be in an area of fuels prone to rapid fire spread. There were other criteria as well, and all seemed to describe the city’s issue.

Seeing an opportunity to engage a recognized need with a positive solution, the BLM introduced the RC&D to the city parks needs. It’s still early in the process, but the means and potential for resolving a long-standing concern are not within reach.

Boise City Fire Department Centennial

The BLM’s Lower Snake River District, given it’s long association and cooperative partnership with the Boise City Fire Department, was asked to participate in celebrating BFD’s 100th year of service. Thousands of people turned out over the 3-day Memorial Day weekend to view firefighting equipment from each era during the past 100 years and to talk about changes in fire suppression. One significant topic during the event was how the wildland-urban interface had impacted fire response needs, skills, and equipment. Along with a display of wildland equipment, BLM personnel staffed an information table that included the large static display titled “When Nature’s Fury Becomes Your Worry.”

“There was a lot of interest in wildland fire issues near the city and other communities, and many wondered how they could better protect themselves,” said Randy Eardley, fire mitigation and education specialist with the Lower Snake River District of the BLM. “We were only too happy to provide them that information and education.”

Contact: Randy Eardley, 208-384-3444

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Movie Slides

It may be the air-conditioned theaters, or it may be a way to pass some idle summertime hours and be entertained, but the summer months are busy times at movie theaters. Packed theaters also provide a means to deliver fire education messages to a large audience. With that in mind, the BLM's Lower Snake River District has worked with Edwards Theaters to show fire prevention and education slides periodically in the 15 minutes prior to starting the movie in each of 21 theaters at the Edwards complex in Boise.

"The messages are subtle, but the images are pretty dramatic, and from the feedback we hear, the slides get people's attention and leave them thinking about it," said Holly LeFevre, fire prevention officer for the LSRD. "If even a fraction of those people turn those thoughts into action, we are all that much further ahead."

The campaign in the theaters began at the end of May and will continue into September.



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A raging wildfire approaches a log cabin in this, one of three slides, showing before every movie in each of Edwards Complex 21 theaters. These messages will be in theaters through September.

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Silver City Clean-up Day Involves Citizens, BLM, Historians, others.

In the first of what will be a series of efforts to reduce hazardous fuels in and around the historic mining community of Silver City, firefighters from the BLM's Lower Snake River District joined citizens June 8 in removing flammable debris and cutting, trimming, and removing vegetation near structures.

Silver City, nestled in a narrow valley high in the Owyhee Mountains of southwest Idaho, presents a number of mitigation challenges. Historic preservation rules have kept the homes, outbuildings, and businesses in much the same condition as they were 100 years ago; namely, constructed of tinder dry wood siding, with open porches and decks. The complexities of the interface area also include juniper encroachment; dead and dying stands of Douglas fir on the slopes surrounding the town and encroaching in large aspen stands; and a riparian area with large accumulations of dead vegetation running through the heart of the community. Land ownership is a mosaic of private and public property around and within the community.

Accomplishing mitigation efforts given these complexities requires close coordination and cooperation among the BLM, property owners, both the state and county historical preservation offices, riparian biologists, and other resource managers.

Due to the wealth of historical artifacts in the area, an archaeologist was on site during the June 8 work to document and approve the removal of old piles of lumber scattered near buildings and to assure that no ground was disturbed during the cutting and removal of vegetation.

A local citizen provided a haul site for all the vegetation and debris removed during the work and both BLM staff and town residents hauled load after load to be burned in the fall. Participation in the community was so high, and resulted in so much debris that BLM crews will return for a second weekend to finish hauling the piles to the burn site.

“While this first clean-up day was very successful, there is still much to do in the



BLM firefighter Keith Hackbarth loads brush from one of many piles that accumulated around the community of Silver City during a firewise cleanup day in June. The large building in the background is the hotel. All structures in the community are of wood construction and in much the same condition as they were a century or more ago.

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community,” said Randy Eardley, fire mitigation and education specialist for the BLM’s Lower Snake River District. “We’ll be working with the Student Conservation Association and our own staff to do at least one and possibly two more firewise clean-up days later this year.”

For the longer term, the BLM is conducting an environmental analysis to address the large-scale fuels issues surrounding the community, including the bug-killed Douglas fir stands, the health of the aspen groves, and more. That EA is expected to take a year, with implementation of fuels projects coming in 2003.

Silver City was one of nine communities that BLM’s Lower Snake River District began work in 2001 with National Fire Plan funding . An extensive fire hazard assessment and mitigation report were completed by Dynamac Corporation, a contractor hired by the BLM.

While the hazard assessment was being done, a 9,000-acre fire threatened the community and heightened the interest among the citizens in creating a more fire-resistant community.

Contact: Randy Eardley, 208-394-3444.



Assistant FMO Andy Delmas, left, and Kyle Gandiaga, BLM law enforcement specialist from the Idaho BLM State Office, load a pile of brush cut in Silver City and prepare to haul it to a burn site away from town.



BLM firefighters Elden Alexander (holding saw), and Rena Simpson finish cutting a large pile of vegetation into smaller portions so it can be hauled away. Citizens in the background take a break from trimming vegetation to create a survivable space around a structure.

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