

Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

Montana

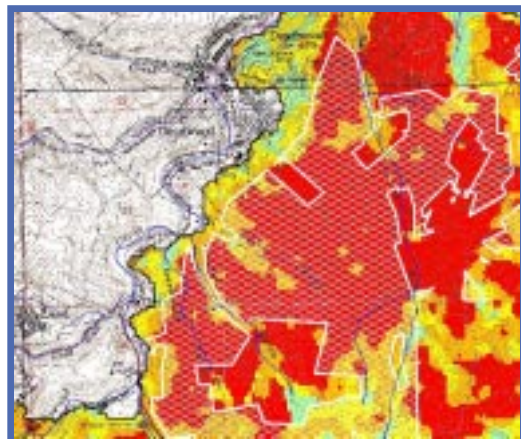
BLM Fuels Module, Fort Meade, South Dakota

The East Zone Fire Management organization of the Montana/Dakotas BLM added a six-person fuels module group this year. The people were hired by early June. Corey Neuharth, Jason Hill and Ryan Alcorn are seasoned firefighters and currently on one-year appointments. Tucker Tonkle, Amber Fitzpatrick and Heather Combs are rookie seasonal firefighters as well as students at Black Hills State University.

Based at Fort Meade, next to Sturgis, South Dakota, the module crew's primary purpose will be to assist with planning, implementing and monitoring prescribed fire and fuel reduction projects in the Dakotas and eastern Montana. The module crew uses space provided by the Veterans Administration at Fort Meade. A former cavalry barracks has been modernized and converted to office space by the VA.



The Veteran's Administration cavalry barracks in Fort Meade that served as headquarters and home for the crew.



White cross hatch on the map illustrates the area treated by BLM. Approximately 1,000 acres close to the community of Deadwood were treated.

Even before training was over, the module crew started out the season on wildfires and remained busy all summer and fall. They spent several weeks in the eastern Montana part of the zone on wildfire assignments and assisted cooperators in the Black Hills with five wildfires.

A hot, dry and windy day on June 29th, spawned several large fires in Montana and North and South Dakota, including the Grizzly Gulch Fire close to Deadwood, South Dakota. This fire, which burned 11,589 acres, including 2,000 acres of BLM administered land, would also consume most of the crew

November 29, 2002



Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...



FIRE CREWS FROM FT. MEADE began work to clear debris from under Gary Cederberg's home in the Mile High Trailer Park on Friday. Jerome Harvey of the Lead Fire Department called for the crew after viewing damage to several homes in the area and conferring with Lead Mayor Tom Nelson. Pioneer photo by Donna Smith.

module's time and efforts the rest of the season. Travis Lipp, the new module leader who's first day on the job was June 30th, had to fill out paperwork on the run so he could report to the fire with the module that day.

The group performed as a burnout crew the first couple of shifts, and then began digging hand line, patrolling and mopping up. The fire was most severe on

A clipping from a local newspaper showed crew members helping with cleanup.

steep rugged BLM lands directly adjacent to the city. Deadwood and parts of the city of Lead were evacuated for several days. Seven primary residences burned along with several outbuildings. The direction of the fierce winds the first day was from the southwest, which assisted firefighters in turning fire flanks that approached Deadwood.



Crew member working to establish a stabilization unit in preparation for rehabilitation.

Before stabilization efforts could begin on the severely burned slopes, a rainstorm came through the area causing flooding and landslides. Damage was caused to several structures in Deadwood and Lead. The module crew assisted with cleanup efforts along with state and local crews.

The crew was given the task to identify sites using the global positioning system and lay out the stabilization units in preparation for a contour felling, mulching and check dam construction contract. The contractor brought in a



Presenting fire-safe information to the public was one of the activities completed during the summer.

November 29, 2002



Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

60-person crew of experienced laborers directly from a stabilization project on the Hayman, Colorado fire. To keep up with the contractor, Corey, Jason and Ryan were designated contract inspectors. The remainder of the module crew assisted with supervising the placement of materials. The contractor completed the contract work in 14 days, well in advance of the 21 days provided.



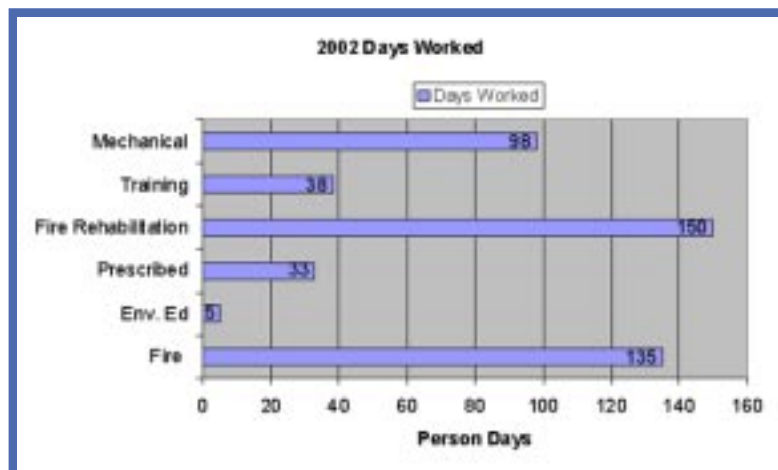
Module crew at work clearing an area to protect archeological resources.

The module crew also felled several acres of large fire killed pine to protect a known archaeological site. They also unloaded and loaded more bales of straw than they care to remember. The crew has established a monitoring plan for the stabilization treatments. Dealing with the effects of the Grizzly Gulch fire will be a long-term process.



Crew members working on a prescribed fire.

Besides the Grizzly Gulch fire, the crew was able to work on mechanical fuel treatment projects and several BLM prescribed fire projects in South Dakota and eastern Montana. They also assisted the National Park Service, The Black Hills National Forest and the City of Lead with implementing prescribed fire projects. The module assisted cooperators with education and mitigation projects. Various members of the



The chart shows a full season of activity for the Fort Meade crew module members.

module crew helped with Project Learning Tree events. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Lead Fire Department were assisted by with prevention and environmental education events.

November 29, 2002



Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

The crew module this fall will be trying to catch up on mechanical treatments in the wildland urban interface. By next spring there will be more prescribed fire projects, fuel treatment contracts, fire season and continued rehabilitation at the Grizzly Gulch fire area.

New Mexico

Socorro and Las Cruces

Two southern New Mexico BLM field offices are attaining National Fire Plan goals. They are taking action where action is most needed, and they're enriching cooperative relationships in the process.

The Socorro Field Office Horse Mountain fuel break is now complete. Work on the five-mile break began in 1996, with annual mechanical treatment from May to November, followed by pile burning 12 months later. The break generally follows the northern boundary of south-central New Mexico's 5,000-acre Horse Mountain Wilderness Study Area (WSA). The WSA includes Ponderosa pine at the 7,000- to 8,000-foot elevations and Pinyon juniper at lower levels.



Kate Padilla (l.), BLM Socorro field office manager, led a "20 Communities Congressional field trip" in October to explain BLM's Horse Mountain fuel break and other National Fire Plan related activities in central New Mexico.

The need for action had been clear: with a steadily increasing population to the north of the WSA, the Horse Mountain community in Socorro County was one of the first designated in the "20 Communities" program. Three wildland fires have burned in the past few years near the 500 newly built homes along the four-mile shared public land boundary (20 structures are within 1,500 feet of public lands).

The BLM-Socorro's cooperative actions also have included fire suppression, prescribed burns, assistance to volunteer fire departments and homeowner education. The fuel break, which was extended by about 230 acres on the WSA's east side to protect and improve elk habitat, tied all of the projects together. The fuel break also expanded relationships between the BLM and local residents that will help achieve public acceptance of future prescribed burns, planned south of the WSA.

Farther to the southwest, the Las Cruces Field Office has continued its award-winning National Fire Plan leadership. This time they're proving that necessity not only is the mother of invention, it's also the creator of collaborative solutions.

November 29, 2002



Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

Seeing the successes of the continuing fuels thinning projects and responding to public education programs at Pinos Altos, Gila National Forest area residents wanted to create defensible space around their homes. When they couldn't find any place to accept slash accumulations, the BLM consulted with the Grant County wildland fire coordinator and New Mexico State Forestry to provide the solution: a bright yellow, fully functioning chipper.



The community response surprised everyone. Several homeowners in the Santa Rita subdivision and in the Pinos Altos area have spread chipped slash on their properties, now there's a waiting list of those who'd like to do the same.

Defensible space education programs, part of National Fire Plan operations in the Pinos Altos area, created a surprising response...a waiting list of private property owners wanting to chip slash to spread on their land. BLM, cooperating with New Mexico State Forestry and Grant County's wildland fire coordinator, provided the chipper to accomplish mutual prevention goals.

The Las Cruces field office continues its fuels clearing around Pinos Altos (for which it won NIFC's Urban Interface Award in 2001). Another 42 acres have been completed, and an additional 110 acres are slated for completion later this year.



The land shown at the bottom of the photo was treated by dedicated hunters who volunteered to help. The top part of the photo shows areas done by BLM crews this fall.

Utah

Cedar City Field Office— Partners for Habitat

The Bureau of Land Management Cedar City, Utah Field Office has received about \$75,000 in grants and other contributed funds and services for seed and labor costs for three wild land-urban interface fuels reduction and big game habitat improvement projects. Contributors include: the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the

November 29, 2002



Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...



The area shown is a deer viewing area in the Interstate 15 corridor. BLM treated the area this fall.

Mule Deer Foundation, Utah Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, and Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. Projects were initiated in the fall of 2002 and will be completed during the next five years.

All of the projects are located in “high priority or critical” big game winter range and in vicinity of designated communities at risk (National Fire Plan, 2000). The projects identified for funding are: the Greenville Bench Watershed Enhancement Project, about 40,000 acres, located southeast of Beaver,

Utah and directly south of the town of Greenville, the South Creek Project, 1,000 acres, located five miles southeast of Beaver, Utah, and the Parowan Front Critical Deer Winter Range and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project, 7,000 acres, which involves the maintenance of many old vegetation treatment areas along a 50 mile stretch, east of Interstate 15, between Utah Highway 20 and Kanarraville, Utah.

The continued expansion of local communities into the urban interface is putting increased pressure on local fire fighting resources to control wildfires and is also reducing the amount of critical winter range available to local big game herds. Fire suppression activities within the last 50+ years have reduced the quality and quantity of historic winter range within these emphasis areas. With cooperation from these and other partners Cedar City hopes to improve winter range conditions while reducing hazardous fuel loads.

The projects will be completed using manual tree cutting, mechanical tree removal using a brush cutter,* and prescribed fire techniques. Work will be completed utilizing government work crews, contract labor and volunteers.



The community at the top right in the photo is Enoch, Utah about five miles north of Cedar City. Work will be done in this area as part of the Parowan Front Critical Deer Winter Range hazardous fuel reduction.

November 29, 2002



Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...



Work was initiated in the fall of 2002 utilizing government crews to maintain old vegetation treatments along the Parowan Front. Approximately 250 acres have been treated to date with work expected to continue as weather permits.

* See following story

Contact: Steve Small (435) 865-3006

Another photo of the Parowan Front project that will be treated in the spring.

Cedar City Field Office - Environmental Brush Cutter

In late October, Utah's environmental brush cutter arrived at the Cedar City Field Office. The machine was purchased by the Bureau of Land Management, Utah Fuels Program, and is to be used in wildland urban interface projects throughout the State.

The brush cutter is a time saver and allows the removal of vegetation in one operation. The machine will reduce selected trees and shrubs quickly to ground level without disturbing root material. Shrubs considered critical for Mule deer winter range remain untouched. The shredded material is converted into mulch that will rapidly biodegrade, reducing erosion and keeping nutrients in the soil increasing its fertility.

The brush cutter has been working successfully on Cedar City Field Office's Joel Springs project along SR-56. In addition, work will be started along the Parowan Front and the South Canyon project located south of Panquitch, Utah, to reduce hazardous fuels adjacent to new housing development and existing communities, as well as to improve Mule deer winter range. Utah BLM plans to continue to operate the machine on other projects throughout the state.



This is an aerial view of the Joel Springs project. The area on the bottom right was treated with the environmental brush cutter. At the top left area has not yet been treated. A residential home development is within a quarter mile of the road.

November 29, 2002



Snapshots

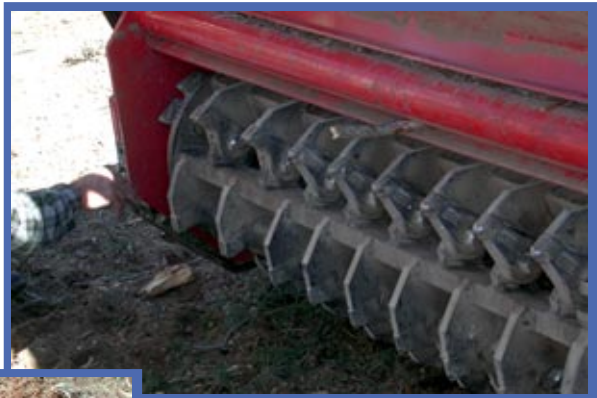
Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

Environmental brush cutters are presently used across the country by utility companies, municipalities, foresters, and agricultural producers and the military to clear land, reduce slash and thin vegetation.

The cost of the tractor at \$239,000 is minimal in comparison with potential suppression costs from a wildland fire. Benefits from the equipment include the ability to reduce wood and brush quickly and safely by cutting it to the ground level, avoid disturbing soil and root material, and leaving a layer of shredded material that biodegrades rapidly. Using the machine greatly reduces erosion, soil compaction since everything is done in a single operation, and eliminates secondary handling to pile and burn slash. The cutter will treat up to 30 acres of pinyon and juniper per day. This piece of equipment is a welcome addition to achieve fuel treatment in the wildland urban interface.



The brush cutter can allow for individual selection of trees and takes only a single pass to complete the full treatment.



The cutter rotary drum with 48 carbide cutting teeth.



After treatment, the resulting wood fibers will rapidly biodegrade, reducing erosion and keeping nutrients in the soil.

Brush Cutter Information:

- Uses a rotary drum with 48 carbide-cutting teeth (300- 500 work hours per tooth).
- Weight 42,500 pounds.
- Horse Power: 260 at 2200 RMP
- Machine Dimensions: 10 feet wide x 20 feet long.

Contact: Paul Brigg (435) 865-3002

November 29, 2002



Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

Alaska

Alaska has a wildland fire management plan that is the envy of many other areas of the country.

Alaska's plan relies on the wide-open spaces in the state and the unique characteristics of the Boreal Forest, but it succeeds primarily because of close cooperation by the major land managers.

The Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan began in 1982 when the first document was prepared for the Tanana Minchumina Planning Area. Thirteen regional plans were made and then combined into the statewide plan in 1993. The plan was endorsed by the State of Alaska, Interior Department agencies, U.S. Forest Service and Alaska Native groups.

Under the regional plans, land managers assigned one of four categories of priority for suppression of wildland fires: *Critical* for areas of human habitation, *Full* for areas with high resource values, *Modified* for areas where a higher level of protection is needed when fire risks are high and a lower level when risks are low, and *Limited* for areas where the resource values are less than the cost of suppression.

November 29, 2002



Alaska's Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan allows large wildfires to play their natural role while suppression agencies focus resources where they are most needed.

Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

Most of the land in Alaska's Interior, where lightning dances every summer on the wooded hills and permafrost-laden lowlands, is in the Limited management option. The black spruce forests, which carpet the huge river valleys, evolved to co-exist with the lightning and would burn regardless of the efforts to suppress them.

"The strength of Alaska's Fire Management Plan is that it lets us allocate our resources and put them to work where we need them the most" said Joe Ribar, Fire Staff Officer for the Alaska Fire Service.

Another strength, he said, is that it provides for a single management option to be used across jurisdictional boundaries. "Under this plan, fire management is ecosystem-based."

Ribar said the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan provides the framework for a coherent response to wildland fires. A predetermined suppression option is marked on maps in the regional and local fire management offices.

When a fire is reported, the option determines the suppression response.

Some Limited fires grow large enough to threaten residential structures or other higher-value areas. Here, in most cases, the response is to protect the sites while letting the fire burn on past them. Alaska Smokejumpers and helicopter squads are adept at bumping from cabin to cabin in remote areas, setting up protection equipment and moving on. "Such tactics have been highly successful in protecting the cabins while leaving fire to play its natural role," Ribar said.

Contact: Andy Williams (907) 356-5511



Gear is staged on a hot tub at Tolovana Hot Springs. Smokejumpers protected buildings at the site when a wildfire burned through the area in May 2002.

November 29, 2002

