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Eastern States

Firewise Southern Style

As part of Earth Day 2008, the Jackson Field Office sponsored a “hands-on” booth at an event at the Jamie Fowler Boyll state park in Jackson, Mississippi. Several hundred students from inner-city schools in Jackson participated. With the onset of summer, and Mississippi behind in rainfall, the primary topic at the BLM booth was how to be Firewise. Employees handed out Firewise brochures and pamphlets, which contain practical and useful information on how to protect people, property, and natural resources from the risk of wildland fire. The presentation was interactive and fun, and, without a doubt, the hit of the day was trying on the Jackson Hotshot pack test



Brown Elementary School student Dallas Levy (left), 10, tries on training equipment from the Jackson Hotshots with assistance for Shayne Banks.



A female student from Jackson Elementary School in Jackson MS was brave enough to try on the 45 pound pack test equipment and to try and walk a short distance. She claims “it wasn’t too bad.”



Students from Brown Elementary gather around the BLM booth to learn about being FIREWISE and to try out the pack test equipment used by the Jackson Hotshots.

gear. Students were able to put on an official Jackson Hotshot hardhat and a pack test vest, complete with 45 pounds of iron weights sewn in. Comments from students ranged from “that’s really heavy,” to “they have to walk how far?” to “can I try?” Staff also fielded questions about fire management practices and general BLM program questions.

The Jackson Field Office hosts many Firewise booths each year throughout the southeastern United States. “The chance of a catastrophic wildland fire in the highly populated southeast continues to grow each year as this area continues to suffer from drought conditions. It is extremely important that Firewise information be disseminated to as many households as possible,” said Bruce Dawson, Field Manager. “We are making a commitment to ensure that as many communities as possible get good, sound advice.”

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Idaho

Going Green for Wildlife Habitat

Earth Day 2008 fell on Tuesday, April 22, yet it seemed like the whole week was set aside to celebrate the environment and exercise different ways to better care for Mother Earth. Whether you opened up a newspaper, turned on the television or visited a community celebration, common Earth Day themes centered on the concept of “Going Green.”

On Friday, April 25, students and teachers from Soda Springs High School decided to “go green” for mule deer and its forage. They teamed up with the Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Fish and Game to plant 1,300 Mountain Mahogany plants on the fire-scarred slopes of Ninety-Percent Canyon near Soda Springs.

Despite cooler temperatures, blowing winds and occasional snow storms, the students scraped soil, augured holes and planted the mahogany—all in an effort to improve the habitat on this valuable and critical mule deer wintering range.

Prior to the planting event, in the classroom, topics were discussed such as mule deer biology, habitat needs and the efforts that have been made in constant attempt to improve mule deer populations. Fish and Game presented to students of Jeff Horsley and Charlie Kato, science teachers at Soda Springs High School, as well as students of Shawnae Somsen, PE and health teacher.

Horsley was excited about incorporating such a presentation and worthwhile activity into this year’s science curriculum. “Activities like these expose students to a potential career path and help them take ownership of the wildlife and public lands,” he noted.





Sophomores Mary Corder (foreground) and Tiffany Senn use scrapers to prepare the soil for seedling placement. Removing competing vegetation from the immediate surroundings helps the new seedlings take root.

Somsen also saw great value in the exposure her students were getting. “This gives them a chance to be involved in their own community while doing something that is physically active. We live in a recreational paradise, and we all need to take ownership in preserving it as well as enjoying it,” she said.

Fridays are not school days for students at Soda Springs High School. Horsley, Kator, and Somsen lured their students to the activity with

Rebecca Haney, a sophomore in Horsley’s class, poses with a Mountain Mahogany seedling she just planted.



the promise of extra credit. Though students came for the boost in their grades, many left with a personal boost, a feeling of accomplishment, that they had done something beneficial for wildlife and its habitat.

Senior, Colter Evans, is not even on the roles of Horsley, Kator, or Somsen; he had heard about the planting and just wanted to help out. “I wanted to make a difference to those in the community who enjoy the landscape we have here in Soda Springs and the mule deer that use it,” he claimed.

Following a slippery but successful journey up and down snowy slopes, Sari Barker, a senior in Kator’s fish and wildlife class remarked, “I am amazed that so much time is taken to make sure the mule deer in our state are doing okay.”

The time taken to plant the 1,300 seedlings far exceeded the allotted timeframe of 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The students were much too excited and committed to the project to accept the offers made by agency staff to take care of the seedlings that would undoubtedly be remaining at “quitting time.” The scholars finished what they started.



Colter Evans, a senior with Soda Springs High School, places a hole in the bare soil where a mahogany seedling will find a new home.



A Jerusalem Cricket stepped out to “help with the day’s events,” but was safely relocated to a different part of the hillside away from augers, scraping tools, and trudging feet.

This year numerous plantings have taken place across the southeast Idaho region, with various high schools and sportsmen’s organizations volunteering their green thumbs. Hand plantings coupled with scheduled tractor plantings will result in over 100,000 bitterbrush, sagebrush, and mahogany seedlings going into southeast Idaho’s soil this year.

Kermit the Frog once lamented “it isn’t easy being green,” and though that may be true, youth throughout the region have shown that it is possible.

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Coming to a Theatre Near you!

The Cottonwood Field Office has been successfully accomplishing one of the key points of the National Fire Plan, Community Assistance, with a local group, Framing Our Community (FOC), involved with fire mitigation and prevention activities in Elk City, Idaho. The Cottonwood Field Office, in cooperation with several cooperating agencies and groups is eagerly awaiting the release of a film entitled “Are We Safe from Fire.” The film is being produced by Emmy award winning, “Fire Wise” filmmaker, Robert Seidler. Seidler has produced film and other media for the State of Florida and BLM that promotes defensible space and fire safety. The latest product is an educational video program for residents, land managers, and emergency service providers that showcases the lessons learned from the Poe Cabin Fire, a wildfire that burned lands managed by the Cottonwood BLM Field Office, among others, during the 2007 fire season.

FOC has been instrumental in assisting in the coordination efforts of this film to include the US Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands, Bureau of Indian Affairs/ Nez Perce Tribe, and Idaho Department of Homeland Security. Contributing partners and



Homeowner's foresight in planning and hazardous fuel reduction result in the protection of this structure from high intensity fire.

FOC have collectively worked to ensure this film shows the effectiveness of defensible space and where improvements are needed.

On July 19th, 2007, the Poe Cabin Fire crossed over a ridgeline that separates the Snake and Salmon River Canyons, spilling into the headwaters of the Deer Creek drainage. Within 10 minutes, the fire had traveled two miles, as embers were cast in front of the main fire front. Eight homes were overrun by a high intensity wildfire within minutes. Homeowners were forced to flee with little or no evacuation warning. Some became trapped because sections of the escape route were engulfed by flames. Other residents waited out the storm at a designated safety zone; many were left wondering if their homes would survive. After the main fire passed, residents of the Deer Creek drainage returned home to find that the majority of structures had survived, primarily due to homeowner's implementing treatments that made their homes “Fire Wise.”

The aftermath of this incident presented an opportunity for land management agencies and residents of Deer Creek to highlight how advance planning and treatments provided defensible space to protect homes even under the most extreme circumstances. The story and idea for sharing lessons learned resulted in the production of the film, “Are We Safe from Fire,” which will be distributed, digitally, by DVD, and other video tape formats. The distribution goal is to utilize all the media opportunities with prevention and fire mitigation content that is reality driven and reality based. The film will be available to all of the US population for their use and to share with their friends and associates. In fact, an interim release of the film was shared with the Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where they were having difficulty getting the “Fire Wise” message to homeowners. With the

use of this educational video, 70 homeowners are now implementing defensible space treatments and evaluating their home construction materials. The interim film was also shared with the California Chaparral Institute and used during presentations to Congressional Representatives in California to help them better understand fire risk. They found a segment with fire researcher Dr. Jack Cohen especially important stating that educating the public regarding planning and mitigation work for the structure, in conjunction with vegetation management, is an important part of reducing the effects of wildfire.



Fire resistant construction materials in conjunction with vegetation treatments may have prevented the loss of this structure.

Wildfire events like the Poe Cabin Fire can occur in a variety of environments. When living in locations adjacent to the wildlands, it is necessary to identify hazards, methods of fuel reduction, and the steps needed to reduce the damage. This message is particularly important to ensure firefighter and public safety.

The unprecedented fire activity throughout the western United States in the last decade shows that



fire suppression efforts are simply not feasible, appropriate, and effective enough to “protect” every home / structure. In fact, the homeowner can take the appropriate planning and treatment actions to reduce the catastrophic effects of wildfire. In the case of upper Deer Creek, a number of homeowners had the foresight to take action long before the fire occurred resulting in a loss of structures.



Homeowner in Deer Creek that was proactive in planning and implementing effective hazardous fuels treatments and use of construction materials that protected this home.

The Idaho BLM Cottonwood Field Office, US Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Department of Homeland Security, and Framing Our Community are excited about the release of “Are We Safe from Fire” this June, coming to a theatre near you!

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Wyoming

BLM and Johnson County Fire Mitigation Committee Conduct Fuels Assessment

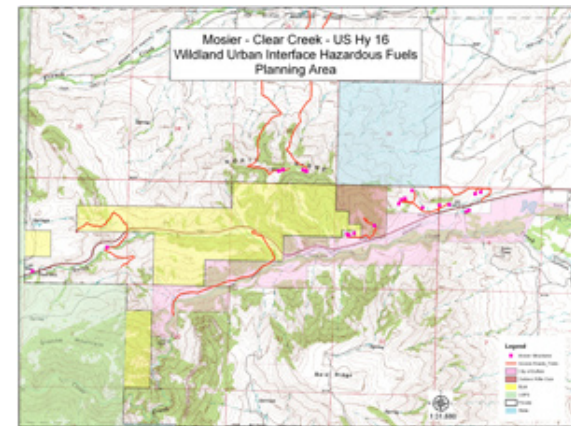
The Buffalo Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in cooperation with the Interagency Johnson County Fire Mitigation Committee is conducting a hazardous fuels assessment in the Mosier Gulch/Clear Creek area.

The planning area is located west of Buffalo and includes the area from Turkey Lane (and the water treatment plant) then west along US Highway 16 to the US Forest Service boundary. The area is bounded on the south by Clear Creek and on the north by the top of North Ridge (Windy Ridge). The area includes property managed by several local and government agencies, as well as private landowners.

According to Buffalo Field Office Wildland Fuels Specialist, Steve Hannan, “The fire protection agencies are focusing efforts in Mosier Gulch and this portion



Steep south facing slopes with moderate to heavy fuel loading adjacent to US Highway 16 are a moderate risk for wildland fire.



The planning area.

of Clear Creek because it is a high priority wildland urban interface area and there is high risk for fire starts along the Highway 16 corridor. The wildland urban interface occurs where houses or other structures meet or intermix with wildland vegetation.”

The Johnson County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) identified the Clear Creek watershed as the county’s highest priority area for protection due to its importance as the municipal water supply watershed, its scenic and recreational values, and the existence of numerous communities considered at risk from wildfire.

The Mosier Gulch/Clear Creek plan is one of several fire mitigation projects targeted at reducing fire risk in the Clear Creek corridor. Fuel treatment projects are ongoing along Clear Creek and the city green belt area immediately west of Buffalo.

The risk assessment for the Mosier Gulch/Clear Creek planning area will identify areas where wildland fuels in the wildland urban interface pose a potential for catastrophic loss from wildland fire. The goal of the fuels mitigation program is to protect



high value property from wildland fire and reduce the chances for wildland fire spreading from the public lands onto private or community lands and vice-versa. The Fire Mitigation Committee and cooperating agencies' hazardous fuels mitigation program works to reduce the threat of wildland fire through fire prevention, reduction of fuels, increasing fire protection capabilities of communities, and public education.

Developments in the Mosier Gulch/Clear Creek corridor include individual residences both within and outside of subdivisions, the Buffalo Outdoor Rifle Club, the Mosier Gulch Picnic Area, and



Timber stands in the Mosier Gulch/Highway 16 Corridor are predominately Ponderosa Pine. Understory surface fuels are primarily moderate to deep needle cast with relatively few "heavy" fuels such as dead and down trees.



telecommunication facilities on North Ridge (Windy Ridge). Potential sources of ignition for wildland fire in the area include natural sources such as lightning or accidental starts such as human caused ignition from recreation activities and vehicle accidents or malfunctions. Other potential wildland fire ignition sources could be the result of illegal acts (arson) including shooting fireworks or tossing a lit cigarette out of a vehicle.

A second phase of the assessment will identify actions that can be taken to reduce the risk of wildland fire to the community. Proposed actions will be included in a hazardous fuels mitigation plan that will be developed in consultation and cooperation with residents and property owners in the community. The Fire Mitigation Committee welcomes input from area residents and property owners. Funding is available through the county mitigation and community assistance programs to assist private landowners in reducing or removing hazardous fuels from their properties.



CWPP identified Clear Creek watershed as the County's highest priority area for protection due to its importance as the municipal water supply watershed, its scenic and recreational values, and the existence of numerous communities considered at risk from wildfire.



Communication facilities located on private property atop North (Windy) Ridge are among the developments potentially threatened by wildland fire.



The wildland urban interface occurs where houses or other structures meet or intermix with wildland vegetation.

Contact: Jim Shell at the Johnson County District 1 fire hall, in Buffalo, or call (307) 620-0091; Steve Hannan, Buffalo Field Office, (307) 684-1144.

