

Snapshots

August 2008

BLM

Table of Contents

New Mexico

Candy Kitchen Forest Restoration & Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project	1
Dripping Springs Prescribed Burn Project	1

Wyoming

Park School Helps BLM Plant Trees on Casper Mountain	2
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New Mexico

Candy Kitchen Forest Restoration and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

The Rio Puerco Field Office (Albuquerque), has been working on a multi-phase project that will be implemented over the next five to 10 years. The project area is located on BLM administered lands adjacent to the rural community of Candy Kitchen, New Mexico and consists of about 9,000 acres. The community of Candy Kitchen has been identified as a Community-At-Risk on the Federal Register, and the purpose of this project is to reduce the existing stand densities of pinion, juniper and ponderosa pine trees adjacent to the community. The existing stands are hazardous and contribute to the decline of wildlife habitat and the potential for catastrophic wildfire that would impact the community.

Under the current conditions, fire can easily spread both horizontally and vertically. The stands of high density have resulted in increased soil erosion, reduced natural vegetative production, and an altered



Crew members burn hand piles.

community structure. The historic pinion, juniper savanna, and ponderosa pine savanna (grasslands with scattered trees) have undergone ecological changes that have departed from reference conditions.

The goal of this project is to employ management ignited prescribed fire, mechanical thinning treatments, and public fuelwood harvests. The fuel reduction projects were initiated in 2004 and roughly 935 acres



Candy Kitchen after the project.

of mechanical treated and 250 acres have been burned to date, with 500 acres planned for 2009 and 2010.

Collaboration for the is project consists of assistance agreements with the Ramah Navajo Chapter and the Pueblo of Zuni, where the BLM provides funding and Ramah and Zuni provide expertise, crews and equipment to complete the thinning projects.

Contact: Todd Richards, Rio Puerco Field Office fire management officer, 505-761-8700.



Project site before treatment.

Dripping Springs Prescribed Burn Project

For the past decade or so, the BLM-Las Cruces District, has implemented a prescribe burn project to protect historical structures, a Natural area, and recreationalist from the threat of wildfire. In addition, this area could be used as a safety zone for firefighters during suppression activities, and visitors in the event of a wildfire. The Dripping Springs prescribed fire, an ongoing 30 acre project has proven to be very useful. The historical structures include a livery, tuberculosis





Aerial view of livery (top) and the sanatorium (center) from 2008 Dripping Springs Fire.

sanatorium and a resort; also included in this area is the Dripping Springs Natural Area. The project was started in the mid-90's and has been ongoing when the fuel load is high enough that they deem necessary. Typically they burn in the spring; reducing the fuel load until the monsoon season. This allows for several months of protection for the structures and the visitors



2006 prescribed fire.

to the area. Normally, local crews from the Las Cruces District Office implement the burning but assistance from Carlsbad, Socorro, Roswell and Taos BLM offices have come down to help.

On June 14, 2008, around 1600, a fire dubbed the Dripping Springs fire started in the canyon south of the recreation site. This fire quickly became active and by nightfall was threatening areas of the Dripping Springs Natural Area. The prescribed fire which was implemented again in February gave fire crews a safety zone and an area to anchor burn operations off of. Crews utilized some rock out crops and the prescribed burn to back burn the area between the structures and the fire. This saved the structures and as the crews carried fire down the canyon, it stopped the fire spread to the north saving countless acres. This control line kept the fire from getting into a draw bottom with thick apache plume that had a direct line to some of the historic structures.

This project, though small in size, proved to be an effective area for fire crews to do what they needed to do. This anchor point was essential in stopping fire spread to the north and protecting the structures. The BLM- Las Cruces District will continue with this project for many years to come and may expand on it now to encompass some of the burned area.

Contact: Ryan Whiteaker, Las Cruces District fuels specialist, 575-525-4342.

Wyoming

Park School Helps BLM Plant Trees on Casper Mountain

On a sunny day in May, Park School first and second graders marched up Casper Mountain ready to dig and plant trees. They had their backpacks on, sun hats perched on their heads, gloves ready to go, and plenty of energy.

Park School and BLM teamed up on Wednesday May 7, 2008 to plant trees outside Casper, Wyoming, along Highway 220. Students planted trees in an area that was burned by the Jackson Canyon Fire in 2006 and is part of the North Platter River watershed.

This is the second year for the project. "The trees we planted last year washed away with all the moisture," noted BLM forester, Cindy Allen. "This year we are forming water bars with rocks and planting Aspens trees and Chokecherry and Sumac shrubs. Jackson Canyon Fire diminished a lot of vegetation. The trees will hold the water and prevent erosion of the soil."



A student gathers rocks to make water bars.



There were three parts to planting the trees, and every student got to try out each task. Cindy started out showing them how to gather rocks and form a water bar to prevent the soil from washing away. Students enjoyed roaming around the area finding different sized rocks along with discovering different insects and butterflies.



BLM employee, Jerry Sleep, help students use a dibble bar.

Next she showed them how to dig holes with a dibble bar and hoedads. Dibble bars and hoedads were very popular and the kids enjoyed using them. Only adults were allowed to use the hoedads and the BLM firefighters were on hand to help with this.

After the hole is dug it's time to plant the tree. "Trees have a root ball and breathe just like humans do," said



BLM forester, Cindy Allen, shows the students how to make a water bar and plant trees.



Park elementary students head up Casper Mountain to plant trees.

Allen as she showed students how to carefully carry the trees and place them in the holes. The tree roots were dipped in an absorbent gel to aid the roots in retaining moisture.

Park students have prepared for this project all winter, according to a teacher, Beth Bergslien. Students learned how to identify plants, animals and insects. They will compare the trees they planted this year to last year and see how many survived. Beth noted, "Some students had homes on the mountain during the Jackson Canyon fire. They are very concerned about another fire and this project helps them.

It was a great day and over 150 trees and shrubs were planted. "This gives kids to opportunity to participate in the watershed, the mountain – their home," said Allen.

Contact: Lesley Collins, 307 261-7603; Cindy Allen, 307 261-7676



Park students work together to plant trees on Casper Mountain.

