



Zion National Park Fire Management



Watchman Hazard Fuels Reduction Project

While many parks are focusing their attention on the wildland-urban interface issues along their boundaries, other areas of park interfaces should not be overlooked. These are the park's own structures, many of which provide housing to the employees who work here. Fire management personnel at Zion addressed this issue by recently completing a hazard fuels reduction project within the Watchman Residential Area of the park.

The 20-acre Watchman Hazard Fuels Reduction Project consisted of the mechanical removal of material in and around park residences that could pose a significant fire risk in the event of a wildland fire. The Watchman Residential Area consists of houses and trailers that are occupied by both permanent and seasonal employees. This project is developed and funded under the wildland-urban interface initiative (WUI) program, in cooperation with the National Fire Plan. The objective of this project is to create and maintain a defensible fuel break in and around park infrastructure within the Watchman developed area. This project will not only aid the wildland fire crew in their efforts to manage wildland fires, but also the structural fire crew in their efforts to protect park buildings. The Watchman Project is just one of several similar treatments planned for the next few years in areas of the park's interface.

Wildland fire personnel began work on the project in early June of 2003 and completed it within a month. All residents were notified in advance of the project and the crew worked closely with them to try to accommodate any special needs/desires that they may have, while still achieving the stated objectives of the project. Project treatments included; removing or limbing trees touching structures, reducing fire-prone brush and grass species by 60-80 %, removing 75-100% of leaf litter and other dead material within 50 feet of structures, and limb/thin ladder fuels to a height of 4-6 feet. The park's maintenance division also participated in the project by removing a section of old fence in the area to improve access to structures. Treatments were accomplished so as to minimize damage to resources, while still providing defensible space. Some snags were left standing for wildlife habitat.

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Small material removed from the project area were either piled away from the structures for future burning or taken to a local disposal site in the park. Larger material was cut into firewood sized lengths and stacked on site for park resident's use. Follow-up treatments will be necessary to maintain desired fuel levels.

With the recent push to treat more acres in the wildland-urban interface, some parks may be overlooking their own interface issues. These interface areas, and the structures within them, are vital to the operation of the parks. Plans must be made to address these park interface areas and insure that they too are protected from the continuing wildland fire threats that are facing our country.



Residential area before treatment



Residential area after treatment



Residential area before treatment



Residential area after treatment