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Department of the Interior
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Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management Streamlined EA Fuels Project Work Completed



Teton Interagency fire management crews completed work this month on a fuels reduction pilot project, totaling 89 acres, in Grand Teton National Park. The fuels reduction project, selected to test streamlined environmental assessments under the NEPA process, was intended to determine the effectiveness of expediting procedures to accomplish fuels treatment work, while also adhering to existing National Park Service policies.

The President's Healthy Forest Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities (August 22, 2002) called for administrative improvements that ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in projects that reduce threats to community safety and better protect wildlife and ecosystems. To this end, the President directed that guidance be developed to ensure consistent procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for fuels reduction and fire- adapted ecosystem restoration projects, including development of a model streamlined Environmental Assessment (EA) for such projects. An interdisciplinary planning team implemented guidance issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to complete an EA for selected fuels reduction work. CEQ guidance provided a framework for administratively improving the EA process.

In Grand Teton National Park, the pilot project included seven small fuels management sites between Moran and Moose, Wyoming:

- Fabian Ranch - 20 acres
- Oxbow Housing (Jackson Lake Ranger Station) - 7 acres
- McCollister - 10 acres
- Blacktail North - 6 acres
- Moran - 10 acres
- Bar BC Ranch - 30 acres
- Jackson Lake Dam - 6 acres

The work occurred near structures, reducing fuel accumulations adjacent to a number of historic buildings, private residences, government offices, government housing units, and Bureau of Reclamation properties in Grand Teton National Park. The seven project areas contained large amounts of dead and down fuels (downed trees and branches), closely spaced trees with interlocking crowns, dead standing snags, and numerous small trees in the forest understory. Dense sagebrush had also established in some valley floor settings. These conditions required a reduction of fuels and increased crown spacing to modify fire behavior by reducing flame lengths and fire intensity to create conditions more favorable for fire suppression operations.

Treatments included thinning of overstory trees to obtain a distance of approximately 12 feet between trees or groups of trees, reducing seedling and pole size tree densities, reducing accumulations of downed logs and debris, removing limbs within 10 feet of the ground on standing trees, and mowing breaks in shrub fuels.



Pre-treatment photo at the Jackson Lake Dam site



Post-treatment photo from the same location

A full Streamlined EA Fuels Project Summary report can be found at www.tetonfires.com/dispatch/final%20report.pdf.