

# News Release



USDA Forest Service  
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests  
2250 Highway 50  
Delta, CO 81416-2485

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact(s): Connie Clementson, Grand Valley District Ranger, 970-263- 5804**

## ***Forest Service and City cooperate in watershed fuels reduction***

**Grand Junction, CO April 27, 2009**—Cooperative efforts are continuing this Spring between the USDA Forest Service and the City of Grand Junction to protect and improve the City's watershed and the natural resources within.

Thirty young workers from the Western Colorado Conservation Corps and the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps from Steamboat Springs have teamed up with Forest Service professionals to accomplish needed work and to provide training and employment opportunities for youth in the Kannah Creek area.

According to Fuels Specialist Craig Warren of the Grand Valley Ranger District, "these young people will be working to thin stands of pinon and juniper to improve forest health and reduce density of trees thereby decreasing opportunity for catastrophic fire while improving wildlife habitat." In all, the crews will treat approximately 230 acres of City-owned and national forest lands this spring.

This work is a continuation of a cooperative partnership effort between the City, the USDA Forest Service and the Colorado State Forest Service to treat vegetation in the City's watershed to improve forest health and to create a more diverse and healthy ecosystem over the next several years. The City of Grand Junction and the Grand Valley Ranger District partnership were awarded \$196,000 through the Colorado Forest Restoration Grant Program (HB1130) in 2008. In addition to the HB1130 grant, the City was awarded a Stevens Grant for \$52,000 for watershed restoration work. The City matched the Stevens grant with an additional \$52,000 and the USDA Forest Service's \$71,000 to accomplish this work within the watershed.

“The benefit of this thinning and fuel reduction project is to reduce the intensity of future fires which can severely damage and impact the soils and other resources in the watershed,” said Warren. “Last summer’s Coal Creek Fire was a great example of the cooperative nature of this work and because of the information and planning occurred, the Forest Service was able to closely monitor the burn and allow it to accomplish resource objectives on over 1400 acres in the watershed.” Warren went on to explain that 440 acres of pinion-juniper was aerially seeded this spring within the Coal Creek Fire area to help regenerate vegetation and protect the soils.

There are other benefits to both City residents and the forest resulting from this work. Treating potential fire fuels in advance helps prevent the intensity of a fire in the watershed. Otherwise, a large, catastrophic fire could result in severe erosion, with silt and mud entering the City’s Kannah Creek water intake and make it difficult and expensive to filter the water for consumption. Wildlife benefits as well because as trees are thinned to provide more light and moisture to the ground, plants will respond and provide better forage for wildlife.

The Grand Junction City Municipal Watershed Fuels Reduction Project is designed to develop a multi-jurisdictional approach to modify, reduce and remove naturally occurring fire fuels in the Kannah Creek Basin Watershed. It builds upon previous work accomplished by the USDA Forest Service and the City of Grand Junction to develop a management plan in the Kannah Creek Watershed to promote land stewardship and maintain clean water. The purpose of the multiyear treatment plan is to limit fire intensity, severity, movement of ash into the City of Grand Junction’s water supply system and to improve the Kannah Creek Basin toward a healthier ecosystem.

“As resource work continues this spring and throughout the summer months, citizens and landowners within the area will see this work and we want them to understand why this is occurring; and the purpose it serves in the continued effort to provide clean drinking water to the City of Grand Junction,” stated Grand Valley District Ranger Connie Clementson. Greg Trainer, City of Grand Junction Utility and Streets Director, agreed and added, “The resource work in Kannah Creek is exciting and it provides great opportunities for citizens to see and learn about land stewardship and the importance that healthy forests play in providing clean water.

The City and Forest Service have a long history of cooperative efforts in the City's watershed, dating back to 1915 when the City paid the salary and supplies for a Forest Service ranger to patrol the watershed in summer and patrol for hunters in the fall.

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