

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



November 5

Nevada

Prescribed Burn Clears Sagebrush Near Elko

Progress is continuing on a five-year project to reduce heavy fuel loading near the North Fork of Beaver Creek, about 50 miles north of Elko, Nevada. In September 2004, BLM Elko Field Office fire staff conducted prescribed burning on small blocks of sagebrush totaling approximately 500 acres.

According to BLM Elko Field Office Assistant Fuels Manager Ky Kinkade, the purpose of the Beaver Creek project is to thin hazardous fuels such as blocks of sagebrush.

“A secondary benefit is that the burning will create forage for livestock away from the riparian area,” Kinkade said. “In addition, the project will create more diverse habitat for wildlife -- primarily mule deer and sage grouse -- and it will also allow aspen stands to regenerate.”

“This was the third year we’ve done fuel treatments in the area,” said BLM Burn Boss Trainee Mike Mowray. “The project started in 2001 and our goal is to treat 3000 acres over a five-year period. This year we were able to reduce the amount of big basin sagebrush which was encroaching in the meadow areas and aspen stands. The timing of the burn couldn’t have been better. It rained and snowed on the area two days after we finished burning.”



BEFORE. One goal of the burn was to reduce the amount of big basin sagebrush encroaching on the meadow areas and aspen stands, and to provide disturbance necessary for regeneration of aspen.



AFTER. The resource objectives have been achieved. Some aspen stands in the project area were fenced to keep livestock out. Some of the stands were burned, and others were not.



DURING. Ten firefighters ignited the prescribed fires, which burned about 500 acres within an overall 3,000 acre area interspersed with private lands.

In addition to the prescribed burning, mowing work will start this fall on a 300-500 foot-wide, 15 mile long green strip along a county road near the recent burn. Work will also begin on a second green strip in the Owyhee area. Mowing the green strip will reduce the amount of additional fuels.

Earlier this year, slash piles created during a 2002 thinning project were burned in the Cherry Creek area. The 2002 project had involved thinning invading white fir and Engelman spruce on a 40 acre plot of old growth limber pine.

Free Video Helps Nevadans Protect Homes From Wildfire

While homeowners are tidying up their yards this winter, they’ll have some tips available to help them better protect homes from wildfire threats. New instructional videos and DVDs from University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, entitled “Living With Fire,” have been made available for free checkout at Reno and Lake Tahoe area Blockbuster Video stores, public libraries and county offices of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.

“We really need to make this information accessible to homeowners and what better way than to have videos available at neighborhood video rental stores,” said Ed Smith, natural resource specialist, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension.

Smith and Cooperative Extension colleague JoAnne Skelly produced the videos, in cooperation with The Media Center and KOLO (ABC) News Channel 8. Funding for the

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



November 5



Home in Nevada City, California, saved by defensible space was used as an example in the video.

video came from the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service and the Nevada Division of Forestry, through a National Fire Plan grant. KOLO News Channel 8 anchor Brent Boynton narrates the videos, which are less than an hour long.

The videos show homeowners how to reduce the threat of wildfire to

their homes by properly managing vegetation, clearing debris, using more fire-resistant building materials and mulches, and ensuring access to and from the property for firefighters.

“It may sound simple, but there are a number of things to consider that the average homeowner probably wouldn’t think about,” Smith said.

In fact, Smith pointed out that he and the local and state firefighters who developed recommendations had decided to do five different versions of the video. “The recommendations are fairly specific, depending upon the natural vegetation surrounding the home,” he said.



The video uses an illustration of defensible space around a home.

The versions for northern and rural Nevada include information on specific vegetation environments, including big sagebrush-grass, big sagebrush-bitterbrush, Pinyon-juniper woodland, and the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Later this year, a version of the video focusing on the Mt. Charleston area will be made available in southern Nevada.

The four versions that focus on northern Nevada are currently available for free checkout in public libraries, county offices of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension and 14 Blockbuster Video stores in Reno, Sparks, Carson City, Gardnerville and Lake Tahoe.

The videos are the latest addition to Smith’s national award-winning “Living With Fire” educational campaign that has included newspaper inserts, billboards, television specials, radio and television news segments and public service announcements.

“The videos will help bring the information right into the home,” Smith said. “I’m grateful to the Nevada Division of Forestry, the Forest Service, the BLM and the National Fire Plan for the funds to produce them.”

Eastern States

Hotshots on the Move

The Jackson Hotshots are ending their season exactly where in began, in Florida. However, instead of prescribed burns they have been providing disaster relief after a rash of hurricanes devastated Florida earlier this year. The Hotshots have been

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



November 5



Jackson Hotshots helping to remove debris from a Panama City neighborhood hit by hurricane Frances.



Interested people picked up information at the Firewise booth at the Mississippi State Fair.

In addition to disaster relief, the Hotshots, with assistance from the Jackson Field Office, found time to staff FIREWISE outreach booths at several events in and around Jackson, Mississippi. Thousands of Mississippians from all over the state were provided information about fire prevention and safety.

Contact: Shayne Banks (601) 977-5405

stationed in Panama City and Cape Canaveral. The Hotshots were called upon to help remove debris and assist with setting up a command center in Panama City then one in Cape Canaveral. Overall, they spent several weeks doing whatever was needed to offer assistance to local communities.

Their final tour of duty for 2004 will include a detail to Lathrop Bayou and Jupiter to fell trees damaged by the hurricanes and to prep areas for

a planned prescribed burn in March 2005. The Jupiter Inlet Natural Area lost an estimated 75 percent of its aging sand pines and the project will reduce the fuel threat to homes and businesses located on the north side of the property. At Lathrop, St. Joe Timberlands and BLM personnel will flag trees for removal in preparation for the construction of new artificial cavities which will be inserted after the burn is completed in March.

Montana

Community Wildfire Protection Plans on Schedule for Central Montana

Cooperative assistance agreements and ambitious partnerships are working together to complete wildland fire mitigation plans for many of the sixteen counties in the Central Montana Fire Management Zone. The first set of three plans was completed in mid September for Fergus, Judith Basin and Petroleum counties with the cooperation of



Hotshots remove felled trees in a Panama City neighborhood.



Logos of the Cooperators for the Judith Basin County Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

Snapshots 2004

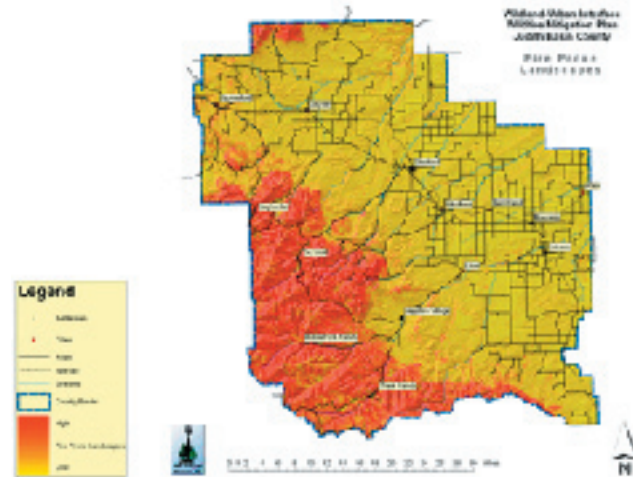
Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



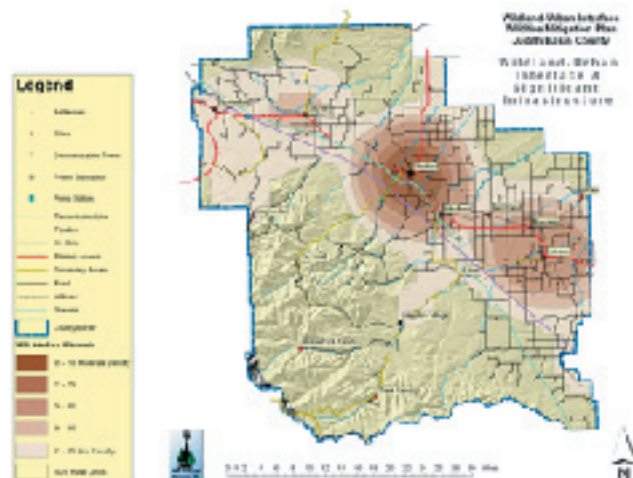
November 5

Snowy Mountain Development Corporation. Snowy Mountain Development covers a six-county area and seemed a logical partner in working with the counties. After signing an assistance agreement, the corporation issued a request for proposals to complete wildfire assessments and mitigation plans for each of the three counties that it covers in the Central Montana Zone. By combining three counties under one contract, Snowy Mountain Development and BLM hoped to use the money more efficiently to complete high quality plans. County planners, Department of Emergency Services coordinators, members of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's Northeastern Land office, and local BLM and Forest Service representatives joined the Snowy Mountain Development staff to evaluate proposals. Northwest Management, Inc., based in Moscow, Idaho was selected as the contractor. This particular contractor was chosen partly because they had proposed to complete a plan that would comply with both the Community Wildfire Protection Plan Handbook and the requirements for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans. They also demonstrated a high degree of geographic information system analysis capability. Committees were established in each county with members from sheriff's departments, county fire and rural fire department chiefs, federal agency representatives, county planners, state agency representatives and other interested people. During the next nine months, maps were developed for critical access and evacuation routes, infrastructure, fire protection districts, land ownership and other

societal characteristics. Wildland urban interface boundaries were derived by mapping all structures and using geographic information system points to develop isolines around various levels of densities. Historic fire occurrences, fire regime condition class, topographic relief and other natural resource characteristics were used to develop a rating of fire prone landscapes throughout each county. Much of the information was derived from satellite imagery so all information products were corrected by committee members with knowledge of the local area before taking them to the public. Public meetings helped to disseminate the information and develop recommended mitigation strategies. The result was a separate plan for each county that details the wildfire hazard, the values at risk, the level of preparedness and community assessments and mitigation strategies for both the county as a whole and each individual community. Contracts have recently been awarded or will soon be awarded to complete wildfire risk assessments and mitigation plans for seven more



Fire prone landscapes were derived from an analysis of topography, vegetation, historic fire occurrence and other geospatial attributes.



The Wildland Urban Interface was determined by a geospatial analysis of structure density throughout the county.

counties in the Central Montana Fire Management Zone. Two counties are working on their own plans. Only four counties are not yet covered, and the goal is to get those counties underway this fiscal year.

Contact: Shannon Downey, Central Montana Fire Mitigation Specialist, 406-538-1989

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



November 5

New Stereo Photo Series for Missouri River Breaks Being Developed

A new aid for determining live and dead fuel loadings is being developed for Missouri River Breaks juniper, overstory conifers, and sagebrush grasslands. The Central Montana Zone Fuels Management staff is cooperating with the Pacific Northwest Research Station and the Fire and Environmental Research Applications crew based out of Seattle, Washington for this project.

Stereo photo series books are tremendous assets, expediting inventory and planning for fuels treatments and land management practices. The new photo series will be useful for the northern prairie and other areas of the country by providing a quick and simple method of quantifying fuel loadings and characteristics. Fuels specialists in

the north central United States were having difficulties using existing photo series from the southwest and intermountain areas because the data and photos did not capture the variable stature and structure of northern prairie and breaks vegetation.

Northern prairie and breaks vegetation includes short, sod-forming grasses and dense forests of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and Rocky Mountain-horizontal juniper. Forested areas typically occur within steep coulees, and a heavy understory of juniper often develops where fire has been excluded. Fire behavior and fuel characteristics of such forests are quite different from those seen in more typical intermountain forests. The grass and shrublands also differ from those more commonly familiar in the intermountain area. Sagebrush is generally less dense and seldom exceeds 24 inches in height. Cheatgrass may be present, but cannot effectively compete with rhizomatous



View of a grass/shrub photo point for the series.

grasses in a summer precipitation regime. A high diversity of summer forbs is present and the ground surface is mostly covered by herbaceous vegetation and litter.

Jennifer Walker, fuels specialist, and Vinita Shea, range management specialists with the BLM in Lewistown have worked with Bob Vihnanek and Clint Wright at the Pacific Northwest Research Station to set up various plots in the Missouri and Musselshell Breaks in grass, forest and shrublands. In addition, sites containing dense amounts of sagebrush were selected in a future prescribed burn unit, as part of a fuel consumption study being done by the Pacific Northwest Research Station.

In July, the crew from the Fire and Environmental Research Applications team arrived to start their first round of inventory, which included site preparation and layout, clipping vegetation, and inventory of vegetative species. This three year project will continue into next year as the crews continue work in the research and implementation phases. The photo series availability and progress reports will be posted on the Fire and Environmental Research website at www.fs.fed.us/pnw/fera. The complete version of the photo series will be available after April 1, 2006.



Fire and Environmental Research Applications Crew works at clipping vegetation in the photo plot.

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



November 5

Zortman Stewardship Contract Begins

Work has begun and is in full swing on the Zortman Stewardship project in the Little Rocky Mountains of north central Montana. The project reduces hazardous fuels, is a step towards restoring forest health in stands adjacent to the town of Zortman, and utilizes thinning debris for mining reclamation. Service work includes thinning forested areas, restoring aspen stands and meadows, and placing slash along the newly restored Ruby Gulch stream channel to provide bank stabilization. Commercial timber has offset the cost of the service work.



Post-thinning and commercial harvest in a Zortman Stewardship project unit.



Meadow after thinning in the Little Rockies near Zortman.



Typical forest stand near Zortman before thinning.

*Dave Vickery, editor
Sheri Ascherfeld, graphics & layout*