

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



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Arizona

Arizona Strip, Southern Utah Win Prestigious Pulaski Award

The Color Country Fire Management Area of the Arizona Strip and southwestern Utah recently received the 2004 Pulaski Award from the National Interagency Fire Center for outstanding interagency cooperation. The award is issued annually for outstanding contributions to wildland firefighting and America's wildland firefighters. Color Country is a multi-agency fire management partnership that covers 14 million acres administered by multiple federal and state agencies.

"We formed Color Country in the early '90s to increase effectiveness in regional fire suppression, training and other wildland fire programs," said BLM Arizona Strip Field Manager Roger Taylor, a founding board member. "The partnership has been highly successful."



The Color Country Fire Management Board is, from left, Ron Wilson, State of Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands, Ed Lopez, Zion National Park, Robert Russell, Dixie National Forest, Kellie Gallegos, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Roger Taylor, BLM Arizona Strip Field Office, Todd Christensen, BLM Cedar City Field Office, and Steve Robertson, Dixie National Forest.

Tim Murphy of the National Interagency Fire Center recently wrote, "The seamless and synergistic nature of the group's accomplishments enhances safety for firefighters and the public, saves tax dollars, and results in other efficiencies across the landscape."

Partners in Color Country include BLM's Arizona Strip, St. George, Cedar City and Kanab field offices, five ranger districts of the Dixie National Forest, Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks, Grand Staircase-Escalante, Cedar Breaks and Pipe Spring national monuments, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Utah and Arizona state lands.

Interagency cooperation and coordination is critical with many agencies having management responsibilities across such an expansive area. Coordination begins at the highest levels with the six-member Color Country Fire Management Board of area managers, which oversees fire management activities throughout the management area. The Board also oversees the activities of the three Color Country committees, operations,

fuels and information, mitigation and education, which carry out the work.

More information about the Color Country Fire Management Area is online at www.ut.blm.gov/ccifc.

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Fire Awareness for the Ages

BLM participated with the Forest Service, Mt. Lemmon Fire Department, Project Learning Tree and the Flandrau Science Center at the University of Arizona to provide Camp Wildfire to a group of enthusiastic eight through ten year olds this summer. At this week-long camp on Mt. Lemmon and at Sabino Canyon on the edge of Tucson, Arizona, children learned about causes and effects of the Aspen Fire and other regional wildfires. Attendees were taught the roles of wildfires in the ecosystem past and present. Included was information on conditions that can create wildfires, role humans have played in suppression or encouraging wildfire, and how the Aspen Fire will influence the ecosystem on Mt. Lemmon. The effects of the wildfire on water supply, wildlife and recreation, as well as a field discussion on Firewise principles in the Summerhaven community were also presented.

In northern Arizona, an audience of more than 40 people attended an interagency evening seminar at the Grand Canyon National Park in July. Issues discussed at the meeting included actions to be taken by locals who rent facilities at the national park and Firewise actions necessary to make the park tenants safer from wildfires. Evacuation measures were outlined with the park's community, as well as other wildland-urban interface fire management practices being implemented throughout Arizona. Grand Canyon National Park conducts a strong prescribed fire program, the results of which were toured by the state's Firewise Committee during a half-day field meeting. Park staff are working through a variety of environmental challenges to expand the mechanical fire mitigation program.

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Participants in Camp Wildfire pause long enough to pose with a fire engine before resuming their week-long educational opportunity near Tucson, Arizona.

Several fire management partners involved in the seminar were present for the quarterly Arizona Interagency Coordination Group – Firewise Committee meeting. Attendees represented the Apache-Sitgreaves, Coronado and Kaibab national forests, BLM Arizona State Office, Safford-Tucson Fire Management Zone, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Northern Rockies Incident Management Team and Grand Canyon National Park fire management staff. Hazardous fuels reduction programs were reviewed by land management agencies and cooperative extension during the quarterly meeting. The Firewise Committee was able to recruit new members during the meeting.

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Arizona Pilot Makes Shift from Heavies to Single Engine Air Tankers

The need for air support during an anticipated busy fire season and a twist of fate combined to allow a former heavy air tanker co-pilot to switch roles and begin flying single-engine air tankers. A pilot that would not have

been able to fly due to restrictions on heavy air tankers is now back in the air behind the controls of Tanker 496 flying for Western Pilot Service. In the process, she has become the first and only female single engine air tanker pilot in the nation.

Fawn McManigal made her first single engine air tanker drop on a wildfire June 24 as she assisted with suppression of the Turtle Fire, located at the 6000 foot elevation on northern slope of Turtle Mountain near Safford, Arizona. Flying under windy conditions, she joined Andy Melson and Charlie Humphrey, two other contracted pilots, to drop retardant on a lightning caused fire in a remote area of public lands. The fire was kept small and no ground crews were needed.

McManigal began flying at age 25. She worked a variety of aviation jobs including flying charter planes, skydiving jump planes, low-level flights, and tow planes for gliders.

She also served as a flight instructor. Last year, she spent the summer as the copilot on a Neptune P2V, a heavy air tanker. While working for Neptune Aviation in Missoula, Montana, she was called to wildfires throughout the west.

When Beryl Shears, the president of Western Pilot Service in Phoenix, first asked her if she wanted to fly single engine tankers this year, McManigal had planned to remain with Neptune another year as a courtesy for all the training and opportunities they had provided her. But when large air tanker contracts were terminated due to safety concerns, McManigal contacted Shears, who had a single engine air tanker available for her to fly.

Flying single engine is a promotion of sorts for McManigal, who is now the lone pilot of her assigned plane instead of being the in second seat. “It’s better to be the pilot in charge,” she said, “and the SEATs have much greater



Fawn McManigal stands next to Tanker 496, owned by Western Pilot Service in Phoenix,

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maneuverability.” So this fire season, she’s behind the controls of Tanker 496, based in Phoenix, where she has lived for the past three years.

Since this is her first year flying single engine tankers on wildfires, the Bureau of Land Management’s Air Operations Center in Safford was chosen for her initial assignment since it is considered one of the best bases in the country. She expects to travel to western states this summer during the fire season, and was heading to Oregon after her Safford assignment.

When asked how she feels about being the first female single engine air tanker pilot in the nation, McManigal said. “I’d rather not make a big deal out of it, there’s such a great team of pilots out there, plus all the ground support crews. I don’t think I should get any special attention; they deserve equal credit.”

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Idaho

Prescribed Fire Smoke Monitoring Project in Eastern Idaho

In an effort to better understand the amount of smoke produced from burned juniper piles, BLM staff in Pocatello, Idaho, monitored smoke emissions from two prescribed burns. The purpose of monitoring was to document the amount of particulate matter released into the air during burning and to identify periods when burning would need to be postponed due to existing high levels of particulate matter in the air.

The Pocatello-Inkom area is listed as a National Ambient Air Quality Standard



The fuel type on the Buckskin project is shown in this photo.

PM10 non-attainment zone. Air quality standards have been exceeded during some past periods due in part to strong winter inversions. The major pollutant of concern in smoke from wildland fire is fine particulate matter. PM10 stands for particulate matter ten micrometers or less in diameter. Studies have indicated that these particles, at elevated levels, pose potential health risks, visibility, safety and nuisance problems.

Criteria pollutants, including PM10 emissions from prescribed fires, are managed and regulated under the Federal Clean Air Act to protect humans against the negative health and welfare effects from air pollution. The air quality standards, as defined in the Clean Air Act, set the 24-hour average of PM10 emissions at 150 micrograms per cubic meter. This is a conservative level, with the intent of protecting even the most sensitive members of the public.

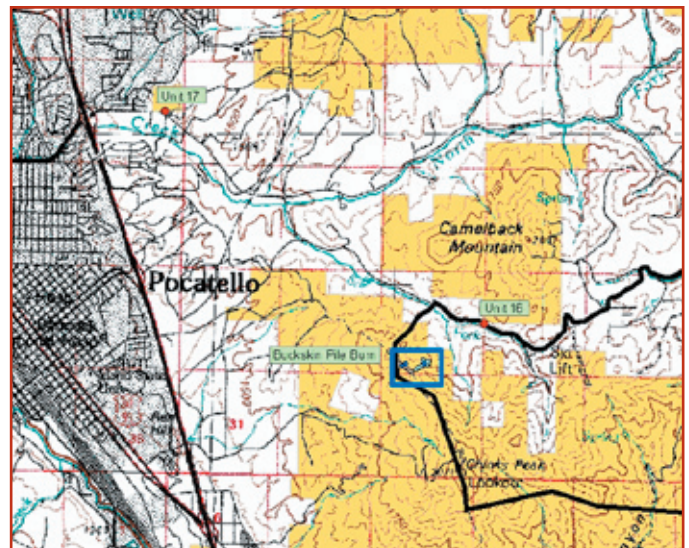
The first monitoring project was the Portneuf Westbench

Project’s Cinnamon Ridge, located on the southern edge of Pocatello. This area is one of ten nationwide projects under the President’s Healthy Forests Initiative, which seeks to find efficiencies in the environmental analysis process so that projects aimed at protecting communities may be implemented more quickly.

Cinnamon Ridge consists of approximately 187 acres of BLM land. Juniper thinning and piling was implemented in the fall of 2003, and piles were burned across 73 acres in the spring of 2004 to reduce fuel loading and danger to area residents.

The second project was on the BLM Buckskin Fuels Management Project. In the fall of 2003, juniper thinning, piling, and scattering was implemented in this area to reduce the risk of wildfire in the wildland urban interface surrounding the community of Pocatello. These piles were burned to decrease fuel loading.

The air near both projects was monitored throughout the burning process using real-time Data RAM4



Map showing the area of the Buckskin Fuels Management Project in relation to the City of Pocatello, Idaho.

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Piles of fuel on the Portneuf Westbench Project prior to the prescribed burning.

Particulate Monitors. Real-time monitoring provides light scatter information on concentrations of particulate matter in the air at any given time. This is valuable information as it is available during the time in which smoke is being generated and can be used to compare relative magnitudes and observe trends over time. Ambient air monitoring began several days prior to burning in order to adequately characterize background conditions and the fire's contribution to local ambient particulate matter concentrations.

Once completed, the air quality study on the two projects found that on a 24-hour average, PM10 concentrations were far below the 150 micrograms per cubic meter limit. This showed that the pile burns on both Cinnamon Ridge and Buckskin did not contribute towards exceeding the air quality standards and was unlikely to have any negative effects on the health or welfare of the people of the Pocatello area.

Overall, the project was found to be successful in monitoring emissions from the prescribed burns. Similar projects are expected to continue in order to keep records and reduce levels of emissions.

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Lower Snake River District BLM and Resource Advisory Council Host Community Conversation and Workshop on Western Juniper Management

Lower Snake River District BLM staff and Resource Advisory Council members hosted "A Community Conversation and Workshop on Western Juniper Management" July 22, 2004. Speakers from Oregon State University and BLM discussed ecology of juniper management, possible juniper treatment methods, biomass utilization, and further public involvement opportunities. The event also included a presentation on Living with Fire.

The conversation workshop was attended by members of the public whose lives and work are impacted by the encroachment of juniper into native plant communities. It gave both agency staff and citizens an opportunity to learn more about the effects of juniper and management options available to address what has become a significant fuels management problem in southwest Idaho.

The event came at the outset of what will be an estimated ten year project to treat approximately 280,000 acres of the Lower Snake River District where encroaching juniper have begun to negatively impact rangeland productivity, diversity, and health. Project planning

efforts include collaborating with the public in developing an effective restoration plan and involve private business, individual entrepreneurs, and volunteers.

The expansion of western juniper into plant communities throughout the Owyhee uplands and many other places within the Great Basin has had an increasingly negative impact on rangeland health. Prior to European American settlement, juniper was largely restricted to areas which were protected from frequent fire. Suppression of fire, reduction of fine fuels by livestock grazing, and the elimination of historical burning by Native Americans has resulted in the absence of fire from most of these areas. As a result, juniper continues to expand beyond its historical range, replacing the native shrub steppe and aspen communities which provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Additionally, many rural communities reside within designated areas in



A Lower Snake River District BLM fuels crew member walks away from a freshly cut juniper. Fuel such as this can be removed and used as biomass material or left in place to provide nesting habitat for native birds, cover for small animals, and additional soil nutrients.

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Fuels crew member cutting juniper trees during the treatment project.

need of juniper treatment throughout southern Idaho. In order to involve the citizens of these communities, the BLM and its resource advisory council provided the workshop to address effective collaboration with the public, and to identify potential economic and social benefits involving project implementation.

Larry Swan from the U.S. Forest Service in Klamath Falls, Oregon, conducted a presentation and discussion on employment and potential economic opportunities involving the project, including biomass utilization and wood products. He told the audience that biomass utilization has quickly become the



Juniper cut to reduce encroachment on a native shrub steppe community.

second-most utilized renewable power generation resource in the nation. By utilizing cut junipers from the juniper management project, private and government energy suppliers will be able to use the vegetation as a solid fuel or convert it into liquid or gaseous fuels to supply electricity, heating, transportation, and other energy markets.

Holly LeFevre, BLM Fire Prevention and Mitigation Specialist, conducted a Fire Prevention in the Wildland Urban Interface presentation. Workshop participants learned how to improve the survivability of their homes in the event of a wildfire by doing preventative maintenance on their homes and property. Participants also discussed strategies for motivating homeowners within their communities to become more proactive in wildfire prevention and the creation of “defensible space” around homes and neighborhoods.

Additional meetings and public collaboration are planned for juniper encroachment issues in southwest Idaho.

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Eastern States

Jackson Hotshots Stay Active

Eastern States hosted several information booths throughout Mississippi in the last two months promoting Firewise outreach. Events were held in Meridian, Canton, and Jackson, Mississippi. Overall, several thousand outdoor enthusiasts attended these events and picked up information relative to fire safety. More events are scheduled for Kentucky and Tennessee.

Hotshot superintendent, Lamar Liddell spent several months on a detail to the Prescribed Fire Training Center in Tallahassee, Florida. While on this detail he oversaw approximately 20,000 acres of prescribed fire. This detail was the culmination of a partnership between federal and state units. Lamar was also acting as an instructor to help teach local firefighters how to safely conduct these burns.



Prescribed fire training was held at the Prescribed Fire Training Center in Tallahassee, Florida.

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Members of the public stopped by a Firewise booth at a local outreach event.

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