

Snapshots 2008

Table of Contents

Utah

From The Fireline To The Classroom Working with Nature enhances the Nature of the Work 1

South Dakota

Community Assistance Program “Assists” Firewise Lead Program 1

Montana

Scratchgravel Hills WUI Fuels Treatment..... 3

Blm And Montana Dnrc Partner Together To Promote Firewise Practices 3

Wyman Face Rx Burn Project 4



Utah

From The Fireline To The Classroom Working with Nature enhances the Nature of the Work

Tax dollars leveraged to fight wildfire and fund public education are getting a 2-for-1 deal with Mr. Marvin Cassler, a fourth grade elementary school teacher and wildland firefighter. Mr. Cassler extends valuable life lessons learned on the fireline to teach nine to ten year-olds of Boulton Elementary School in Davis County, Utah. Mr. Cassler credits the organization and efficiency of his classroom to lessons learned while working as a summer wildland firefighter for the Salt Lake Field Office, BLM. There are many correlations between working on a wildfire and work in the classroom. As an educator, Mr. Cassler successfully connects the good communication and teamwork skills with shared resources



Above: Mr. Cassler's fourth grade students check out a tree ring scarred by fire as part of their adaptation curriculum. Left Mr. Cassler recruited a fellow firefighter to co-teach with the adaptation curriculum.

learned on the fireline to build trust and respect among his students.

“When I’m leading a squad of firefighters my success means

providing a purpose, direction and motivation for firefighters. The same holds true in my classroom, seeing students develop new skills and gain an appreciation of knowledge and learning can be very rewarding,” said Cassler.

“Both careers complement each other,” admits Mr. Cassler, “even my classroom mimics some aspects of fireworld.” Throughout the school year, the students are encouraged to work collaboratively in solving problems by working in groups named after national Hotshot, Helitack, and Smokejumper crews. To be prepared for success later in life, the students learn to interact with others, adapt and think through problems logically. Mr. Cassler uses weather kits, compasses, and maps from fire experiences to help children



Mr. Cassler and his class.

understand abstract concepts, solve problems and develop critical thought processes.

On the fireline, Mr. Cassler and his crew work long hard hours, as a senior firefighter leader he must be able to recognize and respond to individual differences as well as understand emotional needs. The leadership skills gained on the fireline enhance his ability to identify individual and cultural differences in students and employ different teaching methods that will result in higher achievement.

For now, Cassler plans to continue combining his two careers. The 2008 fire season will mark his eighth season as a wildland firefighter with the Salt Lake Field Office, Bureau of Land Management.

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South Dakota

Community Assistance Program “Assists” Firewise Lead Program

The community of Lead (pronounced Leed) is located in the Northern Black Hills of South Dakota. Lead is surrounded by rugged hillsides and canyons where the predominant growth is Ponderosa Pine, Black Hills Spruce and scattered stands of aspen and birch. In June 2002, the community was threatened by the devastating Grizzly Gulch Fire, which burned over 10,000 acres and prompted an evacuation of the entire community.

In September 2002, the Lead Fire Department received a grant from the Western Governor’s Association and the Bureau of Land Management to establish a “Community Fire Action Plan” within the City of



Lead. This plan identified areas of high risk within and immediately adjacent to the city limits. In 2003, Firewise Lead was created. The primary objective of Firewise Lead is to create defensible space within the forest area around the perimeter of the community. Utilizing a program of eliminating under-story growth, minimizing ladder fuels and managing crown spacing, Firewise Lead has created defensible space around 65 percent of the community.

In addition to field work, Firewise Lead organizes community information programs to introduce themselves to the community and to educate the public on proper fire protection. This type of community service is an on going effort that provides individual site visits, public collection of firewood and collection of donations for public food cupboards. Firewise Lead has been accepted as an important member of the Lead community. The primary goal of the Education Division is to inform local residents of the importance of hazardous fuels reduction.



Firewood created from thinning project that is available for public use.

Recently, the Firewise Lead crew has been busy. The recent snowfalls have allowed safe burning of previously built slash piles. The crew began the season with over 3,000 slash piles and through January has burned over 75 percent of the slash piles. The crew has also worked with the Homestake Mining Company in burning large machine piles. The Firewise Lead crew recently completed the prescription plan for the northwest section of Lead and will move to the northeast section where work is expected to continue for several years.

To date, the Lead Firewise Program has treated approximately 300 acres within and adjacent to the city limits. The result in treating these 300 acres has resulted in the protection of both private residences and the infrastructure of the community. The Bureau of Land Management, South Dakota Field Office has contributed greatly to the funding of this nationally renowned program. The Firewise Lead Program Director has successfully applied for, and been granted, Community Assistance money from the Bureau of Land Management. These Community Assistance dollars from the BLM has kept this program moving forward. Bureau of Land Management statistics have shown that the City of Lead is one of the five most endangered cities in the United States from wildland fire. Without the assistance from outside funding, this program would cease to exist.

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.Firewise volunteer assisting children in the planting of aspen and birch seedlings during Arbor Day.



Hazardous fuels reduction project completed by the Firewise Lead program behind an assisted living complex within the Lead city limits.



Firewise Lead crewmember burning slash piles created from hazardous fuels reduction projects.



Montana

Scratchgravel Hills WUI Fuels Treatment

The Scratchgravel Hills WUI Fuels Reduction Project is the second treatment for the Butte Field Office (BFO) in the Helena Valley Wildland Urban Interface Area. Over 250 homes are situated near these BLM-administered lands. The area is approximately five miles north-northwest of Helena, Montana's capital city.

The Scratchgravel Hills WUI Fuels Reduction Project will treat approximately 1,160 acres of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and grassland/shrubland habitat types. Goals of the project include reducing the hazard associated with wildfire and providing for increased public and firefighter safety.

The placements of the treatment units were determined by utilizing the Terrain Navigator and BEHAVE programs. With current fuel conditions and actual weather and fire danger ratings for August 29, 2006, as inputs, these programs were used to simulate wildland fire spread and fire behavior. Simulations were run before and after treatment to determine if the placement and prescriptions were adequate to alter fire spread and fire behavior.

Treatment strategies concentrate on reducing basal area (ba) of the trees to levels more conducive to producing a surface fire instead of a crown fire. Implementation of the project is scheduled for fiscal year 2009.

Treatment of hazardous fuels doesn't stop at the boundary of the BLM-administered lands. The Tri-



Scratchgravel Hills project area and the wildland urban interface.



Country FireSafe Working Group (representing Jefferson, Lewis & Clark and Broadwater Counties) is working to complete wildland fire mitigation work on adjacent

private ground. The Butte Field Office is currently helping to fund such mitigation projects through a Community Assistance agreement. So far, ten projects have been completed for a total of 34 acres. At least 30 more defensible space projects are in the works.

BLM and Montana DNRC Partner Together To Promote Firewise Practices

Several BLM fire and fuels staff members from the Lewistown Field Office as well as Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) employees donated their time and expertise in an effort to promote Firewise practices at the Montana Winter Fair in Lewistown, January 24 – 26, 2008.

Using the Montana/Dakotas BLM fire education trailer as a back drop, these employees handed out Firewise

Information on defensible space within the Wildland Urban Interface is highlighted on the BLM Montana/Dakotas fire education trailer.



brochures and pamphlets, which contain practical and useful information on homeowner safety within the wildland urban interface. They also fielded questions from the public relating to Firewise information as well as local fire management practices. It is estimated that the effort reached over 5,000 individuals from across the state of Montana.

The organizers, Karly Krausz (BLM) and Tim Crosmer (DNRC), felt the need to include this booth in the winter fair to introduce and highlight the efforts of the Firewise organization. The national Firewise Communities program is a multi-agency effort designed to reach beyond the fire service by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners,



Karly Krausz, Fire Mitigation & Education Specialist, hands out Firewise brochures and pamphlets to Winter Fair patrons.





Jennifer Walker, Fire Ecologist, speaks with individuals at the Montana Winter Fair.

developers, and others in the effort to protect people, property, and natural resources from the risk of wildland fire - before a fire starts. Furthermore, in an effort to work collaboratively with other agencies, the BLM sought out the Montana DNRC to assist in informing the public on important fire safety practices, particularly within the wildland urban interface.

Contact: Karly Krausz, Fire Mitigation & Education Specialist, Central Montana Fire Zone, (406) 538-1977 or visit <http://www.firewise.org>

Wyman Face Rx Burn Project

In the spring of 2007, the Missoula Field Office implemented the Wyman Face prescribed burn. The Missoula Field Office partnered with the Pintler Ranger District of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in both the planning and implementation of the 750-acre project. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) was also a contributor to the project. The objectives were to reduce hazardous

fuels near the communities of Philipsburg and Maxville while restoring open Douglas fir conifer communities and native bunchgrass parks which were historically maintained by mixed severity fires. Prior to implementation, most of the project area was characterized by dense patches of sapling and pole-sized Douglas fir and lodgepole pine with open, old-growth Douglas fir stringers extending around the dense patches of conifers. Secondary project objectives included reducing the risk of insects and disease, and stimulating shrub browse species for big game such as Rocky Mountain elk.

The burn unit was split into 10 different ignition zones varying by aspect and stand type. The Pintler Ranger District fire crew completed fuel augmentation in the ignition zones. In ignition zones where crown fire was desired, saw crews slashed 20 foot strips of fuel to facilitate movement of the fire from the ground fuels to the canopy fuels. A helitorch was used due to the remote access, project size, steep terrain, heavy fuels and its ability to generate enough heat to facilitate a controlled crown fire through the remaining strips of standing trees in the ignition zones. Initial monitoring of the burned area indicates objectives were met. Most



Project site during ignition implementation.



View of one ignition zone after implementation.

of the sapling and pole sized Douglas fir and lodgepole pine were killed, thus creating a more open forest structure across the landscape while reducing the fire hazard.

The Wyman Face project is the latest of many successful joint projects between the Missoula Field Office and Pintler Ranger District. The Missoula Field Office and the RMEF have also partnered on some previous projects. The agencies worked together during the watershed assessment planning and environmental assessment conducted on the proposed actions. Both agencies then collaborated on the Wyman Face prescribed burn project layout, burn plan preparation, and burn implementation of this project. The project could not have been completed without the personnel and expertise of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest - Pintler Ranger District. Due to the overall success of the Wyman Face project, a second phase of the project is now in the planning stages. The new prescribed burn project includes 320 acres of land managed by the BLM and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and is expected to be conducted in the spring of 2008.

