

Snapshots

Successes of BLM hazardous fuels projects ...

Silver City Clean-up Day Involves Citizens, BLM, Historians, others.

In the first of what will be a series of efforts to reduce hazardous fuels in and around the historic mining community of Silver City, firefighters from the BLM's Lower Snake River District joined citizens June 8 in removing flammable debris and cutting, trimming, and removing vegetation near structures.

Silver City, nestled in a narrow valley high in the Owyhee Mountains of southwest Idaho, presents a number of mitigation challenges. Historic preservation rules have kept the homes, outbuildings, and businesses in much the same condition as they were 100 years ago; namely, constructed of tinder dry wood siding, with open porches and decks. The complexities of the interface area also include juniper encroachment; dead and dying stands of Douglas fir on the slopes surrounding the town and encroaching in large aspen stands; and a riparian area with large accumulations of dead vegetation running through the heart of the community. Land ownership is a mosaic of private and public property around and within the community.

Accomplishing mitigation efforts given these complexities requires close coordination and cooperation among the BLM, property owners, both the state and county historical preservation offices, riparian biologists, and other resource managers.

Due to the wealth of historical artifacts in the area, an archaeologist was on site during the June 8 work to document and approve the removal of old piles of lumber scattered near buildings and to assure that no ground was disturbed during the cutting and removal of vegetation.

A local citizen provided a haul site for all the vegetation and debris removed during the work and both BLM staff and town residents hauled load after load to be burned in the fall. Participation in the community was so high, and resulted in so much debris that BLM crews will return for a second weekend to finish hauling the piles to the burn site.

“While this first clean-up day was very successful, there is still much to do in the



BLM firefighter Keith Hackbarth loads brush from one of many piles that accumulated around the community of Silver City during a firewise cleanup day in June. The large building in the background is the hotel. All structures in the community are of wood construction and in much the same condition as they were a century or more ago.

June 12, 2002



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community,” said Randy Eardley, fire mitigation and education specialist for the BLM’s Lower Snake River District. “We’ll be working with the Student Conservation Association and our own staff to do at least one and possibly two more firewise clean-up days later this year.”

For the longer term, the BLM is conducting an environmental analysis to address the large-scale fuels issues surrounding the community, including the bug-killed Douglas fir stands, the health of the aspen groves, and more. That EA is expected to take a year, with implementation of fuels projects coming in 2003.

Silver City was one of nine communities that BLM’s Lower Snake River District began work in 2001 with National Fire Plan funding . An extensive fire hazard assessment and mitigation report were completed by Dynamac Corporation, a contractor hired by the BLM.

While the hazard assessment was being done, a 9,000-acre fire threatened the community and heightened the interest among the citizens in creating a more fire-resistant community.

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Assistant FMO Andy Delmas, left, and Kyle Gandiaga, BLM law enforcement specialist from the Idaho BLM State Office, load a pile of brush cut in Silver City and prepare to haul it to a burn site away from town.



BLM firefighters Elden Alexander (holding saw), and Rena Simpson finish cutting a large pile of vegetation into smaller portions so it can be hauled away. Citizens in the background take a break from trimming vegetation to create a survivable space around a structure.

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