

Snapshots 2004

Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.



April 23

Idaho

Firewise Landscape Workshop Held in Idaho Falls

Representatives of the Eastern Idaho Interagency Fire Center, a joint operation between BLM's Upper Snake River District and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, held their first-ever Firewise Landscaping Workshop on April 2, 2004 in Idaho Falls.

Organizers say they are pleased with the results of this first effort. About 30 people attended the workshop, which was advertised to landscaping companies, nurseries, contractors, homeowners associations, fire departments, county planning and zoning boards, insurance agents, and the public.

"We have been working for several years to tell people to create defensible spaces around homes. This workshop and others like it is another potential tool in that ongoing effort," said Rick Belger, BLM Fire Management Officer at the interagency center.

The workshop provided Firewise landscape techniques, insurance companies' perspective, grant information for communities and local project information. Nurseries and greenhouses were also provided with a poster of Firewise Landscape Plants for their business. Later this month, center officials will start distributing thousands of Firewise stickers that nursery managers can place on appropriate plants.

A bonus handout was provided to the attendees. "Gary Bates from the Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Association developed a Firewise plants list for the local area," said Faye Christiansen, BLM fire mitigation and education specialist. "This is important, as what may be "Firewise" in one area of the country may not grow so well in other locales."

Christiansen also said that the non-profit group "Keep Idaho Green" has a list of plants on its website at www.keepidahogreen.org for use across the state of Idaho.

The fire prevention specialists hope that this and other efforts will raise awareness in the stores in the area so that people will start to recognize Firewise plants.

"Workshops like this one will get nurseries thinking about Firewise

Firewise Plants in Idaho

Over 12,000 structures were burned in wildfires from 2000 to 2003 in the United States. Using these firewise plants can help create defensible space and possibly save your home during a wildfire.

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	REMARKS
<i>Arnica montana</i>	Common Tink	White to blue flowers
<i>Cardinalis tetaniorum</i>	Showoff Summer	Red/Orange flower
<i>Coreopsis auriculata</i>	Coreopsis	Orange/yellow flowers
<i>Eleocharis acicularis</i>	Hardfender	Flagrant
<i>Fraxinus chloracra</i>	Wild Strawberry	Amber coloring
<i>Hamamelis sp.</i>	Hamamelis	Yellow
<i>Juniperus sp.</i>	Blue Pine	Seeds/berries
<i>Malva sylvestris</i>	Hardy Hibiscus	Hardy hibiscus
<i>Phlox subulata</i>	Woolly Phlox	Good, rich garden plant
<i>Prunella sp.</i>	Creeping Thyme	Flagrant, edible
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Nettle	Light to dark shade, moisture

Groundcover

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	REMARKS
<i>Androsace sp.</i>	Androsace	Red color
<i>Cornus sp.</i>	Red Dogwood	Red/pink, white flowers
<i>Comarostaphylis</i>	California Laurel	Red to white flowers, height
<i>Erigeron annuus</i>	Wild Chrysanthemum	Yellow color
<i>Phlox subulata</i>	Woolly Phlox	Yellow, long flowers
<i>Phlox sp.</i>	Phlox	Red color
<i>Salix sp.</i>	Willow	Light to dark shade, moisture

Shrubs

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	REMARKS
<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	Shadbush	White flowers, edible fruit
<i>Aspidodactylus</i>	Aspidodactylus	White flowers, edible fruit
<i>Chamaenerion</i>	Chamaenerion	Red to white flowers, height
<i>Coreopsis auriculata</i>	Coreopsis	Orange/yellow flowers
<i>Eleocharis acicularis</i>	Hardfender	Flagrant
<i>Fraxinus chloracra</i>	Wild Strawberry	Amber coloring
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Trees

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	REMARKS
<i>Aspen</i>	Aspen	Good for dry areas
<i>Pinus ponderosa</i>	Great Basin Pine	Flagrant
<i>Quercus sp.</i>	Oak	Flagrant, good shade
<i>Malva sp.</i>	Malva	Flagrant, good shade
<i>Juniperus sp.</i>	Blue Pine	Seeds/berries
<i>Prunella sp.</i>	Creeping Thyme	Flagrant, edible
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Nettle	Light to dark shade, moisture

Photos: Red Hot Poker, groundcover; Show in Summer, groundcover; Virginia Creeper, shrubs; Oregon Grape, shrubs.

If you live near open fields, forests, or rangelands, it is not a matter of IF a wildfire will happen, but WHEN. Make your home defensible. For more information visit www.firewise.org.

A poster showing photos of area Firewise friendly plants was developed and distributed.

plants so that when someone walks into a nursery, they think about Firewise landscaping," said Don Gossweiler, a BLM Fire Mitigation and Education Specialist.

Although attendance at the meeting was lower than expected, especially for the landscape companies, center fire prevention specialists are already thinking about how to improve and present the workshop again, possibly as early as this fall. "Timing is an important consideration. Springtime is when the nurseries and landscaping companies are busiest," said Kevin Conran, a Fire Mitigation and



This sticker was developed for area nursery companies to use in their business locations.

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Education Specialist on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Joanna Bennett, a national forest fire information officer also agreed. "Even in the fall, when they're getting ready for the next year, ordering plants in, would be a better time to host the workshop," she said.

Photos of Firewise friendly plants in Idaho

Snow in summer



Oregon grape



Rose of Sharon



Blue flax



Partners Celebrate Groundbreaking at Foothills Environmental Learning Center

After nearly three years of planning, collaboration, partnership building, and overcoming hurdles, the partners in the Foothills Environmental Learning Center are celebrating the start of construction at the site this month. The facility, nestled in the wildland-urban interface in the foothills on Boise's northern edge, will provide indoor and outdoor classrooms, a lab, and interpretive sites to share information and a variety of educational programs, including topics



Virginia creeper



Red hot poker



Coreopsis



Moss pink

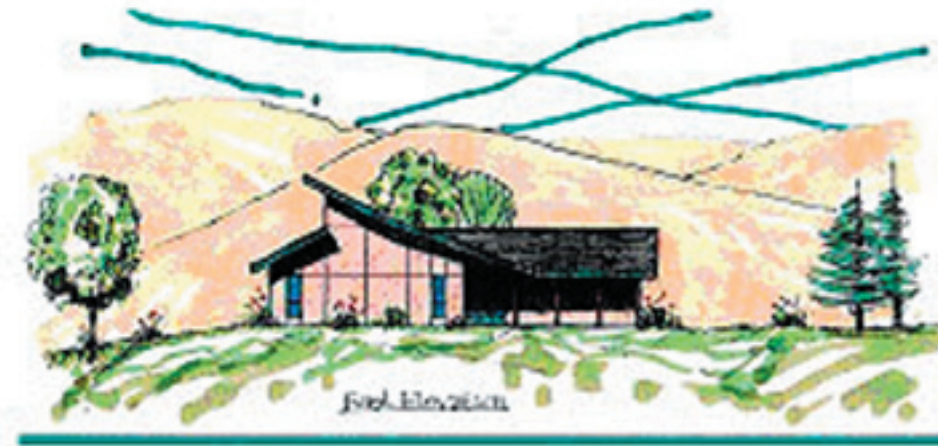
about fire ecology, fuels management, and fire-safe living in the wildland-urban interface.

The exterior of the building will be constructed to look like a home and will incorporate Firewise building techniques. Like the structure, the

grounds will be done as a visual and tangible example of fire-resistant landscaping.

The City of Boise acquired the 20-acre property, including an older existing home, in 1997, not long after the 8th Street Fire scorched more than 15,000 acres across the Boise Front and threatened hundreds of homes, including the property acquired by the city for the learning center. From the outset the city envisioned an environmental education center at the site.

Following the 2000 fire season and the development of the National Fire Plan, which brought a renewed focus on wildland-urban interface areas, fuels management, and homeowner education, BLM's Lower Snake River District was asked to be a partner to serve as a consultant for Firewise building and landscaping practices. BLM would develop curriculum for fire-related programs, assist in the development of interpretive materials, and provide a share of the funding. Through coordination between the BLM district and state offices, funding was contributed and a partnership



An artist's rendering of the Foothills Environmental Learning Center scheduled to be complete and in use by the fall of this year. The building, set in the wildland-urban interface north of Boise, is designed to look like a home and is being constructed and landscaped with Firewise elements. The site will have indoor and outdoor classrooms, a lab, and educational and interpretive elements.

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Sustainable Idaho, a partner in the Foothills Environment Learning Center, arranged for a group called Supportive Housing and Innovative Partnerships to remove the old building on the site. SHIP will recycle and reuse materials from the old structure, including windows, lumber, and fixtures.

formed with both Boise City and Ada County to accomplish the project.

Although initial plans called for remodeling the existing home to include classroom and meeting space, the costs of retrofitting and updating the building to meet current codes was found to be more than removing the old structure and building a new one.

As the project evolved, additional partners joined to create a diverse and collaborative effort. Those partners include Boise Cascade Corporation, which is donating building materials, IdaCorp, a division of Idaho Power Co., which is contributing energy-saving elements, Idaho GEMstars and Sustainable Idaho which was instrumental in removing the old building and providing the materials for recycling and reuse, The Nature Conservancy, and the Golden Eagle Audubon Society. All of the partners will participate in utilizing the site.

Today, the Foothills Center presents an unsurpassed opportunity to create a model wildland-urban structure

including landscaping that balances Firewise concepts with aesthetics, habitat, and other resource concerns. Through its indoor and outdoor classroom and meeting space, BLM will have both a model structure and a venue to provide information and educational outreach to school, adult, and community groups. The facility will be an excellent location to engage a variety of audiences in discussion and learning about such issues as living safely in a wildfire environment, fire ecology, fire effects, fire prevention, the role fire in the natural environment, and how fire impacts communities.

The Foothills Environmental Learning Center location near Idaho's Capitol, and only minutes from the National Interagency Fire Center, enhance its potential educational opportunities for visitors from across Idaho, the nation, and beyond.

Montana

Grass Range Timber Sale and Hazardous Fuel Reduction Broadcast Burns

In 1999 BLM proposed a technical fire management project near Grass Range in central Montana. The purpose of the project was to demonstrate different methods of reducing fuels. About 70 acres of BLM lands were commercially harvested and treated for fuels reduction in the first phase of the project, and a fire crew mechanically treated 20 acres. The last step of the project was a prescribed burn.

A private landowner who had commercially harvested about 50 acres adjacent to BLM lands requested that his area be included as part of the prescribed fire. The objectives of the broadcast burn were to reduce the debris from mechanical operations, improve forage conditions for wildlife and livestock, and reduce the live



Effects of broadcast burn at Grass Range.



Broadcast burn at Grass Range.

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fuel loadings of juniper and ponderosa pine regeneration. The BLM split the 150 acres into four units and burned them in late March 2004.

Contact: Ken Schmid at (406) 538-1983, or Bruce Reid at (406) 538-1960

Lower Armells Unit Two Prescribed Fire

In the Lower Armells Prescribed Fire Environmental Assessment in central Montana, BLM proposed to reduce conifer encroachment in sagebrush-grassland areas, stimulate understory forage and browse species, reduce live and dead fuel loadings in forested areas, and improve forest health.

Fire frequency in the area has been estimated to be between five and 40 years, but the latest interval for much of the area has been about 80 years. An associated 70-year trend of increased conifer regeneration has altered the fire regime. This has resulted in dense and declining conifer stands, suppressed and decadent understory shrubs, and low levels of herbaceous coverage on the forest floor. Drought and insects have exacerbated the poor health of the conifers.

In early April 2004, fire crews black-lined the 1,400-acre second unit along the upper perimeters, then aeri ally ignited it using plastic spheres dropped by helicopter. The treatment objectives were to reduce up to 80 percent of the understory and successional conifers, allow up to 35 percent removal of the overstory, and treat up to 80 percent of the total unit with an underburn.

To create openings in the conifer canopy, desired fire behavior included passive crowning. Surface fire was desired in most of the unit to reduce conifer seedlings, juniper, litter, and downed dead fuels.

Contact: Jennifer Walker at (406) 538-1982, or Vinita Shea at (406) 538-1919

Dave Vickery, Snapshots editor
Sheri Ascherfeld, layout/design



Passive crowning during prescribed fire plementation at lower Armells.



Surface fire and smoke.



Fire effects: Mosaic of unburned, surface burned, and scorched or consumed canopy.