

## Idaho

### South Central Idaho BLM Receives Land Use Plan Award

The Public Lands Foundation named eight South Central Idaho BLM fire and field employees as recipients of the 2003 National Public Lands Foundation Award. The foundation gave the award for unprecedented strides in hazardous fuels treatments and community partnerships since the implementation of the National Fire Plan in 2000.

Shoshone and Burley Field Office Managers, Bill Baker and Theresa Hanley, along with South Central Fire Management Officer Andy Payne received the award at a ceremony in Washington D.C. on January 30. Others receiving the award are Fuels Use Specialist Joe Russell, Lead Fuels Technician Glen Burkhardt, Fire Mitigation and Education Manager John Sabala, and Mitigation and Education Specialists Curtis Jensen and Dennis Smith.

Hanley and Baker were specifically recognized for their leadership and support of National Fire Plan objectives. Payne was also noted for his energy and vision in leading the South Central Idaho BLM Fire Program, one of the five largest wildland fire suppression programs in the West.

“Additional funding through the National Fire Plan has made a vast amount of progress possible for the BLM in South Central Idaho,” Payne said. “We have made enormous leaps in all areas of our organization.”

In the mid 1990s prior to development of the National Fire Plan, South Central Idaho BLM treated less than 400 acres of hazardous fuels per year. With implementation of the plan over 50,000 acres are treated using mechanical and chemical methods every year. In 2002 alone, the South Central BLM fuels program treated 52,000 acres, 75 percent of BLM Idaho’s total treatment and over 18 percent of BLM fuels accomplishments nationwide.



*BLM Shoshone Field Manager Bill Baker.*



*BLM Burley Field Office Manager Theresa Hanley.*



*South Central Idaho Fire Management Officer Andy Payne.*



Highlighting BLM projects that support the National Fire Plan.

# Snapshots 2003

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*Hidden Valley area sprayed after a recent wildfire during fall of 2000 in south central Idaho.*



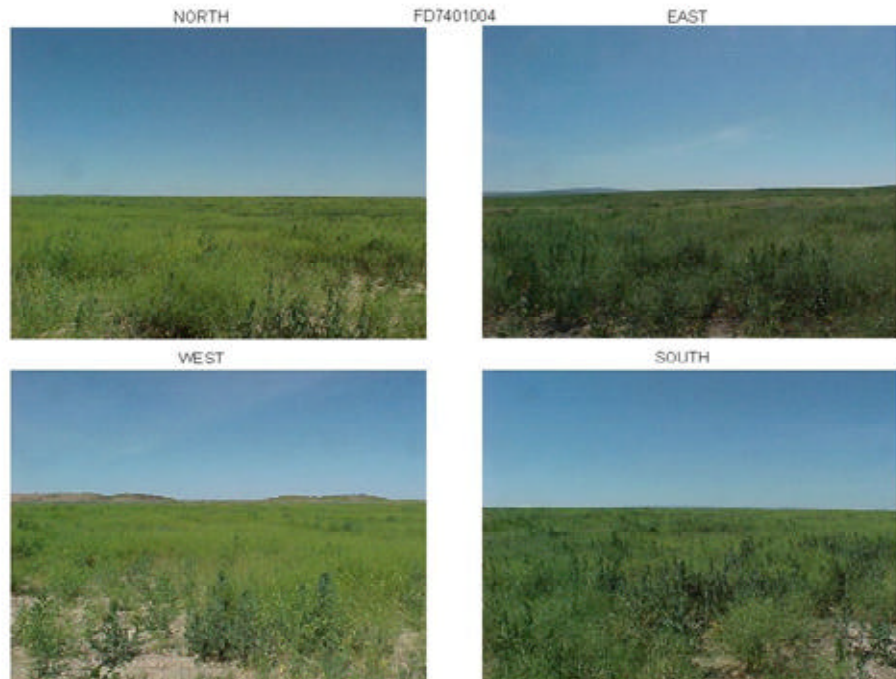
*Cheatgrass and weeds grow in the Hidden Valley area of south central Idaho, showing some of the most flammable fuels in the district.*

The Hidden Valley region in the south central Idaho was one of the areas that benefited from the work done through the National Fire Plan.

In addition to fuels treatment strides, BLM is also rigorously involved in building partnerships with southern Idaho communities. Since 2001 BLM has been able to establish 51 agreements with rural fire departments and allocate more than \$1.5 million for equipment, training and prevention. More than 20 surplus fire engines and vehicles were also acquired and sold to rural departments giving them more ability to assist the BLM during wildfire initial attack. Through partnership agreements and the purchase of these surplus engines, South central Idaho BLM and rural fire departments are able to more fully cooperate with fire related efforts, keeping fires smaller and saving taxpayer dollars.

fuels reduction and homeowner education in 16 southern Idaho communities. The agency has been successful in embracing the National Fire Plan, allowing its objectives to structure and change how resources are protected and partnerships are sustained in southern Idaho.

In implementing the National Fire Plan, South Central Idaho BLM has also signed agreements for hazardous



*Hidden Valley area seeded during 2001. Although some exotic mustard and other weeds remain, the pre-fire cheatgrass is gone. The seeded perennial plants are well established and will out-compete the remaining weeds in the next two to three years.*



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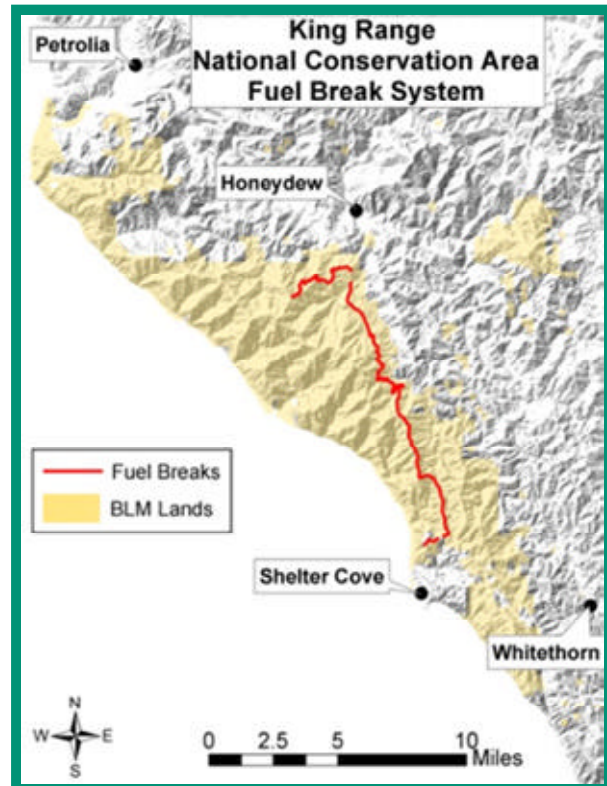
## California

### Shaded Fuel Break System Being Developed in the King Range National Conservation Area

The King Range National Conservation Area, established by Congress in 1970, is managed by BLM's Arcata Field Office. The remote region, also known as California's Lost Coast, covers 60,000 acres and extends along 35 miles of coastline between the mouth of the Mattole River and Sinkyone Wilderness State Park.

Historical fire occurrence in and around the King Range National Conservation Area indicates a large wildfire every 20 to 30 years. Vegetation can burn with high intensity and extreme rates of spread. In the Shelter Cove area, the last large devastating wildfire was in 1974, where approximately 16,000 acres were severely burned on public and private land. Significant urban development has occurred since the 1974 wildfire with approximately 80 percent of the houses in the community of Shelter Cove situated within the perimeter of the 1974 wildfire.

In order to reduce risk of catastrophic fire spreading to the surrounding communities of Petrolia, Honeydew, Whitethorn, and Shelter



Map of BLM's King Range National Conservation Area. It is located along the remote northern California coastline.

Cove, the Arcata Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management has begun constructing an 18.8 mile system of shaded fuel breaks within the national conservation area.



Shaded fuel break is shown on the right with the untreated area to the left of the road.

The goal is to develop a ridge top corridor with well spaced large diameter trees, both conifers and hardwoods, to provide a shaded canopy and act as an effective fuel break. The shaded fuel break would decrease the probability of stand replacing wildfires in the Douglas fir/tan oak and Douglas-fir/mixed-evergreen vegetation types by breaking up areas of heavy, continuous ground fuel and ladder fuels. In areas not capable of growing large trees, smaller trees are left at a closer spacing to take into effect visual concerns. Trees are pruned high enough as to avoid a fuel ladder and limit the potential for fire to be carried into the crowns of the trees.



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This ongoing project is being conducted by hand crews from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, BLM fuels management crews, and private companies contracted by the BLM. The vegetation is being thinned by hand with resulting slash being chipped back onto the site, or piled and burned outside of fire season. The resulting fuel break varies from 100 to 300 feet wide along ridge tops, adjacent to existing trails and roads, and will provide defensible space and anchor points for suppression crews in the event of a wildfire.

Contact: Tim Jones, Fire Management Officer, Arcata Field Office (707) 825-2306

## Fuel Treatments Protect Cultural and Historic Resources at Massacre Ranch

Massacre Ranch is located within the Black-Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, approximately 35 miles east of Cedarville, California. The historic ranch was once a stop over for immigrants heading west to California and Oregon along the Applegate-Lassen Trail. During the later 1800's the ranch became part of the Miller

Lux Cattle Ranch empire. Sheep herding became the main business of the ranch in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Foundations for building structures, an outhouse, a Basque bread oven, and historic corrals are still visible at the ranch. In addition, the Massacre Ranch area contains remnants of prehistoric activity by early Native Americans.

Recently, the BLM Surprise Field Office initiated a fuels reduction project to protect the historic structures from lightning-caused wildfires on Massacre Mountain and from human-caused wildfires originating from recreational use. The goal of the project is to create a buffer between the sagebrush that is continuous from Massacre Mountain to the south and the ranch structures and corrals to the north. Since the area is part of the



*Prior to treatment, continuous stands of sagebrush threaten structures at Massacre Ranch.*



*Piles of cut vegetation at the fuel break await spring burning.*

national conservation area, an effort was made to reduce the visual impacts. Different treatments were applied according to their proximity to the historical features being protected. For example, the brush and fuels immediately adjacent to a cabin were totally cleared away. The fuels one to two hundred feet from the sites were thinned but not completely removed. A small 30 foot



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fuel break was constructed to create a break in the continuous fuels about 200 feet from the ranch buildings. The fuel break is not visible from the house. All the piled fuels will be burned this spring when conditions allow.

This project highlights how fuel treatments can be customized for unique situations and by doing so, can help protect and preserve our cultural and historic resources.

*Contact: Garth Jeffers, Fire Management Officer, Surprise Field Office (530) 279-2729*

## Seasonal Effects of Prescribed Fire and Mastication in Northern California Chaparral Studied

The chaparral communities of Northern California are not well understood in terms of the effects of the season on fuel treatments. For example, burning during the winter and spring months when soil moistures are high may have a negative impact on post fire obligate seeding species. There is even less information known on the effects of season on mechanical fuel treatments such as mastication and chipping.

In November of 2000, the BLM Ukiah Field Office was successful in seeking grant funding from the Joint Fire Science Program to begin research into this topic. Since then, the BLM has been working under an agreement with the University of California-Berkeley to research the effects of the season of treatment for both prescribed fire and mechanical treatments. The principle researchers are Dr. Scott Stephens, Assistant Professor of Fire Science and Ms. Jennifer Potts, graduate research student.

A total of 20 prescribed fire and mechanical treatment plots were established, with each plot ranging in size from approximately five to ten acres. Pre-treatment transects were established and hand lines cut around the plots.

The pre-burn and treatment phases of the project are successfully nearing completion. The last of the 12 prescribed fire plots was burned in early April. Two mechanical plots will be cut and masticated using a Rayco Forestry Mower and Mulcher later this spring and the final two mechanical plots will be treated this fall.

The data derived from these test plots will provide valuable information for the development and implementation of an effective and efficient fuel management program for chaparral in Northern California. A tour of the research area is planned in mid- May and a demonstration area is being established at the University of California Hopland Research and Extension Center, where land managers, academia, scientists and interested publics can see the results of this research.

*Contact: James F. Dawson, Fire Management Officer, Ukiah Field Office (707) 468-4079*



*The photo shows a research plot burned Jan. 8, 2003. Ignition was by hand drip torch.*



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## Nevada

### BLM Marks Trees for Fire Hazard Reduction Project

Bureau of Land Management Ely Field Office fire crews began cutting selected pinyon and juniper trees in April on public lands about eight miles southwest of Ely, Nevada.

Work on the Ely Fire Hazard Reduction Project began in March, with crews marking both the project area and the trees to be retained during removal operations. The five-mile long 366-acre project area is located adjacent to Pole Line Road on Ward Mountain's eastern bench.

The project is the result of a settlement agreement reached in October 2002 by BLM and environmental groups, including American Lands Alliance, Committee for Idaho's High Desert and Western Watersheds Project. The groups had sued the BLM in federal district court over the Ely and Mount Wilson Guest Ranch Community Urban Interface projects.

The plaintiffs had previously appealed both projects to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). The American Lands Alliance and Committee for Idaho's High Desert dismissed with prejudice their IBLA appeals following a March 2002 ruling that denied a request to temporarily



*Crew member performing hand thinning on Ward Mountain.*

stop the projects. In the ruling, the IBLA dismissed as an appellant the Western Watersheds Project.

The projects were intended to reduce hazardous fuels buildups, thereby protecting human life and property while helping to protect watershed integrity.

Both projects called for the mechanical thinning and chipping of selected pinyon and juniper trees. The three-year Ely Urban Interface Project would have thinned trees on about 7,200 acres of public lands at Ward Mountain. The five-year Mount Wilson Guest Ranch Community Urban Interface Project would have thinned trees on about 22,000 acres of public lands in Lincoln County.



*Area showing result of thinning work.*



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*One view of an area that has been hand thinned.*

lead. “However, the BLM didn’t want to put resident’s lives and property in danger, while undergoing lengthy and time-consuming litigation that would have had an uncertain outcome.”

In the meantime, the Ely Fire Hazard Reduction Project is expected to continue into the summer.

The BLM Ely Field Office staff is also preparing the Mount Wilson Guest Ranch Community Fire Hazard Reduction Project for implementation in July. A contractor is scheduled to begin selectively thinning pinyon and juniper trees on about 750 acres of public lands, which are adjacent to the community.

The settlement agreement calls upon the BLM to implement pre-suppression type projects by installing or widening already existing firebreaks at strategic locations near Ely and the Mount Wilson Guest Ranch Community.

The Mountain Wilson Guest Ranch includes about 50 guest homes, and is located 22 miles north of Pioche.

The settlement, however, does not spell an end to the two larger projects.

“Absolutely not –we’re in the process of writing a district-wide Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement that will assist in implementation of both projects,” said Bill Dunn, BLM Ely Field Office fire management officer. “We anticipate the RMP will be finished in about two years.”

“We still feel the projects are necessary to prevent injury or loss of life and property, and to reestablish healthy ecosystems,” said Sue Howle, BLM Ely Field Office fire hazard reduction project



*Thinning work done in April.*



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