

Snapshots

Successful Bureau of Land Management hazardous fuels projects in the wildland urban interface...

Arizona

Prescribed Fire - Mimicking Mother Nature

In late June 2001, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Phoenix Field Office mimicked Mother Nature by igniting nearly 6,000 acres of the Agua Fria National Monument. Lighting fires in Arizona during the summer months has a similar effect as the pre-monsoon lightning fires. Fire promotes a healthy grassland ecosystem by improving the quality of grasses for wildlife and reducing the number of non-native plant species.



The Phoenix Field Office worked with the Tonto and Prescott National Forests, the Arizona State Land Department, Black Canyon City Fire Department, and the Arizona Department of Transportation to make this prescribed fire a success. During this burn, hundreds of motorists along Interstate 17 stopped to ask about the fire, which gave employees the opportunity to interact with the public, explain the purpose of the prescribed burn, and provide daily updates.

Resource specialists and fire managers discussed strategy, safety concerns, public information needs every morning. Firefighters patrolled the area to make sure no flare ups occurred at night.

Long-term monitoring of the area will provide resource specialists and fire managers with information to help with future prescribed burn planning.

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Kids Enjoy Visit to the BLM

“This is the best field trip we’ve ever been on!” This was one of the many comments Safford Christian School first and second grade students had after they visited the Safford Field Office on August 21, 2001. Diane Drobka, public affairs specialist, welcomed the students and then introduced them to the BLM. She explained how public land is used and the resources used to manage the it. She also gave them an overview of the types of jobs within the BLM.



Drobka then took the students out to the Fire Shop to learn about wildland firefighting. Roy Draper’s tour of the fire cache allowed students to see the variety of equipment used by firefighters and he let them try on a hard hat. Firefighter Marco Coronado then demonstrated how an engine can spray foam and how it is used to suppress a fire. The students enjoyed their day at the Safford Field Office and learned a lot about the BLM.

Idaho

The Hulls Gulch Environmental Education/Wildland-Urban Interface Project

In August 1996, more than 15,000 acres across the Boise Front burned. Hundreds of homes in the wildland-urban interface were threatened including an inholding surrounded by Boise City’s Hulls Gulch Preserve, a protected 270-acre property that provides a public gateway to the heavily used Boise Front.



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In 1997, the City of Boise acquired the 20-acre property from the McCord family. It includes about two acres of landscaped area around the home. From the outset, the city's vision has been for the McCord site to serve as a community outdoor lab and environmental education center, particularly due to its location in the wildland-urban interface and ease of public access.

After the severe fire season of 2000, the McCord site was used to develop a public model home that emphasized living safely in a wildland fire environment, wildland fuels management, and fire ecology.



When completed the facility will provide indoor and outdoor classroom and meeting space to educate audiences ranging from school children to adult neighborhood associations and other community groups. The site, only minutes from the National Interagency Fire Center and the Capitol building, is a wonderful educational opportunity to showcase wildland-urban interface facility.

The McCord project provides an excellent chance to create interagency, community, and business partnerships. Idaho BLM, the City of Boise, Ada County, Ridge to Rivers Council, Boise Parks and Recreation and the Treasure Valley Fire Prevention Co-op are working together on this project to provide funds, expertise, and labor. Other groups and organizations also have expressed an interest in participating in the project.

The existing house and surrounding buildings will be redesigned. Once complete, the exterior of the facility will appear as a typical urban interface home with appropriate landscaping. Inside, however, will house a large classroom facility, meeting space and offices. Nature trails, interpretive signing, and an orchard with sample fire resistant plants surround the center. The McCord project is expected to be completed sometime in 2003.

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Utah

Reduction of Fuel Load Near Communities

The Cedar City Field Office in Utah is selecting areas of risk by the amount of heavy fuel loads and the proximity of homes in the wildland urban interface. There are at least ten areas that have been identified so far as areas of risk. Each area has a diversity of concerns and interest groups. Collaboration is essential with these varied interests. Cedar City is meeting with local fire departments, agencies, county commissioners, homeowners and others to establish the framework for the wildland interface projects.

One of these projects is a 260 acre hazardous fuel reduction project on the west slope of Cedar Mountain above Cedar City, Utah. Above the project area is the Cedar Highland Subdivision and incorporating part of the project area is the C-Trail, a popular BLM hiking trail. The layout of the land where the subdivision is located increases its risk to high intensity fire. With an increase in dead Pinyon Pine and because of the level of fuel loading of pinyon and juniper in the subdivision and adjacent public lands this area was selected for treatment.

This fall the BLM will start the removal of the hazardous fuel load by selecting the highest affected areas and removing the fuels by hand cutting with chainsaws and piling the slash. The slash would be burned during the winter months. This project will take place over the next two to three years.

The C-Trail project area is part of a critical deer winter habitat. With that in mind, this project is designed to enhance and protect that aspect. Resource protection and enhancement are always an important part of all projects. In each area of risk, the type of fuel treatment will depend on the condition of the natural resources and public safety issues.



A home site in the lower portion of the Cedar Highlands Subdivision. The white roof tops show the location of other homes in the subdivision.

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