

Snapshots

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

Eastern States

Juniper Inlet Natural Area

Eighty six acres surrounding the picturesque Jupiter lighthouse in northern Palm Beach County, Florida reverted to the Bureau of Land Management in July, 1996, after over 100 years of use by the U.S. Coast Guard. The BLM is now working with Palm Beach County Department of Environmental Resources Management, the South Florida Water Management District and other local partners to manage this urban "island" of scrub, mangrove, and hardwood tropical hammock. This tract is the fourth largest Florida scrub tract remaining in the County.



BLM's Jupiter Lighthouse tract



Public notice about Jupiter

Sensitive vegetation communities and the presence of 18 special status species prompted designation of the northern 54 acres of the tract as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern in 1996, a first for BLM in the east. A plan was developed with public input to guide management of the tract for the next ten years. In the upland scrub, this included the reintroduction of fire, an important element for many of the scrub-dependent special status plants. It also included an aggressive exotic species removal program.

The goal of the first controlled burn was to reduce the possibility of a destructive wildfire which would threaten properties in the area, and to improve habitat for wildlife. The initial burn encompassed 5.3 acres in the northeast portion of the Jupiter tract. A second prescribed burn is now planned and is expected to take place early in FY 2002. Each year this site has been selected as a National Public Lands Day site, and over 100 local students have come out and assisted with exotic plant removal (such as australian pine).



Initial prescribed burn site

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Wyoming

Heli-Rappellers Drop In

A helicopter rappel crew from Idaho dropped in on Rawlins for a couple of weeks to help out with fire suppression efforts. While there, the heli-rappellers conducted some of their regular training exercises in the skies above Rawlins.

The crew, known as the Price Valley (Idaho) Heli-Rappellers (Payette National Forest), operates out of a Bell 250 helicopter, a “Super Huey.” The craft can carry six rappellers plus the pilot and spotter. The spotter is the most highly-trained and qualified crew member, responsible for getting the rappellers out of the helicopter and then performing the “cargo letdown procedure” in which the tools and supplies the crew needs are lowered from the ship. Two crew members rappel at a time, carrying their personal gear in backpacks. The helicopter hovers between 175 and 200 feet during the rappelling procedure. The helicopter also carries a 300-gallon water tank for dropping water on the fire. The aircraft uses a snorkel to suck the water into the tank from water sources.

The rappel crew is an initial attack force, rappelling into areas where a helicopter can't safely land. Whenever possible, however, the helicopter lands before the crew exits the aircraft. Before its stay in Rawlins, the crew has been on fires in Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and Arizona.



Rappelling crew trains near

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Colorado

Counties Plan for Wildfire

Twenty-two Colorado counties are developing comprehensive fire plans with the help of Bureau of Land Management grants to five individual counties and three organizations serving multiple counties. When completed the county fire plans will guide decisions made by cooperating landowners and agencies about wildland fire management. Seamless fire management across administrative, jurisdictional, and ownership boundaries will be easier.



BLM and county planners coordinate on

The Colorado legislature in 2000 changed the county sheriffs' wildland fire responsibilities from prevention and suppression to management. (In Colorado, the sheriffs provide fire protection on non-Federal lands.) The change substantially increased the complexity of the sheriffs' jobs. Now they may engage in a whole range of fire management actions including hazardous fuels reductions, fire education, and wildland urban interface wildfire preparedness.

The same law authorized and encouraged counties to prepare plans that would help coordinate fire management. The legislation provided a foundation for seamless, interagency fire management. The BLM has completed fire management for all lands that the agency manages in Colorado. The National Fire Plan requires close coordination and cooperation between Federal agencies and local authorities and landowners. Recognizing that a comprehensive, countywide fire management plan covering all lands including Federal lands meets these needs, the BLM made financial, material, and technical assistance available to support county efforts.

Planning is well underway. On November 26, Colorado county fire planners will meet in Colorado Springs just before the winter meeting of Colorado Counties, Inc. (An association of Colorado County Commissioners.) CCI, the BLM, and the Colorado State Forest Service are sponsoring the planners' meeting. The first comprehensive county fire plan drafts should be ready early in 2002.

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Deer Haven Ranch

The Royal Gorge Field Office (BLM), in Canon City, Colorado completed the Deer Haven Mechanical Fuels Treatment Project in August of 2001.

The project area covered approximately 410 acres where mechanical treatments were used to reduce hazardous fuels that had accumulated over many years. The project



Encroachment of young trees into Deer

was also designed to improve habitat for elk, mule deer and turkey in addition to improving forage conditions for livestock.

Mechanical treatment in the numerous meadow complexes in the Deer Haven area removed young ponderosa pine, pinyon pine, juniper and white fir trees that had invaded the meadows.

Maintenance of the meadows insures that fuel breaks are in place in the event of a catastrophic fire and helps reduce ladder fuels in the understory. Transplants of saleable ponderosa pines were removed prior to mechanical treatment. The treatment consisted of using hand-held chainsaws to cut and slash the undesirable vegetation. Additional mechanical treatments and prescribed burning are planned in the future to continue with the fuels treatment program in this area.



Site after fuels

The BLM acquired the 4,900 acre Deer Haven Ranch from the Mellon Foundation and the Conservation Fund several years ago. The two organizations purchased the Deer Haven Ranch from the Resolution Trust Corporation and donated the land to the BLM to provide significant

wildlife, riparian and wetland habitat, recreation opportunities, protect scenic quality and to improve stewardship and access to adjoining public land. The development of adjacent private lands into subdivisions has necessitated increased fuels reduction efforts on the ranch.

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American Red Cross Teams with BLM

American Red Cross volunteers are working with the Colorado State Forest Service in western Colorado to promote community wildfire preparedness. The Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service provide funds, training support, and other assistance. Trained Volunteers help landowners decide on wildfire hazard mitigation and teach wildland urban interface residents about wildland fire and how to live safely with it.

Red Cross volunteers trained at Cedaridge, Colorado in the basics of FIREWISE landscaping and building construction and community-based fire education methods. They shadowed a state forester to learn more about how to help residents prepare their families, homes, and landscapes to survive wildfire and now are working in several interface communities.



Red Cross volunteers receive training to help

The experiences of these Volunteers are the basis for training curriculum development in community wildfire preparedness and hazard mitigation education. Red Cross will use the curriculum to train Volunteers in Colorado and elsewhere.

The Bureau of Land Management provides funding and expertise to Red Cross for curriculum development and volunteer logistical support. BLM Fire Mitigation Education Specialists, state foresters and volunteers coordinate work on

federal lands and neighboring communities supporting local education efforts. The BLM and USFS provide funding to the Colorado State Forest Service to help finance a Red Cross program coordinator for education efforts in the wildland urban interface.

Red Cross works with neighborhood leadership and the sheriff and rural fire departments. Volunteers serve as the “arms and legs” of the fire agencies. They organize community education meetings where agency specialists teach fire behavior, fire ecology, and advise on hazard mitigation. They organize hazard mitigation demonstrations, monitor progress, watch for problems and help find solutions, and do other things needed to reduce the wildfire threat on a neighborhood scale. The success of the program has spawned requests from American Red Cross chapters and fire managers in other states for training and assistance in establishing similar programs.

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