

# Snapshots

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BLM

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# Alaska

## “28 Started and 28 Finished”

Fairbanks, Alaska. That simple statement, by one of the Alaska Fire Service (AFS) instructors at the emergency firefighters (EFF) crew boss training session, said a great deal about the dedication and hard work of the new crew boss participants at the Alaska Fire Service. On May 22, 2007, 28 people received a crew boss certificate after 11 days of training that is filled with “long hours and hard work,” according to Adam Kohley, course coordinator. The new crew bosses are from native villages located throughout the state. They are the leaders of the 16 member EFF crews that play a key role in wildland fire fighting in Alaska and the lower 48 states.

The EFF crews have been in existence for many years and these crews mainly come from villages throughout the state of Alaska. This year there will be 65 – 70 EFF crews available to work on fires in the state, and they could be sent to the Lower 48 to assist in wildland fire fighting.

The crew boss training is a two week course that teaches leadership and advanced wildland fire fighting skills to participants. This training

is a cooperative effort between the AFS and the Alaska Division of Forestry.

AFS Training Operation Manager Lynn Standley Coe stated, “This was one of the best crew boss classes I have worked with.”

Congratulations to the following:

James Sims, Holy Cross	Ben Henry, Fairbanks
Charlie Patterson, Noorvik	Tyrone Ryder, Fairbanks
George Kobuk, St. Michael	Gabriel Lee Pease-Madore, Delta
Clifford Charles, Koyuk	John Hutchinson, Copper River
Duane Thompson, Mtn Village	Frederico Johns, Copper River
Perry Snyder, Selawik	Wilfred Adams, Tetlin
Robert Pete, Stebbins	Drew Patrick, Mentasta
Gary Lawrence, Fort Yukon	Cecil Martin, Tanacross
James Martin, Venetie	Edward Demit, Northway
Julien Roberts, Arctic Village	Johnny Mann, Hooper Bay
Mickey Silas, Minto	Earl Balluta, Nondalton
Nathan Charlie, Minto	Patrick Nanok, Chevak
Rudy Moses, Allakaket	Ronald Alexie, Nondalton
Orville Bergman, Allakaket	Andrew Paniyak, Chevak

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## Idaho

### Coeur d'Alene Field Office Reforestation Project

In the fall of 2006, the Coeur d'Alene Field Office completed burning and reforestation efforts on the Donated 80 project. The 80-acre parcel, acquired through a private donation, is located along the St. Joe Divide between the Coeur d'Alene and St. Joe River basins in Shoshone County. Before donating the parcel, the previous owner, through a timber sale, mechanically treated the land. Since acquiring the land, the BLM mechanically piled about 40 acres and broadcast burned nearly 30 acres. The Coeur d'Alene Field Office will use this very productive, high elevation site as a test bed to help determine the optimum site preparation technique, (broadcast burning vs. mechanical piling followed by burning) that will ultimately produce a healthy forest.

Bill Cook, natural resource specialist and silviculturalist, coordinated this intensive reforestation project which was recently completed. Though reforestation is complete, vegetation monitoring will continue into the foreseeable future to periodically evaluate the viability of the planted, rust-resistant western white pine and western larch.

Prior to reforestation, the field office broadcast burned the residual slash that had been mechanically piled above a road. Broadcast burning was used to reduce both activity and natural fuels and provide planting sites for the fall reforestation efforts. Most of the area below the road had been broadcast burned in the fall of 2005. Once burning was completed, the BLM contracted a



*View comparing site preparation techniques (slashing/mechanical piling/pile burning) above road and partial slashing/Rx broadcast*

crew to plant western larch and rust-resistant western white pine. The field office prefers to plant trees in the spring, but due to high elevation snow blocking access into the area, this delayed planting until the fall. This can be a relatively speculative operation since adequate soil moisture is critical to the survival of the tree seedlings. Should the fall rains be delayed much beyond the norm, seedling survival can be questionable. Since the Coeur d'Alene Field Office is using this particular project area as a site preparation test bed comparing broadcast burning to mechanical piling/pile burning, the permanent sample plots located in both treatment areas will be examined on a regular basis. The results will determine the need for brush release and/or pre-commercial thinning in order to benefit the desired western larch and western white pine. The skid trails and roads used during this project will heal when access is ultimately closed to this parcel.

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*Contract workers planting rust-resistant western white pine and western larch.*



*Bill Cook, natural resource specialist and silviculturalist, inspecting the project area.*



## Local Tribe Protects Wildlands with Engines from BLM

As the fire season begins throughout the Twin Falls District, BLM firefighters will be turning to their neighbors for assistance. The BLM appreciates the assistance from many neighbors including federal, county, and city governments in combating wildland fire. Under the re-organization table for the Twin Falls District BLM Fire and Aviation program, several wildland fire engines were made available for loan to other state and federal wildland agencies this fire season.

The Twin Falls District will use the resources of a cooperator, sometimes overlooked, because of its distance from Idaho's major cities. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley are located in southern Idaho and northern Nevada. With a reservation encompassing a vast desert that appears to have never been touched by human hands, the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes will be a great resource in protecting wildlands.

The Tribes received two fully equipped Type VI engines that include tools such as shovels, Pulaskis, and bladder bags to use for the summer months. Fire Management Officer, Chris Simonson, and Acting District Manager, Bill Baker, were on hand to lend these engines to Tribal Chairman, Kyle Prior.

These engines, loaned to supplement the Shoshone-Paiute fire department, will improve response time and further protect the pristine public lands in the area.

Fire Management Officer, Chris Simonson, said, "These engines have provided the BLM with a great resource and now, besides helping the BLM, they will offer wildfire protection for others as well."

To date, 13 fire engines were loaned to other

governmental agencies. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Three Island State Park, and other BLM and Forest Service offices are all receiving fire engines. This project provides additional resource protection to public lands and in particular, adds a new dimension to BLM's relationship with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes.

## Fire Danger Sign becomes Eagle Scout Project

The Twin Falls District BLM strives to use the best resources possible. Human caused wildfires pose a significant concern for the District. With 73 human caused fires in 2006, the Twin Falls District fire education staff is considering ways to deliver a message to improve the public's understanding of preventing wildfires

To deliver this message, a local Boy Scout's assistance was called upon. Alex Rodriguez of Jerome, searching for an Eagle Scout project that could benefit the public, discovered the perfect project with the help of the BLM fire education staff. The BLM Fire Danger sign displayed and maintained by the Jerome City Fire Department was due for replacement.

"BLM prevention staff provided the material and paint for the new sign and Alex provided the knowledge and labor. This project was a great example of cooperation between two parties," said John Sabala, mitigation and education manager.

The Fire Danger signs include exchangeable fire danger adjectives such as extreme, very high, high, moderate, and low. These descriptions are changed throughout the fire season with BLM burning indices referred to as the indicator for the local area.



*The Shoshone-Paiute fire department gets the keys to the engine.*



“This was a great example of cooperation between benefiting parties. We want the public to be aware of the fire danger, the Jerome Fire Department provided a place for the sign and will maintain it and Alex provided the sign that we needed for this message. This is a win-win, where all parties benefit,” said Jessica Hockenberry, BLM fire education staff lead.

Now the sign rests in front of the Jerome City Fire Department near City Hall, to inform the public about the conditions regarding wildland fire danger. One young man’s Eagle Scout project is meeting its goal to provide a major benefit to the public.

### Idaho BLM Receives Cooperative Conservation Awards for Partnership in FIRE Up for Summer Program

On May 8, 2007, the FIRE Up for Summer program received the U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary’s Cooperative Conservation Award in Washington, DC. The program received the award for excellence in conservation activities that further the mission of the Department of the Interior and for the collaboration to promote a full public education partnership with the Meridian School District in Meridian, Idaho, and Northwest Nazarene University (NNU) in Nampa, Idaho. The FIRE Up for Summer program, now in its fourth year, was designed for high school students who want to earn high school science or transferable NNU college credits by collecting data and completing research



*FIRE Up award ceremony, from left to right: Acting BLM Director Jim Hughes, Eagle High School teacher Steve DeMers, retired teacher Robert Beckwith, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, BLM Idaho State Office Education and Interpretation Coordinator Shelley Davis-Brunner, Department of Interior Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management Steve Allred*



*Eagle High School teacher Steve DeMers works with Boise District Fuels Specialist Chris Cromwell to set GPS plots for FIRE Up students to study.*

projects. The FIRE Up for Summer program was also awarded the BLM Director’s Cooperative Conservation Award in December 2006. Assistant Secretary Allred and State Director Tom Dyer presided over the ceremony and representatives from Meridian School District, NNU, and the Idaho BLM all received certificates. Ten students, who represented over 50 program participants, were given Cooperative Conservation t-shirts from the agency.

FIRE Up research projects help students learn about wildland fire behavior, its effect on natural ecosystems, and what can be done to minimize rural communities’ susceptibility to wildfire by utilizing Red Zone, a computer software program. Red Zone calculates wildfire risk for homes and communities by analyzing data about water source locations, vegetation in and around each home, topography, access to the structure, type of building, construction materials, and fire response in the analyzed area. For example, Red Zone software is designed to ask detailed questions about each individual home, such as: Is there defensible space? What type(s) of vegetation are adjacent to the home? What type of roofing material does the home have? What are the predominant building materials of the house? The students are also introduced to FIREMON software (Fire Effects Monitoring and Inventory System), which they use to combine vegetation, landscape, and global information systems data to characterize changes in ecosystems over time.

Twenty four biology students from the Meridian School District are currently participating in the 2007 program. On June 11, students started one week of classroom introduction to fire ecology, computer software, and data





*The community of Pine, where the 2007 FIRE Up students will complete their studies. The picture was taken from one of the plots that students will use to study fuels around the community.*

gathering techniques. During the week of June 18-22, students will collect data on vegetation and structures in and around the community of Pine, Idaho, and will map the area using GIS/GPS data. The students will then use Red Zone to input data about structures in the subdivisions, to calculate hazard value, and to suggest specific mitigation measures each homeowner can take to decrease their homes' susceptibility to wildfire.

The students will present their findings on June 29 at 10 a.m. at the BLM state office in Boise, Idaho. The presentations will be open to Pine residents, local educators, BLM employees, and anyone interested in the program. BLM employees will be able to use the students' findings to give homeowners suggestions on improving their homes' resistance to wildfire, and treatment options for fire-prone vegetation in and around

the Pine area, which can be used to improve the entire community's resistance to wildfire.

*For more information, please contact: Jessica Garetto, 384-3221*

## Wyoming

### Bennett Peak Fuels Projects

Bennett Peak is a popular area due to many fishing, hunting, boating, camping, and hiking opportunities. It also serves as big game crucial winter range for mule deer, elk, and big horn sheep.

Bennett Peak and Corral Creek campgrounds are located near the base of Bennett Peak along the North Platte River, in southeastern Carbon County. Heavy concentrations of fuel were present in the area which contributed to an increased potential of escaped campfires and large high intensity fires in the area that might impact several historic ranches near the community of French Creek, Wyoming. A 50-acre fuels reduction project in and around these campgrounds



*The high amount of dry vegetation at the Bennett Peak Campground poses a high-threat potential for wildland fire from campers and other recreation users.*



*A herd of Mule deer grazing near Bennett Peak are an example of one of the resources at risk from out-of-control wildland fires. The deer and other native species benefit when habitat is improved from prescribed burns.*





*A Rawlins Field Office wildland firefighter conducts a prescribed burn at West Barrett to reduce potential fire risk and improve natural habitat.*

was completed in 2006, greatly reducing the chance of escaped campfires.

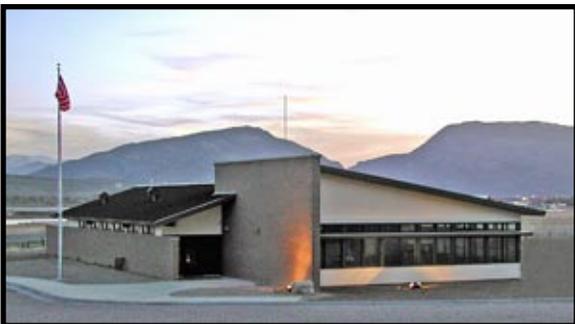
School Creek and Moore’s Creek are located a few miles east of Bennett Peak. These two drainages were experiencing heavy juniper encroachment. A fuels reduction project began in 2005 to remove the juniper from the drainages to increase the amount of aspen and to improve the flow of water. Water flow has already begun to improve in the treated areas. This project is slated for completion in 2007.

The West Barrett/Upper Bear Gulch prescribed burn is also located in the Bennett Peak area. 1,600 acres were treated in two phases so far. The primary objectives of this burn was to remove old decadent stands of sagebrush in the area and to improve wildlife habitat in the big game crucial winter range.

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### Cody Dispatch Center

All is well in the world of the Cody Interagency Dispatch Center (CDC). “I pinch myself every morning when I walk in,” says Greg Warner, center manager, as he looks around with outstretched arms. “After working 21 years



*A new day breaks over Cody Interagency Dispatch Center.*



*Worland Field Manager Bill Hill addresses guests at the Grand Opening. Photo by Ruffin Prevost, Billings Gazette*

in the old building, it is absolutely wonderful...” The old building he refers to is visible a few hundred yards away next to the apron at Yellowstone Regional Airport; a dilapidated 10 by 20 feet, two story, cinder block, 1960’s era converted air tanker base with low ceilings, a steep, narrow staircase, and coed toilet. “In the summer the air conditioner couldn’t keep up with the heat that radiated through the roof.”

On a recent sunny morning at its dramatic site at the feet of Rattlesnake and Carter Mountains, representatives of state and federal agencies assembled to celebrate the new dispatch center. The \$1.7 million, 4,600 square foot facility is more than 10 times larger than the old dispatch center, and capable of accommodating expanded operations and extra personnel in the event of large, or multiple fires. Added amenities include a 75 kilowatt backup generator, new computers and radios, lockers, showers, exercise room, briefing room, full kitchen and lunch room, and ADA compliant access, and the



*Worland Field Manager, Bill Hill, points out ground zero of the 34,000 acre 2006 Little Venus Fire.*





*All Smiles – CDC Manager Greg Warner beams with satisfaction over the new facility.*

result is a thoughtfully designed, highly effective communications center that will make its presence known with the coming fire season.

CDC is the central fire dispatch office for wildland fires in north central Wyoming. It coordinates firefighting support for the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Forest Service, and Wyoming State Forestry. As for that, Warner is quick to point out, “It’s definitely not just fires anymore. We’re getting more into responding to other incidents as part of the ‘all risk’ philosophy of incident response,” where dispatchers coordinate shared resources closest to where they’re needed regardless of agency ownership. “It’s crazy to think that we used to have to get a resource from Colorado when Billings, Montana had the same thing much closer.” Closer usually means quicker, and, in his example, it means five to 12 hours quicker; enough to make difference.

“More than ever before, no one does anything in firefighting alone. We neighbor up,” said Tim Murphy, BLM deputy assistant director for Fire and Aviation. Over the past five years, CDC has coordinated responses to 598 fires covering 115,000 acres in north central Wyoming, while dispatching 254 crews, 419 aircraft, and 1,078 engines. During the same period, it handled an additional 636 emergency responses in the form of people, supplies, and vehicles for natural disasters nationwide.

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## Eastern Wyoming Zone BLM Trains Rural Firefighters through the Ready Reserve Program

The Eastern Wyoming Zone BLM, comprised of the Casper, Buffalo, and Newcastle Field Offices, has been busy training rural firefighters over the winter. Courses were held entirely during evenings and weekends so firefighters with weekday jobs could attend. Turnout was excellent, with more than 100 people attending three courses.

In January, two instructors from the BLM taught S-215, Fire Operations in the Wildland Urban Interface to 30 rural firefighters from Platte, Goshen, Albany, and Converse counties, and the towns of Wheatland and Glendo. This 28-32 hour course provides the student with the skills and knowledge to size-up a wildland urban interface fire incident, evaluate the potential situation, order and deploy the necessary resources, and apply safe and effective strategy and tactics to minimize the threat to life and property. After completing this course, the Glendo firefighters invited the BLM to assist them in developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Jason Adkins and Heath Serres, Engine Module Leaders at the Casper Field Office, spent a day in Glendo assessing the Glendo Wildland Urban Interface area and triaging structures.

S-234, Ignition Operations, was taught in Douglas over two weekends in February. This 32 hour course provides training in the functional roles and responsibilities connected with firing operations. It covers, planning, ignition procedures and techniques, and equipment applicable to wildland and prescribed fire. This course also addresses the role of the firing boss as the organization manages escalation from a non-complex to a complex fire situation. A three



*Gregg Buckalew describes ignition techniques to rural firefighters at the University of Wyoming Extension Office in Douglas, Wyoming.*



person cadre instructed the course to 23 rural firefighters from Converse, Platte, and Goshen counties, and the towns of Wheatland and Glendo.

The Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher was also offered in Douglas in late April. The course was a combination of the Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR), Safety Gram information, and Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, and Safety Zones (LCES) exercises. Turnout for this course was a county record at 53 people.

Feedback on all courses was excellent. This was the first time many of the firefighters had been exposed to Sand Table Exercises and Tactical Decision Games. The refresher training, in particular, was a success because the students felt it applied to their situation. The county normally offers Standards for Survival to meet the refresher requirements, an outdated course that doesn't change from year to year.

The BLM's Ready Reserve Program is designed to fund established wildland training academies and to provide training opportunities to eligible rural cooperators. The focus of the program is to form mobile cadres or otherwise provide instruction to remote Rural Fire



*Derek Bitner showing examples of control lines at the First State Bank in Wheatland, WY during S-215.*

Departments (RFD's) unable to attend regular academy sessions, with instruction schedules accommodating RFD personnel (i.e. weekend or evening sessions). Ready Reserve was a pilot program for FY06, but was not funded for FY07. These courses were funded from FY06 carryover money. It is unknown if Ready Reserve will be funded for FY08. The Eastern Wyoming Zone BLM believes this program is essential to building and maintaining relationships with rural cooperators.

