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BLM Fuel Breaks Prove Successful near Vale

Vale, Ore. – At the beginning of July, the Lincoln Bench Fire started just South of Vale, Oregon. Light winds pushed the fire from private land onto BLM lands.

As the fire crossed the boundary, it made contact with a fuel break that was established in 2004 to protect private structures and property around Willow Creek.

This maintained fuel break stopped the wind-driven spread of the fire to the South. The fire was able to slowly flank to the East and West along the edges of the fuel break.

However, a single BLM heavy engine assisted by water tenders and structure protection engines from the Nyssa Rural Fire Department were able to contain the fire the same night and keep it to just under four acres in size.

Vale BLM's Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist Don Rotell said the fire could have been much worse.

““This fire definitely had potential to cause much more damage than it did,” Rotell said, “this is an excellent example of how a well-maintained network of fuel breaks can minimize burned areas and protect property and natural resources.”

Fuel breaks can be created by several means, herbicides, mechanical treatments like mowing, and even through strategic livestock grazing of targeted areas. Generally, these fuels breaks are created by thinning vegetation on the sides of existing roads. Not only can these fuels breaks create a barrier to slow or stop fire movement across the landscape, they can create a strong “anchor point” from which fire suppression personnel can safely and effectively fight fire.

The BLM has proposed several fuel break projects, one of which is the Tri-State Fuel Break Project. For more information on that project, visit: <http://1.usa.gov/1Wr8EGD>.

-BLM-

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Fiscal Year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands.