During the late 1900s and early 2000s, the Boise District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) witnessed a steady increase in wildfires along the Interstate 84 (I-84) corridor connecting Boise and Mountain Home, Idaho. Fires along this portion were often large and difficult to suppress, eventually becoming one of the largest wildfire hotspots in the country. These fires posed significant and repeated threats to the public, firefighters and rangeland resource values.

Boise District BLM responded by working with cooperators to develop an overarching fuels management strategy along the I-84 corridor. This strategy employed a combination of mowing, fuel break construction, improvements to the adjacent roadway aprons, and establishment of perennial grasses to reduce invasive annuals. Implementation required years of adaptive management and hard work, but the effort is producing results: average fire size for the last seven years has been reduced 95% even while traffic flow increased over 30% (see Appendix A).
**Box 1: 1992 to 2006**

Time period prior to entering into agreement with Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). Agreement provided additional funding for ITD to increase maintenance and fuels reduction adjacent to the interstate.
Box 2: 2007 to 2012

Time period illustrating the first efforts to establish a fuel break along I-84 corridor. Perennial bunch grasses such as crested wheat was planted in the right of way adjacent to the interstate, where ITD also began periodic mowing. This began to reduce the number of ignitions and fire size.
Box 3: 2013 to 2019

Time period representing full implementation of fuel break strategy in cooperation with ITD. Starting in 2013 the treatment strategy shifted from establishment of perennial vegetation along the interstate to vegetation reduction. Treatments included mowing brush and grass in the interstate right of way and re-establishment of the gravel apron along edge of the pavement surface to a minimum of 12 feet.
Example of a typical fire started on the roadside in an untreated area (MM 66 Fire in 2012).

Area along Interstate 84 (MM 95) with enlarged gravel apron to decrease roadside fire potential. Gravel apron improvements have significantly contributed to reducing the number of fire starts.
Conclusion

Observed fire history patterns along I-84 from 1992 to 2019 suggest fuel treatments have significant potential to reduce the frequency and size of wildfires particularly along travel corridors. Recent fire ignitions along I-84 have remained largely confined to the roadside in treated areas or grown in size slowly enough to allow for an effective fire suppression response.

As the Boise District fuels program refines fuel break construction techniques, lessons learned will be applied to similar projects. Several areas across the District with significant values at risk to loss or damage from wildfires are adjacent to or compartmentalized by existing road systems. Existing roads present opportunities to establish effective fuel breaks to protect these resources with minimal additional disturbance to the larger landscape.
Appendix A

Idaho Transportation Department Daily Average Traffic History for the Blacks Creek Exit 1996-2020

Boise District BLM Fire Statistics (1992—2016) for the I-84 Corridor between Mountain Home and Boise, Idaho

*The I-84 Blacks Creek Exit is located within the treatment area between Mountain Home and Boise, Idaho.*
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