



BRIEFING STATEMENT
BLM-MONTANA/DAKOTAS
MONTANA STATE OFFICE • 5001 SOUTHGATE DRIVE • BILLINGS, MONTANA 59101 • WWW.BLM.GOV/MT

March 9, 2012

SUBJECT: MONTANA FUEL REDUCTION PROJECTS

I. SUMMARY:

Fires in public forests and on public rangelands now threaten people, communities, and natural resources in ways never before seen in our nation's history. Today's forests contain fuel loads at previously unmatched levels, while highly flammable invasive species now pervade many rangelands. The current fuel situation is a result of decades of fire exclusion policies and other land management actions that altered fire's historic role in shaping plant communities.

II. BACKGROUND:

The Montana/Dakotas BLM's goal for fiscal year 2012 is to complete 13,800 acres of fuel reduction. These projects decrease risks from severe wildfires on 10,500 acres in wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas and 3,300 acres in non-WUI areas. These projects enhance public safety in the WUI and improve forest and rangeland health.

The challenge to completing our prescribed fire projects is largely weather-related. Periodic spring rains and windy days can minimize the spring burn window, reducing the days available to burn. Where possible, we take advantage of alternative methods for meeting our resource and fire objectives. We utilize mechanical methods where appropriate, but in most cases the best way to maintain fire-adapted ecosystems is to apply fire to the landscape.

The fuels reduction projects are planned on a landscape level, taking into account other resource management objectives and requirements.

Projects are developed through collaboration with our cooperators and accomplished through partnerships with local, tribal, and state and other federal agencies, as well as with interested stakeholders. We use a combination of contracted and government labor and mechanical and prescribed burning methods.

III. PUBLIC INTEREST:

Stewardship contracting, interagency government agreements, and indefinite delivery-indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts have helped in expediting critical fuels treatments in the wildland urban interface.

CONTACT:

Karen Michaud, Fire Management Specialist, (406) 896-2911