

# Snapshots

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## Nevada

### Stewardship Contracts Restore Watershed Health, Harvest Biomass

Harvesting biomass makes dollars and sense in eastern Nevada, where the BLM signed stewardship contracts that will help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and restore and maintain watershed health.

All of the pinyon and juniper tree-thinning projects contracted by the BLM Ely Field Office are underway. Each of the projects is located within a few miles of the Great Basin community of Ely, which is home to 4,000-plus residents.

Projects include the Cold Springs Stewardship, Thirty Mile Stewardship and Ward Mountain Wildland Urban Interface projects. On two of the projects, the contractor is harvesting the wood product for resale as firewood. The third contractor is chipping the harvested biomass, prior to shipping it elsewhere.

About halfway complete, the Cold Springs project has been selectively thinning pinyon and juniper trees on approximately 520 acres of public land near Cold Springs, about 20 miles south of Ely. Begun in December 2006, the project reduces fuel overloading and serves as a demonstration and study site featuring differing tree-thinning densities.

The Thirty Mile project, about eight miles west of Ely, will help protect a major power line in the area and will also improve wildlife habitat. The two-year, 365-acre tree-thinning contract is part of the larger Upper Gleason Creek Sagebrush Restoration Project, which includes the BLM application of prescribed fire to 1,100-plus acres of pinyon and juniper-encroached habitat.

The name Ward Mountain Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Project speaks for itself. The BLM is implementing the WUI project on approximately 1,000 acres in an effort to help protect life and property. The project will also protect the Ward Mountain watershed from suffering the effects of catastrophic wildland fire. The watershed is located south of and adjacent to Ely.

Stewardship contracts account for about 500 acres of the overall Ward Mountain project. The BLM anticipates completing the first half of the project by 2008, with the remaining acres treated by 2010.



*Equipped with a feller shear, the Gehl skid steer tractor fells a pinyon pine tree as part of the Cold Springs Stewardship Project near Cold Springs, about 20 miles south of Ely. About halfway completed, the Cold Springs project reduces fuel overloading and serves as a study site featuring differing tree-thinning densities.*

All three projects meet criteria established by the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, and implement strategies outlined in the National Fire Plan. They are also consistent with the BLM Ely District Managed Natural and Prescribed Fire Plan.

## Utah

### Preparing for the Future

The Cedar City BLM Field Office is managing land and resources adjacent to Utah's fastest growing communities. Southwest Utah is experiencing an explosion of growth that began in 2005. Growth is concentrated in Kane, Iron and Washington counties. Growth rates for Washington County in 2006 were projected to be over 1,000 new residents per month. Expansion at this level causes the expansion of the Wildland Urban Interface to be almost unmanageable. However, the Cedar City fuels program is focused on this expanding interface and was prepared in accordance with National Fire Plan guidelines.

Currently, reduction of hazardous fuel loads is taking place on public lands adjacent to communities, which are designated as Communities at Risk from wildfires. Reducing and treating hazardous fuels has been instrumental in protecting communities from wildfires, restoring healthy forests and rangelands, as well as working to enhance important habitats. Also many of





*The Greenville Bench Vegetation Enhancement Project is also located adjacent to Interstate-15. Hazardous fuels were removed by mechanical means to reduce the threat of a catastrophic wildfire crossing the Interstate and overtaking the communities and critical mule deer habitat near this project.*

these projects are located in “high priority or critical” big game winter range. The Cedar City fuels program has several important projects planned for this year.

The Greenville Bench Vegetation Enhancement project, located in Iron and Beaver counties near the communities of Greenville, Adamsville and Beaver, is in the final stages of completion. The goals of the project are to establish fuel breaks, decrease hazardous fuel loads, reestablish a sagebrush corridor, decrease pinyon and juniper encroachment, and increase diversity of

native and non-native plant species. These goals will be accomplished through the use of manual and mechanical treatments, prescribed fire, and seeding activities.

The South Beaver Project is located near the community of Beaver, Utah. The project is designed to reduce 12,000 acres of hazardous fuel accumulation, while improving wildlife habitat and vegetative composition. This project was recently identified and partially funded as Utah’s number one priority project in the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI).

The Ash Creek Vegetation Enhancement project, located in Washington County near the community of New Harmony, is also near completion. The goals of the project are to establish fuel breaks, decrease hazardous fuel loads, decrease amount of pinyon and juniper encroachment and increase plant diversity of native and non-native species. These goals will be accomplished through the use of manual and mechanical treatments, prescribed fire treatments, and seeding activities. During the 2005 and 2006 fire seasons, the fuel break established by this project was instrumental in creating a place for firefighters to hold their ground and protect homes and private property.

Looking into the future, the Cedar City fuels program has many projects in the planning stages. Some of the projects planned for the future include the Dammeron Valley Fuel Reduction Project, located in Washington



*Prescribed fire on the Ash Creek project removes hazardous fuels close to the expanding New Harmony community.*



ANOTHER QUALITY PROJECT BY:

OMNIA  
DEVELOPMENT LLC



BRAFFITSCREEK

**LOTS FOR SALE**  
MARKETED EXCLUSIVELY BY:



*This new development located in Iron County has 1000 housing lots for sale. The majority of the lots are surrounded by lands managed by the Cedar City BLM Field Office. As of April 16, 2007, 50 percent of the lots have been sold.*

County, as well as the Central Fuel Break Project also located in Washington County. Both of these projects are adjacent to communities at risk and have been designed in consideration of the goals of the National Fire Plan. The Cedar City fuels program continues to work closely with an ever-expanding list of partners as part of an organization known as the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development. This organization provides matching funds, seed, labor and equipment to cooperatively implement these joint projects.

*For more information, contact Paul Briggs at (435) 865-3002.*

### Collaborative Fuels Projects in Utah

Since the inception of the National Fire Plan and in subsequent supporting documents and legislation, collaboration has been a focus for federal hazardous fuels treatments. Collaboration has traditionally focused on working with cooperators in developing priorities for treatments and on Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) projects and community fire-related planning efforts. In Utah, the Bureau of Land Management has added depth to our collaborative relationships by working with the State of Utah, other federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations on hazardous fuels treatments. This collaborative work has facilitated integration of fuel treatment objectives with other land management activities including wildlife, range, forestry, and watershed. This work is in concert with current

interests in cooperative conservation, where through environmental partnerships the federal government can enhance wildlife habitat, protect the environment, and promote conservation practices.

A common example of collaboration in Utah occurs when the BLM conducts fuel treatments in areas where pinyon and juniper have encroached upon historical sage and grasslands. Mechanical treatments utilizing heavy equipment (i.e., Bullhog) and hand thinning, mitigate the fire risk while reducing the encroachment and opening the area back to its historic condition. Following the mechanical treatments, cooperators assist with purchasing and planting native seed, and providing specialized seeding equipment.



*Bullhog treatment.*



*Aerator with Seedbox*

Through our collaboration, the BLM is able to leverage additional funds and support for projects. Cooperators involved with this type of collaborative work include: Utah Partnership for Conservation Development (UPCD), Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR), Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Joint Fire Science Program, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, Mule Deer Foundation, School and Institutional Trust Lands



Administration (SITLA) of the State of Utah, Questar Gas Corp., USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, and grazing allotment associations. Unlike other areas of the country, Utah has had difficulties in developing stewardship contract and biomass utilization projects as a means to pay for some of its fuels treatments. This has primarily been due to a lack of local markets and the limited value of the pinyon-juniper woodlands where many of the fuels projects have been occurring. Utah BLM has furthermore had a policy of not using hazardous fuels funding to purchase seed on non-WUI projects due to limited funds. This collaboration has added additional funding opportunities to BLM projects in Utah and extended limited funds.

Since the start of the National Fire Plan, 48 projects for 88,144 acres of collaborative treatments have occurred on the over 225,000 acres of land treated for hazardous fuel treatments. The contributed funds total \$3,438,100 on these 48 projects and is broken down by field office in the below table. Some examples of successful projects around Utah follows the table.

Field Office	Number of Projects	Acres	Collaborative Funding	BLM Fuels Funding
Vernal	15	17,180	\$472,000	\$148,000
Salt Lake	16	8,142	\$1,805,600	\$1,537,500
Moab	7	7,894	\$539,500	\$2,641,800
Cedar City	8	49,000	\$221,000	N/A
Richfield	2	5,928	\$400,000	\$50,000
Utah Total	46	88,144	<b>\$3,438,100</b>	

**Vernal** - The Bowery Springs Fuel Reduction is a 330 acre mechanical treatment using the Bullhog to reduce fuel loads and to provide increased winter range habitat for deer and elk on the Diamond Mountain/South Slope Unit of the Vernal Field Office. The BLM funded the planning of the project and costs of the fuels treatments with UDWR providing the seed for the project and the Diamond Mountain Landowners Association funding the aerial application of the seed. The project was completed in the fall of 2004. Monitoring has shown that the project was a success, and the area has received extensive use by both deer and elk since the project was implemented.

**Moab** – East Carbon Wildland/Urban Interface Treatment project is just one example of how ongoing collaborative fuel reduction efforts can help achieve goals and objectives in these important projects. An extensive area of BLM lands adjacent to the communities of East Carbon and Kenilworth in Carbon

County were mechanically treated beginning in 2003. The primary goals and objectives were to protect the communities and to provide for firefighter safety in the event of a wildland fire. Additional objectives included habitat improvement and the return of the area to a historical condition class/fire regime. While the mechanical and prescribed fire treatments of over 3,400 acres of pinyon/juniper was funded and implemented through BLM hazardous fuels funds, the UPCD provided for the purchase of seed as well as the resources for seed application following completion of the fuels reduction treatments.



*Pile burning at East Carbon*



*Before (top) and after (bottom) the Bowery Springs treatment.*



**Salt Lake** – Prior to treatment, the vegetation in the Clover Creek project area was dominated by large, dense stands of juniper, with little or no understory. This area threatened the adjacent Wildland Urban Interface with a high potential to carry intense, fast-moving fires toward nearby developments. Within the project area, several fuel breaks of less flammable fuels were created. This is expected to help lessen the potential severity and intensity of wildland fires that could threaten nearby developments, namely the community of Rush Valley north and east of the project area. A collaborative approach was used on this project working with local and state officials in developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The seed and aerial application of the seed was provided by UDWR.



*Clover Creek post-treatment*

**Cedar City** – Implementation of the Greenville Bench Enhancement Project began May 2003 and will continue over the next 5 years. It is a 40,000-acre landscape scale project that is located southwest of Beaver. A combination of manual, mechanical, and prescribed fire treatments will be used to accomplish the objectives of protecting the project area and neighboring private lands from wildfire, decreasing hazardous fuel loads, re-establish sagebrush travel corridors for wildlife, decreasing pinyon-juniper encroachment, increasing



*Bullhog at Greenville.*

plant diversity with native and nonnative shrubs, forbs, and grasses, and increasing plant biological and age class diversity. To date approximately 1,500 acres of pinyon/juniper removal has been accomplished with contract and BLM hand crews. An additional 2,500 acres of pinyon and juniper removal has been accomplished with a BullHog, and 1,800 acres of sagebrush has been treated by chaining and harrowing. Over 4,000 of the treated acres have been seeded with native and non-native species.

**Richfield** – The Seven Mile area had over 5,900 acres of treatable, decadent, Wyoming big sagebrush habitat, which consisted of a monoculture of 80 to 100 year old sagebrush that was lacking an understory of desirable perennial grasses and forbs. A Dixie harrow treatment was applied with double harrowing of the vegetation and broadcast seeding of the harrowed area. A seed mix was developed by the wildlife, range and fuels staff to meet multiple objectives. The harrow treatment improved the vegetation and therefore restored the rangeland as the existing, decadent, sagebrush stand was of limited value to wintering big game, other wildlife species, livestock, and the watershed. An increase in desirable, upland forage and a decrease in overland flow/soil erosion has occurred. The hazardous fuels concerns (tall, decadent, big sagebrush) for the area were also decreased with shorter fuel heights and decreased fuel loads, resulting in



*Dixie Harrow*

decreased flame lengths and fireline intensity.  
*Prepared by J. Bradley Washa.*

