

# *BLM News*

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## BLM Fuels Program Receives National Award

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely Field Office Fuels Program received the Excellence in Ecosystem Management Award for "Achievement in Providing Economic Opportunities for Rural Communities" for its partnership with the Nevada Division of Forestry and the White Pine County School District to provide biomass for the Fuels for Schools Program.

During the past three years the Ely Field Office Fuels program has established an infrastructure to use the biomass and woody material that is available from fuels reduction projects. They have developed six stewardship contracts and treated more than 2,100 acres. The highlight of the program is the Fuels for Schools project that is supplying the fuel for the biomass boiler at the David Norman Elementary School in Ely.

A collaborative effort among the Ely County Commissioners, Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council and Public Land Users Advisory Committee, Fuels for Schools, and other local contractors, a biomass heating system was installed and biomass is now the primary source of heat for the school. The project is saving money for other needed supplies within the rural school district. Last year, burning the biomass is estimated to have saved the school district \$36,000. Students are providing tours of the system and are studying other types of renewable energy sources. Sierra Pacific Power recently installed solar panels as part of a local learning network.

New jobs and new businesses are being developed in the community. A pellet mill is under construction and plans on opening for business in the spring of 2008 and the Nevada Prison System is considering installing a biomass heating system.

In presenting the award, the BLM's National Fire and Aviation Office, through the National Fire Plan, encourages implementing specific efforts which address both objectives for fire and fuels management while providing economic opportunities for rural community development. For more information about the Fuels for Schools Program contact Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist Cody Coombs at 775-289-1854.

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Left to right: BLM National Fire and Aviation Forest Health Program Manager Rick Tholen and Fuels Management Specialist David Mueller, present the Excellence in Ecosystem Management Award to the BLM Ely Field Office Fire Archaeologist Kurt Braun and Fire Management Specialist Bill Panagopoulos.