

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act

Assisting communities while improving the landscape

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act was enacted by Congress in 2003. This Act enables land managers to be more effective in addressing the problems of hazardous fuels accumulations and to better protect communities in the wildland-urban interface.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act grants the BLM authority to offer stewardship contracts. These contracts allow private sector businesses to conduct fuels management projects and use the by-products to offset project costs.

These contracts improve the health and fire resistance of the landscape. They also benefit communities by fueling new cottage industries that use the materials being removed.

For more info, visit www.healthyforests.gov or www.fireplan.gov.



BLM Kenai Forest Stewardship Project

The map below shows the location of the 40-acre parcel of BLM-administered public lands on the Kenai Peninsula selected for fuels reduction treatment by the BLM.



A contractor stacks sawlogs at the Kenai parcel. Removing dead trees before the wood deteriorates allows the wood to be salvaged for other uses.

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Why did the BLM cut trees near K Beach Road?

Kenai Forest Stewardship Project

2005-2006

BLM

Anchorage Field Office



The Kenai Forest Stewardship Project



In 2004 the BLM signed a Memorandum of Understanding with other land managers pledging to work together to reduce wildland fire risk on the Kenai Peninsula.

When a wildland fire hazard assessment of the Kenai Peninsula Borough revealed that a 40-acre parcel of BLM lands required treatment to reduce fuels, it was time to keep our pledge. So the BLM, in conjunction with the Spruce Bark Beetle Task Force and the Alaska Division of Forestry, developed a treatment strategy.

The parcel is located near Kalifornsky Beach Road and Helmsman Avenue, nestled amid private homes on all sides. Approximately 60 percent of the white spruce within this parcel were killed by spruce bark beetles in recent years. The dead spruce and the high density of vigorous grass in the understory had increased the forest fuel accumulation, placing nearby homes at risk should a wildland fire occur on this parcel.



Before thinning

The project

After the parcel was identified for treatment, BLM surveyed the lands to determine the volume of material at the site. We then developed a treatment strategy and prepared a contract, which was awarded to a local contractor.

The contractor removed all dead spruce greater than four inches in diameter and hauled the logs away for use as firewood or sawlogs. Forest Stewardship contracts allow private sector businesses to keep woody by-products to offset project costs.

The work on this parcel was started in the fall of 2005 and completed in early 2006, with a total of 340 cords of dead and down beetle kill spruce removed.

The benefits

The crowded stand of diseased trees at this site in the “before” shot (left) is a wildland fire waiting to happen. The thinned stand in the “after” shot (right) will be healthier and more resilient to insects and disease. In short, trees--like humans--benefit from a little breathing space.

The benefits of this project include:

- Improved forest health and resiliency to natural disturbances such as fire, insect or disease
- Natural regeneration and increased vigor of young trees
- Improved wildlife habitat
- Reduced wildfire risk to adjacent private properties

- Removing wood before it deteriorates allows the wood to be salvaged for other uses
- Reduced public safety concerns
- Improved cooperation with the local community through active participation in the interagency All Lands/All Hands Action Plan
- Increased educational opportunities and public participation in Forest Stewardship projects

The future

Land managers today face the challenge of protecting communities and the environment from the impacts of catastrophic wildfire.

Developing and implementing financially efficient and environmentally effective uses of the woody biomass removed from forests will help reduce hazardous fuels, invigorate local economies, and better protect the nation’s natural resources.



After thinning