



2.0 RATTLESNAKE HILLS – ASPEN HIGHLANDS



2.1 Area Description

Number of Points: 73

Number of Structures: 20

BLM Ownership: 2,905 acres

The area consists of Garfield Peak, Murphy Creek, Fales Creek, and Woodard Basin. There is a rural subdivision that encompasses Garfield Peak in between BLM tracts. Large landowners are the Spano and Forgey Ranches to the east, Hendry Ranch to the west, and Backus Ranch to the north. There are twenty cabins in the area, the majority in the Murphy Creek drainage. The 1986 Goat Mountain Fire burned 4,000 acres including the west face of Garfield Peak and ridge to ridge in the valley to the south. The result has been an increase in grasses, predominately bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoegneria spicata*) and western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*). Some sites have Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*) and rubber rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*) reestablishing. There is a large amount of sound, standing



and/or down limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*). These 1,000-hr fuels are slow to decompose due to the dry conditions; 10- and 100-hr fuels are fewer in number.

White pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*) is widespread throughout the area in limber pine. There are few, if any, drainages in the entire area that do not show signs of this disease, with the majority found in the Rattlesnake Hills area. Several stands have approximately 80% mortality and are in the process of falling down. The result is a heavy fuel load in the drainages—mostly freshly killed limber pine with dead needles still on the branches.

There has been no domestic grazing on the BLM land for the last 20 years due to its fragmented nature; hence there is high grass cover throughout. Some sites show heavy use by elk, deer, and antelope, particularly in the Rattlesnake Hills area. Wyoming big sagebrush near point 97 was heavily grazed and point 126 was over-utilized as well. Prairie falcons (*Falco mexicanus*) were observed on the cliffs northwest of Garfield Peak. Wyoming State Forestry conducted a wildfire mitigation assessment on all the structures. The timber in the area is not of sufficient quality and size to make harvesting economical. The branching character of limber pine makes it less desirable for firewood, though the State has done a firewood sale for \$1 per cord.

2.2 Management Recommendations

1. *Public Outreach and Multiple Agency Approach.* Due to the fragmented nature of the BLM lands and the widespread effects of the blister rust, adequate treatment of the area is not obtainable without partnerships with State and private parties. A detailed treatment strategy needs to be developed and presented to all parties before management recommendations can be implemented. Recommendations from State assessments and defensible space materials need to be presented to homeowners.
2. *Fuel Wood.* Contract a fuel wood sale to decrease the fuel load and prepare the site for a broadcast burn. Concentrate on areas that are accessible by roads and adjoined by meadows.



3. *Pile and Burn.* Pile and burn areas that are in more remote locations or that still retain high fuel loads. Burn piles in the early winter when the threat of escape is decreased.

4. *Aspen Regeneration.* Promote aspen regeneration by burning, tree removal, or mechanical stimulation. Lop and scatter or windrow around the stands to reduce the livestock and big game browsing of aspen shoots. Expand aspen stands to enhance wildlife habitat, aid in water and soil stabilization, and create natural fuel breaks to modify the spread and intensity of crown fire to the ridgeline.

5. *Prescribed Fire.* Broadcast burn, utilizing roads, natural breaks, meadows, and wet lines as containment lines. Prioritize areas based on ease of burning (e.g., location, minimal site prep, ample fire breaks), greatest likelihood of success, possible impacts to structures or recreation areas, etc.

6. *Wildland Fire for Resource Benefit.* Fires that start in Woodard Basin might be candidates for a containment strategy utilizing the rocky outcrops and cliff faces as natural fuel breaks. This action would reduce the heavy fuel load and promote regeneration of native plant and tree species.

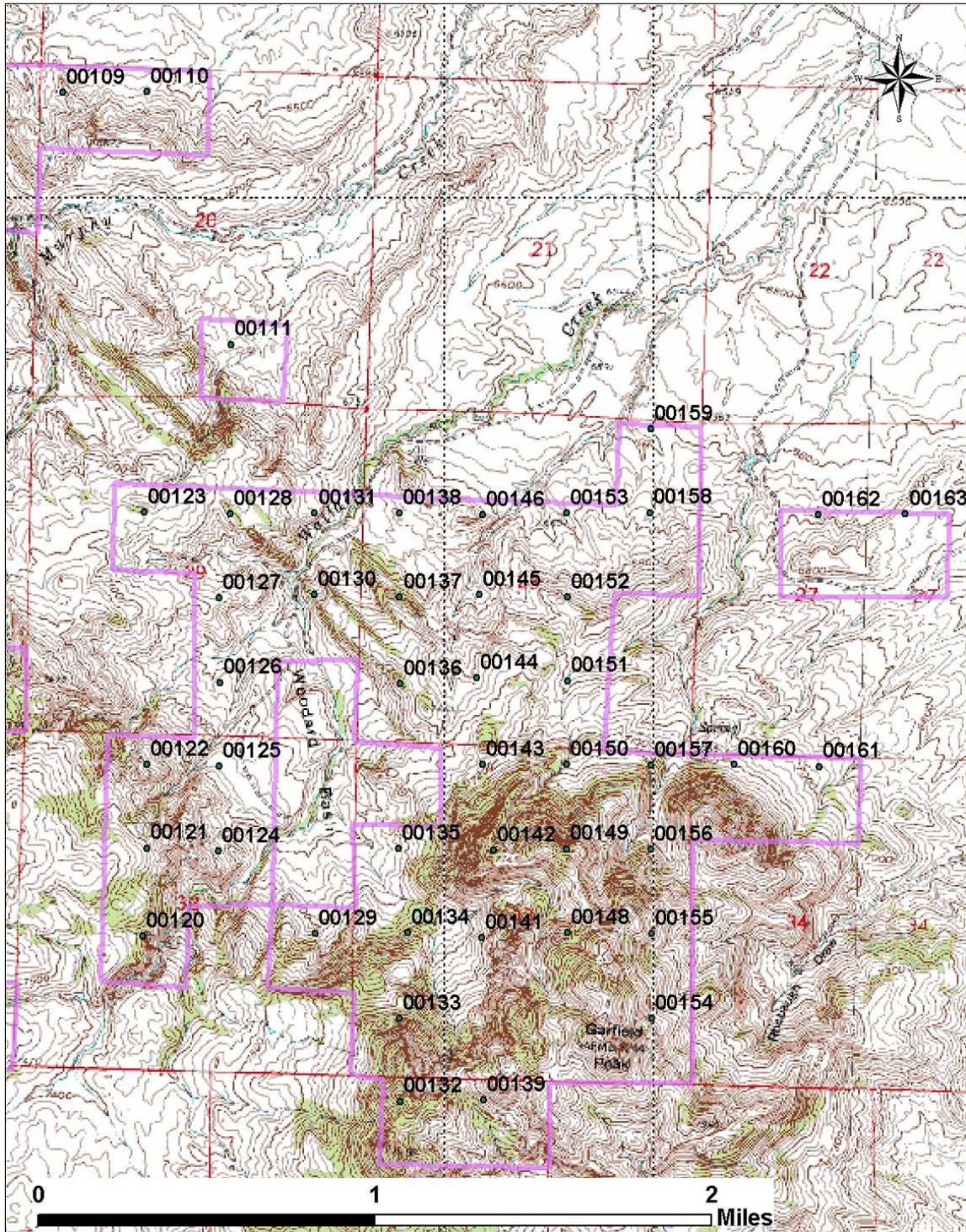
2.3 Rattlesnake Hills – Aspen Highlands Hazard Assessment Rating

<u>Total Rating Score</u>	<u>Hazard Level</u>	<u>Amount (%)</u>
1-14	Low	7
15-21	Moderate	77
21-28	High	16
29-35	Extreme	0



2.4 Rattlesnake Hills – Aspen Highlands Maps

RATTLESNAKE HILLS – ASPEN HIGHLANDS - EAST





RATTLESNAKE HILLS – ASPEN HIGHLANDS - WEST

