



February 13, 2003

Dear Interested Public Land User,

On August 22, 2002, President Bush established the Healthy Forests Initiative directing the Department of Agriculture, Department of Interior, and the Council of Environmental Quality to improve regulatory processes to assure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risks of catastrophic wildfires. The **Pahvant Interagency Fuels Reduction Project**, located in west central Utah, is one of more than ten national pilot projects selected to spearhead the President's Initiative.

Proposed Action

The Fillmore Ranger District of the Fishlake National Forest (NF), and the Fillmore Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are proposing to cut and burn hazardous fuel accumulations along the western slopes of the Pahvant Mountain Range (Front Range). The projects are located east of Interstate 15, between Fillmore and Richfield, and extending from Scipio to Meadow, Utah. This project is coordinated between the Fishlake NF, BLM, Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands, and communities within Millard County. Enclosed are a map and detailed description of the Proposed Action. More detailed maps can be viewed at the Richfield Interagency Fire website at www.fs.fed.us/r4/rifc/ and will also be made available at the following locations:

- Fishlake NF Supervisor's Office, 115 East 900 North, Richfield, UT
- Fillmore Ranger Station, 390 S. Main, Fillmore, UT
- Fillmore BLM Field Office in Fillmore, 35 East 500 North

Background

There is a need for reduced probability of catastrophic wildfire and secondary effects, such as flooding, along the Pahvant Front Range near the wildland/urban interface communities of Scipio, Holden, Fillmore, and Meadow. To this end, the proposed action is to reduce hazardous fuels by reducing fuel height and fuel loads. The areas proposed for treatment have an existing fuel height of more than 8 feet, and a fuel loading of over 15 tons per acre. The desired condition is a fuel height of 0-2 feet, and a fuel loading of less than 5 tons per acre.

Over the last ten years there have been numerous large uncharacteristic wildfires along the Pahvant Front Range. Almost one-half of lightning caused fires on the Fishlake NF occur in this area. It experiences a ten-year average of 31 lightning caused fires per year, and has resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars in fire suppression and burn rehabilitation costs over the last few years.

In 1996 the Adelaide wildfire burned approximately 15,000 acres near Kanosh, which later resulted in flooding to farmlands and damage to hay crops. A bridge, fisheries structures, and fences were also damaged on National Forest System lands. Fire suppression costs exceeded \$4 million dollars, while emergency burn rehabilitation costs exceeded one-quarter of a million dollars.

In August 2000 the Swain's wildfire burned about 7,700 acres along the Pahvant Front Range. The wildfire threatened several structures in the area. Later that summer and in the summer of 2001 heavy

RECEIVED

FEB 21 2003

NATURAL RESOURCES

such confidentiality should be aware that, under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and if denied, the Agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within five days.

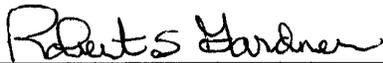
Comments should be sent to Fishlake National Forest, Attn: Diane Freeman, 115 East 900 North, Richfield, UT 84701. Although your comments are always welcome, comments received by March 12, 2003 will be most useful.

Public Meeting

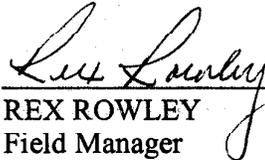
We will be holding a public meeting at 7:00 p.m. on February 20, 2003 at the Millard High School to discuss our proposal and obtain public comments. Meeting location is 35 North 200 West, Fillmore, UT in the cafeteria room.

For more information about this proposal, please contact BLM Project Leader Glen Nebeker, Fillmore Field Office, 35 East 500 North, Fillmore, UT, 84631, phone: (435) 743-3100, or Fishlake NF Project Leader Diane Freeman, 115 East 900 North, Richfield, UT 84701, phone: (435) 896-9233.

Sincerely,



ROBERT S. GARDNER
District Ranger
Fillmore Ranger District
Fishlake National Forest



REX ROWLEY
Field Manager
Fillmore Field Office
Bureau of Land Management

Proposed Action Description

The Fillmore Ranger District of the Fishlake National Forest (NF), and the Fillmore Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are proposing to treat approximately 16,000 acres of hazardous fuel accumulations along the western slopes of the Pahvant Mountain Range (Front Range). Treatments would occur in seven treatment units ranging from approximately 490 to 4,935 acres in size. Vegetation to be treated includes sagebrush-grasslands, pinyon-juniper, gambel oak, and mountain brush.

The proposed action is to reduce hazardous fuels by reducing fuel height and fuel loads. The areas proposed for treatment have an existing fuel height of more than 8 feet, and a fuel loading of over 15 tons per acre. The desired condition is a fuel height of 0-2 feet, and a fuel loading of less than 5 tons per acre. Treatment methods include cutting vegetation by hand, piling or scattering cut vegetation, burning cut vegetation by hand or aerial ignition device, and broadcast burning by hand or aerial ignition device. Treatments involving broadcast burning would occur mainly during spring and fall months; cutting could occur all year long. Treatments would begin in 2003 and are anticipated to be completed by 2008.

The following design features would be implemented as part of the proposed action:

- ❑ Low- to moderate-intensity prescribed fire would be used in order to promote the creation of a patchwork burn pattern of burned and unburned vegetation, and to protect soil resources.
- ❑ Where necessary, hand or "black" lines would be constructed along the perimeters of treatment units in order to contain prescribed fire within the treatment units. Hand lines and black lines are created by removing vegetation along a line by hand tools or hand burning, respectively. These lines would be constructed prior to the implementation of treatments that involve the use of prescribed burning.
- ❑ No fire lines would be constructed through known significant heritage sites. A minimum 100-foot buffer of untreated vegetation would be left around significant heritage sites. Vegetation may be cleared along the perimeter of the 100-foot buffer to exclude fire or reduce fire intensity. Prior to ignition, an archeologist would assist fire personnel to identify any other appropriate protection measures.
- ❑ Grazing pastures within treatment units would be rested from livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons following a prescribed burn in that unit. Pastures would be rested for an additional season(s), where necessary to allow grasses to rejuvenate.
- ❑ Any tree cavities that are observed during cutting of pinyon or junipers will be retained for cavity nesting bird species.
- ❑ Where necessary, treated areas may be seeded to promote recovery of ground cover to protect soil resources. Seed mixes may be comprised of grass, forbs, and shrubs. Only noxious weed free seed mixes would be used.
- ❑ The Forest Service and BLM would prepare a prescribed fire burn plan for each treatment unit prior to prescribe burning. The prescribed burn plan would describe methods and conditions under which prescribed burning would occur in order to accomplish project objectives.

Table 1. Treatment Unit Name, Acreage, Vegetation Type and Proposed Treatment Method.

Unit Name	Forest Service Acreage	BLM Acreage	Existing Vegetation Types	Primary Treatment Methods
Grabalt	914	1,438	pinyon-juniper, mountain big sagebrush, gambel oak, mountain brush	Cutting and burning by hand
Wild Goose	1,581	N/A	pinyon-juniper, gambel oak, mountain brush	Prescribe burning by hand or aerial ignition device
Holden Springs	N/A	2,638	pinyon-juniper, sagebrush, gambel oak, grassland	Cutting and burning by hand
Pioneer	1,185	457	pinyon-juniper, gambel oak, mountain brush	Cutting by hand, prescribe burning by hand or aerial ignition device
Frampton Heights	N/A	490	pinyon-juniper	Cutting and pile burning by hand
Horse Hollow	2,022	N/A	pinyon-juniper, gambel oak, mountain brush	Prescribe burning by hand or aerial ignition device
Meadow	2,195	2,737	pinyon-juniper, gambel oak, mountain brush	Cutting by hand, prescribe burning by hand or aerial ignition device

Pahvant Interagency Fuels Reduction Project

