



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cedar Breaks National  
Monument

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## Cedar Breaks National Monument Fire Management



### Contract Fuel Reduction Project

An innovative and unique contract fuel reduction treatment program that began in Cedar Breaks National Monument in the fall of 2002 is nearing completion. The program's goal was to utilize local contract crews to reduce the amount of standing dead and downed trees that cover much of the developed area of the monument and thus reduce the risks from wildfire to adjacent properties and structures. This will provide multiple benefits to both Cedar Breaks and the local area.

Following the severe wildfire year of 2000 when over seven million acres burned and hundreds of structures were lost, the federal government adopted what has become known as the National Fire Plan. This plan, among other things, stresses the need for fire

management agencies to reduce the amount of fuels that have built up over the years on state and federal lands that are next to structures, communities, and private development. This area is known as the wildland-urban interface and has been targeted as a priority by the federal government for reducing the risks from wildfires.

A major reason for concern about wildland fire in Cedar Breaks is an epidemic outbreak of native spruce bark beetles that began around 1990 and soon left much of the monument and the surrounding Dixie National Forest covered with dead and dying spruce trees. Approximately 80-90 percent of the spruce trees in the monument's treatment area are affected by this epidemic. As a result,

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fuel loads from standing dead and downed timber have increased. While officials at Cedar Breaks realize that spruce beetle mortality on trees is part of the natural progression of these high-elevation forests, they also understand the risks that these dead trees now pose to the safety of park structures and visitors and adjacent private homes in the event of a wildfire.

Also, in June of 2002, the 7000+-acre Big Wash Fire, just to the south of Cedar Breaks, prompted some emergency fuel reduction measures around the historic visitor center and other structures to help protect them if the fire spread that far. Luckily, the fire stayed to the south of the monument, but it was a “wake-up call” to the dangers that wildfire poses to the area from the accumulation of fuels.

The treatment reduced woody fuels, including dead standing and downed timber, in a corridor up to 300 feet wide (150 feet on each side of the road) along the Cedar Breaks Scenic Byway, and in areas up to 100 feet around the visitor center and other structures (several listed on the National Register of Historic Places). Very few live trees were removed. Under the project, approximately 100 acres of the park’s 6155 acres were treated. The project also created buffer zones, with low fuels availability between the monument wildlands and development inside and outside of the monument. Within the treated areas, there will be a reduced probability that



Contract feller/buncher removing hazard trees in winter.



Log pile with associated slash.



Contract crew piling slash into burn piles.

a wildfire would burn uncontrolled, thus protecting capital improvements while at the same time providing firefighters a higher degree of safety.

This treatment project was divided into three phases with phase one being the removal of the trees. This was contracted out to Mountain Valley Timber of Parowan, Utah with work beginning in the fall of 2002. The contractor cut the trees using a feller-buncher, a machine that grasps the tree with two huge claws while a saw blade cuts the tree. The cut trees were then removed by skidding them out to the roadside over snow and frozen ground for removal by truck as soon as road conditions allowed. The trees were then taken to a local mill for processing.

Phase two utilized another local contract crew (2-H Enterprises form Hilldale, UT) to remove and pile the leftover debris from the tree removal phase. This phase of the project is expected to be completed in the fall of 2003. Also included in this phase was the use of a contracted chipper (tub grinder) to reduce some of the larger slash into chips for removal. Phase three will have National Park Service (NPS) crews burning the slash piles in the fall and early winter of 2003, when conditions are favorable. All treatments are being done in such a way as to minimize the impacts to the monument's resources, visitors and the surrounding landowners.

The immediate impact that a returning visitor to Cedar Breaks will notice in the summer of 2003 will be the removal of dead trees along



Contract tub grinder making wood chips from large slash.



Slash piles along road corridor; to be burned in the winter months.

the Cedar Breaks Scenic Byway. The long-term benefit of this treatment will be to lessen the chances of visitors being subjected to the adverse effects of a wildfire that could potentially close the monument or char the landscape. Visitors may also notice the fuels reduction treatments near many of the monument's structures.

As required by federal law, an Environmental Assessment was completed and released in September 2001. This was followed by a 30-day public comment period. A Finding of No

Significant Impact (meaning that this project would cause no significant impacts and that an Environmental Impact Statement was not required) was issued by the NPS in February 2002.

While the removal of and sale of resources from NPS lands is not a common practice, this is a case where doing so provides multiple benefits to both Cedar Breaks and

the local area. The removal of the dead trees will greatly reduce the fuel load in the monument and thus lessen the risk of wildfire threatening park structures and visitor safety, while the utilization of the resources and the use of local contractors to carry out the project is a boost to the local economy. This project is a good example of how a federal agency can work together with the local area for the benefit of both.



Visitor center parking lot area before treatment.



Visitor center parking lot area after treatment.



Monument entrance area before treatment.

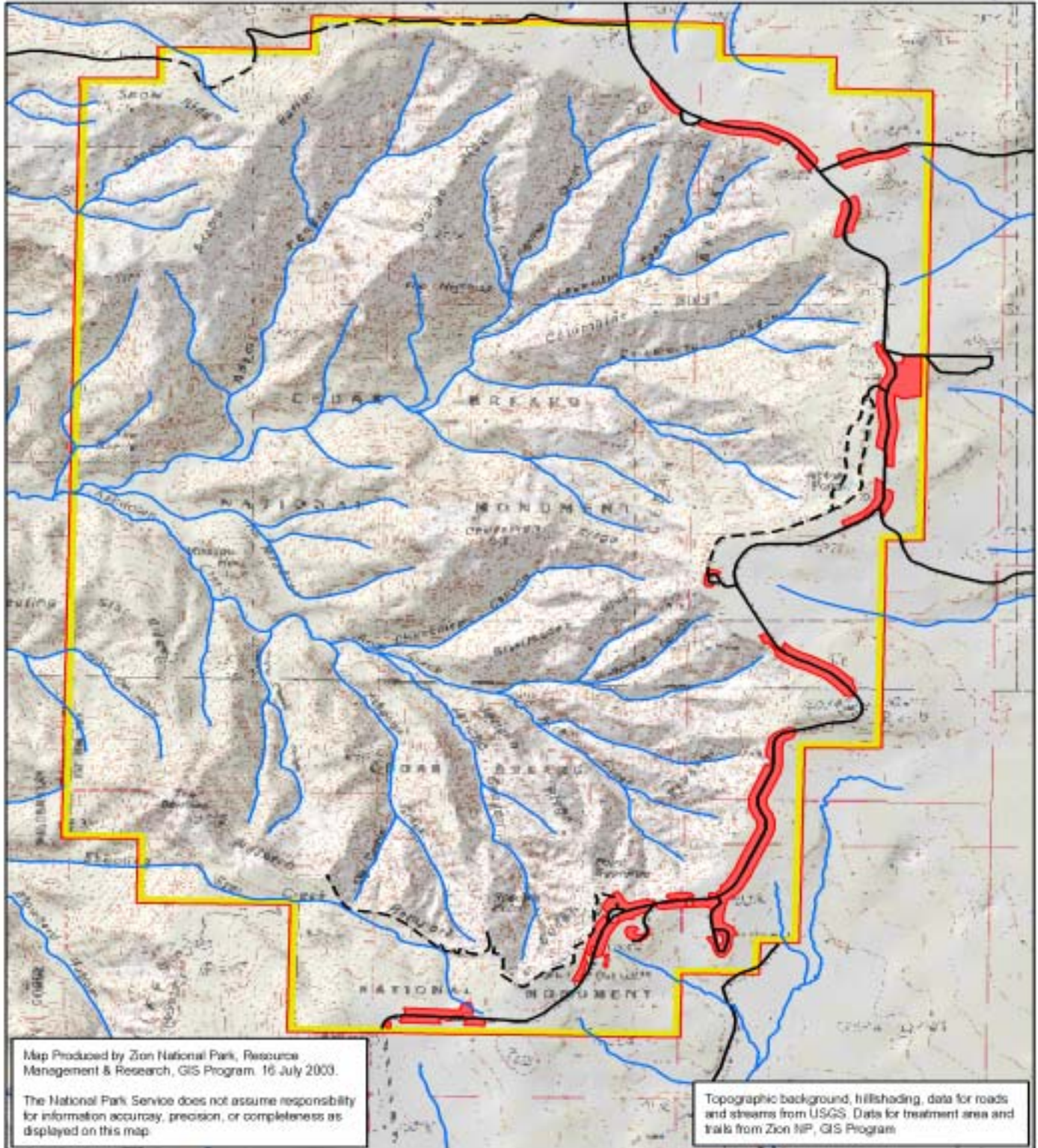


Monument entrance area after treatment.

# CEDAR BREAKS NATIONAL MONUMENT

## Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project

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U. S. Department of the Interior



Treated Areas Streams Roads Trails Cedar Breaks NM Boundary

1 Mile

1 KM

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