



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Florissant Fossil Beds
National Monument

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Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument Fire Management



Parks' Fuel Treatments Help Contain Fossil Beds Wildfire

In the world of fire management, it's often hard to measure the success of many of the mitigation projects that are completed, unless they are actually tested by wildfire. That was the case recently at Colorado's Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument when a human caused wildfire was slowed and contained once it hit an area treated by numerous fuel reduction projects.

On March 3, 2009, a wildfire was reported in the southeast corner of the Monument. This wind driven wildfire was pushing toward the park boundary and the private property and structures just outside the Monument. A quick response and cooperative effort from Teller County Emergency Management, National Park Service firefighters, the U.S. Forest Service at Lake George, and other local agencies was able to contain the Fossil Beds Fire to 42 acres by the end of the next day. Investigation concluded that the fire had been caused by exhaust emissions from a passing vehicle.

A major factor in the firefighters' successful efforts to contain the fire was the fuel reduction and thinning activities that had taken place along much of the Monument's boundary over the past several years. This reduction in fuels caused the fire's activity level to be reduced and provided firefighters an opportunity to contain the fire quickly in spite of dry, windy conditions. The probability of the fire spreading to private property and structures adjacent to the park would have been far greater had the mitigation measures not taken place.

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Community support for the monument's fuel reduction program has been, and will remain, key to helping lower the risk of a catastrophic fire event. The successful containment of the vast majority of the Fossil Bed Fire to within the monument (less than 1/2 acre burned on private land) is a good example of how fire mitigation efforts can slow or stop the movement of a fire by eliminating the fuels the fire needs.

Due to fuel reduction efforts over the past few years, the Florissant Fossil Bed's Fire Management Program has helped to reduce the risk from wildfire to local landowners and residents. Continued fuel reduction efforts in the future will only help to reduce the risk even more. Local residents are not only safer in the event of a wildfire, they will also get to witness the burned area's recovery in the spring, with a healthy, intact forest and a flush of new grasses for the elk herd that roams the Monument.



Investigating possible cause of Fossil Beds Fire



Firefighters containing the Fossil Beds Fire