



January 2004

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management

Teton Interagency Fire Management Lends Support to Snowshoe Walks



Just as the Jackson Mountain Resort Nordic Center was gearing up for their ski season in mid- December, the Bridger- Teton National Forest was busy preparing a pool of naturalist volunteers for another season of interpretive snowshoe walks. Now in its third season, the free snowshoe tours originate from the Nordic Center and take participants into the forest surrounding the resort. The activity offers another alternative for visitors and locals alike to enhance their experiences in the valley.

Naturalists from a variety of agencies participate in leading the hikes, offered three days a week and geared toward all ability levels. The guides bring a range of experience with backgrounds in conservation, wildlife, recreation, fire, and education. A pre- season orientation day brings interagency talents together to hike the trail and share possible topics of discussion at various vantage points. The snowshoe trail winds through wooded areas, aspen stands, and sloping hillsides, circling back through an open meadow before returning to the base of the mountain. The diverse landscape lends itself to lessons on a variety of ecology and natural history topics. With the experience and training of the volunteers, the programs can be tailored to meet the interests and expectations of the groups.

A portion of the trail passes through a previously burned area, presenting an opportunity for guides to lead discussions on fire ecology along with the adaptations of plants and animals in this fire- dependent ecosystem. Two Teton Interagency Fire personnel attended the training this year, aiding in incorporating fire education into the range of topics. Examples of successional stages, serotinous cones, and fire- scarred trees dot the landscape along the scenic route.



This program has proven to be a successful cooperative venture. Tours will continued to be offered through March.



February 2004

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Teton Interagency Fire Management

Interagency Fire Effects Meeting Shares Monitoring Information

The third annual Interagency Fire Effects Meeting was held in Jackson this month, bringing together resource professionals to review data and hold discussions on research and fire effects projects in the area. Participants included representatives from:

- Bridger- Teton National Forest
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Grand Teton National Park
- Salmon- Challis National Forest
- Teton Science School
- US Fish & Wildlife Service - National Elk Refuge
- Wyoming Game & Fish Department
- Yellowstone National Park



The diverse audience brought a range of skills and expertise to the meeting. In addition to fire effects technicians, the workshop was attended by fire ecologists, fuels specialists, education specialists, planners, fire managers, GIS specialists, wildlife biologists, vegetation specialists, and silviculturists.

The meeting allowed participants to share information and ask questions about the research and implementation of projects throughout the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Though many of the projects on the agenda had been preceded by interagency communication during the planning phase, the daylong workshop provided a format for professionals to distribute findings to a broader scope of cooperators.



The Teton Interagency Fire Effects Monitoring program follows guidelines established by a larger, standardized program begun by the National Park Service in the late 1980s. Fire effects crews monitor prescribed fire and hazard fuel treatment areas to document basic information, identify trends, and ensure that fire and resource management objectives are met. Crews also map burn severity on natural ignitions, collecting data to better understand the effects of natural processes and fire regimes.

The workshop demonstrated how research and management can parallel one another with a constant, ongoing improvement of knowledge base. The afternoon session ended with a key discussion of how the data will be used for direct adaptive management applications in the various programs through continued interagency coordination, management involvement, information sharing, and feedback.





March 2004

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National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

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Teton Interagency Fire Management

Teton Interagency Fire Participates in Incident Information Officer Training



The Teton Interagency Fire Management Program was represented in the second annual Arizona Wildfire Academy this month, helping to round out a cadre of instructors for the academy's first Information Officer's training. The course, entitled *S- 203: Introduction to Incident Information*, was one of 32 classes offered this year at the Prescott, Arizona location.

Many of the courses included both classroom work and field experience, and the Incident Information Officer's training was no exception. Each student was required to record and critique a radio and television interview as well as manage a complex information center scenario. The academy, operated in a fire camp format, included an incident information plan and center. The students had opportunities to visit and work in the center outside of class hours and to contribute to the academy's daily news bulletin and DVD recording.

Multi- agency teamwork was a key to the success of the course. Representing the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service, the six- member team of instructors exemplified the interagency component so integral to the academy. "It is critical that we train together because we will inevitably work together," said Don Howard, Chief of the Summit Fire Department and the Incident Commander for this year's academy. With the addition of 17 Fire Education, Prevention, and Information Specialists since 2001, the National Park Service has significantly increased its participation in Incident Information Officer's training. They teamed with the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to host a "*Train the Trainers for S- 203*" workshop at the National Interagency Fire Center in 2002. Since then, many participants have coordinated the course, emphasizing that working together is critical to the role of Information Officers and National Fire Plan goals.

Thirty- five students from six agencies and nine states participated in the class and will be eligible for assignments as Information Officer Type III trainees.





April 2004

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management

Forestry Event Focuses on Fire Mitigation Efforts



Interagency specialists shared their knowledge about fire and insect management with the public this month, participating in a community workshop held at the Crescent H Ranch south of Wilson, Wyoming. The two-day event consisted of forest tours, presentations, and an open forum session.

In 2000, a local interagency wildland-urban interface work group was developed to identify communities at risk to wildland fire. The task group consisted of representatives from the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, State Forestry, Bureau of Land Management, and the Jackson/Teton County Fire Department. Together, the team then prioritized the identified communities and developed partnerships to secure funding for mitigation efforts. The Crescent H Ranch was among the areas identified in the study.

The event was organized by arborist Travis Eva and served as an informal way to bring together professionals and homeowners to discuss forest health. The setting was a prime location to view the effects of both mountain pine beetle infestation and the 2001 Green Knoll Fire. Participants toured areas that have undergone different types of forest treatments, including work on Crescent H properties and the neighboring Bridger-Teton National Forest. While describing the Butler Creek project, a 21-acre fuels project implemented by the U.S. Forest Service in 2003, forest officials emphasized the need for collaboration on adjoining private and public lands to achieve common goals.

Presentations and a panel discussion followed the tours. The panel included Teton County Fire Marshal Rusty Palmer and Wyoming Game & Fish Biologists Steve Kilpatrick and Jill Miller. Regional experts included Jim Webster, Wyoming National Fire Plan Coordinator, and David Leatherman, a Colorado State Forest Service entomologist.

Approximately 25 people attended the workshop.





April 2004

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National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management

Teton County Parks & Recreation Students Participate in Fire Programs



Spring break in Teton County means more than just a two-week hiatus from school. It triggers the kick-off for the Teton County Parks & Recreation's *Kid's Club Spring Break Program*. For ten days, the program offers a variety of both indoor and outdoor activities for children participating in the sessions. "The goal of the program," explained Recreation Supervisor Mike Estes, "is to combine fun activities and field outings with opportunities to learn about the community."

This year's line-up included a trip to Grand Teton National Park's fire cache to learn about the training that is part of wildland fire season preparation. The participants spent much of the morning learning about safe fire management field practices and protective clothing. They had a chance to try on gear, deploy fire shelters, and lift a 45-pound pack used in physical fitness testing. The students then rode bicycles up the inner park road, a section of roadway closed to motorized vehicles through May 1. Along the route, they viewed new growth from the 1985 Beaver Creek Fire and listened to a roadside geology lesson led by a park naturalist. Later in the week, the same group had an opportunity to visit the Hawkins & Powers helibase, sit in a helicopter, see the equipment used for bucket drops, and talk about prescribed fire.

The Parks & Recreation Department also schedules monthly afternoon programs that coincide with Teton County School District early release days. Last month, the Jackson/Teton County Fire Department hosted a field trip to their Adams Canyon facility. There, the students ran through a series of structural fire exercises and discussed fire prevention.

"These are the kinds of programs we love to offer," summarized Estes. In all, eighty-one students took part in the two Parks & Recreation programs.





May 2004

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National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management School Programs Feature Fire Management Careers



The Jackson Hole High School, Jackson Chamber of Commerce, and Jackson Workforce Center co-sponsored a job fair this month, giving local students an opportunity to learn about area job opportunities. Organized by the School- to- Careers program, the job fair was developed to feature summer employment positions and showcase local careers. Approximately 250 students attended the afternoon event, held in the High School Commons area.

Teton Interagency Fire Management was one of thirteen participants in the job fair, providing a display with photographs and information on a variety of positions within the fire organization. Staff members spoke with students and distributed brochures detailing the application process. They teamed with Grand Teton National Park's Human Resources Officer who was on hand to answer questions about federal employment and to recruit for other seasonal positions throughout the park. In response to the National Fire Plan goal of increasing wildland preparedness and developing additional trained fire staff, Teton Interagency Fire managers have stepped up recruiting efforts over the last two years, using college mailings, web postings, and local school programs to promote federal fire positions. Grand Teton National Park also served as a pilot site with other Department of the Interior bureaus to jointly recruit seasonal firefighters for Wyoming units in 2002/2003 and within the Rocky Mountain Geographic Area Coordination Center in 2003/2004.

The Teton County School District's School- to- Careers program also organized the third annual Careers- on- Wheels Day this month. With trucks of all sizes lining the parking lot, elementary and middle school students toured the area and listened to drivers talk about their jobs and the capabilities of their vehicles. Teton Interagency's Engine 3, a Type III wildland fire engine, was one of the featured trucks. Staffed by four National Park Service and three Forest Service crew members, the engine serves as an example of the coordination and partnership that exists between the two federal land management agencies. Approximately 600 people attended the popular school event.





June 2004

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management

Fire Information Class Targets Local Community



Training offered through the Teton Interagency Fire Education program this past June shared fire information with local community members and helped develop a pool of resources to utilize on future fire management activities. Comprised of primarily teachers, retired individuals, and current or past federal employees, the class of 17 participants expressed an interest in assisting with fire information on a short-term, interim basis if needed. The class was specifically designed for the general public with limited knowledge of fire management policies or the Incident Command System used in managing wildland fire incidents.

Students began by discussing what happens when a fire is first reported, brainstorming definitions and operations associated with both suppression fires and wildland fire use incidents. The instructors detailed management considerations such as the cause of the fire, location, time of season, and severity. The students used recent local incidents to review past management decisions. Discussions then led to tactics and available resources that may be utilized to manage a fire. Information on complexity levels, national preparedness levels, and the Incident Command System rounded out the morning session and gave participants a general overview of the wildland fire organization.

The afternoon session focused on the information function of a wildland fire. Students were shown key sources for gathering information including ICS- 209 forms, local and national web pages, and news releases. Basic fire information and community outreach duties such as distributing updates, fielding questions, and conducting roving operations were also covered. These are the areas where additional assistance is frequently needed and local personnel with knowledge of the area can be very beneficial. Safety and documentation practices were also emphasized.

Evaluations for the first-time course were very positive:

Great information. It really helped to pull bits and pieces together for me.

All the information seemed very useful - nothing was greater than the whole message.

Good introduction for the uninitiated.

Instructors disseminated a great mass of information in a very comprehensible, comfortable manner.

While not part of the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS), the class served to peak interest and increase knowledge of fire management activities. It will also allow local residents an opportunity to share their knowledge and become involved in the Teton Interagency Fire Management program.



June 2004

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National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management

Interagency Fire Personnel Participate in All Fire Days Training



The sixth annual interagency All Fire Days training was held on Friday, June 18th in Grand Teton National Park's Beaver Creek employee housing area. The day- long event brought agency wildland fire cooperators together for a task- oriented field exercise day. The objectives of the training were to test skills, reinforce relationships, strengthen communications, and instill safety and efficiency in wildland firefighting.

After introductions, firefighters were welcomed and given expectations for this fire season by both the Bridger-Teton National Forest Supervisor and Grand Teton National Park's Superintendent. Crews then spent the day rotating through work stations. To accommodate the 56 students who were completing their S- 130- 190 Basic Wildland Firefighting week- long course, a series of basic firefighting skills were taught at various locations. Stations included line construction, pumps and engines, shelter deployment, preparedness, communications, and administration. Sand table exercises were held for experienced personnel, including scenarios, pocket guide reviews, and After Action Reviews.

Several weeks later, the All Fire Days training continued for federal and county resources in the Granite Creek area of the Bridger- Teton National Forest. Here, the training focused on initial attack modules and the wildland- urban interface. Crews implemented a running attack and structural protection assessment, participated in helicopter manifest and passenger briefings, reviewed communications and fire conditions, and completed a handcrew exercise.

Grand Teton National Park and the Bridger- Teton National Forest, with local town and county fire departments and state resource agencies, have created a model program that demonstrates the benefits of extensive partnering. The All Fire Days training is an important component in continuing to strengthen the interagency cooperation and communications to maintain a cohesive, integrated program.





July 2004

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U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management Federal Officials Dedicate New Interagency Helibase



The Bridger- Teton National Forest and Grand Teton National Park celebrated completion of a new interagency helibase in a ceremony held on July 8th. Park Superintendent Mary Gibson Scott and Forest Supervisor Kniffy Hamilton jointly cut the ribbon on the new 3,200 square- foot building, located at the Jackson Hole Airport.

Establishment of a permanent base for interagency helicopter operations has been a long- term goal for both Park and Forest administrators after a 1995 helibase review noted safety concerns for approaches and departures. At that time, helicopter operations were based from a helipad located behind Bridger- Teton offices in downtown Jackson, Wyoming. An interdisciplinary team comprised of federal and county officials and conservation groups identified potential locations for a new base. A subsequent environmental analysis determined the Jackson Airport was the best site for operations, serving firefighters and emergency response teams.

Beginning in 1999, space for a temporary helicopter base was leased from the airport, allowing interagency crews to continue operations while a permanent base facility was under construction. Construction on the new base began in September, 2003 and was finished last month. The project cost approximately \$950,000.



The new base provides two 30-foot-by-30-foot helicopter landing pads and one 40-foot-by-40-foot pad. Additionally, there is spill containment parking for fuel trucks and a mobile communications trailer. The building houses offices, a crew ready room, a storage area stocked with gear and equipment for response crews, a training/meeting room, and a helitack operations center. The new facility also includes a physical fitness room for firefighters to maintain their required fitness standards.

Through an established interagency partnership, the two federal agencies were able to build an efficient and safe base and eliminate duplication of facilities. "This would not have been possible without this partnership between Grand Teton and the Forest Service," said Forest Supervisor Kniffy Hamilton. "Interagency partnerships like this are really unique, and that uniqueness provides an avenue for pooled resources, efficiency, and better service to the public."

In 2003, the helitack crew responded to 81 wildland fires and kept all but four to less than one acre. The two contract helicopters also provide a shared resource that allows park rangers to use the helicopter for short-haul rescue operations within the Park and Forest. The base will directly serve 2.5 million acres of federal land and is available to assist in rescue and fire operations on 18 million acres across the Greater Yellowstone area.



August 2004

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management Junior Firefighter Program Wraps Up For the Season



The Junior Firefighter program offered in Grand Teton National Park concluded this month, ending a six-week season that began in early July. The program gave children an opportunity to learn about fire and its relationship with wildlife habitats and plant adaptations. The 1- 1/2 hour program was offered three times weekly to students ages 8- 12.

Through a National Park Service Fire & Aviation Management Community Assistance Grant, the Teton Interagency Fire Education Office was able to hire a contractor to coordinate and present the sessions. Lessons focused on the fire triangle and basic fire behavior and fire ecology concepts. Students differentiated between fuels that would burn rapidly and those that would burn more slowly, and they role- played different kinds of fire behavior. Other topics included fire history, park fire management zones, and the importance of good communication and safety in wildland fire operations. All sessions concluded with a fire prevention and campfire safety message. Participants earned a cloth patch to commemorate their experience.

In all, 17 programs were given in the park this summer with 179 students attending. The program's success was due in part to interdivisional coordination, teaming the Fire Education Office with the park's Division of Interpretation to develop a curriculum complimenting the Young Naturalist program already offered in the park. The interpretive staff played a critical role in promoting the program and registering students at the Visitor Centers. Park Chief of Interpretation Rich Fedorchak commented, "The Junior Firefighter program was widely successful. Fire education is an extremely important message to convey to visitors. This program not only showed children what fire managers do in the field, it gave them a sense of fire's role in the ecosystem."

Additionally, the Junior Firefighter program was offered at several day camps throughout the community. The Fire Education Office partnered with the Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Teton County Parks & Recreation Department, Bridger- Teton National Forest Greys River Ranger District, and the Moose Corner Day Care to offer the curriculum to local students participating in summer programs. This allowed the Junior Firefighter curriculum to reach an additional 54 children.

To learn more about Fire Education programs and materials, visit the National Park Service Fire & Aviation Management Education link at www.nps.gov/fire/educational/education.html, or click on the Fire Education link at www.tetonfires.com.





September 2004

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National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management

Fire Management Highlighted at State Outdoor Expo



Through a cooperative effort between the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Bridger- Teton National Forest, and Grand Teton National Park, participants in this month's Wyoming Hunting and Fishing Heritage Expo had an opportunity to learn about fire's role in the ecosystem. A series of interagency presentations highlighted fire science and fire management practices and featured hands- on activities and demonstrations.

In 1998, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department initiated the first Wyoming Hunting and Fishing Expo which has since become an annual event. The Expo builds community through understanding and recognition of mutual goals among the general public, government agencies, special interest groups, educational entities, businesses and landowners. The event, held in Casper, has averaged over 15,000 people each year.

The Expo provides learning and participation opportunities that communicate the relevance of wildlife and habitat management and perpetuates Wyoming's hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching heritage. This year, six Teton Interagency fire personnel assisted the Wyoming Game and Fish Department with two stations focusing on fire management and fire prevention. At an outdoor exhibit area, fire education specialists set up two lessons from the FireWorks curriculum, developed by the Rocky Mountain Research Station. The first hands- on activity allowed participants to make model forests and compare fire behavior on different slopes and with different arrangements of trees. A second activity focused on studying tree growth rings and fire scars to learn about fire history. Demonstrations on aerial ignitions were also held throughout the weekend. Inside the Casper Event Center, fire personnel handed out literature and materials pertaining to fire prevention.

Though the Expo is a free educational event for all ages and skill levels, Friday's sessions were tailored to school- age children with approximately 6,000 students from around the state in attendance.





October 2004

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National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management

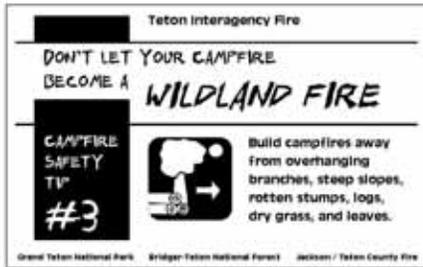
Community Assistance Grant Funds Fire Prevention Advertising



Fire prevention messages found their way into new locations in the Jackson Hole area this summer, reminding local residents and visitors to use caution with campfires. A National Park Service Fire & Aviation Management Community Assistance Grant allowed the Teton Interagency fire prevention program to reach additional communities and utilize a new method of advertising.



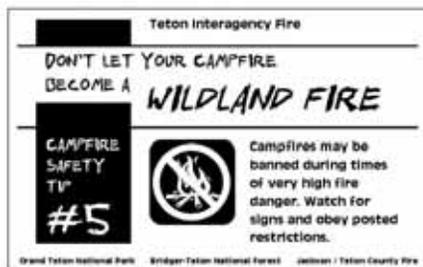
A series of campfire safety ads was developed and published in five newspapers, running from the first week of July through the end of August. A total of five advertisements comprised the series. "We've run fire prevention ads in the past, but this year we focused specifically on campfire safety," noted Fire Education Specialist Lori Iverson, who secured the funding. "We felt it was important to target the source of many of the human- caused fires in the area." Last summer, fire prevention ads were published in the *Jackson Hole News & Guide* daily and weekly newspapers only, but this year's grant allowed the addition of the *Star Valley Independent*, *Kemmerer Gazette*, and *Pinedale Roundup*. The five periodicals have a combined circulation of over 30,000 and serve many communities near the Bridger- Teton National Forest and Grand Teton National Park.



Fire prevention specialists also collaborated on three large- screen movie advertisements, running the slides before every film showing at ten theaters in Jackson, Pinedale, and Kemmerer. Two of the slides focused on reducing human- caused fires while the third encouraged defensible space. "It's a fire prevention campaign we've always wanted to try," said Nan Stinson, Fire Prevention Technician for the Bridger- Teton National Forest. "Before a movie starts, you've got a pretty captive audience." Stinson worked with the locally based Hatch Marketing firm to customize the ads, which featured the logos of Grand Teton National Park, Bridger- Teton National Forest, and Teton County Fire Department. The ads ran in theaters for 3 ½ months beginning in early July and reached approximately 89,000 viewers. To promote the advertising to internal staff, three free movie passes were awarded to Grand Teton National Park personnel who entered a drawing after reading an article in an in- park newsletter that described the project.



Area interagency fire prevention personnel meet several times each spring to coordinate staffing at community events, schedule shared resources, and develop new ideas for disseminating fire prevention messages. "We share ideas within our local area and from within the region," explained Fire Prevention Officer Dean Burnham, "because we all have the same message and desired outcomes."





October 2004

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National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management Streamlined EA Fuels Project Work Completed



Teton Interagency fire management crews completed work this month on a fuels reduction pilot project, totaling 89 acres, in Grand Teton National Park. The fuels reduction project, selected to test streamlined Environmental Assessments under the NEPA process, was intended to determine the effectiveness of expediting procedures to accomplish fuels treatment work, while also adhering to existing National Park Service policies.

The President's Healthy Forest Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities (August 22, 2002) called for administrative improvements that ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in projects that reduce threats to community safety and better protect wildlife and ecosystems. To this end, the President directed that guidance be developed to ensure consistent procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for fuels reduction and fire- adapted ecosystem restoration projects, including development of a model streamlined Environmental Assessment (EA) for such projects. An interdisciplinary planning team implemented guidance issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to complete an EA for selected fuels reduction work. CEQ guidance provided a framework for administratively improving the EA process.

In Grand Teton National Park, the pilot project included seven small fuels management sites between Moran and Moose, Wyoming:

- Fabian Ranch - 20 acres
- Oxbow Housing (Jackson Lake Ranger Station) - 7 acres
- McCollister - 10 acres
- Blacktail North - 6 acres
- Moran - 10 acres
- Bar BC Ranch - 30 acres
- Jackson Lake Dam - 6 acres

The work occurred near structures, reducing fuel accumulations adjacent to a number of historic buildings, private residences, government offices, government housing units, and Bureau of Reclamation properties in Grand Teton National Park. The seven project areas contained large amounts of dead and down fuels (downed trees and branches), closely spaced trees with interlocking crowns, dead standing snags, and numerous small trees in the forest understory. Dense sagebrush had also established in some valley floor settings. These conditions required a reduction of fuels and increased crown spacing to modify fire behavior by reducing flame lengths and fire intensity to create conditions more favorable for fire suppression operations.

Treatments included thinning of overstory trees to obtain a distance of approximately 12 feet between trees or groups of trees, reducing seedling and pole size tree densities, reducing accumulations of downed logs and debris, removing limbs within 10 feet of the ground on standing trees, and mowing breaks in shrub fuels.



Pre- treatment photo at the Jackson Lake Dam site



Post- treatment photo from the same location

A full Streamlined EA Fuels Project Summary report can be found at www.tetonfires.com/dispatch/final%20report.pdf.



November 2004

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management Open House Highlights Fire Management Plan EA Alternatives



Grand Teton National Park hosted a Public Open House on October 14th to provide information and answer questions about the Environmental Assessment (EA) completed for three fire management plan alternatives. The EA was released for public review and comment on October 4th, and comments were accepted through November 3rd.

Three EA alternatives were developed for the Fire Management Plan through an internal and external scoping process. The EA incorporates data from several sources including the federal fire policy, park program goals and objectives, research and monitoring strategies, and experience from the current fire management program. An Open House in April 2003 also gave the public an opportunity to identify issues and develop alternative fire management approaches that were evaluated in the EA.

Participants in the public workshop received an orientation guide that outlined the seven information stations. Attendees then rotated through the stations, visiting with staff, viewing displays, and picking up handouts. Copies of the EA were also available at several of the stations. The open house format was designed to give visitors many opportunities to informally interact with staff and provide feedback. Flip charts, comment forms, comment log books, and computers were available for visitors to record their comments. Interagency partners were also on hand to answer questions about the fire management program and distribute fire protection information to the public.

A decision will be reached on the alternatives following review and consideration of public input received during the comment period. The final Fire Management Plan is expected to be completed by late December.



December 2004

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management Fencing Project Helping to Achieve Prescribed Fire Objectives



In October 2002, Teton Interagency crews implemented the Wolff Ridge Prescribed Fire, a 1700- acre project planned by resource managers and fire management personnel to stimulate regeneration of quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) stands in the Lower Spread Creek area. Post- burn data collected by fire effects monitors has indicated an increase in the number of aspen suckers compared to pre- burn conditions. Because Wolff Ridge is located in a transitional and winter ungulate range where heavy browsing by moose and elk occurs, fire managers installed a temporary electric fence in the fall of 2003 around 60 selected acres of the project to protect suckers from ungulate browsing. A crew returned to this area again last month to make repairs and prepare the fence for the second migration season.

Reduction of aspen on the landscape is a concern in northwestern Wyoming, in both Grand Teton National Park and the Bridger- Teton National Forest. Fire suppression efforts combined with ungulate densities have contributed to this significant loss of critical habitat. Historically, extensive fires created early seral sprouting of quaking aspen and the growth of palatable grasses, shrubs and herbs. This broadscale regrowth produced a forage supply that sufficiently dispersed browsing ungulates and allowed the aspen to regenerate. The goal of the fencing project is to reduce the amount of browsing in the area until the aspen sprouts attain a height above browseline, or approximately two meters.



The fence consists of four wires, attached to tee posts and trees for support. Three of the wires are high tensile steel, placed at heights of 18, 32, and 68 inches. The fourth, placed at 48" high, utilizes ½" electrical tape. The tee posts are equipped with adjustable fiberglass supports to maintain proper wire heights. The bottom wire has been left as a grounding wire and does not carry a charge.



To increase visibility to wildlife, the fence is marked with two types of flagging. The first is a standard orange plastic flagging, and the second is made from high flash Mylar® tape that reflects light off the shiny red and silver material. The noise made by the crinkly texture of the Mylar® in the wind further deters animal traffic into the enclosure.



Photo insert: Ungulates investigated the Mylar® flagging last winter and respected the fence.

Elk begin browsing quaking aspen as soon as they move onto winter ranges in November and continue to use the area through March. Last year's monitoring indicated the critical time to patrol the fenceline and make repairs was the approximate six week period between the end of the park's elk reduction program (early December) and the end of the fall migration (mid- January). Crews checked the fence weekly throughout last winter, accessing the area by snowshoes or touring skis, to ensure the wires were still charged and effective. By June, when ungulates had changed their diet to newly sprouted grasses and forbs, the fence was turned off.



In mid- December, approximately 25 elk were feeding near this site. The fence was proving successful in keeping moose and elk out of the 60- acre site. Subsequent tracks in January showed small groups of elk were still respecting the fence.

Educational signs placed along the perimeter give background information on the prescribed fire and describe the fencing project. The flyers also inform visitors to the area that the enclosure remains open for recreational use and hunting. A contact number is for listed for persons interested in learning more about the project.

This winter, crews will continue to make weekly patrols to ensure the equipment is properly working and that animals or snow have not damaged the fence. When the summer field season returns, the interagency fire effects crew will continue to monitor seedling densities, aspen heights, and browsing impacts both inside and outside the fenced area. Together, these efforts on the Wolff Ridge Prescribed Fire project will continue to help achieve the objectives of aspen regeneration and stand improvement.



November 2004

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Grand Teton National Park

Department of Agriculture
U.S. Forest Service
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Teton Interagency Fire Management Vegetation Mapping Crew Completes Third Season



Grand Teton National Park's Vegetation Mapping crew recently finished its third data collection season, continuing work on an integrated project with the park's Division of Science & Resource Management and Fire Management Office. The two divisions jointly fund the work.

Under the direction of the National Vegetation Classification program, the project was initiated in the fall of 2001. It was developed to update and improve a fifteen year- old map showing vegetation types and locations throughout the park. Though the map detailed the overstory, or tree components on the landscape, it did not describe the understory vegetation, such as grasses and shrubs. Understory vegetation plays a key role in both fire behavior and intensity. Resource specialists devised a strategy and implemented the vegetation mapping protocol to create a more accurate and detailed map that can then be converted to fuel models.

During the 2002 and 2003 summer seasons, crews collected data through intense field work. They measured critical information such as tree heights, tree diameters, crown ratios, crown base height, and quantities of dead and downed material. The data was then analyzed during the 2003 and 2004 winter seasons and used to produce a map and vegetation type key. This past field season focused on groundtruthing the key and the map.

The Biological Technicians staffing the field crew bring to the project a variety of backgrounds, including experience in botany, fire effects, and forestry. The 7- 9 person crew is led by the park's Botanist.

Next year's summer season will utilize a smaller crew to collect final data. When finished, the program will have produced a classification of vegetation types, a written description of each vegetation type, a map of the vegetation and fuel models for Grand Teton National Park to predict fire behavior. The project is expected to be completed by December 2005.

