

**2014**  
**PRESCRIBED**  
**FIRE** IN SOUTHWEST  
IDAHO

**In southwest Idaho, public land managers are reducing the risk of large, severe wildfires, improving wildlife habitat, and achieving other natural resource objectives through the use of prescribed fire and other management programs.**

**Boise National Forest  
Prescribed Fire Hotline  
208-373-4208**

**Southwest Idaho  
Prescribed Fire Website  
[www.rxfire.com](http://www.rxfire.com)**

## Acres of Treatment Planned for 2014

### Southwest Idaho

#### Prescribed Fires Planned

<b>Total Acres</b> .....	<b>27,522</b>
Spring 2014 .....	19,158
Fall 2014 .....	8,364

#### Total Acres of National Fire Plan

<b>Mechanical Treatment Planned</b> .....	<b>22,354</b>
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### Idaho Department of Lands Prescribed Fires Planned

#### Prescribed Fires Planned

<b>Total Acres</b> .....	<b>6,093</b>
Spring .....	69
Fall .....	6,024

**Total Mechanical Treatment Acres .. 0**

### Bureau of Land Management Prescribed Fires Planned

<b>Total Acres</b> .....	<b>550</b>
Spring .....	225
Fall .....	325

#### Total Mechanical Treatment

<b>Acres</b> .....	<b>9,131</b>
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### Boise National Forest Prescribed Fires Planned

<b>Total Acres</b> .....	<b>7,919</b>
Spring .....	7,764
Fall .....	155

#### Total Mechanical Treatment

<b>Acres</b> .....	<b>7,494</b>
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### Payette National Forest Prescribed Fires Planned

<b>Total Acres</b> .....	<b>12,960</b>
Spring .....	11,100
Fall .....	1,860

#### Total Mechanical Treatment

<b>Acres</b> .....	<b>5,729</b>
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**COVER PHOTO:** Boise BLM fire employees utilize prescribed fire to treat juniper encroachment in sagebrush steppe.

# PRESCRIBED FIRES:

## Ensuring the Health of our Wildlands

**V**irtually every year Idaho's challenging wildfire season demonstrates the importance of prescribed fire, or other tools, to help prepare wildland urban interface areas and the forests from uncharacteristic fire events.

Fire managers for the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the Idaho Department of Lands have established annual programs that reduce fuel concentrations and wildfire risks on an average of 25,000 acres each year through the predominant use of prescribed fire.

In 2013, wildfires burned almost 140,000 acres on the Boise National Forest, with multiple communities threatened. Two large complexes of fires, which quickly grew in size destroyed 40 homes and almost 50 other structures. In Idaho, the cost to fight wildfires on federal lands in 2013 amounted to over \$110 million. The need to reduce the risk of large severe wildfires, particularly in wildland urban interface areas, is clear. In 2013 the combined agencies in Southwest Idaho reduced fuel through prescribed burning and mechanical means on over 50,000 acres with the majority of that in the wildland urban interface. Continued drought conditions provide the emphasis for reducing fuels that can feed wildfire through a managed program.

Public land managers annually use prescribed fire and mechanical clearing to reduce the severity of large wildfires, improve wildlife habitat, and achieve other natural resource objectives.

Substantial progress has been made, particularly in urban interface areas and the number of acres treated annually is progressing at a steady rate. However, inherent challenges can prevent land managers from igniting prescribed fires on as many acres each year as they believe are necessary. These challenges include weather, the time required to complete prescribed fire plans, and occasionally the impacts of prescribed fires on air quality.

Reducing hazardous fuels through prescribed fire and other tools is one of the key components of the National Fire Plan. In addition, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act added additional emphasis to reduce fuel concentrations and threats of uncharacteristic wildfires, especially in the wildland urban interface.

Prescribed fires on federal lands must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires extensive analysis of the environmental, economic, and social impacts of projects with public participation. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act provides an expedited process using collaboration and integration with such things as county hazard mitigation plans, state fuels committee priorities, and direct work with local communities.

Fuel reduction management is a long-term proposition, but through annual programs combining federal, state and private land, and the people responsible or affected, the journey to return much of our forests to a historic condition and reduce the threat to life and property will be achieved.

### For More Information

Detailed descriptions of each project are available on our website—[www.rxfire.com](http://www.rxfire.com)—along with a local contact number to discuss the project. Prescribed fires must be ignited under certain weather conditions, both to achieve natural resource management objectives and to meet air quality standards. It is difficult to determine exactly when they will occur. Burns planned for each day can be found on line at [www.smokemu.org](http://www.smokemu.org). Individuals potentially affected by prescribed fires are encouraged to refer to this web site on a daily basis during the spring and fall burning seasons.

## Program Success

# BLM Restores Forest Health in Juniper Mountains

Bureau of Land Management

**J**uniper treatments began during the Fall of 2013 on the Pole Creek Project which is located on Juniper Mountain in Owyhee County about 35 miles southeast of Jordan Valley, OR. This treatment is the first step in a multi-year landscape project that encompasses 10,900 acres on the western flanks of Juniper Mountain.

BLM employees began the first steps by performing hand treatments with chainsaws to prepare units for prescribed burning. This involved felling, slashing and girdling of Juniper trees on 200 acres to create fuel loading conditions that will accomplish the prescribe fire objectives.

This project is designed to reestablish the natural fire regime, reduce conifer encroachment and restore and maintain fire resilient ecosystems.



Boise BLM employee, Ben Rojas, uses a chainsaw to mechanically treat Juniper trees in preparation for a prescribed burn on 200 acres to re-establish a fire resilient ecosystem within Juniper Mountain.



## Air Quality Standards in Place

**L**ocally, atmospheric conditions are monitored closely before ignition to maximize smoke dispersion. Factors evaluated include wind direction and speed, atmospheric stability, and long-range weather forecasts. Yet even in favorable conditions, the air may still become smoky, especially at night. Often, although the air is smoky, it still meets federal and state air quality standards.

Idaho's Department of Environmental

Quality's real-time air monitoring program collects real-time measurements of ambient levels of air contaminants at more than 20 sites throughout the state. Integrated sampling methods are used at another 10 sites.

DEQ improved its website to provide the public with accurate information from its real-time air monitoring stations around the state. Real-time air monitoring data is located at: <http://airquality.deq.idaho.gov/>

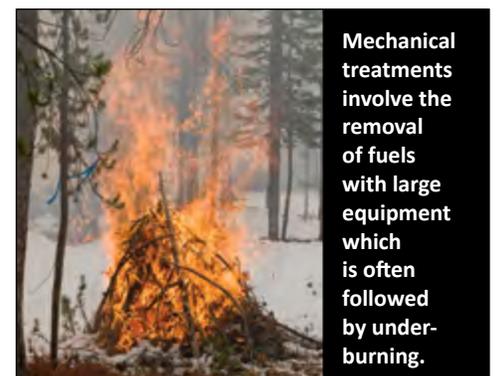
## Protecting Our Communities at Risk

**I**ntegrating a mix of fuel treatments and a community based Firewise effort with private structures is the key to enhance community protection from wildfire. Using a variety of fuel treatments near community private structures, Firewise increases community protection from wildfire. This year's fuels reduction program mixes prescribed fire and mechanical treatments.

For more information on the Firewise Program log on to:



[www.idahofirewise.org](http://www.idahofirewise.org)



Mechanical treatments involve the removal of fuels with large equipment which is often followed by under-burning.

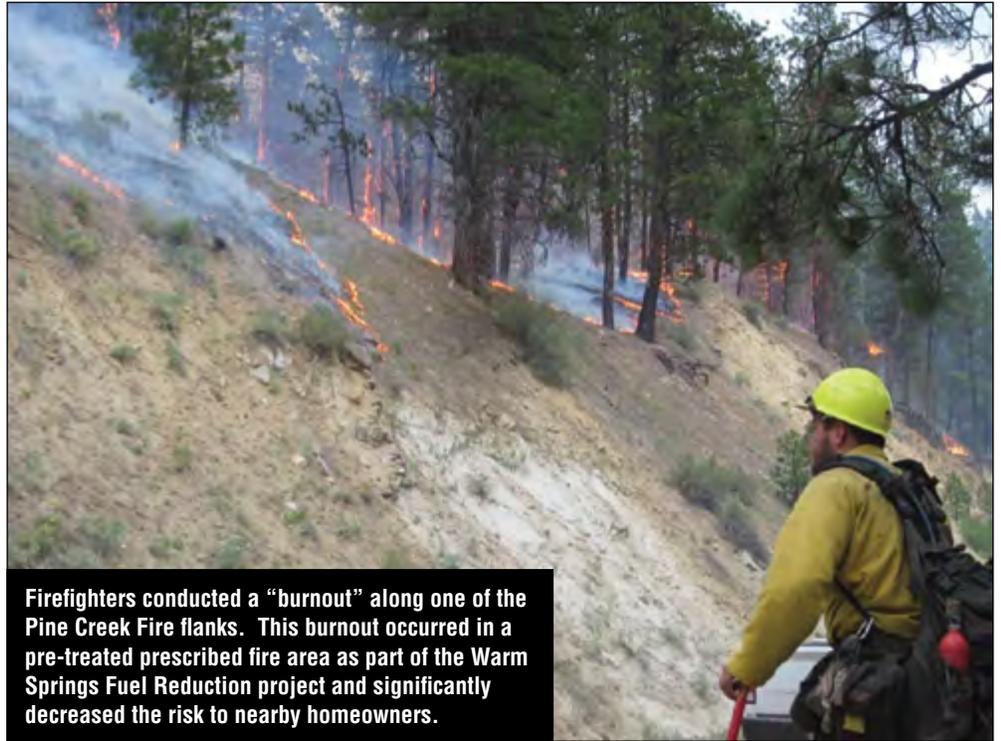
## DEQ PM 2.5 Monitors in Southwest Idaho

Garden Valley  
Idaho City  
Ketchum  
McCall  
Twin Falls  
Boise

Based on DEQ's analysis of pollutant indicators and meteorological conditions, a color-coded system notifies the public of the forecasted air quality condition for the following day. When air quality is expected to be good, a green alert is issued; when air quality is deteriorating, a yellow alert is issued; when air quality is poor and expected to deteriorate even further, a red alert is issued. Precautionary measures are prescribed for each type of alert.

Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern	Colors
<i>When the AQI is in this range:</i>	<i>...air quality conditions are:</i>	<i>...as symbolized by this color:</i>
0 to 50	Good	Green
51 to 100	Moderate	Yellow
101 to 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Orange
151 to 200	Unhealthy	Red
201 to 300	Very Unhealthy	Purple
301 to 500	Hazardous	Maroon

## Program Success



Firefighters conducted a "burnout" along one of the Pine Creek Fire flanks. This burnout occurred in a pre-treated prescribed fire area as part of the Warm Springs Fuel Reduction project and significantly decreased the risk to nearby homeowners.

## Fuels Treatments Help Contain Wildfire More Than a Decade Later

Boise National Forest Service

The Warm Springs Vegetation Management Project on the Boise National Forest began in the early 2000's and combined thinning, commercial timber sales and broadcast prescribed fire to reduce fuels that could feed a large and intense wildfire.

The project, along the Highway 21 corridor between Grimes Creek and Idaho City, has proven to be instrumental in reducing wildfire risk to Idaho City and surrounding communities.

The Pine Creek Fire started in July 2013 in the southern end of the project area. Fire managers say the vast majority of the fire burned inside an area that had already been treated. The ground fuels had been significantly thinned and reduced which helped keep the fire on the ground burning at

a lower intensity.

The fuel reduced stands allowed firefighters to conduct successful suppression efforts with the limited resources that were available at the time. Fire crews with engines were able to burn out along area roads which kept the fire from impacting Highway 21 and Idaho City.

According to fire leaders, more than 50 homes in the area were threatened and would likely have been destroyed if the fuels treatments had not previously occurred. The fire was kept under 3,000 acres. No homes were destroyed during the Pine Creek Fire.

The Warm Springs Ridge area has the highest incidence of lightning strikes on the Idaho City Ranger District, with much private land adjacent to the National Forest which increases the likelihood of human-caused fires. Fuel treatments clearly help prevent a catastrophic fire event.

## Program Success

# Fuels Thinning Accomplished to Protect Ski Resort

## Boise National Forest Service

**A**pproximately 600 acres of Boise National Forest land near Bogus Basin Ski Resort was treated to reduce fuels to better protect the Ski Resort. There has been a long-standing concern with wildfire

threatening the resort. Dense forests and diseased trees added to the threat.

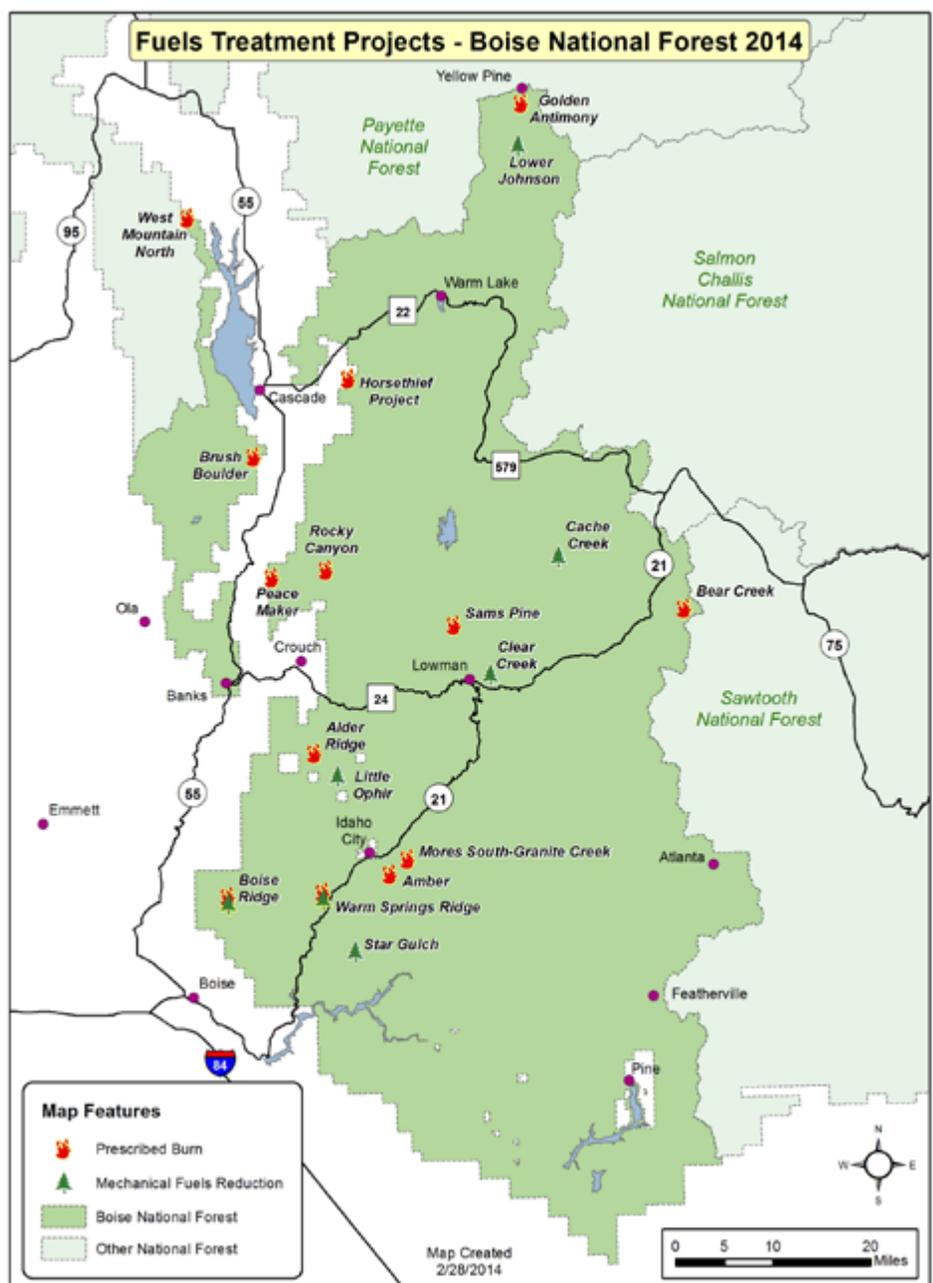
Chainsaws were used to thin the abundant hazardous fuels to the west of the resort. The residual vegetation was then put into piles and burned last fall over a multiple day period. This burning eliminated the fuel that would have been dangerous to have in

place during the dry summer months.

Fire managers plan to perform tree-well burning this spring, which burns the vegetation and needles around the base of trees without harming the trunks. This further reduces the threat of wildfire killing the remaining trees.



Forest workers thinned the dense forest, reducing fuel that will better protect the nearby Bogus Basin Ski Resort facilities. A thinned forest reduces the chance for a wildfire to move into the tree tops, and enhances firefighter suppression effectiveness.



For daily planned Ignitions go to:  
[www.smokemu.org](http://www.smokemu.org)

For specific project information  
go to the Southwest Idaho  
Prescribed Fire Website  
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## Program Success

# Valley County Partnership Works to Protect Area Homes

Boise National Forest

In 2003, a planning team led by the Valley County Commissioners began working to implement the Valley County Wildfire Protection Plan. This partnership effort continues today and works to reduce hazardous fuels and lessen wildfire threats to structures located in the wildland urban interface in Valley County.

Rural fire departments, the Payette and Boise National Forests, Valley County, Southern Idaho Timber Protection Association and Idaho Department of Lands now form the Valley County Wildland Fire Working Group. The current protection plan identifies opportunities to improve fire prevention and suppression, reduce hazardous fuels, restore fire-adapted ecosystems and promote community assistance. As part of the plan, all new subdivisions in Valley County must have a Firewise plan that includes using fire-resistant building materials, proper landscaping to limit a fire's ability to reach a house and the location of available water sources.

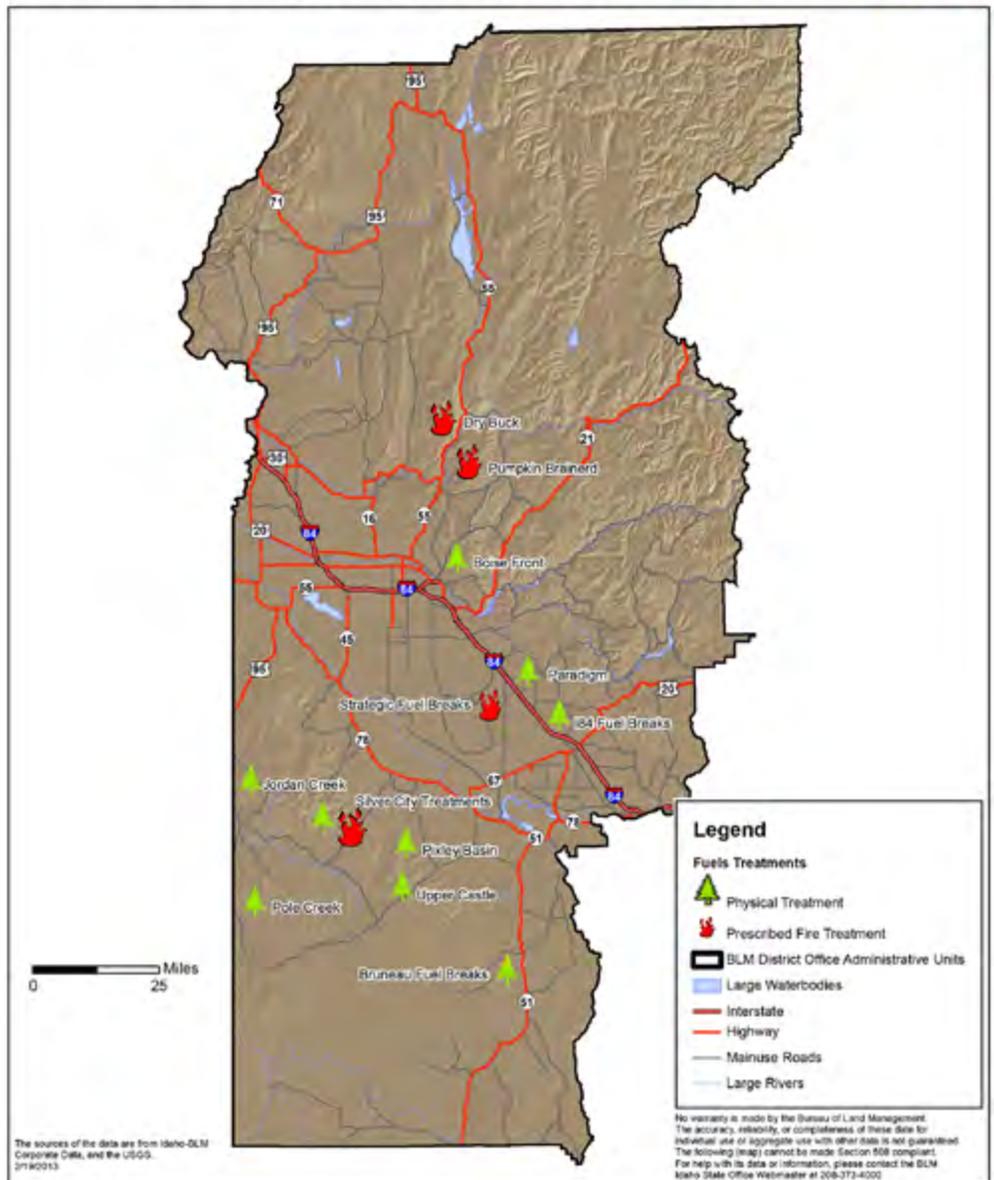
The county has received approximately one million dollars in grants. So far, the money has predominately gone to treat approximately 1,000 acres in subdivisions that adjoin Forest Service fuels-reduction work. Mostly this involves thinning the area, then burning the piles of vegetation, as well as completing some pruning and chipping to reduce fuel that could feed a wildfire.

- See Homes page 8



Dense stands of pine trees and abundant dead or downed trees create a high hazard wildfire situation which could cause a summer wildfire to erupt. The Valley County partnerships are reducing these hazardous conditions at many locations.

### Fuel Treatment Projects - Boise District BLM 2014



## Program Success

# Idaho Department of Lands Salvage Burned Timber from Elk Fire Complex

## Idaho Department of Lands

During the Elk Complex fires in August of 2013, approximately 6,000 acres of Idaho Endowment Land was burned in Elmore County. Crews already harvested 40 million board feet of burned

timber and harvesting will continue through this winter and summer near the town of Prairie.

In keeping with a constitutional mandate to manage the lands for health and productivity for future generations, the

Idaho Department of Lands will plant 1.5 million seedlings on the 6,000 acres over the next two to three years. By comparison, the IDL planted a total of 2.2 million seedlings statewide in 2013.



Salvaging burned timber on the Blacksmith timber sale near Prairie, Idaho.



It's Good Medicine for our  
Public Lands

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## Program Success

– Homes, continued from page 6

Some funding also goes to educating homeowners about what they can do to protect their homes from wildfires. “When everyone works together toward a common goal, it makes huge projects like this much easier and more successful”, says Dusty Pence, Forest Fuels Planner for the Payette National Forest and Chair of the Lands sub-committee.



Small diameter trees and dense forest stands that were cut leave a much more open forest that leads to better wildfire protection. Developing these types of conditions on federal, state, and private land makes fire suppression safer for firefighters and homeowners.

### Fuels Treatment Project- Payette National Forest 2014

