

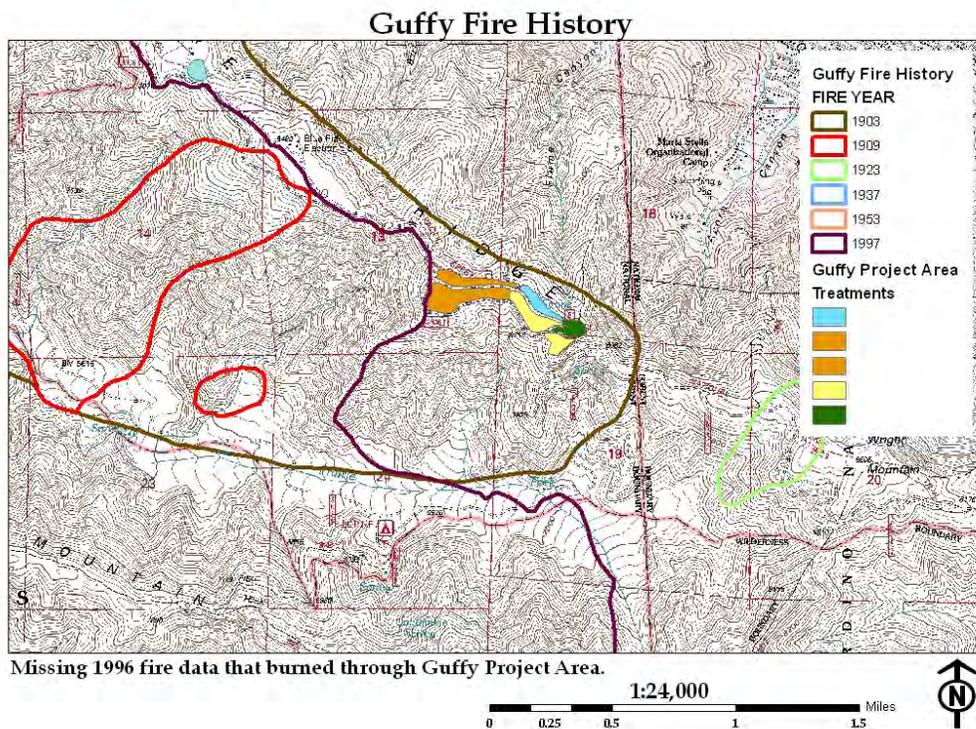
Guffy Vegetation and Fuels Management Project

Background

The Guffy Campground and Eastern Blue Ridge occupy the southern slope of the ridge overlooking the town of Wrightwood. The campground contains historic remains of the Guffy Lookout tower and leads to the access road for the tower site. The Pacific Crest Trail is a popular recreational site that runs through the project area. Recreationists come from all over the world to hike this trail and they depend on the aesthetics of this site for a quality recreational experience.

Blue Ridge has been the scene of repeated catastrophic wildfires from 1903 through the 1990's. The most notable were the Narrows and the Beiderbach fires. These fires have converted the entire eastern and middle ridge from a mixed conifer (White fir, Jeffery pine and Sugar pine) forest into brushfields with scattered individual survivor trees.

The area recovered from the 1903 fire (outlined in brown below) but was re-burned in 1996 (missing from the fire history data). The fire in 1996 burnt over the existing vegetation and prevented the 1997 fire from reentering the stand.



The decision was made to not salvage the fired killed trees and to allow the area to regenerate through natural means. In some areas this strategy has worked but

over most of the ridge it has not. Only in areas where a seed source survived and where brush has not overgrown the area has tree regeneration occurred. The boundary of the burn also has locations where regeneration has occurred from wind-blown seed from the surrounding forest.

As a result of no action taking place, a previously forested area is now covered in brush with existing large fallen logs beneath and throughout the brush that were generated from the catastrophic fires. The logs in conjunction with the brush create heavy continuous ground fuels which await the right conditions to ignite. With the site being directly adjacent to the highly used Guffy Campground and within the WUI (Wildland Urban Interface) of the Wrightwood community, this fuel hazard is of great concern from a fire management perspective. This project would help to keep those objectives of fuels reduction and fire protection for the Wrightwood community congruent with other projects across the forest. There is a current project focusing on the reduction of fuels across the Blue Ridge and in other surrounding federal land adjacent to Wrightwood.

Those trees that were not salvaged now present additional hazards. In addition to creating ladder fuels, they are subject to wind throw and are continuously adding fuels to the brush fields. They now have no economic value and can only be considered another hazard. Once the brush is removed as a fuel hazard, the logs can then be left for soil stabilization and a seedling protection source to benefit planting success rates. Then they will no longer be considered a fuel hazard.

It is apparent that tree seedling establishment through natural regeneration of the area has been unsuccessful. The Guffy area has produced few individual trees across 42 Acres. In the area around the communication site further west some regeneration has occurred but it is in need of brush release for survival in order to prevent seedling mortality through competition for water and sunlight with the brush. Therefore the removal of this brush would be contributing to tree regeneration survival as well as fuels reduction.

With the Guffy area once being of a natural and native conifer stand, regional direction along with the Southern California Land Management Plan (LMP) both promote reforesting areas that are deforested by wildfire. Reforestation is a secondary part of this project but is very important from a fuels standpoint because the reestablishment of trees to the landscape will allow the area to recover to its natural fire regime of frequent low intensity fires rather than infrequent stand replacing fires that can occur in brush fields and lead to destructive wildfires.

Project Description

Objective: Start restoring the 42-acre project area to pre-fire conditions by removing brush and planting conifer stands on the Blue Ridge within the old burn sites of the Narrows and Beiderbach Fires of 1996 and 1997.

Goal: Reestablish a mixed conifer stand by mimicking adjacent unburnt stands while restoring the natural historical fire regime of the area.

Activities

- Where slope is less than 30 percent, masticate or crush brush to ground surface height on site in order to decrease hazardous fuels in the area and to reduce inter-plant competition for moisture and sunlight.
- Where mastication or crushing occurs, leave shredded material on site to create a 3 inch deep organic covering layer for minimizing erosion and retaining soil moisture. This layer will also decrease the success of reestablishing brush on site by limiting its access to sunlight. This will allow a window of opportunity for the conifer seedlings to establish.
- Plant a mixture of Sugar Pine (Blister Rust Resistant Stock), Jeffery Pine, Ponderosa Pine, Big Cone Douglass Fir, Incense Cedar and White Fir, to mimic the surrounding stands.
- In areas where mastication is not permitted due to slope restrictions, hand tools will be used to cut 20 ft diameter openings spaced 100 ft apart and offset so as to mimic natural breaks in vegetation in the brush field. Future release of recruiting brush may also be necessary for survival of the tree seedlings to prevent competition for water and sunlight.
- Wherever hand tools are used to remove brush, hand piles will be created from those limbs with a diameter of less than 3 inches for burning at a later date. Those limbs with a diameter of 3 to 6 inches will be lopped into lengths of 3 feet or less and scattered across the ground in a single layer.
- Plant the hand cut openings in the brushfield with tree seedlings of the above mentioned species in groups spaced eight feet apart throughout the clearings. The objective is to establish clumps of scattered trees throughout the brush field in order to re-establish a seed source that can provide regenerative opportunities in the future as openings develop within the brushfield.
- Plant the masticated or crushed areas using traditional planting methods with a proposed spacing of 10X10 ft in order to restore a mixed conifer

stand to the area which is not recovering from natural regeneration after the Beiderbach and Narrows fires. Use the remaining logs as seedling protection from high winds and heat scorching by planting trees alongside.

Planting in Guffy Campground

Objectives are to establish a replacement stand under the current overstory trees that have not reproduced a viable understory and to provide campsite vegetative screening.

These objectives will be met by planting White fir and Jeffery Pine in dense clusters around each of the existing campsites in three staggered rows 4 ft apart. This mimics the natural dense grouping of white fir regeneration in the area. As the trees mature, release activities would allow for sapling removal as needed. These initial plantings will be augmented in the future with scattered plantings of Jeffery pine. Over time these larger shade trees will replace the older trees on site as they die from various natural causes.

Schedule of Activities

All plantings are predicted to occur in the fall season due to access limitations to the site in winter and spring, however if an opportunity arises for a spring or winter planting, then this possibility will be considered.

1. Award NEPA analysis contract fall 2009.
2. Order seedlings in fall 2009/November order.
3. Finish NEPA documents summer 2010.
4. Order more seedlings in fall 2010/November order.
5. Plant Guffy Campground in fall 2010 with current seedling stock held at L.A. County Nursery.
6. Masticate and hand cut openings in brush field spring 2011.
7. Plant masticated areas fall 2011.
8. Burn piles in winter 2012.
9. Plant hand treated areas fall 2012.
10. Release for survival in brush areas spring 2014 and on as needed.

Locations of Areas by Treatment Type

Guffy Project Treatments

