



Summer 2012

San Juan Public Lands People

News for San Juan Public Lands employees, retirees & partners

Fuels Reduction Helps Save Homes from Wildfire

MANCOS - Residents of Elk Stream Ranch had seen their rural East Canyon location threatened by many fires over the years.

“We knew it was just a matter of time before one would drop over the hill and threaten our homes,” says Philip Walters, Elk Stream resident and FireWise Neighborhood Ambassador.

This June, East Canyon was directly threatened by the Weber Fire. What helped save its homes from the flames was a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, which had helped residents mitigate fire danger around their homes and create a community fuel break along the only access road.

“The fuel break along the road increased our safety factor by several notches,” says firefighter Rich Graeber. “It gave us more time to work before having to leave and allowed us to commit crews to work on potential threats to homes because we had a large defensible space in which to maneuver engines.”



Fire moving downhill behind a home in East Canyon this summer.

*“As a firefighter and a structure protection specialist, I greatly appreciated their efforts,”
- Rich Graeber, Weber Fire Structural Protection Crew Leader.*

Graeber said some of the homes needed more work at the last minute; “We spent time at each house doing a little more mitigation - limbing trees, removing ladder fuels or cutting grass.”

As flames reached the steep hillside above the subdivision, ember showers kept firefighters battling spot fires from home to home as the main fire moved up the canyon. Many of the 28 homes in the canyon were directly threatened, with firefighters having to dig fire line around, lay fire hose and foam seven homes.

Mitigation done by residents allowed firefighters to safely conduct burnout operations between homes and the encroaching fire. Graeber and his crew were also impressed by building materials. Most homes had a stucco finish and metal roofs. Many also had enclosed soffits, which prevents embers from entering roof eaves.

“These proactive actions allowed us to do defensive work from an offensive position,” said Graeber. “As a firefighter and a structure protection specialist, I greatly appreciated their efforts.”

- Pam Wilson, Fire Information Officer and Program Director for FireWise of Southwest Colorado

Community Wildfire Protection Plans allow residents to work together to reduce the risk of wildfire to their subdivision. Neighborhoods with plans are competitive for grant funding, and the USFS and BLM are more likely to implement fuel treatments on adjacent public lands when private property owners do the same.

SW Colorado has eight approved subdivision-level Wildfire Protection Plans, with another 14 underway. Approved plans can be found on the Colorado State Forest Service Website at: www.csfs.colostate.edu/

For more information, contact Pam Wilson at 970 385-8909 or via email at: wcoloradofirewise@gmail.com.

SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS CENTER



Mark's New in Radio

DURANGO - Mark Spann is the new SJNF Electronics Technician handling radio communications. Previously he was a telecommunications technician in San Antonio, Texas.

Mark worked as Telecommunications Specialist for the Tonto NF from 1990 to 1995, and in the same position on the National Forests and Grasslands of Texas from 1995 to 1998.

He and wife, LeAnn, have two grown children, Stacey and David. Mark enjoys fishing and basketball. He and LeAnn also love to play cards; Pinochle, Euchre, Spades, etc.

- Ann Bond



Julie Honored by FLC

DURANGO The Fort Lewis College Center for Southwest Studies presented SJNF Cultural Heritage Team Lead Julie Coleman with an Archaeology and Historic Preservation Award this summer.

Other recipients of this year's awards included Dr. Jim Judge, the Durango Discovery Museum and the Durango Railroad Historical Society.

Julie was honored for her work to restore historical mining structures on public lands in San Juan County.

- Ann Bond



Bev Rich with the San Juan County Historical Society (left) presents Julie Coleman with her award.

Burger Paradise

DURANGO - San Juan Public Lands Center employees gathered together to kick off the summer at the annual Cheeseburgers in Paradise BBQ luncheon.

Tom Boness and Rick Rymerson (above) of the BLM served as head grillmasters. The large crowd of USFS and BLM employees included our own San Juan Hotshots.

The popular event is sponsored by the Durango Federal Employees Association.

- Ann Bond



Ruth is Ready for Retirement

DURANGO - The San Juan Public Lands Center won't be the same after Ruth Richardson's retirement at the end of July.

Ruth, BLM Tres Rios Field Office Land Law Examiner for Fluid Minerals, started out with the BLM San Juan Resource Area 20 years ago as Office Automation Clerk and moved over to Visitor Information Specialist, while filling in as Computer Specialist along the way. Prior to her present position, she was Legal Instruments Examiner.

Ruth's first career was with Silverton Public Schools, where she worked as Secretary to the Superintendent, Business Manager and Budget Director. She studied Business Management and Accounting at Fort Lewis College and Texas Tech University Southwest School of Governmental Finance.

Ruth is a rare find indeed - a native of Silverton. Her family includes mother, Mannie Salazar; daughter, Shannon Marabella; and grandchildren, Gregory and Siena.

During her years with the BLM, Ruth says she is most proud of her work to upgrade and convert files for oil and gas leases, wells and units.

"Thanks for memories," Ruth says. "I've enjoyed working with all of you."

To which we might answer, "Oh, but the pleasure has been all ours!"

- Ann Bond

SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS CENTER



Interns Learn Hands On

DURANGO - Arndreya Howard (left in photo) and Deondre Glover (right) are not letting the recent rainstorms get in the way of their summer internships. The two students are shadowing SJNF engineers on projects to acquire hands-on experience in a career atmosphere.

Deondre is attending South Carolina State University on a USDA scholarship studying Civil Engineering in Orangeburg, South Carolina, where he was born and raised. "I'm really enjoying working with the USFS," he says. "I believe this experience will be one that I will learn a lot from and never forget."

Arndreya Howard, also a Civil Engineering Intern, is currently studying Civil Engineering at Prairie View A&M University in Prairie View, Texas.

"This is a great opportunity that will allow me a greater insight into the engineering field and allow me to return to school with more knowledge," she says. "I'm enjoying seeing how projects are handled and what to do when certain situations arise."
- Ann Bond



Front Desk News

DURANGO - David Cramer is helping out at the PLC this summer volunteering as a Fort Lewis College intern. He's helping out with road maintenance, visitor information, Wilderness patrol and other duties.

David starts his final year at Fort Lewis College this fall working on his Bachelor's Degree in Sociology-Criminology. He enjoys playing piano and guitar.

"I love working for the Forest Service," he says. "The different fields of work are really interesting."
- Ann Bond

DURANGO - Sarah Denali is the new Lead Visitor Information Specialist at the PLC. She has worked with the USFS and various DOI agencies, most recently out of Boise, Idaho. Sarah has served as team leader on several projects and is interested in both the public service and technical aspects of our VIS program.

In addition to three grown children, Sarah has a set of 12-year-old twins. She looks forward to an outdoor lifestyle and the other great amenities found in the Four Corners and San Juan Mountains.
- Brian White



Rica Finds Internship Rich

DURANGO - Rica Fulton is working this summer as an intern in the PLC assisting Bill Dunkelberger, BLM Colorado Division of Resources and Fire Eco-regional Specialist. Under the internship, she is employed by the Southwest Conservation Corps through the Colorado Youth Corps/BLM Pathways program.

BLM Colorado's Internship Partnership Program aims to increase the agency's ability to hire mature, trained young adults into its workforce using a phased approach at a very low cost.

Rica is a junior at Fort Lewis College studying Environmental Policy working to obtain her GIS certificate. She enjoys rafting, mountain biking, backpacking with her two dogs, music and being with friends and family.

"I am excited about my new position," Rica says. "It is a wonderful hands-on learning experience on how research is conducted, plans are implemented, and how different groups can work together to accomplish goals."
- Ann Bond

COLUMBINE RANGER DISTRICT



Guardian Dogs Meet the Public

DURANGO - Ranchers and recreationists got together in June to discuss livestock protection dogs at the La Plata County Fairgrounds. The USFS and BLM joined with the County's *Living with Wildlife Advisory Board* to sponsor the event, with the goal of helping high-country recreationists safely coexist with the dogs, which offer valuable non-lethal predator control on public lands.

In recent summers, some recreationists have felt threatened by their encounters with livestock protection dogs guarding sheep herds in the high country. Participants at the forum were able to meet guardian dogs, share their experiences and concerns, and learn how the dogs are trained and used.



ATTENTION
Sheep Grazing in This Area

The Columbine RD has produced maps showing where sheep are grazing on public lands this summer north of Durango and in the Silverton area. Maps can be viewed at the Durango and Silverton Public Lands Offices and also are available on the SJNF website at: www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan.

In addition, signs are posted at trailheads leading into active sheep allotments with tips on how to safely coexist with livestock protection dogs. - Ann Bond

Grant will Help Native Fish

DURANGO - The San Juan National Forest has been selected as the recipient of a \$56,000 grant from *Bring Back the Natives*, a division of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, to help re-establish Colorado River cutthroat trout to a portion of its native range.

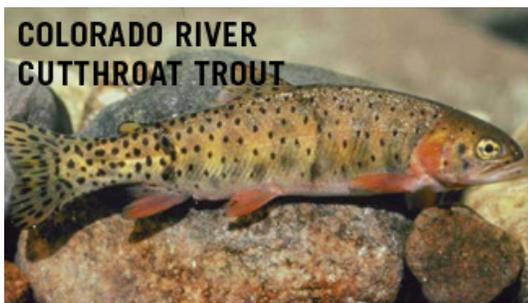
The Colorado River cutthroat is one of the country's most imperiled native fish. Once plentiful throughout the upper Colorado River drainage, today the cutthroat is found in less than five percent of its original range, with only one percent of the population composed of non-hybridized fish.

The Hermosa Creek and East Fork Hermosa Creek watersheds north of Durango provide a unique opportunity to re-establish this species. A small population of genetically pure cutthroat was established in 1991 in the East Fork of Hermosa Creek above a natural barrier. A new population will be established this fall in the headwaters of the main stem of Hermosa Creek above a recently completed fish barrier.

The next phase of the project includes construction of two more fish barriers downstream of the established cutthroat populations. This will allow the two isolated populations to interbreed without competition for habitat or threat of cross breeding from non-native fish species.

The effort is an ongoing partnership between the San Juan NF and Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. An environmental analysis now underway for the project will be released for public comment soon.

- Clay Kampf



Improving Fish Habitat Improves Fishing

The San Juan National Forest is also working to improve fish habitat and fishing opportunities on the main stem of Hermosa Creek.

More than 1,000 feet of eroded stream bank are being rehabilitated to reduce siltation in the water, and 16 in-stream structures are being built with rocks to create deep pools to help trout survive winters. Winter survival is one of the chief limiting factors to healthy trout populations in Hermosa Creek.

As an important partner in the project, Trout Unlimited is helping to fund the reseeding and re-vegetation of stream banks through a \$2,000 *Embrace a Stream* grant, a flagship grant program for funding TU's grassroots conservation efforts.

- Clay Kampf

PAGOSA RANGER DISTRICT

Contract Awarded to Remove Bio-Mass from Forest

Pagosa Springs - The USFS has awarded a long-term stewardship contract to Pagosa area businessman, J.R. Ford, for removal of saw timber, other wood products and biomass from the San Juan NF.

Operations will include forest thinning and biomass removal within a 50-mile radius of Pagosa Springs. The project will take place in areas identified by the agency for forest restoration and by counties as posing wildfire risks to adjacent private lands.

“We’ll achieve fuels reduction and forest health improvement on lands already approved for treatment,” said Steve Hartvigsen, Pagosa District Forester. “We plan to treat 1,000 to 2,000 acres annually in lower-elevation ponderosa pine and warm-dry mixed-conifer.”

The total value of the contract, which was bid competitively, is up to \$4.5 million over the 10-year life of

the project. The contractor will pay for removal of commercial wood products, which will help defray agency costs. As an added benefit, Ford will generate energy for the community from the woody biomass.

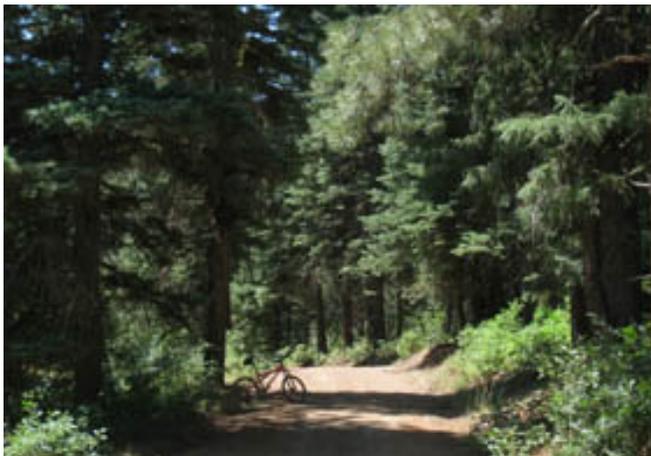
“All the material - chips, slash and limbs - will be removed,” Hartvigsen said. “This will help us safely conduct future prescribed burns in the treated areas.”

Hartvigsen says projects will generally require only surface and drainage maintenance on existing forest roads to allow the contractor access to treatment areas.

“We’re excited about the potential for this type of project to spread across the west, where communities can receive direct benefits from forest health projects on public lands,” says Mark Stiles, SJNF Supervisor. “We’ve been working on this for several years and appreciate the support of the community, agency leaders and others who helped to bring it to fruition.”

- Ann Bond

What’s It Going to Look Like?



BEFORE: The Turkey Springs Biofuels Demonstration Project before treatment included 286 acres of ponderosa pine, warm-dry mixed conifer and a small aspen/conifer unit east of Chris Mountain near Pagosa Springs.



AFTER: The same area after all white fir and blue spruce, and some smaller aspen and Douglas-fir were cut. Trunks, limbs, tops and foliage were removed. Lessons learned: bio-mass removal is less costly than hydromowing and prepares a site better for prescribed fire .

The Upper San Juan Mixed Conifer Working Group has been studying forest management issues, including the above project, and working with the San Juan NF since 2009. Its members represent the wood products industry, environmental groups, educational organizations, residents, ranchers, recreationists, local government, the USFS and Colorado State Forest Service.

“The workgroup is a diverse cross-section of people interested in public lands,” says Kevin Khung, Pagosa District Ranger. “Their desire to openly share and learn from one another, as well as support possible solutions, is extraordinary. The fact that they want to be problem solvers, rather than just problem identifiers, is encouraging for all public land managers.”

The working group has published recommendations to balance the ecological, social and economic needs of the National Forest and the community, which are posted at: <http://ocs.fortlewis.edu/mixedconifer/>.

PAGOSA RANGER DISTRICT



Retired Smokejumper Richard Hilderbrand lays down shingles on the roof of the Turkey Springs Guard Station.

Smokejumpers Restore Cabin

PAGOSA SPRINGS - Although much of the Pagosa RD's focus this summer was on fighting the Little Sand Fire, there was another flare up of intense work nearby by a group of retired Smokejumpers.

These Smokejumpers were not fighting fires but tackling falling porches and rotten shingles. For some of them, the last time they jumped out of a plane was in the 1950s.

Ten volunteers from the National Smokejumpers Association worked at the Turkey Springs Guard Station in June.

They replaced its cedar-shingle roof with fire-retardant shingles, restored the porch and foundation, repointed the chimney, scraped and painted the building and fence, restored the doors and rescreened the windows.

According to District Ranger diaries of the period, the Guard Station was built in 1921 to house staff working to improve range management after over-grazing at the turn of the last century.

This was the Smokejumpers' fourth season working on the San Juan to help preserve our historic structures. From 2008 to 2010 many of the same volunteers worked on the Glade Guard Station on the Dolores RD. They decided they wanted to come back, and the Turkey Springs Guard Station was the lucky beneficiary of their hard work and dedication this year.

The retired Smokejumpers throw themselves into these projects with the same enthusiasm and dedication they once used to fight fires. The oldest volunteer this year, Jim Hickman, a spry 81 years old, drove all the way from Alabama to help out.

After long days of hard work, much camaraderie, kidding and memories were shared. This year we ended the last night of the project with a story-telling contest. Tales of adventure, surprise, excitement and a few embarrassing moments made us all laugh until our sides ached as much as the rest of our weary bodies.

After the last shingle was nailed, the last board painted, and the last tool put away, the Smokejumpers drove off with on one last request- "Find us another project for next year!"

- Julie Coleman

Weed Warriors Sought

PAGOSA SPRINGS - The Pagosa RD is seeking volunteers to pull thistle and remove seed heads at Gopher Meadow in the Turkey Springs area. The weed pull will be held Friday, July 20 and will last as long as people want to work, the weeds run out or until 3 p.m.

Musk and bull thistle can be effectively removed if pulled before seeds disperse. Although Canada thistle cannot be effectively removed via pulling, its reproduction and spread can be slowed by removing its seed heads.

Volunteers will meet at the junction of the Turkey Springs Road with the Chris Mountain Trail at 8:30 a.m., where shuttles will be available. Gopher Meadow can also be reached via foot, bicycle, ATV or horse. Volunteers should bring water, tough gloves, long pants, sun hat and lunch. Small clippers would also be nice to have. Carpooling is encouraged, as parking is limited. The District will provide shovels and plastic bags.

In case of rain, the event will be cancelled due to muddy roads. For information, email rwu@fs.fed.us or call 970 264-1529.

- Ros Wu



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Read this and past issues online at:
www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan/about/newsletter.shtml



DOLORES PUBLIC LANDS OFFICE



Heather Moves to the District in Range

DOLORES - Heather Musclow is the new USFS Supervisory Range Conservationist for the Dolores RD administering 38 livestock allotments over 600,000 acres.

Heather moved to the DPLO from Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. During her federal career, she has worked for the Custer National Grasslands in North Dakota, Weaverville Ranger District in California and Moab/Monticello Ranger Districts in Utah.

Heather holds a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Management from Shasta Community College and Humboldt State and a Masters in Biology from Chico State University and Cal Poly Pomona.

Husband Rudy, retired from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, is building the couple's new home in Lewis, which they share with four horses and a dog. Heather enjoys gardening, horseback riding, hiking, hunting, collecting and refurbishing antiques, playing musical instruments, scrapbooking and reading. *- Toni Kelly*



Zane Lands Permanent Engine Position

DOLORES - Zane Muhonen is now an Assistant Engine Captain for the Dolores Public Lands Office. His new position has him taking on more administrative duties and leadership roles. Previously he was a Lead Engine Crewmember.

Zane started his federal career in 2006 in Monticello, Utah, as a BLM engine crewmember. In 2008 he moved to Moab as a BLM Helitack crewmember. In 2009 he moved to Durango as a crewmember with the USFS San Juan Hotshots, arriving in Dolores in 2011.

Since 2007, Zane has also worked winters with ski patrol for the Telluride Ski Area and is an Emergency Medical Technician Basic.

A graduate of Telluride High School, he and wife, Rachel have a daughter, Elinore, 8, and son, Sawyer, 3.

"I look forward to the new challenges and opportunities of a permanent position," Zane says. *- Toni Kelly*



Michael Anderson, Coconino NF Wilderness Ranger, participates in the Backcountry Cookoff at the Wilderness Ranger Academy.

Rangers Test Backcountry Cooking Skills

MESA VERDE - Sixty five wilderness rangers from the USFS Rocky Mountain and South-west regions gathered at Mesa Verde National Park earlier this summer for the annual Wilderness Ranger Academy. The six-day event immerses backcountry rangers in classroom and field work on wilderness skills and management.

A fun part of the event was the Backcountry Cookoff, inspired by the Wilderness Ranger Cookbook, which is available for sale at San Juan National Forest offices.

The cookoff, held afterhours at Morefield Campground, had strict ground rules that all meals had to be made in one pot over a backcountry stove with ingredients that could be carried in a backpack. The contestants whipped up everything from sushi rolls to pasta to gumbo.

Volunteer judges Sam Greene of the Cortez Journal and Lewis McCool of Mesa Verde National Park chose the following recipes as winners of the competition:

- Landlocked Gumbo by Triston Richardson, San Juan National Forest
- Cranberry Delight by Ana Zajicek, Weminuche Wilderness
- Potato Surprise by Chris Smith, Routt National Forest

The annual academy is an interagency event of the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

- Ann Bond