

In June of this year, the Cedar City BLM's Division of Fire and Aviation along with its Color Country Fire Management partners (US Forest Service, National Park Service, Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands, and Bureau of Indian Affairs) received the prestigious Pulaski Award for its outstanding interagency approach to managing wildfire in southern Utah and northern Arizona. As demonstrated by this year's fire season, this multi-agency partnership has proven to be more successful and cost-effective in fire suppression while enhancing both firefighter and public safety. During 2004, the BLM



has had an extremely busy fire season with over 720 fires reported within the Color Country Fire Management Area. Cedar City BLM fire crews have already responded to nearly 300 fires, well above the twelve year average of 109 fires on BLM lands within the Southern Utah Support Area.



Adding to the complexity of the fire season, was the fact that many of the lightning ignited fires occurred across jurisdictional lines and were located within the wildland urban interface, forcing the evacuations of many homes. No structures were lost, yet over 23,000 acres of BLM land were blackened as a result of this season's fire activity.

Many of these large fires occurred adjacent to communities that are actively participating in the National Fire Plan. The Dixie Regional Fire Council, a community fire council for the communities of Brookside and Central completed their community fire plan in the fall of 2002. This season two separate wildfires threatened the communities and forced evacuations, however with a fuel break in place and evacuation plans written, the communities were well prepared and were able to see the benefits of a completed fire plan. Since last October, the Cedar City BLM has actively participated in community fire planning meetings and has provided technical advice to eleven additional communities that have recently completed their fire plans.



Along with an active suppression program, the Cedar City BLM Fuels Management Program had an equally challenging and successful season implementing many wildland urban interface and resource projects throughout southwest Utah. The program's continued success comes from integrating fire management objectives with natural resource objectives and by working closely with other federal and state agencies, as well as various



wildlife and resource partners. Partners including the Mule Deer Foundation, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Utah Division of Wildlife resources contributed over \$155,000 in 2004 to buy seed and to share in contract labor costs of reducing hazardous fuels. Over 15,000 acres of BLM lands were treated in the Southern Utah Support Area, of which 9,659 acres were within the wildland urban interface (WUI).



Although the primary objective of each of these fuels projects is to reduce the likelihood of catastrophic wildfire affecting neighboring communities, many of the projects are also designed to restore ecosystem health by improving wildlife habitat for species such as elk, mule deer, sage grouse, and wild turkey. For instance, the Greenville Bench Enhancement Project, an

ambitious 36,000 acre landscape level treatment southwest of Beaver, Utah not only provides increased wildfire protection to the neighboring communities of Beaver and Greenville, but also improves habitat for mule deer and sage grouse, while restoring rangelands and the Beaver Watershed. Four other fuels projects are nearing completion or have been completed this year around the communities of Quichapa, Far West, Woolsey Ranch, Parowan, Paragonah, New Castle, and Veyo. Many of these projects use a variety of treatment techniques including manual and mechanical thinning as well as pile burning and/or prescribed fire. In addition, several of the areas have been reseeded with native and nonnative plants and forbs, and some areas have been planted with bitterbrush and sagebrush tublings as part of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' Dedicated Hunter Program.

2005 proves to be an equally challenging year with the extensive emergency stabilization and rehabilitation efforts that will occur this fall and winter on over 23,000 acres that burned this summer. Additionally, the fire and fuels program is hoping to complete several prescribed fires including the 6,000 acre Horse Valley Burn near Circleville and the 5,000 acre South Canyon Burn near Panguitch. Several new hazardous fuel reduction projects near the communities of Alton, Brookside, Panguitch, and Zion Panorama are also planned for the upcoming year.

For more information concerning BLM fuels projects in southwest Utah, contact Tambi Gustafson at the Cedar City BLM (435)865-3013 or log on to www.colorcountryfire.gov.