



## Great Basin Incident Management Team 5

### Big Summit Fire

July 21, 2020

<https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6853/>



### RESTORATION PROJECT AIDS FIRE SUPPRESSION EFFORT

On July 13, 2020, the Big Summit Fire started in Nevada and quickly burned across the state line into Utah, reaching the western edge of the Hamlin Valley. While firefighters anchored line near the point of origin and began to flank the fire with hand line and dozer line, winds out of the southwest drove the flames toward the northeast.

In 2018, the Color Country District of the Bureau of Land Management removed the pinyon and juniper trees from an area once dominated by perennial grass, forbs and shrubs. The area lies within the Hamlin Valley Sage Grouse Priority Habitat Management Area. The State Line Project was a collaborative effort through the Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, which had multiple interested parties, including local landowners. A total of 843 acres had mulching treatments, and were seeded with a grass and forb mix to achieve a vegetation community more closely resembling the sagebrush ecological site. This also resulted in patchy fuel breaks adjacent to private land in the Hamlin Valley. When the flaming front from the Big Summit Fire reached this treated area, it was suddenly starved of continuous fuel provided by a tree canopy. According to fire behavior analyst Gayle Sorenson, flame lengths from burning juniper trees usually reach heights of 20-30 feet or more. Firefighters are often unable to get close enough to be effective, even with fire engines. Water and fire retardant dropped from helicopters and air tankers is less effective when it cannot penetrate the canopy, and the intense heat evaporates much of the water or retardant before it reaches the fuels. The grass and forb vegetation left after treatment produce much less intensity and flame lengths are more likely to be just 3-6 feet. These fuel breaks created by the State Line habitat restoration project allowed firefighters the opportunity to directly attack the fire with hand tools and fire engines on this section of the fire. They were able to quickly build line and corral a prong of the fire in a relatively short time, assisted by helicopters dropping water and air tankers spreading retardant across the grassy fuels. This kept the fire from advancing on to private land to the east of Section 20, in the Hamlin Valley, just north of State Line Road.

The fire's progression northward was also hampered when it reached the rehabilitated burn area of the 2002 Eagle Fire. Progression eastward was slowed when it reached the 2007 Paradise Fire rehabilitation. The fire was completely lined on July 18, 2020. Nearly 13 miles of line was built in five days, due to the hard work of numerous firefighting crews and dozer operators. Firefighting efforts were benefited because the Big Summit Fire burned to the edges of previous natural disturbance and the restoration project area.

For more information on the Big Summit Fire: [2020.BigSummit@firenet.gov](mailto:2020.BigSummit@firenet.gov) or (702) 329-5256.

#### Nevada Fire Info

<https://www.nevadafireinfo.org/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/BLMNevada/>  
<https://twitter.com/NevadaFireInfo>

#### Utah Fire Info

<https://utahfireinfo.gov/>  
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