



Four Threats to Forest and Grassland Health

2004 Accomplishments
Boise National Forest
September 2004

The Forest has undertaken many activities that respond to the “four threats” to the health of our Nation’s forests and grasslands, identified by Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth last year. As Forest Service leaders, we are committed to reducing the four threats - fire and fuels, invasive species, loss of open space and unmanaged recreation - on the landscape. Here’s what we’ve accomplished to date in 2004 to respond to the four threats:

Fire and Fuels Decades of fuel buildup in many forest types have led to growing numbers of uncharacteristic fires, which burn out of control, damage forest stands, and compromise human safety and ecosystem integrity. We need to restore healthy ecosystems at risk to these fires, improve the condition and function of important watersheds, and sustain critical wildlife habitat.



This spring, the Casner prescribed fire project southwest of Idaho City burned 500 acres at low intensity to reduce fuel loads and the risk of severe, uncharacteristic wildfire. The Casner area is within a “wildland-urban interface area” identified in the Boise County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan.

Accomplishments *The Boise NF fully completed hazardous fuel reduction on about 8,200 acres of National Forest land in fiscal year 2004 (October 1, 2003 – September 30, 2004), using funding specifically allocated for hazardous fuels reduction. Treatments were focused on “wildland/urban interface” (WUI) areas, where wildlands and communities meet, and in areas where fire regimes have been moderately or significantly altered from what happened historically.*

Over 80 percent of the hazardous fuels funding in fiscal year 2004 was directed to projects in the WUI. The Southwest Idaho Resource Advisory Committee also provided funding for WUI treatments. Hazardous fuels were reduced around the communities of Idaho City (including surrounding areas such as the Duquette Pines subdivision and the Highway 21 intermix of homes), Garden Valley and surrounding subdivisions, Placerville, Yellow Pine, and Warm Lake.

About 7,200 of the acres treated were burned under controlled conditions. In addition, small trees were thinned using mechanical equipment on about 1,000 acres.

The Forest has also worked with Boise, Elmore, Gem and Valley counties in developing the counties’ Wildland Fire Mitigation Plans. These Plans are the cornerstone of National Fire Plan implementation in Idaho.



Canada thistle is one of 15 noxious weeds on the Forest.

Invasive Species Invasive species are nonnative species likely to cause economic or environmental harm, or harm to human health. Invasive species are spreading at alarming rates. We need to protect forest and rangeland ecosystems by preventing the release of non-native species and by controlling the spread, or eradicating, invasive species.

Accomplishments *The Boise NF actively participates in Idaho’s Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs), local organizations that integrate all noxious weed management resources within watersheds or other*

jurisdictional units. The CWMA is the core of Idaho's Strategic Plan for Managing Noxious Weeds, and of the Forest's approach to noxious weed management. Ranger Districts participate in the Boise Basin, South Fork Boise River, Lower Payette and Upper Payette CWMAs.

The Forest is also a key player in the Idaho Weed Awareness Campaign, which creates public awareness and education about the threat of invasive weeds, and which helps prevent the spread of these weeds.

The final report for acres infested and treated during the 2004 field season will not be available until later this fall. In 2003, there were nearly 109,000 acres on the Forest infested with noxious weeds, primarily Canada thistle, Dalmatian toadflax, rush skeletonweed, and spotted knapweed. The Forest treated almost 10,000 acres infested in 2003, largely through spraying and biocontrol methods.

Loss of Open Space Fragmentation poses great challenges to effective land management, causes loss of biodiversity, and contributes to degradation and loss of fish and wildlife habitat. We need to work with partners, communities and landowners to balance development with sustaining ecosystems and viable working landscapes.



Long Valley near Cascade includes a mix of federal, state, local and private owners who often work together on natural resource issues.

Accomplishments By understanding how urbanization and land fragmentation on adjacent ownerships may affect resources on National Forest lands, Forest managers can adopt appropriate strategies.

This year the Forest, in cooperation with Rocky Mountain Research Station, NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, developed a "Framework for Implementation of the 2003 Forest Plan" (Framework). The Framework focuses on threatened and endangered fish and wildlife species, as well as Forest Plan Management Indicator Species (MIS).

The Framework is a way to incorporate multiple scales of information across watersheds and jurisdictions into project planning on the National Forest. The Framework will help Forest leaders identify opportunities for partnerships with adjacent landowners to minimize or avoid fragmentation effects and preserve "open space."

The Forest has developed a Memorandum of Understanding with Boise County, the Bureau of Land Management, the City of Boise, and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to collaboratively manage public-land open space in the Boise foothills.

Unmanaged Recreation With increasing use of the National Forests for outdoor activities, we need to manage many forms of recreation, including the use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs). We need to work with partners to appropriately regulate OHV use on designated roads, trails and parks.

Accomplishments After intensive involvement with user groups and the public, the Forest adopted in July a new travel management policy that will eliminate cross-country travel by wheeled motorized vehicles. (Snowmachine use is not affected by the new policy.)

The new policy will help reduce soil compaction, erosion and other resource impacts, and social conflicts resulting from dramatically increased OHV use on the nearly 525,000 acres of the Forest that had been open to cross-country OHV travel.



The Danskin area on the Mountain Home Ranger District provides an easy after-work or weekend opportunity for motorized recreationists.