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Intermountain
Region

Boise National
Forest

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A Forest in Focus

What the
Boise National
Forest is doing
to accomplish
the Forest Service
Natural Resource
Agenda



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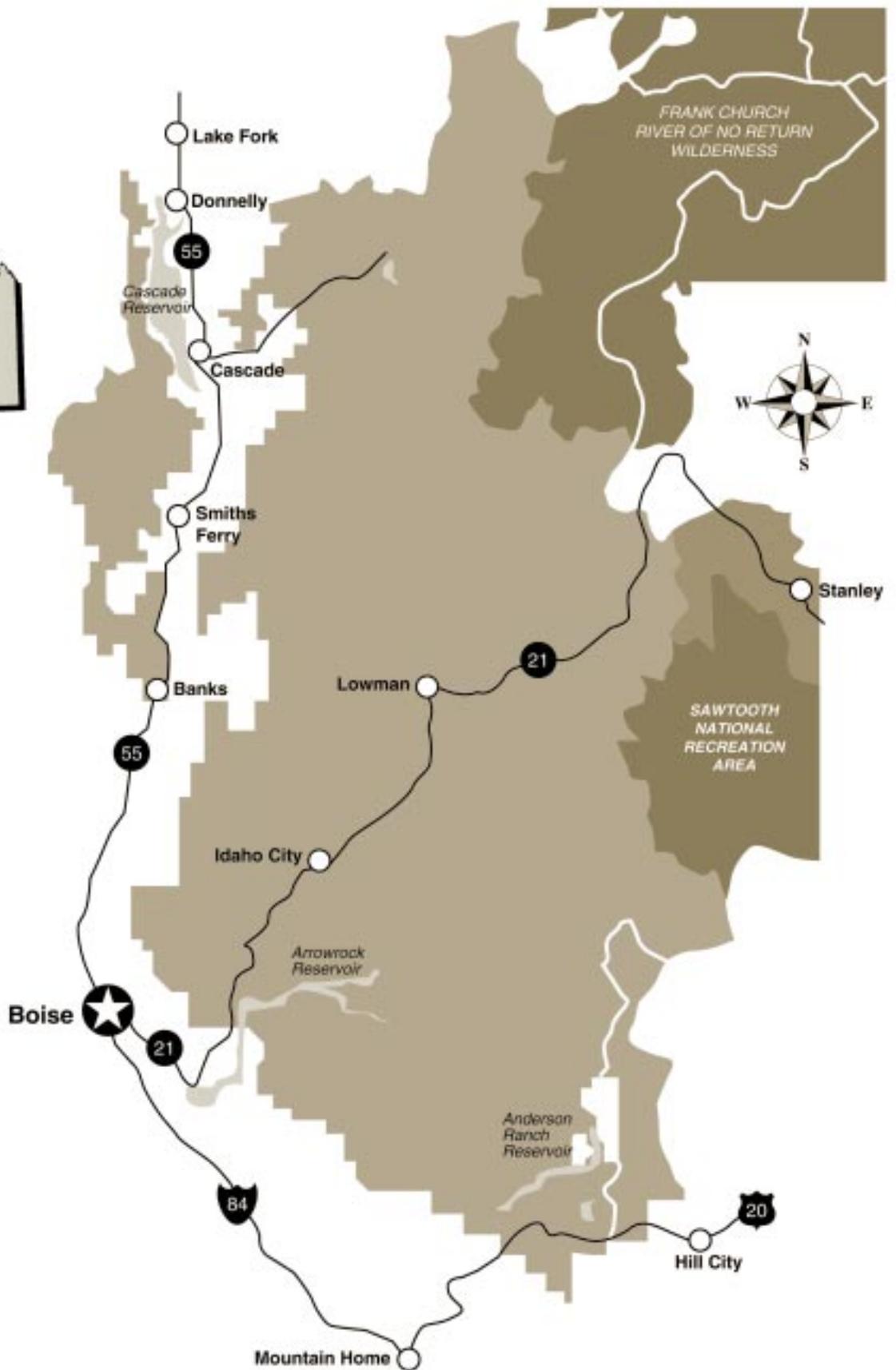
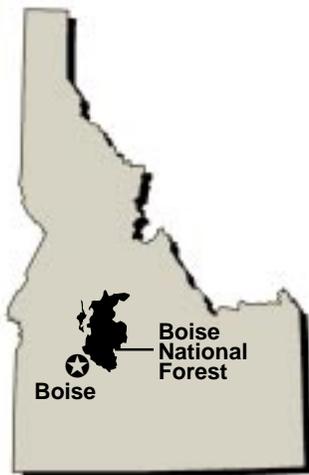
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Boise National Forest



ROAD DECOMMISSIONING

Of the approximately 5,000 miles of Forest Service administered roads within the Boise National Forest, an average of 15 miles per year are obliterated. These roads, which were originally built to facilitate timber harvest, are no longer needed for natural resource management activities and receive very little, if any, public use. The Boise National Forest determines which roads to decommission by assessing the resource damage that the road is causing and weighing that against public use. Decisions to decommission roads are done with public involvement through the National Environmental Policy Act process.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

The Boise National Forest has changed many road maintenance practices to reduce the amount of sediment entering nearby streams. Equipment operators have received training on the latest maintenance techniques for reducing sediment. Operators have worked with hydrologists and fish biologists in the field to identify solutions to tough road maintenance problems. The Boise National Forest has also helped author a booklet of road



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Decommissioning or restoring roads that cause environmental damage is a top priority on the Boise National Forest.

maintenance practices to reduce sediment. The booklet has been used as a reference on other Forest Service units.

LONG TERM ROAD POLICY PROTOTYPE

The Boise National Forest was one of six National Forests throughout the country selected to develop and test a process that could be used to determine when it is appropriate to build, upgrade, and decommission roads as part of the development of the Forest Service's long term road policy.

ROAD UPGRADES

Many roads that were originally built to facilitate timber harvest are now receiving heavy use by recreationists. In addition these "timber" roads were not built to the environmental standards of today. Graveling and stabilizing improvements are being made to these roads which reduce sediment to nearby streams and also improve motorist's comfort because they are smoother and not as dusty.

Conclusion

These are just a few of the actions the Boise National Forest is taking to put the Forest Service Natural Resource Agenda into action on the ground. We invite you to help us advance the Natural Resource Agenda by taking advantage of the many opportunities to provide input on proposed projects or volunteer to help complete projects in your area of interest. To stay updated about projects, visit our web site at www.fs.fed.us/r4/boise and take a look at our quarterly schedule of proposed actions and frequent news releases.

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Karl K. Brown

Many roads that were originally built to facilitate timber harvest are now receiving heavy use by recreationists.

Roads

ROAD RESTORATION

The Boise National Forest is working to repair damage associated with roads that were designed and constructed under outdated standards. In Scriver Creek, the Boise National Forest is working with Boise County, the Idaho Department of Lands, and Boise Cascade Corporation to reduce the amount of sediment entering the Middle Fork Payette River by reconditioning 20 miles of road, gravelling 20 miles of road, stabilizing five miles of stream, stabilizing 26 acres of hillslopes and conducting monitoring in the watershed.

The Boise National Forest has also completed several additional road improvement projects by successfully



Karl K. Brown

A road grader installs a "rolling dip" to capture and remove water from the road surface before it can concentrate and create erosion.

competing for dollars available from the "10% Road and Trail Deposit Fund." This fund, which is endowed by a percentage of receipts collected from the sale of National Forest products, provides monies to improve existing roads. In 1998, the Cascade Ranger District obtained more than \$200,000 to reshape and gravel 4.5 miles of the Anderson Creek Road, which accesses a popular snowmobiling area. The

Cascade Ranger District also constructed 26 rolling/drivable dips in the roadway surface. This road improvement project has improved the water quality of Lake Cascade, enhanced access and safety for recreationists, and will decrease future maintenance costs."



Karen Wattenmaker

A scenic view of Rainbow Lake on the Mountain Home Ranger District.

Introduction

In March 1998, Chief Mike Dombeck introduced the Forest Service “Natural Resource Agenda” to guide policy and decision making on the nation’s 156 National Forests into the 21st century. The primary goal is to ensure the protection and conservation of our nation’s natural resources, many of which are encompassed within National Forests.

The Natural Resource Agenda calls for increased emphasis in four key areas:

- Watershed health and restoration
- Sustainable forest management
- Roads
- Recreation

In some ways, the Boise National Forest had a head start in implementing the Natural Resource Agenda. That’s because in 1997 we developed a list of “Focus Items” on which to center our work that are very similar to the emphasis areas of the Natural Resource Agenda.

Here are some highlights of on-the-ground actions that the Boise National Forest is taking to implement the Natural Resource Agenda.

Watershed Health & Restoration



Joseph Tomelleri

BULL TROUT RECOVERY

The Boise National Forest contains prime habitat for bull trout, a species of fish native to Idaho that was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1998. We are working hard to maintain and enhance bull trout populations by improving habitat. Our efforts include:

- Modifying culverts to make it easier for fish to swim upstream and removing culverts that are at risk of failing and adversely effecting habitat in the event of flooding.
- Removing brook trout to reduce competition for food and cover.
- Fencing some streamside areas to prevent recreationists and livestock from damaging important bull trout habitat.

In addition, we are working with the Southwest Basin Native Fishes Watershed Advisory Group and the State of Idaho to develop and implement bull trout recovery strategies and prioritize watersheds and habitat improvement projects. As a result, we worked with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to install a fish ladder on the Kirby Dam near the town of Atlanta to enable bull trout to access prime habitat in the Middle Fork Boise River and its tributaries.

NATIVE AND RIPARIAN PLANT PRODUCTION

The Lucky Peak Nursery, which has traditionally grown conifer seedlings to replant areas that have been harvested in timber sales or burned by wildland fires, has started to produce native and riparian plants and shrubs to meet increasing needs for watershed restoration projects. In 1998, the Lucky Peak Nursery harvested its first major crop of 9,000 plants and shrubs of several species, all of which are native to the western United States. The plants were shipped to the Department of Defense for planting along streams at a training center near Yakima,

Washington to prevent soil erosion, provide shade for fish, and provide food and shelter for birds and other small animals. The Lucky Peak Nursery plans to expand production of native grasses and forbs to meet increasing needs for wildland fire rehabilitation and road obliteration projects.

The Lucky Peak Nursery has also begun producing native grass seed for specific mine reclamation projects on the Boise National Forest. For example, the Nursery is producing redtop grass seed that will be used in rehabilitation efforts at the abandoned Missouri Mine site.



Karen Wattenmaker

Employees from the Boise National Forest and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game remove brook trout from Edna Creek on the Idaho City Ranger District.

user fees and retaining them to fund operations, maintenance, and improvements in the areas where they are generated. In the first year of the program, \$36,000 was generated and spent to improve highway signing along the river corridor to enhance safety; to improve operations and maintenance by hiring a seasonal employee to maintain and monitor all of the project sites; to install signs and barbecue grills; and to construct a trail to the river at the Deer Creek River Access Site to minimize resource damage.

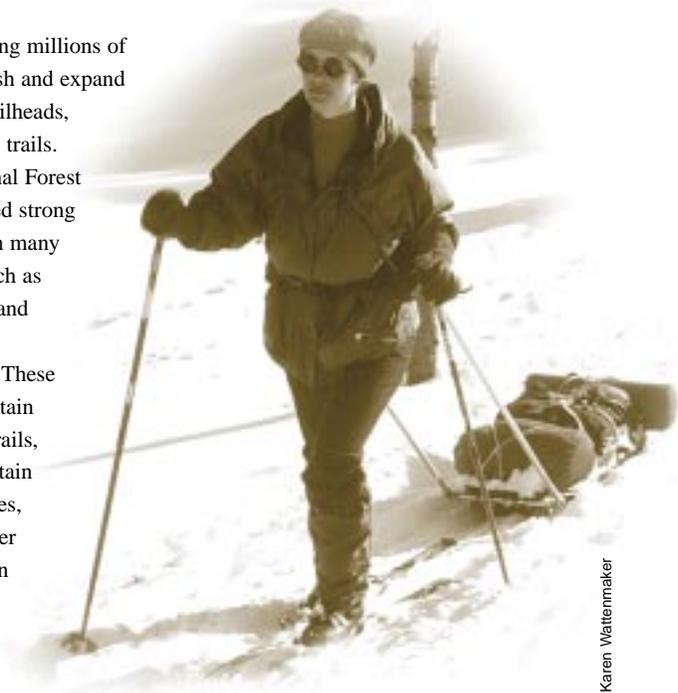
PARTNERSHIPS

The Boise National Forest works closely with other federal and state agencies that provide outdoor recreation through the Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative. Through this initiative, we have been able to create “one stop shopping” for information about outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in Idaho by producing joint brochures and maintaining an interagency web site (www.idoc.state.id.us/irti). Over the last few years, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation has been a strong partner in enhancing outdoor recreation on the Boise National

Forest by providing millions of dollars to refurbish and expand campgrounds, trailheads, boating sites, and trails. The Boise National Forest also has developed strong relationships with many organizations, such as trail user groups and campground concessionaires. These groups help maintain and reconstruct trails, operate and maintain recreation facilities, and complete other outdoor recreation projects.

MEETING CHANGING DEMANDS

While budgets generally do not allow for the construction of new facilities, the Boise National Forest is trying to respond to the changing and varied demands of changing and varied outdoor recreationists. Over the last few years, we have been working hard to make our recreation facilities more accessible to all users. On the Idaho City Ranger District, we are installing structures at the Whoop-Em-Up Campground to make it possible for people with



Karen Wattenmaker

The Boise National Forest offers a wide variety of outstanding recreation opportunities year round.

disabilities to ride horses on nearby trails. We are also trying to respond to the public’s growing demand for information about natural resources. On the Lowman Ranger District, a newly constructed interpretive trail at Kirkham Hot Springs enables the public to learn about hot springs and how to protect them.

DISPERSED RECREATION

National Forests are just about the only places where camping is permitted outside of designated campgrounds. While many people enjoy camping away from the crowds, especially along rivers and streams, use of what are called “dispersed” campsites sometimes threaten sensitive resources. In October 2000, the Boise National Forest will host a workshop on management of this very valued recreation opportunity.



Since 1993, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation has provided the Cascade Ranger District with more than \$215,000 to improve the Campbell Creek boat launch site on Lake Cascade.



Karen Wattenmaker

A Terra-torch is used to ignite a prescribed fire.

Sustainable Forest Management

ASPEN RESTORATION

The Boise National Forest is doing its part to halt the decline of aspen throughout the West by actively attempting to restore it. Aspen provides important food, cover, and nesting sites for many species of wildlife. The beauty of aspen stands, particularly in the fall, is highly valued by recreationists. On the Mountain Home Ranger District, where most of the aspen on the Forest is located, the Boise National Forest is removing conifer trees from aspen stands to reduce competition for soil, nutrients, and ground moisture and igniting prescribed fires to stimulate new growth.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

The Boise National Forest has launched an ambitious effort to restore fire to its natural role in ecosystems by conducting prescribed fires on a landscape scale. Currently, we are planning to conduct prescribed fires on an average of 20,000 acres per year. Prescribed fires have many benefits, including decreasing the risk of large wildland fires by reducing heavy accumulations of brush, plants, and grass; improving wildlife habitat by stimulating new growth; and enriching soil by providing nutrients.



Karen Wattenmaker

Dense forests line the South Fork of the Payette River.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Due to the exclusion of fire and past logging practices, many parts of the Boise National Forest now have ten times as many trees per acre, and a far greater proportion of non-fire resistant species of trees, than 100 years ago. Under these conditions, forest are vulnerable to large wildland fires and severe insect infestations and disease outbreaks. The Boise National Forest is trying to restore more sustainable conditions in areas that are at risk through a variety of vegetation management techniques. These include reducing the number of trees per acre by removing small diameter Douglas-fir trees while retaining larger diameter ponderosa pine trees and removing grand fir trees so that ponderosa pine trees can be planted.

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTS

Traditionally conventional timber sale contracts have been one of the only tools available to achieve desired resource conditions. Consequently, restoration and improvement projects have not been possible on a large scale because the Forest Service has only limited authority to require timber sale purchasers to perform restoration or improvement work and many of the trees that need to be removed have little or no commercial value. In

1999, Congress authorized the Forest Service to implement 28 pilot projects to demonstrate the effectiveness of “stewardship contracts” as a tool to accomplish restoration activities. Stewardship Contracts enable the Forest Service to integrate restoration work, such as water quality improvement, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, noxious weed control, road reclamation, and fuels reduction, into timber sale contracts. This reduces administrative costs as well as the potential for environmental degradation. The value of timber or other forest products removed can be used to help pay for the restoration or improvement work. The 6,500-acre North Kennedy/Cottonwood area on the Emmett Ranger District has been selected as one of 28 pilot project sites across the nation. Other government agencies and the public will be involved in helping to determine the goals for the North Kennedy/Cottonwood area and the land management activities that are needed to accomplish them. Annual monitoring, in which any individual, organization, or other government agency can participate, will be conducted to evaluate project success



Karen Wattenmaker

The Tiger Creek area provides living proof that forest restoration techniques work. After the area was thinned, harvested, and treated with prescribed fire, large ponderosa pine trees survived a huge wildland fire.

and determine if stewardship contracts should be applied more broadly and made permanent.

INTERNATIONAL FORESTRY

Boise National Forest employees are providing data and technical assistance to their counterparts around the world. The Center for International Forestry, based in Bogor, Indonesia, selected the Boise National Forest as one of only six sites in the world to test different ways to measure the sustainability of forest management. In 1999, Boise National Forest employees traveled to Mexico, Indonesia, and Russia to assist government agencies in rehabilitating land burned by wildfires, organizing for large scale wildland firefighting, and establishing tree nurseries.



Karen Wattenmaker



Kari K. Brown

A fly fisherman casts his line at the new Lowman Nature Fishing Ponds on the Lowman Ranger District.

Recreation

FACILITY IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

The Boise National Forest is refurbishing and expanding existing campgrounds and other facilities to meet growing and changing demands for outdoor recreation opportunities. One new, recently completed project is the Lowman Nature Fishing Ponds. The two ponds were constructed from old gravel borrow sites in partnership with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The area surrounding the ponds has been replanted with native ponderosa pine trees. The Lowman Nature Fishing Ponds, which are stocked regularly with catchable rainbow trout, are a big hit with both kids and adults.

Over the last few years, most of the improvements that have been made in recreation facilities on the Boise National Forest have been funded with grants provided by the Idaho Department of Parks and

Recreation (IDPR). The IDPR has provided the Boise National Forest with millions of dollars to refurbish and expand campgrounds, trailheads, trails, and boating sites. In 1999 alone, the IDPR provided more than \$165,000 to the Boise National Forest to enhance outdoor recreation.



Kari K. Brown

RECREATION FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

The Payette River, located on the Emmett Ranger District, was selected for inclusion in the Recreation Fee Demonstration program, created by Congress to test the feasibility of collecting

Two children delight in their catch at the Lowman Nature Fishing Ponds.



Kari K. Brown

Boy Scouts from Ore-Ida Troop 97 help the Forest Service with a stream restoration project.

NOXIOUS WEEDS

The Boise National Forest is forging partnerships with other federal, state, and county government agencies, private businesses, and landowners to prevent the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Noxious weeds cause a variety of serious environmental problems by competing with native and desirable plant communities. These include degrading fish and wildlife habitat, increasing soil erosion, and diminishing the quality of recreation experiences. The Boise National Forest has helped to establish, and actively participates in, several cooperative weed management areas, which enable agencies to enhance the effectiveness of noxious weed control efforts by

pooling resources and coordinating prevention, eradication, and public education projects.

COLLABORATIVE RESTORATION PROJECTS

The Boise National Forest is working with a wide variety of individuals and organizations to complete projects to maintain and restore the health of watersheds. One example is in Bear Valley on the Lowman Ranger District. For several years, members of the Ted Trueblood Chapter of Trout Unlimited and Boy Scouts from Ore-Idaho Troop 97 have been helping to restore, protect, and enhance critical spawning and rearing habitat for chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout; species native to Idaho that are listed as

threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The anglers and scouts have placed structures in Bear Valley Creek to restore channel stability and placed access barriers for recreationists, livestock, and vehicles to protect streambanks and allow vegetation to re-establish.

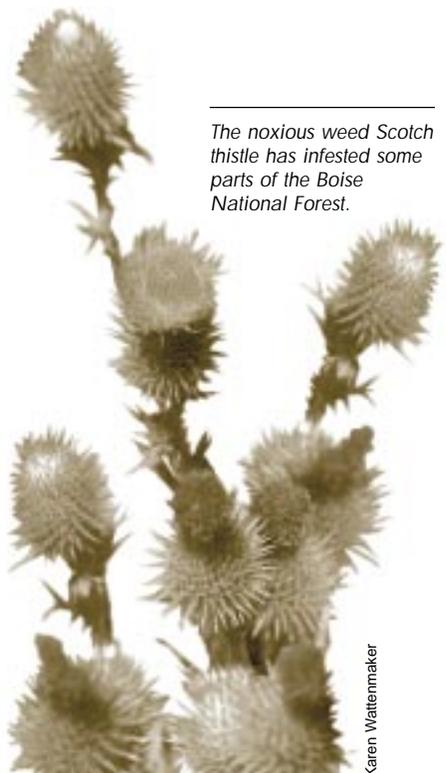
BURNED AREA EMERGENCY REHABILITATION

The Boise National Forest has received national awards for efforts to rehabilitate land burned by wildland fires including the U.S. Forest Service Chief's Stewardship Award, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Honor Award, and the U.S. Department of the Interior's Unit Award for Excellence of Service. The multi-million dollar rehabilitation of land burned in the Eighth Street Fire in 1996, designed to prevent flooding and mudslides in Idaho's Capital City, has become a national model of interagency cooperation and innovative wildland fire rehabilitation techniques.



Ravi Miro Fry

Installation of straw bale dams was one of the methods used to rehabilitate land burned in the Eighth Street Fire.



Karen Wattenmaker

The noxious weed Scotch thistle has infested some parts of the Boise National Forest.