



National Fire Plan

Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge Takes on Hazardous Fuels

With funds generated by the National Fire Plan, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Little Pend Oreille (LPO) National Wildlife Refuge near Colville, Washington is removing hazardous fuels that threaten refuge infrastructure, wildlife habitat and adjacent private lands and structures.

Decades of fire suppression and a variety of harvest practices over the years created dense stands of conifer trees on the refuge. These stands pose a wildfire hazard for both federal and private lands and structures.

Reducing the number of standing and downed trees reduces the chance that that a small fire could become a large one and devastate public and private property. Refuge employees and local Washington Department of Natural Resources personnel surveyed adjacent properties and identified high-risk areas, then worked with landowners to reduce the fire threat. On the refuge, more than 15 miles along the refuge boundary have been burned or thinned since 1998, for a total treatment area of more than 5,000 acres.

Prescribed fire and tree thinning reduced the fire risk to the refuge's main office. The refuge also uses contractors to harvest trees with the intent of reducing density and restoring mature stand structures as well as restoring fire's role in the ecosystem, particularly in ponderosa pine and western larch forest types.



Prescribed fire burns in a dense forest near the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge office. (USFWS)
