



FACT SHEET

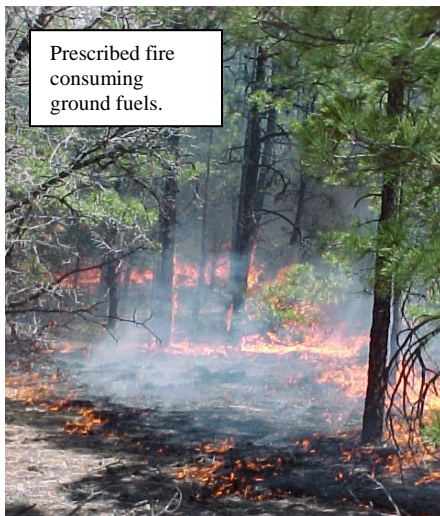


United States Department of Agriculture
Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

United States Department of Interior
Web: <http://www.doi.gov>

Making a Difference Gila National Forest - New Mexico

Due to its mountainous topography, the Gila National Forest located in Southern New Mexico has the highest fire occurrences in the state. Dense stands of mature trees and a continuing drought have combined to make for a very dangerous wildland fire situation that threatens local communities and wildlife and fisheries habitat.



Prescribed fire consuming ground fuels.

In the Summer 2003, the Gila National Forest successfully completed the planning on four categorical exclusions under the Healthy Forests Initiative. The projects are Gap 1 Wildland Urban Interface, Mollogon Fuel Break, Pine Cienega Subdivision fuel break, as well as a Highway right of way fuels treatment. Combined, the projects totaled 510 acres.

All of the projects reduced hazardous fuels by removing trees mechanically and using prescribed fire. The small diameter trees will be chipped. Some of the projects occurred in and around communities so mitigating any damage that may happen during a wildland fire.

The Healthy Forest Initiative made possible planning and implementation of projects in the same year. It has eliminated the months of notice and comment and appeal on projects that are essential to firefighter and public safety. The Gila National Forest anticipates completing seven categorical exclusions under HFI in FY 2004.

In the end, HFI has helped decrease the hazards to the community in a timely manner and promote a healthier forest.

Wood chipper used to chip small diameter trees and brush removed



For more information on the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Healthy Forests Initiative, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/> or <http://www.doi.gov/hfi/newhfi/>