



BLM Continues Hazardous Fuels Removal in Hoback Ranch Subdivision

BLM's Pinedale Field Office plans to resume work on a fuel break in the Hoback Ranches Subdivision this summer as part of the Wildland-Urban Interface Communities-at-Risk Program.

Hoback Ranches was identified as a Community-at-Risk for wildfire in 2001. It was determined to be the number one BLM priority in Wyoming for Communities-at-Risk. As a result of the National Fire Plan, the Wyoming Division of Forestry began offering grants for removal of hazardous fuels on private lands in the subdivision.

Summit Forestry was awarded an Indefinite Deliver-Indefinite Quality contract last year and began working on a fuel break in the 75-acre section. Due to inclement weather, the project was not completed.

In May 2002, a contract was awarded for a Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan of the Hoback Ranches Subdivision. This plan was funded and administered by BLM and prepared by the Dynamac Corporation. The plan determined the buildup of wood, brush and grass in the area to be hazardous and identified what measures needed to be taken to prevent wildfire.

In October 2002, the completed Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan identified four needs for the area as fuel breaks and fuel reduction, water storage facilities, road improvements, and community education and outreach. The survey identified the area as a risk to lives, homes, property, wildlife habitat, recreation, potentially historic sites, grazing, soil stability, water quality and timber due to the buildup of vegetation.

The mitigation plan identified actions to reduce hazards of wildfire as continual cooperation among state, federal and local agencies, reduction of diseased timber and fuel loadings on public lands, private lands and roads, construction of shaded fuel breaks along the borders between public and private lands, and shaded fuel breaks are areas where shorter trees and large shrubs are removed to create an area free of ladder fuels.

In 2003 the U.S. Forest Service and BLM co-funded a contract to determine if the project was in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. This was signed on June 24, 2004. A contract was awarded last year to survey the private and federal land boundaries to assist in project development. The contract was funded by the forest service and BLM.

In 2004, BLM began developing an assistance agreement with the Hoback Ranch Subdivision to fund mitigation, education and planning activities on private lands. The funds from the agreement were used to provide qualified volunteer firefighters with the equipment necessary to fight wildfire within the subdivision. The funds also began a fuel-thinning project along Rim Road.

BLM and the U.S. Forest Service committed funds last year to begin the first phase of construction of shaded fuel breaks along boundaries. The agencies used the National Indefinite Deliver-Indefinite Quality contract for fuels contractors.

Bids for a stewardship contract under the authority of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act are being accepted. This contract would assign responsibility to complete the fuel break to the company or organization awarded the contract. Bidding continues for the stewardship contract.

BLM is currently working with the Hoback Ranches Community for further assistance agreement funding to continue projects.

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Home in Wyoming's Hoback Ranch Subdivision. (7-8-WY-1.tif)