

First Prescribed Fire Completed at Monument Capulin Volcano National Monument, New Mexico National Fire Plan – Fuels Reduction

Capulin Volcano National Monument burned approximately 50 acres of prairie on Saturday, April 23, 2005. Fire crews from Bandelier National Monument, Lake Meredith National Recreation Area, El Malpais National Monument, and Kiowa National Grasslands conducted the burn after several hours wait for winds to abate.

This burn is the third step for implementing the Fire Management Plan (FMP) for the monument. Manual thinning of brush occurred during the summer of 2004. A crew of 15 worked for a week cutting piñon, juniper, oak, and mountain mahogany on the north and northwest base of the volcano to reduce the fuel load and the chance of wildfire in the monument. Brush piles from this thinning operation were burned in February, 2005.



Crews ignite prescribed fire near the Capulin Volcano Visitor Center.

Fire history data suggest a declining fire frequency by the late 1800s, as suppression activities interrupted natural fire cycles. Fuel loads and tree density have increased. Management intervention is needed to reduce the risk to life, property, and resources from wildland fire. Fire, as an ecological process, has been excluded from the Monument which has contributed to the decrease in species and habitat diversity.

This first prescribed, controlled fire will help to restore prairie grasslands by reducing woody vegetation, reducing excess fuels, and controlling invasive plants.

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