



National Fire Plan

Klamath Basin: Another Successful Year in Prescribed Fire

In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex conducted 146 prescribed burns and treated 34,697 acres in its quest to reduce hazardous fuels on its refuges. These activities improved birdwatching, photography and hunting opportunities on several refuges while protecting nearby homes from the potential effects of wildfire.

Fire crews treated nearly 15,500 acres of leaseland farms with fire and mechanical brush clearing within Tule Lake and Lower Klamath national wildlife refuges. More than 19,000 acres of waterfowl and migratory bird habitat at Tule Lake, Lower Klamath and Modoc refuges were improved using prescribed fire. At Bear Valley refuge, crews ignited 130 acres of brush piles as part of an ongoing wildland-urban interface hazardous fuels reduction and juniper removal project.

More and more people are choosing to build houses in wildland-urban interface areas, more commonly referred to as WUI. These areas, where development meets wild lands such as refuges, are naturally prone to wildfire. Specific definitions vary, but Klamath Basin's Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a prime example of an area where the natural landscape abuts the forested communities of Keno and Worden, Oregon. By first cutting trees and brush and then burning the area, fire specialists reduce the possibility that wildfire could significantly damage homes adjacent to the refuge, or destroy fragile eagle nest sites within the refuge.

Since 2001, Klamath Basin fire managers have led an effort between the Service and Bureau of Land Management biologists, timber specialist and firefighters to implement a fuels and risk reduction program at Bear Valley refuge. Slashbusting, chainsaw hand-thinning and contract timber sales are complemented by burning understory vegetation in the treated units.

This fire management program protects six refuges that comprise the Klamath Basin NWRC, including Bear Valley, Upper Klamath and Klamath Marsh national wildlife refuges in southern Oregon, and Clear Lake, Lower Klamath and Tule Lake national wildlife refuges in northern California. The program also provides fire management services to Modoc NWR in Alturas, California, and to Humboldt Bay NWRC in Loleta, California.

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