

# National Fire Plan

## McCreary County's Hazardous Fuels Mitigation Kentucky 2003



McCreary County's problems with hazardous fuels began with the ice storms and winter snows of 1998 and 1999. Subsequently, Southern Pine Beetle activities increased throughout Kentucky. By the spring of 2000, beetle populations were at epidemic levels, killing 85 percent of southern yellow pines in McCreary County.

That year, the county had 157 fires for a total of 2,555 acres. Two homes were burned and the fire danger was so severe that schools were closed. The McCreary Firewise Council was formed to reduce fuel hazards, provide information about local wildland fire potential, defensible space and wildland fire prevention, and improve relationships among federal, state and county agencies and the public.

With a National Fire Plan grant, the council improved public awareness by mailing over 7,000 defensible space surveys, started the Beware and Prepare and Stop Arson campaigns, and began work on a county-wide risk assessment. In 2001, McCreary County had 95 fires - a decrease of 62 with no homes lost.

In 2002, the county-wide hazardous fuels assessment was completed and an action plan developed to mitigate risk from hazardous fuels. After 7,000 hours of mitigation work, 60 structures were protected -- and the council received a second grant to continue the mitigation and education programs.

The council has been approved for a third grant to continue the defensible space program, do fuels mitigation work, develop a cost share program, and continue arson prevention and Firewise education.



**Pine Beetles killed all the young pines surrounding Otter Creek Church in McCreary County, Kentucky. At right, the South McCreary Volunteer Fire Department used NFP grant funds to create a 50 ft defensible space around the church.**