National Fire Plan

Bryce Canyon Completes Paria Prescribed Fire
Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah
National Fire Plan – Fuels Reduction

In May 2004, Bryce Canyon National Park Fire Management personnel completed the Paria Prescribed Fire as part of their ongoing fire management program. This burn is part of the federal government's Wildland Urban Interface program as directed by the National Fire Plan of 2000. Project goals included the protection of communities and structures located near public lands from the impacts of wildfire and the restoration of fire as a natural process to ponderosa pine and grassland communities. Bryce Canyon fire personnel are planning other similar burns in the future under the guidance of their Fire Management Plan.

The 1000+ acre Paria Prescribed Fire Burn Unit is located to the south of Bryce Canyon Lodge and Bryce Viewpoint, in the northern portion of the park. The burn was designed to reduce the wildfire hazard to the lodge and adjacent historic structures, campgrounds and other developments in or near this area of the park. The area has been identified by state and federal land management agency administrators as one of six wildland urban interface focus areas requiring priority fuels treatments in this part of Utah. This area was treated with prescribed fire once before in 1994.

The prescribed fire was a cooperative effort between state, local and federal agencies and was carried out over a period of four days. Bryce Canyon Fire Management personnel utilized the assistance of over 50 individuals and associated equipment including the Arrowhead Hotshots (a 20-person National Park Service fire crew), fire personnel from other national parks, federal wildland engine crews, and a helicopter operations module from Mesa Verde National Park.

Public input concerning smoke issues and the burns' effects on visitation were utilized in the formation of the final planning documents for the burns. One of the things the park did to address the smoke issue was to install a DataRam monitoring device in the local town of Tropic, prior to and during the burn, to measure the particulate concentration. This device uses scattered light to measure the average and maximum concentration levels of particulates, particle size, humidity, and temperature, with time information for all. It was found that the particulate levels in Tropic during the burn were very low. In fact, the levels were approximately the same as for days preceding the burn.

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