



## **Colville National Forest, Three Rivers Ranger District - Washington Burnt Valley Wildland/Urban Interface Project**

The project area is located 5 miles north of the town of Chewelah. The purpose of the project is to reduce fuels in the area by using both prescribed fire and mechanical treatments, which will reduce the risk of impacts of wildland fire to public and private lands within the project area and provide safety for firefighters undertaking wildland fire suppression operations in the wildland/urban interface.

Treatment objectives are intended to decrease surface fire intensity and lessen the potential for high-intensity crown fires by:

- Reducing surface forest fuel loading
- Reducing ladder fuels
- Reducing the number of trees with interlocking crowns that contribute to crown fire initiation and crown fire spread
- Maintaining forest stand conditions that favor fire-resistant tree species in short interval and mixed severity fire regimes

The HFI Fuels Reduction Categorical Exclusion was used, with a Decision Memo signed on July 30, 2004. The project includes 778 acres of thinning and 1,531 acres of prescribed fire treatments. The project will use the new stewardship authority with expectation of awarding a contract in the fall of 2004. The Colville Community Forestry Coalition was the primary group with which the Colville National Forest collaborated on the project, along with individual local landowners.

The mechanical treatments, which include the removal of merchantable-sized trees, may not have been possible without the HFI authority. The new HFI authorities allowed the Forest, interest groups, and individual citizens to be involved in the project planning and seek agreement on work to be done. The documentation of the analysis through a Categorical Exclusion provided a shorter time from planning to implementation. Even though improving Condition Class was not a primary objective on this project, the treatments will improve condition class and increase fire resiliency.

The town of Chewelah is developing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and the project fits within the strategy of that plan. There is also a National Fire Plan grant requested through the Washington State DNR for defensible space and fuels reduction work for the Burnt Valley area.

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