



National Fire Plan

Fuel Break, Quick Response Keeps Wildfire from Spreading in Arizona

On the morning of August 8, 2005 refuge staff at Arizona's Cibola National Wildlife Refuge discovered a small wildfire, most likely from the previous night's lightning storm, burning on the east side of the refuge near a farm and residential area.

Initial attack on the fire was conducted by members of the Ehrenberg Volunteer Fire Department and the Service and other state suppression resources were dispatched from the Mohave Valley Station. While firefighters were being dispatched, the fire grew to more than 20 acres and was moving toward private land. The rate of the fire's spread was slow, but flame lengths reached 30 to 40 feet in areas with dense stands of salt cedar, an aggressive invasive tree. Hazardous fuel loads in this area exceeded 60 tons per acre.

The fire quickly reached a fuel break that had been created along the boundary where refuge and private land meet. The fuel break, constructed in 2003, is approximately 60 feet wide and although salt cedar had recently been trying to overtake it, the break was enough to stop the fire until fire crews from the Service, Bureau of Land Management and local fire departments to arrive. The fuel break then served as an anchor point and an access route for the firefighters to begin direct line construction. The fire was fully suppressed at 39 acres the next day with no adverse impacts to private land.

The fuel break was created by refuge staff with their Gyro-trac, and also was treated with the herbicide, Garlon. A second fuel break was constructed in 2003 using specified funding and contract equipment. The refuge plans to create two more fuel breaks, but budget and staffing shortfalls have precluded new construction.

Contact: Lorene Guffey
USF&WS R-2, WUI Coordinator
AZ, NM, TX and OK
505-248-6421
505-269-7868 cell
