

National Fire Plan

Hazardous Fuels Reduction

Colorado

2003



BLM Teams Up with Colorado Division of Wildlife

BLM specialists wanted to reduce fuels on land in the wildland-urban interface near Durango, but some terrain was too steep, so to lessen potential fire intensity they evaluated treating adjacent land, which happened to belong to the Colorado Division of Wildlife. When project manager Randy Lewis explained the potential benefits to wildlife to state officials, a partnership was struck.

This month the BLM and Colorado Division of Wildlife started a thinning project that will reduce hazardous fuels and improve wildlife habitat on about 400 acres in the Perins Peak Wildlife Area, which borders the city of Durango. The project is designed to both protect surrounding areas from catastrophic wildfire and stimulate the growth of palatable vegetation for wildlife.

The project area is home to deer, elk, and other herbivores as well as being a popular hiking area for local residents.

Several dozen homes are less than one-quarter mile from the wildlife area. “We’ve thinned within 150 feet of homes, but I haven’t heard one negative comment from a homeowner,” said Lewis.



The hydroaxe mower at work in the project area.

The project will take place in areas of flat terrain and small drainages on BLM and State Division of Wildlife lands west of Durango between the Rock Ridge Subdivision and Dry Fork drainage. A hydroaxe will create openings in dense areas of shrubs by thinning scrub oak and smaller juniper trees. It will also remove thick areas of brush choking out natural meadows.



Perins Peak area illustrating BLM lands that have received thinning treatment.

The contractor is using existing trails in the Perins Peak Wildlife Area between Rock Ridge and Dry Fork to access project areas. The area will remain open to use, but the public has been cautioned not to get too close to the machine, which can throw material 300 feet. Contact: Randy Lewis, San Juan Public Lands Center, (970) 247-4874, or Colorado Division of Wildlife, (970) 247-0855.

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