

# National Fire Plan

## Rural Fire Assistance

### Idaho

### 2003



(l to r) Lower Snake River District Rural Fire Assistance Coordinators Leigh Ann Hislop and Elden Alexander join Fire Management Officer Rosemary Thomas in handing the keys to the 1990 International Type IV engine to David Haney, Fire Chief of the Robie Creek Volunteer Fire Department. Haney's department was able to purchase the surplus engine with funds from the Rural Fire Assistance Program.

Of the many programs and efforts spawned by the National Fire Plan, perhaps none are hailed as more successful and efficient than the Rural Fire Assistance Program. At least that is the case in southwest Idaho. While a number of county mitigation plans are successfully being done, involving a broad spectrum of partners for projects being implemented, the Rural Fire Assistance program is out front in showing immediate benefits to the BLM Lower Snake River District and its partners throughout the area.

In the three years since its inception, the Rural Fire Assistance program has enabled the Lower Snake River District to foster new partnerships and strengthen existing ones on the way to delivering approximately \$670,000 to 43 community fire departments. The funding assistance for equipment, training, and prevention for these departments, many which are small and often financially-strapped, has made a significant difference in their capabilities and safety in preparing for wildland fire.

This summer, four departments were able to use the funding to purchase surplus BLM wildland fire engines. Departments in the communities of Mountain Home and Yellow Pine, and the Robie Creek and Murphy-Reynolds-Wilson fire districts each used their funding to purchase 90's-model

Type Four heavy wildland engines. BLM District Rural Fire Assistance coordinators facilitated purchase of a surplus engine from out of the area for a fifth department.

Each of the five departments has significant wildland areas within their jurisdictions and the addition of an engine makes a tremendous improvement in their ability to safely and effectively respond to wildfires, especially in wildland-urban areas, as well as work more closely with BLM crews on the scene.

In ceremonies transferring title and keys to the engines, fire chiefs, county commissioners, and representatives from Idaho's Congressional offices, the Lower Snake River District Manager and others lauded the success and efficiency of the Rural Fire Assistance Program. The success of the program is grounded in a variety of ways, from the quick turnaround time from application for funding assistance, to dollars transferred and increased cooperation and coordination between the BLM and partners, as well as increasing the capabilities and safety factor for small community departments responding to wildland fire.

Rosemary Thomas, Lower Snake River District Fire Management Officer, described the program as "win-win-win" for everyone involved. "This program has helped foster and improve relationships with our partners, and benefited them and their fire programs. Ultimately, we think it will result in improved safety and protection of life, property, and resources during wildfire events," she said.