



Black Canyon City, A Careless Sparks One Year Kindles Community Care the Next

Black Canyon City, Arizona is north of Phoenix along Interstate 17. In 2004, the risk of wildfire was evident around this community. Dry grass and brush was against sides of homes, brush piled under a bridge near the town's center, along with a continuing seven year drought cycle. Some homeowners prepared for the worst and the worst happened.

On June 5, 2004, a careless spark started a fire which spread toward nearby homes and into a large brush pile under the bridge in the middle of town. The towering flames and black smoke were seen by the entire community. Twenty acres were quickly consumed.



Before and after photos of a fire break in the St. David community.

While it was quickly controlled, the close call reminded community leaders of the importance of working with BLM fire management experts, volunteers, and other groups to continue cleanup efforts not only reduce fuel loads in the area but beautify the community itself.

Turn the clock ahead almost a year to May 7, 2005. A sea of yellow tee-shirts is evidenced by some 200 volunteers who are cleaning up the community, removing brush, branches, and dead trees in the riverbed area and around the community where the fire occurred one year earlier. Community volunteer groups young and old alike, Arizona Public Service volunteers, and BLM crews used chippers and trucks to reduce vegetation, thereby reducing the potential for an urban interface wildfire.

BLM's Phoenix Field Office brought in fire crews, another chipper, and sawyers to cut up dead and dying trees along the Aqua Fria riverbed. Dead and down materials were chipped into piles of mulch which were made available to the public.

Dry weeds were removed from the medical center's helipad, neighbors helped others who could not clear dried vegetation themselves, and seniors cleared grass and weeds from around the local community center as younger volunteers helped load trailers around the area.

This project was a true community partnership, with Arizona Public Service volunteers, BLM, local youth and senior groups, church and civic leaders brought together with a common purpose aided by National Fire Plan funding and the contributions of others.

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