

**Fuels reduction investment returns great dividend in just one year**  
**West Mountain Wildland Urban Interface Project Findings**  
**Salt Lake Field Office, Bureau of Land Management**

**Overview**

Perhaps, Ezra Patten, a local resident, offers the best overview of the wildfire threat on West Mountain when he told the Uinta Herald (4/9/03) the he remembers the night three years ago when, to save his orchard from a raging wildfire, he and his neighbors spent all night spraying water around the fenceline of his property.

“It came within 100 feet of my fence,” said Patten, who owns 120 acres of sweet cherries, peaches and pears on the slopes of West Mountain. “Some of the trees were singed by the heat.”

Large fires on West Mountain are common occurrence, over the last ten years, 23 BLM fires have burned over 12,500 acres on West Mountain. Two more wildland fires were added to that list during the month of September 2004.

The difference between the fires years past and present is a 300-foot wide area that has been mechanically treated and seeded by the Salt Lake Field Office (SLFO), Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Under the National Fire Plan, five treatment areas were identified around the benches of West Mountain to create fuelbreaks. This year those fuelbreaks proved effective in obtaining their objectives of improving wildland fire management, prioritizing firefighter and public safety and preventing damage to property. Initial reports reflect objectives were achieved.

**Observations**

**Fire Behavior-**As afternoon winds started driving the fire downslope the fuelbreak slowed its drive from fast moving flames to a slower, smoldering front.

**Safety-**Safety of firefighters and surrounding homes and businesses was enhanced by the fuelbreak.

**Suppression Effectiveness-**County Firefighters in concert with the BLM were able to quickly establish a black line within the treated area in order to protect nearby homes and orchards.

**Fire Effects-**Potential fire spread was greatly reduced in the treated disk line. Weather, topography and time of day are uncontrollable variables within the fire equation but man made efforts such as the fuelbreak built on West Mountain have proven to influence favorable fire behavior and effects.

***The National Fire Plan and A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: A 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy***

**Promote Community Assistance**-The SLFO is pursuing assistance agreements with surrounding communities. Our assistance agreements have helped strengthen the effectiveness of the fuelbreaks on public land, especially given the scattered nature of the public land along the base of the mountain.

**Communities At Risk**-The Salt Lake Field Office has been working with 19 communities in or adjacent to public lands to demonstrate “firewise” concepts that they can use in the protection of private land and property. Six community fireplans have been completed with the input of local citizens, volunteer fire departments, county, state and federal agencies.

**Interagency Cooperation**-BLM, USFS,USFWS, State of Utah/Forestry, Conservation Districts, Fire and State Lands, and County Fire Officials are just a few of the players that work collaboratively in planning, coordinating and implementing fuels treatments to create maximum protection for WUI and HFR projects.

**Reduce Hazardous Fuels**-In Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 the SLFO, BLM completed a total of 2,507 acres or 125% of their target. For Wildland Urban Interface the target of 8,870 acres was reached and exceeded to 104%.

For more information feel free to call Erin Darboven, Fire Mitigation and Education, Salt Lake Field Office, 801-977-4328