

WILDFIRES PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON FIRE PROTECTION PROJECTS

Two fuelbreaks created by the Bureau of Land Management, Salt Lake Field Office proved their worth this summer in separate wildfires in Utah County that were caused by target shooting. Over the last three years, the field office has designed and implemented numerous fuels reduction projects aimed towards increasing firefighter and community safety. The fuelbreaks were made by the field office using funds provided by the National Fire Plan appropriations and were coordinated with local government, state and federal partners.



Payson City Fire Chief Scott Spencer was very happy with the results from the BLM firebreak placed within his protection area on West Mountain. Spencer said, “I was getting a bit nervous when afternoon winds took a turn and started pushing the fire towards homes and the business orchards close to the base of the mountain.” As flames diminished so did Spencer’s worries. Chief Spencer continues, “Once I realized the fire would

hold in that fire break I was able to relocate our resources to protect its spread to other areas of the mountain.” Treatment for West Mountain simply involved disking and reseeding a 300’ strip on public lands close to the community two years ago.

In September, Saratoga Springs Volunteer Fire Department, Utah County, the State of Utah, and BLM were assisted by another fuelbreak on public land. Saratoga Springs firefighters reported a significant reduction in flame length and speed when the Concrete Fire hit sagebrush that had been treated by a chaining method. Again, the method applied was simple and inexpensive, a mere strip of thinned sagebrush helped protect subdivisions in both Saratoga Springs and Eagle Mountain. Saratoga Springs completed a community fire plan this spring in conjunction with the State, County and BLM that will help the city implement further fire protection measures.

Dan Washington, Wildland-Urban Interface Coordinator for the SLFO, BLM,



said, “The fuelbreaks on West and Lake Mountains did what they were intended to do in protecting the communities. They slowed the fire’s spread and reduced the size of the flames so that firefighters could do their jobs more safely.” Washington added, “The juniper thinning areas burned in the Concrete Fire were not as successful but we’ve learned ways to improve future projects.” More information on fuels projects in the state can be found at www.utahfireinfo.gov.

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