

Range Creek Fuels Reduction and Vegetation Restoration Project





OVERVIEW

The Range Creek project is a multi-phase fuels treatment anticipated to be implemented over a number of years, beginning in 2016. Treatments were designed and coordinated through the application of current scientific research and sound land management practices to:

1. Protect against wildfires
2. Enhance wildlife habitat
3. Improve watersheds
4. Restore plant communities

Wildfire protection includes thinning dense pinyon and juniper trees, reducing cheatgrass fuel loads which can serve as the primary carrier of wildfire, and re-introducing fire as a natural ecological process on the landscape.

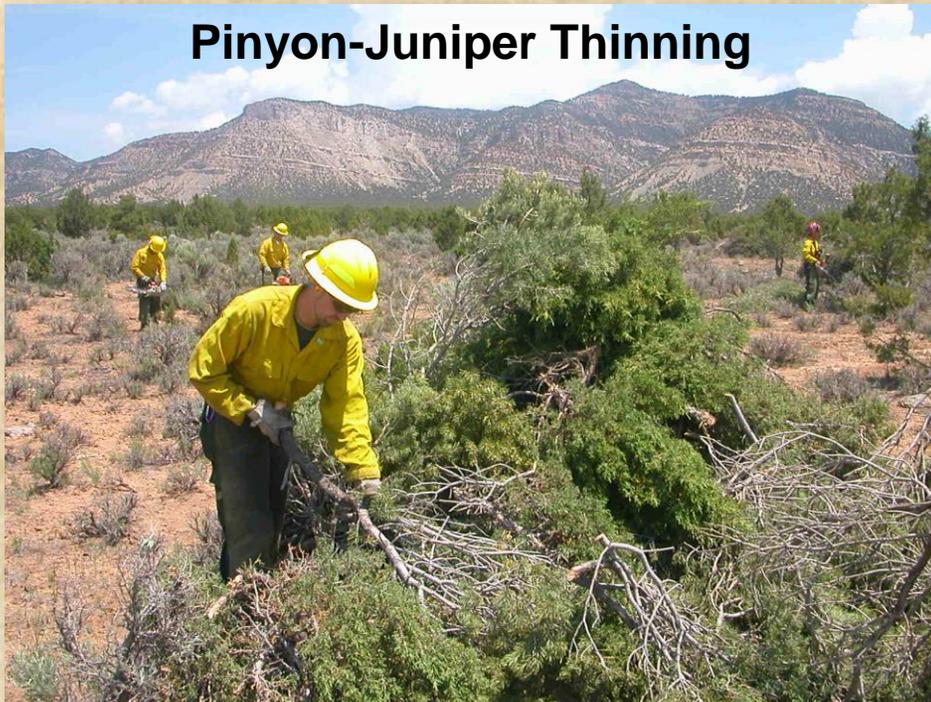
Wildlife habitat enhancement involves the conservation and improvement of existing sagebrush and riparian habitat to support healthy and sustainable wildlife populations.

Watershed improvement incorporates increases in water yield and quality by reducing the risk for the negative outcomes of high-intensity wildfire and promoting the development of understory biodiversity.

Plant community restoration is achieved through removal of invasive plant species, reducing resource competition, and re-establishment of native plant species which promotes a rich and resilient understory.

GOALS

- Reduce the potential for loss to life and property from wildfire.
- Preserve and enhance critical habitat, forage and travel corridors for wildlife.
- Restore ecological resilience to watersheds and plant communities.
- Restore and expand sage brush, riparian and other native plant communities.



TREATMENTS

- Lop and Scatter
- Thin, Pile, and Burn
- Prescribed Burning
- Mastication
- Seeding
- Herbicide Application

HISTORY

The Range Creek area is currently experiencing pinyon and juniper (P-J) encroachment, sagebrush degradation and cheatgrass invasion. The combination of increased fuel loads and high fire frequency increases the possibility for large scale high-severity wildfire in the area. The Range Creek drainage and surrounding area have experienced an increase in fire activity (see Figure 1). Since 1974, the analysis area has had 53 documented fires burning a total of 7,385 acres. Increased fire size and intensity could put human safety and local infrastructure within the Range Creek vicinity at risk.

Range Creek contains unique ecological and cultural resources which are of significant historical value. The area has a long history of cattle ranching, and remained preserved under exclusive private ownership until 2001. The land was secured by the state of Utah, who handed off land stewardship responsibilities to the University of Utah in a 2009 land exchange. Today, administration of the area remains under the Natural History Museum of Utah, where it provides a spectacular opportunity for research and education.

Over the past several decades, P-J encroachment has been a major focus for the BLM due to its spatial extent and the undesirable consequences of fire regime change. Vegetative competition from P-J has contributed to declines in forage production, diminished habitat quality for wildlife, decreased herbaceous cover, and increases in soil erosion with implications for long-term ecosystem sustainability. Degraded sagebrush habitat can be improved by removing junipers and reseeding with perennial species where desirable understory species are lacking. This proactive approach reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire and promotes ecosystem resiliency.

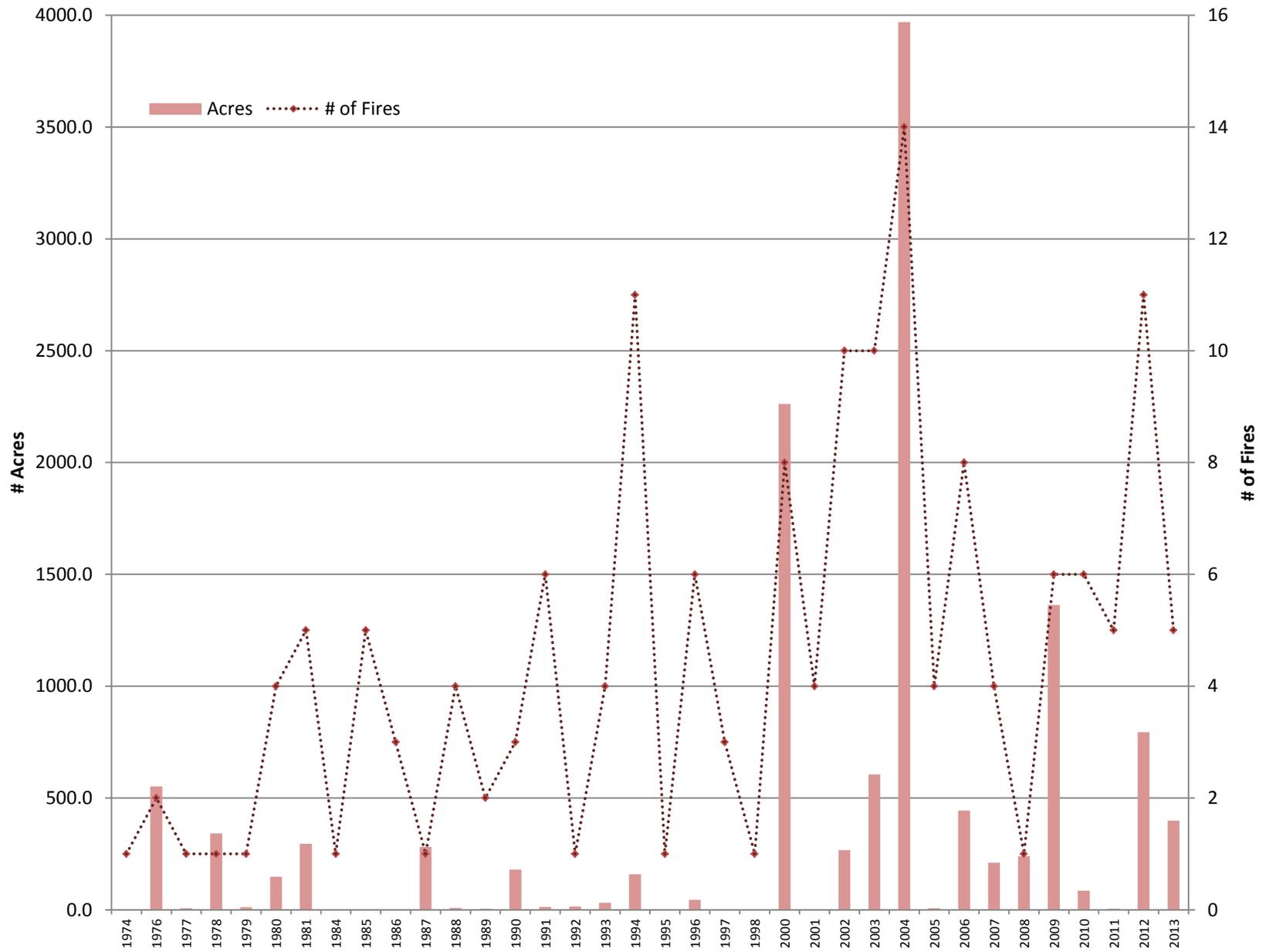


Figure 1: 40-year fire history for the Range Creek area depicting a general increase in fire occurrence and number of acres burned.

MONITORING AND REPEAT PHOTOGRAPHY



Established monitoring plot prior to treatment.



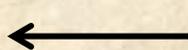
Pre-treatment monitoring plot with cheatgrass invasion.

COLLABORATION

- The Canyon Country Fire Zone has taken the lead in an effort to combine datasets such as past fire occurrence and fuels treatments with newer treatment data from cooperating agencies in southeastern Utah to create a comprehensive look at collective activities on a landscape scale.
- Project discussion, design, and scoping have been coordinated with resources specialists in the BLM Price Field Office, Utah Watershed Restoration Initiative, Department of Natural Resources, local tribes and private landowners.
- The BLM and the Natural History Museum of Utah at the University of Utah (NHMU/UU) continue to work closely to ensure ongoing research, preservation and protection of cultural resources within the Range Creek drainage.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- As aspen, sage and ponderosa micro-ecosystems re-establish; the risk of high-severity wildfires will diminish for adjacent communities, lands and infrastructure.
- The Range Creek project is a product of partner collaboration to ensure the application of contemporary scientific research for the unification of best land management practices.



WWW.UtahFireInfo.gov

For more info and
other on-going projects

BLM, Canyon Country Fire Zone, Moab Field Office

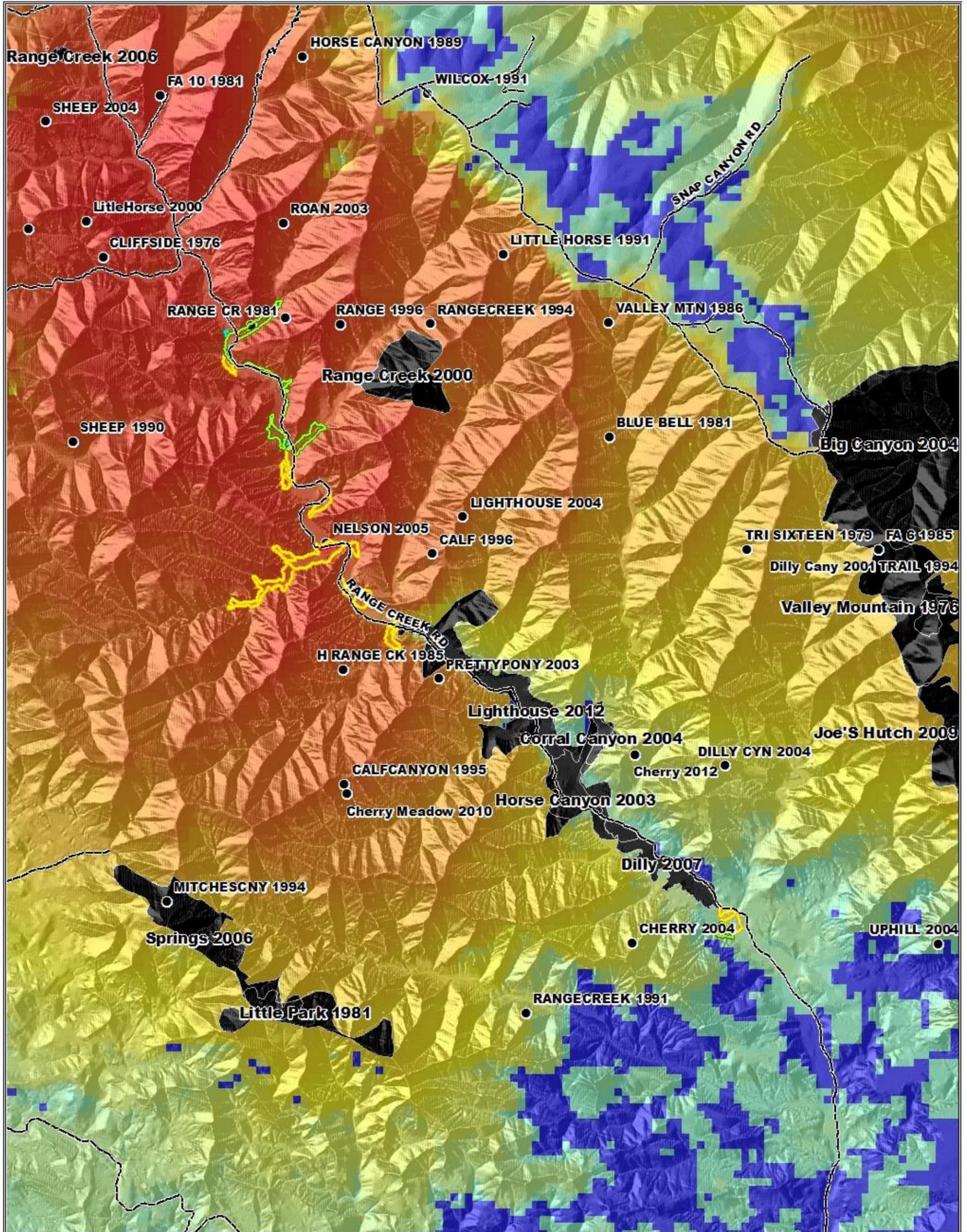


Range Creek Fuels Project

June 17, 2016

Fire History & Burn Probability

Canyon Country Fire Zone



State of Utah

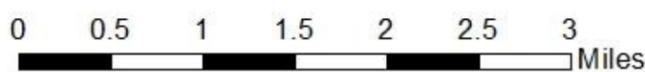


Burn Probability



■ Fire History Polygons (1976-2013)

● FireHistory Points (1973-2012)



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.



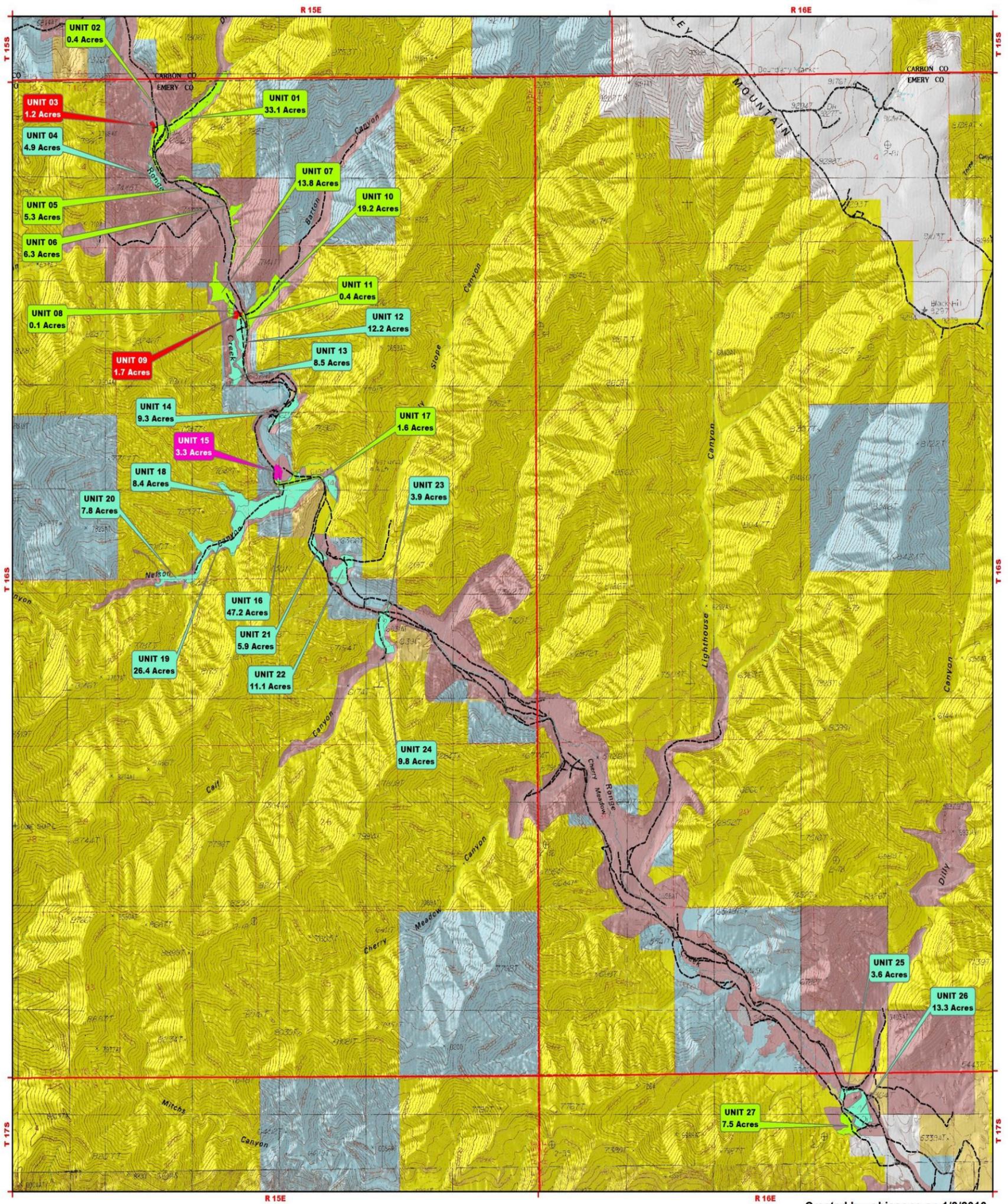
Range Creek Fuels Project

January 08, 2016

Phase I Project Units (266 Acres)

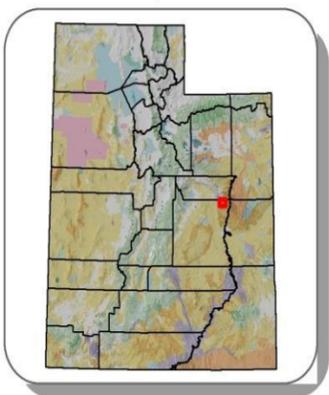
Canyon Country Fire Zone

BLM



Created by: gbiSSone on 1/8/2016

Utah County Boundaries



- | | |
|---|---|
| Hand Pile (3 Acres) | Township, Range and Section |
| In-House Mowing (3 Acres) | Wilderness Study Areas |
| Lop & Scatter Units (172 Acres) | Bureau of Land Management (BLM) |
| Mastication Units (88 Acres) | Private (White) |
| Archaeological Survey Footprint (9,230 Acres) | State |



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.