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Bureau of Land Management Canyon Country Fire Zone

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Peters Point Fuel Reduction and Habitat Restoration Project

The BLM Canyon Country Fire Zone has begun a fuels reduction and habitat restoration project located in the Monticello Field Office approximately 12 miles north of Monticello in the vicinity of Peters Canyon. The area consists of dense pinyon and juniper woodlands that have encroached into the domain of sagebrush and other native plant habitat. In addition, portions of the project area have been heavily impacted by the Ips beetle which has killed numerous trees adding to the fire hazard. The continuous, dense fuel buildup of the woodlands poses a severe fire hazard to nearby homes, planned developments, the highway 191 corridor and utility infrastructure. The locale is frequented by dry lightning during the monsoon season and poses other factors that line up for a high intensity wildfire.

To mitigate the potential for high-intensity wildland fire and to establish a diverse and fire resilient vegetative community two treatment methods are being implemented: mastication with tractor mowers and hand crew thinning with chainsaws. Mowing will take place on the mesa tops for a total of 1,253 acres. Hand crews will thin and pile an additional 962 acres in the more rugged terrain of the canyon. The fuel reduction project is designed to create a mosaic pattern on the landscape and will be ongoing this fall and may continue into spring depending on snowfall.

The goals of the project are to:

- Reduce the risk of wildfire damage to life and property
- Reduce stand density of pinyon and juniper woodland encroachment
- Reduce the risk of stand replacement fire
- Enhance critical winter deer and elk habitat
- Protect and enhance sagebrush vegetative communities
- Contribute to ecosystem health by increasing perennial grasses and shrubs
- Restore 3 stock ponds and one spring for wildlife and grazing

The planned treatments at Peters Point are similar to other fuel reduction and watershed restoration projects the BLM has implemented with favorable results. Fuel reduction projects such as this often initially look disturbed but then thrive with green up from grasses, shrubs and wild flowers as well as increased wildlife diversity and visitation. Over the past several years firefighters have been able to use fuels reduction projects, like this one at Peters Point, to gain tactical advantages for successful wildfire suppression operations.