



# Bureau of Land Management

Utah  
News

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## *Green River District completes the Coal Mine Basin Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project.*

**Vernal, Utah**--The Bureau of Land Management completed the Coal Mine Hazardous Fuels Reduction project in the fall of 2013. The project was deemed successful as all of the objectives and goals were met in improving the land. The project reduced the risk of wildfires on private property adjacent to the Coal Mine Basin area. The project aided in the protection of 50 homes in the event of a wildfire. The project also helped maintain important sagebrush habitat for a variety of wildlife species in the area. The project was approximately 1,000 acres on wildland urban interface land (WUI).



The goals of the Coal Mine Hazardous Fuel Reduction project included:

- Establishing a “green strip” of fire resistant vegetation adjacent to private property.
- Reducing the buildup of hazardous fuels by removing Pinyon-Juniper encroachment into treated sagebrush communities.
- Maintaining areas that provide for important ecological functions and habitat for keystone species.
- Maintaining important sagebrush habitat for a variety of wildlife species in the project area.
- Reducing the risk of soil erosion.
- Reducing the concentration of downy brome (cheat grass).

- Reducing the risk of large fire events.



Green River District Fuels Specialist Hank Barela is proud of the project and says, “Coal Mine Basin further strengthens previous treatments we have completed in the area. A great firebreak and defensible space have been created for those who live in Painted Hills subdivision and the mouth of Dry Fork Canyon. I have received positive comments from adjacent homeowners who have visited the work site and said they appreciate our work.”

The project was completed using five different methods:

- 1) Slashing: The treatment involved a hand lop and scatter on 423 acres located on the ridge top at the northeastern portion of the project. This area was treated with a mastication bullhog in 2004 which removed pinyon and juniper trees (PJ) and was re-seeded. The slashing will preserve the treatment from additional PJ encroachment into the area.
- 2) Bullhog: The second treatment involved a bullhog mastication device mounted on a rubber tracked skid steer. The bullhog methodology involves the chipping of the pinyon pine and juniper trees. The bullhog mastication treatment covered approximately 863 acres.
- 3) Seeding: An aerial application of seed was spread across 349 acres in the southeast area of the project. The goal of the seeding is to establish a fire resistant vegetation community that will compete with invasive species and retain fuel moisture longer into the summer months.
- 4) Mowing: The fourth treatment was mowing approximately 80 acres in the southeastern portion of the project. Mowing sagebrush and other forbes and grasses achieved the following: decrease in the amount of hazardous fuels, increase the success of the herbicide reaching the soil, and increase the chance of seeding success by removing competition.
- 5) Herbicide: The final treatment was comprised of weed control. Weeds expected to be controlled primarily are downy brome (*Bromus tectorum*) and Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*). Only BLM- approved herbicides were used to control these noxious weeds.



“The Coal Mine Basin project will become a crucial means to protecting the communities of Dry Fork and Maeser. We have had several fires start adjacent to these communities and threaten lives and property. Implementing the Coal Mine Basin project has created a zone where we will be able to initially attack fires and have a greater ability to catch them with local resources. The project has also had the added benefit of providing critical winter deer habitat.” Green River Fire Management Officer Troy Suwyn, explains. “We are happy with this project and all the benefits it offers our WUI community.”

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