



# Gateway Interagency Fire Front

Bureau of Land Management	1111 N. 8 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	Pocatello, ID 83201
Caribou-Targhee National Forest	415 S. Arthur	Pocatello, ID 83204
Chubbuck Fire Department	4727 Yellowstone Ave.	Chubbuck, ID 83202
Eastern Idaho Interagency Fire Ctr.	1405 Hollipark Drive	Idaho Falls, ID 83401
Ft. Hall Fire District	P.O. Box 306	Ft. Hall, ID 83203
Inkom Fire Department	P.O. Box 60	Inkom ID 83245
Pocatello Fire Department	408 E. Whitman	Pocatello, ID 83201
Pocatello Valley Fire District	4598 West Old Hwy. 91	Inkom, ID 83245

February 28, 2003

## PORTNEUF WEST BENCH FUELS MANAGEMENT PROJECT

The Gateway Interagency Fire Front (GIFF), in cooperation with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Bureau of Land Management Pocatello Field Office, the U.S. Forest Service Westside Ranger District of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, and the Idaho Department of Lands, is proposing hazardous fuel reduction activities in and around the Pocatello wildland urban interface area on private, state and federal lands. These projects are designed to reduce hazardous fuels and demonstrate how hazardous fuel reduction activities can help residents, policy makers, and the public better understand what to do to protect themselves and their property from wildfire and what the costs and benefits are.

Fuel modification has a direct relationship on how fast a fire spreads, at which intensity a fire burns, and whether torching<sup>1</sup>, crowning<sup>2</sup>, or spotting<sup>3</sup> will occur. Local, state and federal agencies have identified high-risk areas around Pocatello that would benefit from modifying fuels so that when a wildfire starts, the resulting fire behavior is decreased by reducing existing ladder fuels. Ladder fuels allow a fire to move from a ground fire into a crown fire. These treatments could include creating fuel breaks adjacent to the community; treating hazardous fuels on a parcel(s) in or adjacent to the community in cooperation with private landowners, and/or federal, and state land management agencies. Treatment methods may include mechanical thinning and biomass removal; hand thinning and chipping or burning; small prescribed fires, or some other method. These projects are funded by the National Fire Plan.

### The Purpose and Needs for these actions:

The purpose of these projects is to effect an immediate change in fire behavior reducing the intensity and maintaining conditions supporting historical natural fire behavior.

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<sup>1</sup> Crown or canopy of a single tree or shrub that is wholly consumed in a rapid spread of fire. This behavior is a prelude to spotting and crowning.

<sup>2</sup> A fire that advances from top to top of trees or brush more or less independent of a surface fire

<sup>3</sup> Behavior of a fire producing sparks or embers that are carried by the wind and which start new fires beyond the zone of direct ignition by the main fire.

The needs for these actions include:

- Reduce the potential for loss of life, property, and natural resources to wildfires and enhanced firefighter safety.
- Protect the long-term scenic quality of the area.
- Provide educational and motivational demonstrations of cooperative hazardous fuel reduction projects on private, state, and federal lands in the Pocatello wildland urban interface area.
- Develop cooperative fuel reduction opportunities in Bannock County that coordinate efforts, funds, and resources.
- Meet natural resource goals and objectives contained in the National Fire Plan, the Pocatello BLM Resource Management Plan (1987) and the Revised Caribou Land and Resource Management Plan (2003).

The USDI-BLM and USDA-Forest Service with their natural resource specialists will provide technical assistance and complete the required environmental analysis in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the project area.

### **What Are We Proposing to Do?**

Multiple fuels reduction projects are proposed through the combined use of mechanical treatments, prescribed fire, and pile burning on the south end of Pocatello. These projects are located in and around Gibson Jack, the Mink Creek, the Fort Hall Creek and the Papoose Creek watersheds. The treatment areas total 7,488 acres and 13.6 miles of existing roads and trails in a 26,915-acre analysis area. The project areas will be treated to reduce the build up of fuels and create areas of “defensible space” in and around the Wildland Urban Interface. In addition, this will allow fire crews a greater opportunity to defend the Wildland Urban Interface and control a wildfire. Implementation of several of these treatment areas will begin in the summer of 2003 (see attached map for priority treatments areas) and continue over ten years.

### **What Preliminary Issues and Concerns Have Been Identified?**

- 1.) Rights of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes within the ceded lands**
- 2.) Air Quality**
- 3.) Water Quality**
- 4.) Soil Erosion and soil productivity**
- 5.) Wildlife**
- 6.) Cultural Resource concerns**

**7.) Riparian Habitat Management**

**8.) Biomass Utilization (harvesting wood products)**

**9.) Post treatment OHV use**

**10.) Weeds**

**11.) Impacts to scenery and recreational settings**

**What Decisions Will Need to Be Made and Who Will Make Them?**

Private landowners will work with the Gateway Interagency Fire Front to decide how and when fuel reduction activities will occur on private parcels or in cooperation with state and federal activities. The District Manager for the BLM and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest Supervisor, in consultation with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, will decide whether to implement the proposed projects on federal lands and what mitigation and monitoring may be necessary as a result of the environmental analysis.

**How Can You Get Involved and What You Can Do To Help**

An open house is scheduled for March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at the Indian Hills Elementary School (666 Cheyenne Ave. Pocatello), 10:00am to 4:00 pm. You are invited to attend this open house to discuss issues, concerns, opportunities and participation in this project. If you are unable to attend and have issues, concerns, or wish to participate please send comments to the Gateway Interagency Fire Front no later than **March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003**.

Gateway Interagency Fire Front  
Attention: West Bench/Portneuf Fuels Management Project  
P.O. Box 6111  
Pocatello, Idaho 83205-6111

**Who to Contact If You Have Questions?**

Pocatello Fire Department  
Roger Sears  
208-234-7071

Pocatello Valley Volunteer Fire Department  
Karen Aguilar  
208-775-3581

Inkom Fire Department  
Chris Ottonello  
208-223-4101

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes  
Yvette Tuell  
208-478-3743

Idaho Department of Lands  
Dennis Page  
208-525-7167

USFS Caribou-Targhee National Forest  
Gary Bishop  
208-236-7540

BLM Pocatello Field Office  
Bill Swann  
208-478-6036

## TREATMENT TYPES AND LOCATION

### **Prescribed Fire:**

Prescribe burn 16 areas totaling 2,435 acres over a period of ten years. These areas will be burned to include a mosaic burn pattern not to exceed 60 percent burned area. These areas are within the following:

T7S R34E S 14, 15, 21, 22, 25, 26  
T7S R35E S 25, 26, 27, 35, 36  
T8S R35E S 2,5,8

### **Mechanical Thinning with Heavy Equipment:**

Use a slash buster and other mechanical treatment apparatus to thin and prune 5 areas totaling 1,361 acres over ten years. These areas will be thinned and pruned not to exceed 50 percent of the treatment area. These areas are within the following:

T7S R35E S 19, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29, 32, 33, 35, 36  
T8S R35E S 2

### **Mechanical thinning with Chainsaws and Biomass removal:**

Use chainsaws and other hand tools to thin and prune 13 areas totaling 1,400 acres over ten years. These areas will be thinned, pruned and piled burned (consideration is being given to alternative uses of this biomass) not to exceed 50 percent of the treatment area. These areas are within the following:

T7S R34E S 13, 35, 36  
T7S R35E S 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33  
T8S R34E S 1

### **Mechanical Pretreatment with Prescribed Fire:**

Use chainsaws and other hand tools to pretreat areas that subsequently would be prescribe burned. These 2 areas totaling 2,292 acres will be treated over ten years. These areas will be treated not to exceed 50 percent of the treatment area. These areas are within the following:

T7S R35E S 25, 27, 28, 33, 34, 36  
T7S R36E S 30, 31  
T8S R35E S 1, 2  
T8S R36E S 6

### **Brushing out existing Roads and Trails:**

Use chainsaws and other hand tools to brush out and thin overgrown vegetation along existing roads and trails to be used a fuel breaks. Portions of 3 roads (forest roads 287, 290, 294) and 2 trails (Upper and Lower Gibson Jack Trails) totaling 13.6 miles will be treated over ten years. These areas are within the following:

T7S R34E S 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 33, 34

The treatment areas total 7,488 acres and 13.6 miles of existing roads and fences and will be treated over ten years.