



Rogue River Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project

The President's Healthy Forests Initiative

In August 2002, President Bush announced the Healthy Forests Initiative, directing the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to develop administrative and legislative measures that will help reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire to America's forests and rangelands. The initiative builds on a historic ten-year plan for reducing wildfire risks adopted last spring by federal agencies in cooperation with western and southern governors, county commissioners, state foresters and tribal officials.

The Healthy Forests Initiative will implement core components of the National Fire Plan's 10-year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan. This historic plan, which was adopted this spring by federal agencies and western governors, in collaboration with county commissioners, state foresters, and tribal officials, calls for more active forest and rangeland management. It establishes a framework for protecting communities and the environment through local collaboration on thinning, planned burns and forest restoration projects.

In December of 2002, the President announced work on the Model Environmental Assessment (EA) component of the Healthy Forests Initiative. The focus of the current EA Guidance is on Forest Health Projects. This included direction from the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) that provides a framework for administratively streamlining the process to allow for more efficient management of fuels reduction efforts and fire-adapted ecosystem restoration projects.

Rogue River Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project

In the Northwest, the Rogue River Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project within the Hellgate Recreation Section of the Rogue National Wild & Scenic River was subsequently chosen as the only project in Oregon.

The purpose of this project is to proactively reduce and manage the wildfire/fuel hazard within the approximately 8,000 acres of public and private land which comprises the Hellgate Recreation Section of the Rogue National Wild & Scenic River. This project will create a sustainable mosaic of vegetation and fuel types/profiles that will facilitate protection of property and the scenic, recreational and fisheries values for which the Hellgate Recreation Section of the Rogue River was designated.

The designated corridor includes portions of three National Fire Plan designated Communities at Risk. Within the designated corridor, there are approximately 190 residences most of which are in 12 localized areas. Two designated National Historic Sites are located within the corridor. The BLM will work closely with Rogue River Wild & Scenic River user groups, the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Josephine County, and residents and private landowners within the project area. Because ODF has fire prevention and suppression responsibilities for the lands in the project area, we anticipate extensively involvement of ODF during neighborhood planning and project implementation.

On BLM lands, project implementation is anticipated to start in the fall of 2003 contingent upon fire season work restrictions. Implementation will focus on the areas identified to have the greatest values at risk. The Medford BLM District Office anticipates completion within two years after beginning their work.