

# National Fire Plan

AN INTERAGENCY ACCOMPLISHMENTS  
REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001

*Oregon/Washington*



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
**Natural Resources**

# Overview

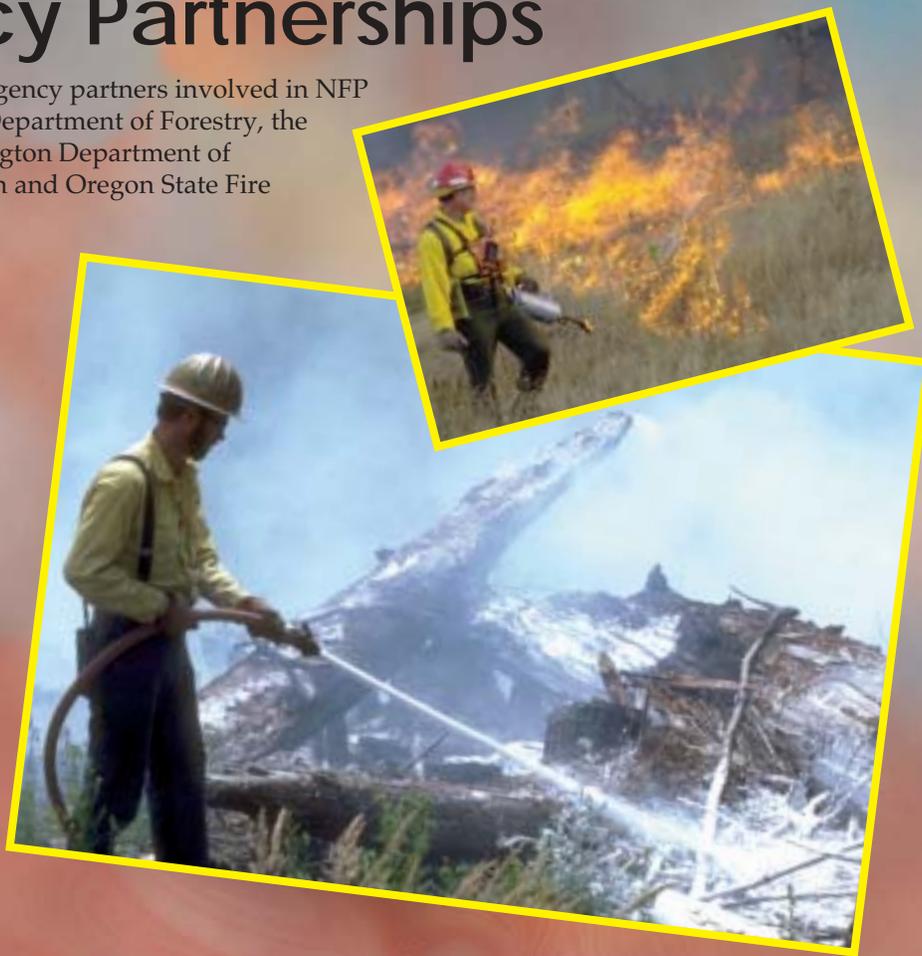
On August 8, 2000, the President asked the Secretaries of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to prepare a report recommending how to respond to severe ongoing fire activity, reduce impacts of fires on rural communities and the environment, and ensure sufficient firefighting resources in the future. This report became known as the National Fire Plan (NFP).

The NFP laid the foundation for a long-term program of work to reduce fire risk and restore healthy fire-adapted ecosystems in the Nation's forests and rangelands. The multifaceted nature and scope of the issues and jurisdictions involved requires new approaches, with open collaboration among a wide variety of stakeholders. The increased emphasis on interagency coordination continues to improve public service and the way each of the agencies do business.

This Interagency Accomplishments Report documents progress in implementing the NFP in Oregon and Washington for Fiscal Year 2001 (FY 2001). This report provides information on Oregon and Washington accomplishments in the four major NFP areas: Community Assistance, Hazardous Fuel Reduction, Firefighting, and Rehabilitation and Restoration. Supporting elements of these four major NFP components are interagency partnerships, Endangered Species Act streamlined consultation, research conducted by the Pacific Northwest Research Station, and monitoring and accountability.

## Interagency Partnerships

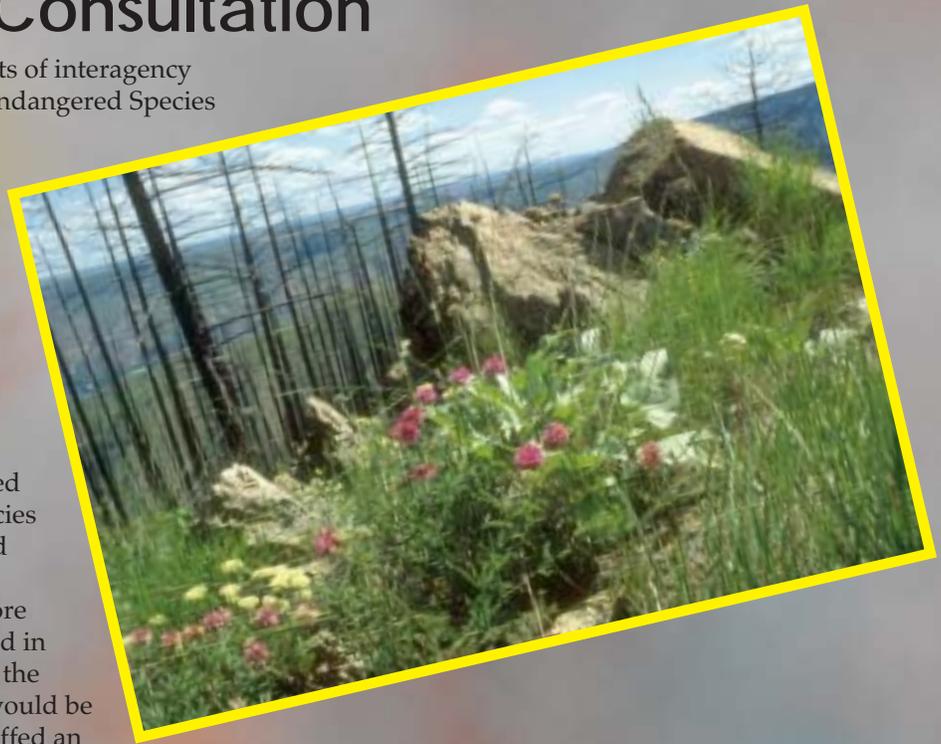
In Oregon and Washington, interagency partners involved in NFP implementation include: Oregon Department of Forestry, the Oregon Governor's Office, Washington Department of Natural Resources, the Washington and Oregon State Fire Marshal Offices, County Commissioners, Tribal representatives, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and the USDA Forest Service.



## Streamlined Consultation

An example of the positive benefits of interagency collaboration is the streamlined Endangered Species Act consultation process that was developed by the National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the USDA Forest Service. This process covers federal lands in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Utah.

In order to expedite NFP collaborative planning, streamlined procedures, and Endangered Species Act consultation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service hired more than 50 biologists who were placed in eleven field offices close to where the NFP project planning and work would be occurring. Both agencies have staffed an office in LaGrande, Oregon, and the National Marine Fisheries Service opened a new office in Ellensburg, Washington. The new biologists now routinely interact with their USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management counterparts, and are now assisting wildland fire management agency staff in the development of projects for Fiscal Year 2002 and beyond.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service completed consultations on emergency fire actions, initiated and completed consultations on a variety of fire and timber-related projects, and began planning and assessment work with wildland fire management agencies in an early consultation effort on NFP projects identified for FY 2002 and FY 2003.

## Pacific Northwest Research Station Support for the National Fire Plan

The Pacific Northwest Research Station of the USDA Forest Service is carrying out fundamental and applied research efforts to support NFP goals, with many collaborators from western universities, and state and federal agencies. In the area of firefighting, scientists are developing models that enable fire teams to make better predictions of smoke movement, fire emissions, and visibility impacts from wildland and prescribed fires. Scientists are also improving the capabilities to make long-range forecasts of fire danger.

## Monitoring and Accountability

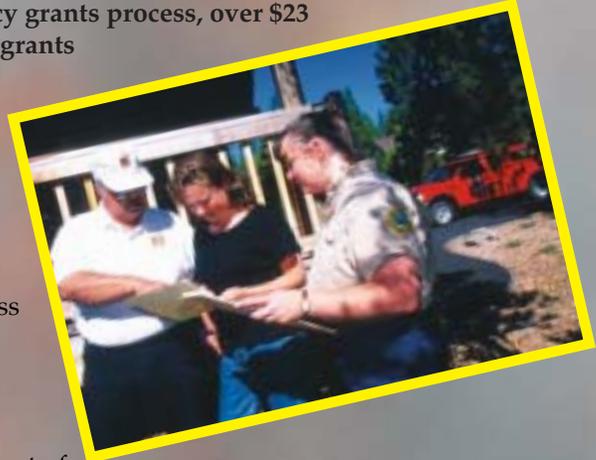
The interagency partners involved in NFP implementation have identified monitoring priorities and methods for tracking and reporting progress. National, outcome-based performance measures are also currently being developed which will assist all federal agencies in charting NFP progress. The participating agencies are committed to achieving the goals outlined in the NFP and to keeping the public informed and involved throughout the implementation of plan initiatives.

# Community Assistance

As the Nation's demographics change, developed areas and individual home sites increasingly extend into wildland areas. Community involvement is critical in restoring landscapes and reducing fire hazards near homes and communities. Community assistance programs focus on building local methods of reducing risks associated with wildland fires.

Federal agencies and the states are working together to build effective community protection programs in Oregon and Washington. **Through the interagency grants process, over \$23 million in grants were awarded to over 380 recipients. These grants leveraged over \$26 million in project activities.**

**New Interagency Grants Program:** The USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, with the assistance of the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Washington Department of Natural Resources, developed a "one-stop-shopping" process for all the federal NFP grant opportunities. The agencies jointly reviewed the applications and determined which proposals to fund.



**Wildland Urban Interface Program:** The Department of the Interior agencies (Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs) awarded approximately **56 grants totaling approximately \$7 million** to states and communities to perform hazardous fuel reduction projects, provide education and prevention programs, and to find uses for the by-products of the hazardous fuel reduction projects.

**Economic Action Program:** The USDA Forest Service, through its Economic Action Program, **provided over \$3 million in 44 grants** to state, tribal and local governments, universities, and non-profit groups for projects attempting to develop markets and uses for low value woody material, including small diameter trees removed in fuel treatment projects. These funds were also used to cover costs for community fire planning and public education and prevention efforts to make homeowners more aware of ways to make their properties safer.

**FIREWISE and FireFree Communities Programs:** The FIREWISE and FireFree Communities Programs, funded by both the USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior agencies, as well as many other state and nonprofit partners, is another highly successful part of community hazard mitigation efforts. The program encourages communities and homeowners to take responsibility for hazard mitigation through hazardous fuels reduction work, land-use planning, building codes, landscaping codes, zoning, and fire protection.

**State Fire Assistance:** The State Fire Assistance Program is a USDA Forest Service program in which funds are distributed directly to the states for various hazardous fuel reduction and fire protection efforts. **Under the NFP, \$5.5 million was awarded to Oregon and Washington in FY2001.**

**Rural and Volunteer Fire Assistance Programs:** In the Pacific Northwest, the agencies chose to use an existing USDA Forest Service process for distributing funds to rural fire departments through the states of Oregon and Washington. **This existing process was expanded to include the Department of the Interior agencies, thereby reducing the need to create additional bureaucratic methods of disbursing funds to rural fire departments. Volunteer Fire Assistance and Rural Fire Assistance totaled \$1.6 million, and was distributed to 269 fire districts in Oregon and Washington.** The funding was used for training, equipment purchase, and prevention activities on a cost-share basis.

# Community Assistance Success Stories: Sunriver, Oregon

Instead of spending \$20,000 a year in transportation and tipping fees at a local landfill or creating burn piles, the community of Sunriver, Oregon (located 15 miles south of Bend, Oregon) is now composting the by-products of forest fuels thinnings. The mulch produced by this composting effort will be used in local golf courses and parks. Sunriver also plans to market the mulch for home use. The project was initiated as a result of a NFP grant administered by the Deschutes National Forest and awarded to the Deschutes Soil and Water Conservation District. The community of Sunriver is managing and matching funds at the composting site, and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality provides project oversight. This collaborative effort promotes the reduction of hazardous fuels and uses the debris collected in beneficial ways.



*Reducing Hazardous Fuels in Sunriver*

The Deschutes Soil and Water Conservation District has additional funding to expand the composting program to other locations and would like to help other communities in Central Oregon replicate the Sunriver project's success.

## Klamath Falls, Oregon

The small rural community of Klamath Forest Estates is located on Bly Mountain, approximately 20 miles northeast of Klamath Falls, Oregon. Klamath Forest Estates is a small rural subdivision that has several hundred homesites carved out of the dry landscapes on the east side of the Cascade Mountains. The homes were surrounded by decadent brush and overcrowded timber stands. There are many undeveloped lots next to homes that did not have defensible space for wildfire protection and there was no natural fire break around most of the subdivision.

In order to address these issues, the BLM's Lakeview District conducted the Bly Mountain Fuels Reduction Project which consisted of more than 4,000 acres of tree thinning, brush removal, slash piling and burning on federal land in and around the small community of Klamath Forest Estates. Most of the work was done by contract crews using chainsaws and piling the slash by hand. The piles have been covered and will be burned after drying. Shaded fuel breaks were created beside existing roads, and concentrations of brush and trees were thinned to break up continuous fuels. The Oregon Department of Forestry cooperated in this effort and took the lead in public outreach, community relations and assessment of risk for the Bly Mountain Fuels Reduction Project.

Although the primary goal of this project was to reduce dangerous fuel loadings in the wildland urban interface area, a very important secondary objective was to provide temporary jobs for displaced farm workers in the Klamath Basin. The BLM contract for the project was awarded to two private contractors, who recruited approximately 35 local workers and two local subcontractors to complete the work.



*Thinning and Brush  
Removal on Bly  
Mountain*

# Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Hazardous fuel reduction projects reduce the risk of unwanted fires to communities, natural resources, and cultural resources. Past disruptions of natural fire cycles, as well as other management practices, have resulted in wildland fires of increasing intensity and severity. Fire occurrence records show increases in the numbers of large wildland fires over the past two decades. A compounding factor has been growth of communities closer to federal, tribal, and state lands. These two changes have increased the risk to communities, natural resources, and cultural resources from unwanted wildland fires. The NFP provides increased funding and direction to reduce this risk.

The agencies are accelerating the removal of live and dead vegetative fuel through the use of prescribed fire, mechanical treatment, and other methods. Hazardous fuel treatment will also help restore health to fire-adapted ecosystems, particularly in western ecosystems where fire activity greatly exceeds historic levels. **In FY 2001, NFP dollars resulted in 166,171 acres of hazardous fuels treated in Oregon, and 41,457 acres in Washington. Over 50 percent of the acres treated were within the wildland urban interface.**

The NFP gives special emphasis to the reduction of hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface. Under the NFP, the hazardous fuel treatment program has expanded significantly, with a greater focus on treatments intended to protect wildland urban interface communities (see Communities at Risk map on page 7). The focus on treatment in wildland urban interface areas adds additional complexity and cost to both project planning and implementation actions. These projects involve extensive coordination with adjacent landowners and state and local representatives.

In support of hazardous fuel reduction activities, the Pacific Northwest Research Station scientists are developing improved techniques for monitoring and assessing fuels, mapping fuel characteristics, and validating fuel information. They are also gathering information on the effects of new fuel reduction treatments on a variety of species.

## Hazardous Fuel Reduction Success Stories: Medford, Oregon



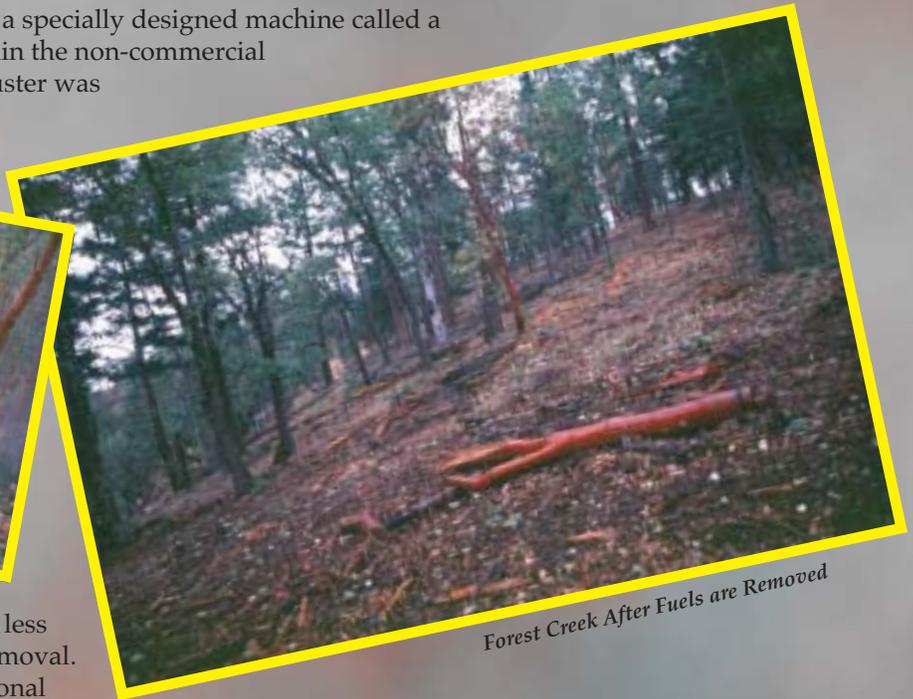
*Aerial View of the Forest Creek Area*

The Forest Creek hazardous fuels project on the BLM's Medford District utilized new technology to reduce the threat of wildfire to the nearby communities of Jacksonville and Medford. The fuels reduction work performed included a combination of understory thinning, hand piling, pile burning, broadcast burning, and commercial thinning in a 186-acre stand of conifers and hardwoods. Due to historic fire suppression efforts, the area became overstocked with brush which created a very high fire risk.

As part of this fuel reduction operation, a specially designed machine called a slashbuster was used to mechanically thin the non-commercial understory. In this instance, the slashbuster was



*Slashbuster Removes Fuels*



*Forest Creek After Fuels are Removed*

more effective, less costly, and involved less risk than traditional methods of fuels removal.

In one section of the project area, traditional manual means of fuel reduction would have cost \$1,300 per acre. Using the slashbuster, the cost per acre was \$460. The BLM's Medford District will follow up the slashbuster treatment with a prescribed underburn to reduce the remaining fire hazard within the thinned stands.

## LaPine, Oregon

Over the past several years, the LaPine area (located approximately 30 miles south of Bend, Oregon) has experienced several large wildfires that have threatened and in some incidents, destroyed homes. Through U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and USDA Forest Service grants, the Oregon Department of Forestry and the LaPine Rural Fire Protection District formed a partnership to assist residents and neighborhoods in the wildland urban interface areas to reduce the threat of wildfire in their neighborhoods. Crews were brought in to do thinning of overstocked stands and reduce surface fuels near homes.

This past spring, the 146-acre LaPine fire clearly demonstrated the success of local fuel treatment efforts by the proactive homeowners. Thanks to the work of seven families who had pruned and thinned trees around their homes and had the forethought to install metal and composition roofs on their homes and outbuildings, local firefighters were able to use these seven properties to stop a potentially catastrophic wildfire from spreading to hundreds of their neighbor's homes.

This experience helped spur massive fuel treatment efforts throughout Central Oregon. Walker Range, a fire protection district just a few miles away in Northern Klamath County, used a NFP grant to chip over 300 acres of hazardous fuels for homeowners in 21 separate subdivisions. Local volunteers matched the 470 hours of work by the Walker Range employees with 819 hours of volunteer labor. The hazardous fuels were chipped and the resulting mulch was used in the homeowner's gardens.

# Hazardous Fuel Reduction on Federal Lands

## OREGON

### HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION IN WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE AREAS

Agency	FS	BLM	FWS	NPS	BIA
Prescribed Fire (acres)	17,550	25,659	1,200	0	55
Mechanical Treatment (acres)	18,474	10,135	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,024</b>	<b>35,794</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Cost</b>	\$8,202,000	\$13,356,000	\$197,000	0	\$913,000*

### HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION IN NON-WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE AREAS

Agency	FS	BLM	FWS	NPS	BIA
Prescribed Fire (acres)	25,759	38,585	3,178	1,300	910
Mechanical Treatment (acres)	15,031	10,700	52	15	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,790</b>	<b>46,285</b>	<b>3,230</b>	<b>1,415</b>	<b>1,378</b>
<b>Cost</b>	\$6,811,000	\$7,406,000	\$163,000	\$282,000	\$643,000*

## WASHINGTON

### HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION IN WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE AREAS

Agency	FS	BLM	FWS	NPS	BIA
Prescribed Fire (acres)	17,766	0	7,107	5	106
Mechanical Treatment (acres)	4,648	0	0	0	240
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,414</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,107</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>346</b>
<b>Cost</b>	\$2,931,000	0	\$1,164,000	\$55,000	\$825,000*

### HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION IN NON-WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE AREAS

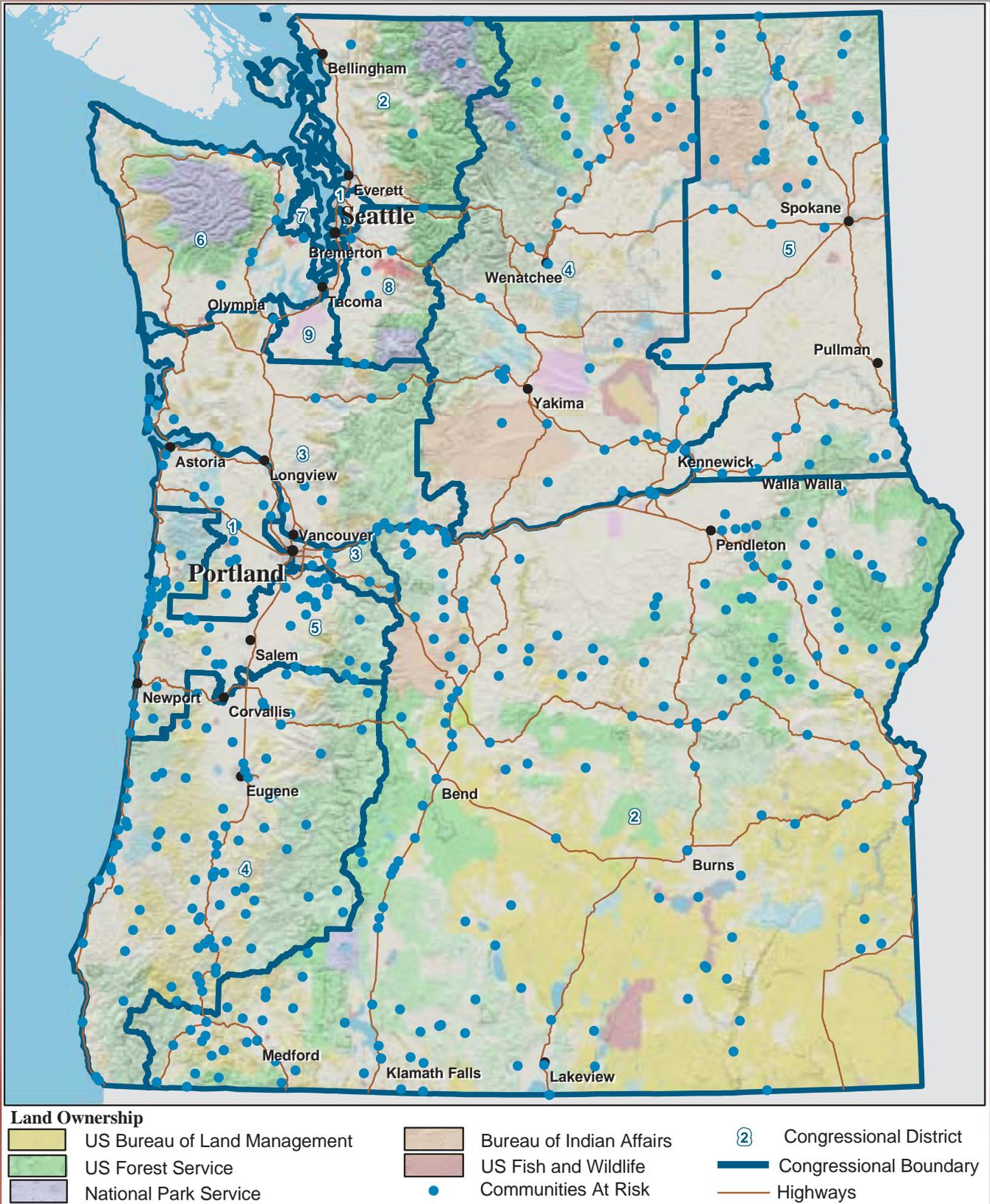
Agency	FS	BLM	FWS	NPS	BIA
Prescribed Fire (acres)	2,504	750	2,829	47	4,748
Mechanical Treatment (acres)	371	0	326	318	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,875</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>3,155</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>4,758</b>
<b>Cost</b>	\$543,000	<i>included in the cost for Oregon</i>	\$159,000	\$54,000	\$424,000*

\* The BIA funds have been contracted to the Tribes and they continue to treat hazardous fuels with these funds.

The cost of hazardous fuel reduction per acre varies dramatically depending on the topography of the area being treated, the fuel loads being treated, and the area's proximity to dwellings and structures.

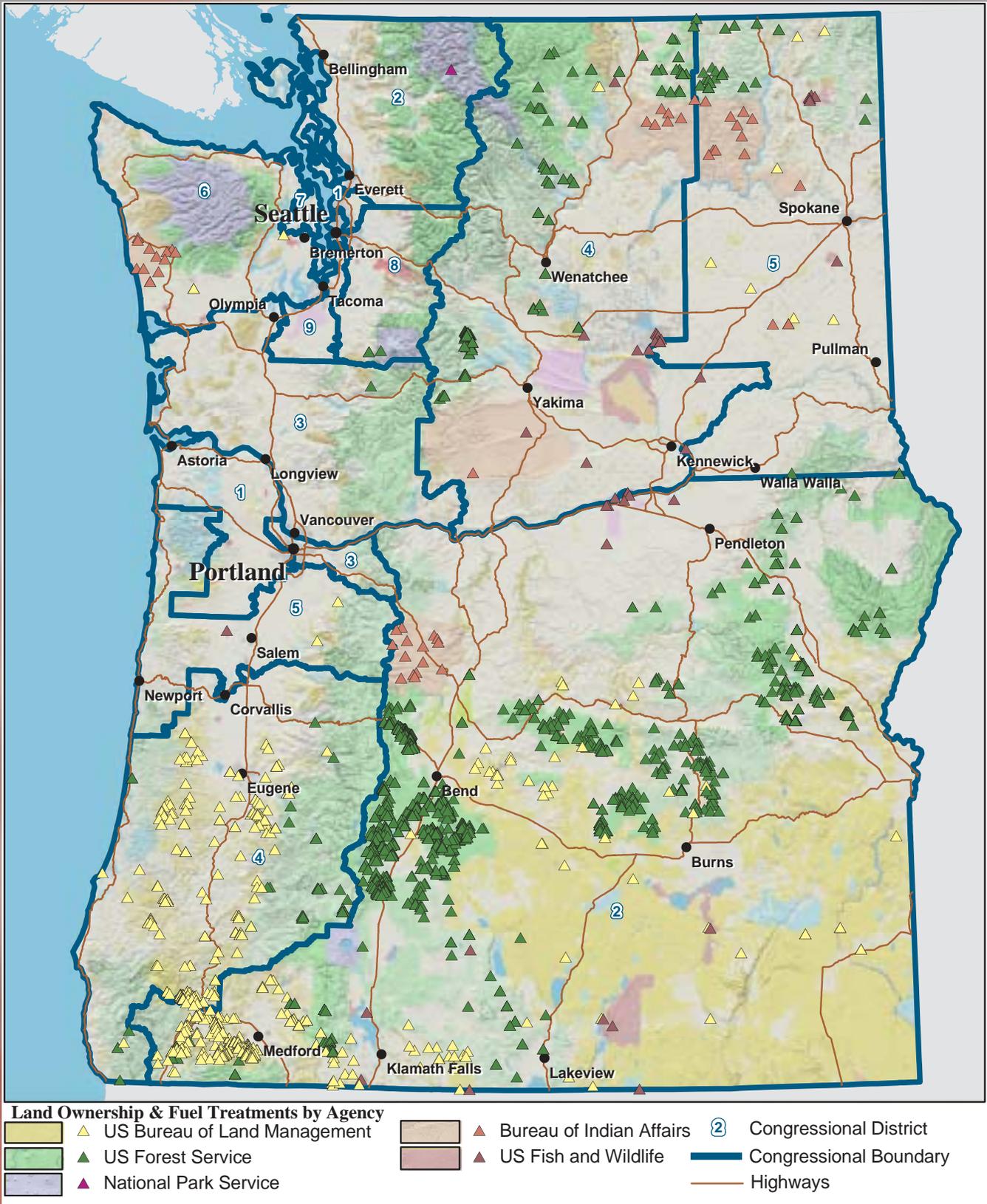
FS: USDA Forest Service, BLM: Bureau of Land Management, FWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NPS: National Park Service, BIA: Bureau of Indian Affairs.

## Communities at Risk in Oregon and Washington



This map identifies communities that have a high wildfire risk. These communities are in the vicinity of federal lands and were selected by the States of Oregon and Washington and Pacific Northwest Tribes in collaboration with federal agencies and local partners. Additional information on this topic can be found at [www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov).

# Hazardous Fuel Reduction Projects Implemented in FY2001



# Firefighting

Using NFP funding, over 1,100 new firefighters were hired in the Pacific Northwest in FY 2001. To accomplish this extra hiring, agency staff conducted comprehensive recruitment programs. Some new hires were recruited from nontraditional sources. Personnel were also hired to support contracting, fuels, planning, and National Environmental Policy Act and administrative functions.

The NFP also provided funding for the maintenance and capital improvement of wildland fire facilities to address and eliminate critical health and safety problems.

The agencies also awarded NFP contract funds through 295 contracts to local businesses, tribes, and organizations to benefit local fire fighting efforts. These contracts infused approximately \$20 million of federal funds into local communities throughout Oregon and Washington.



## Firefighting Success Stories: Stevens County, Washington

Through a Bureau of Indian Affairs grant to the Stevens County Fire District Number 2 in Hunters, Washington, the district was able to convert a used chassis into a fire engine.

Within one week after putting the unit into service, the district responded to a structure fire in a residence. The attic was fully engulfed in flames on arrival. By utilizing the new engine's foam capability, the district was able to limit damage to the home's second floor and roof.

## Wallowa County, Oregon

Oregon Department of Forestry stationed an additional three-person engine crew at its Wallowa compound this past summer, bringing its total number of crews to five. The crew, which was hired and supervised by the Oregon Department of Forestry, was funded by a NFP grant from the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

### USDA Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management

### Fire Fighting Resources for Oregon/Washington

	FY2000	FY2001	FY2000	FY2001
Engines/Tenders	115	183	52	52
Single Engine Air Tankers/Helicopters	7	7	6	8
Lookouts and Prevention Personnel	86	136	7	7
Initial Attack Handcrew Personnel	198	404	0	0
Interagency Hotshot Crews	9	10	1	1

# Rehabilitation and Restoration

Post-fire rehabilitation work focuses on short-term goals, and post-fire restoration work focuses on long-term goals for the land. Both of these efforts are intended for lands that are unlikely to recover naturally from fire damage either fast enough or completely enough. The work is often implemented over the course of several years following a wildfire. Activities include:

- reforestation;
- watershed restoration;
- road and trail rehabilitation;
- fence replacement;
- fish and wildlife habitat restoration;
- invasive plant treatments; and
- replanting and reseeding with native vegetation.

In the area of rehabilitation and recovery, Pacific Northwest Research Station scientists are monitoring the effects of fuel reduction treatments and wildfires on the spread of invasive plant species.

**In FY 2001, the federal agencies received approximately \$6.5 million in NFP and Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation funds for restoration and rehabilitation projects in Washington and approximately \$4.9 million for restoration and rehabilitation projects in Oregon.**

Using NFP funds, 65 restoration and rehabilitation projects were completed in Oregon and 11 were completed in Washington. Combined, these projects totaled 312,756 acres. In identifying rehabilitation and restoration opportunities, projects in wildland urban interface areas were given added emphasis.

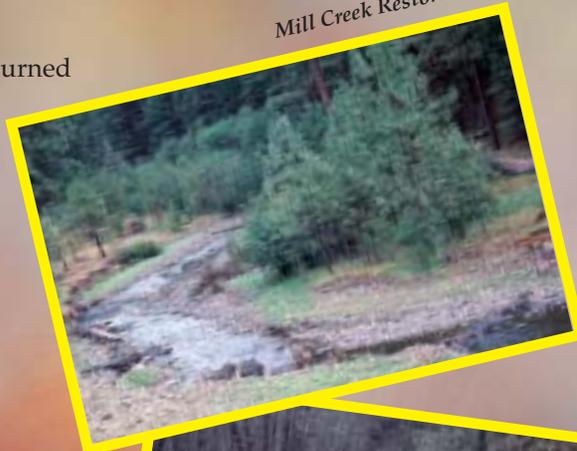


## Rehabilitation & Restoration Success Story: Hash Rock, Oregon

In the summer of 2000, the stand-replacing Hash Rock Fire burned 18,500 acres within the Mill Creek Wilderness. Using both NFP and Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation funds, the Ochoco National Forest conducted a variety of restoration and rehabilitation projects in the effected area. Efforts included channel restoration on Mill Creek and its tributaries. This channel restoration involved the placement of boulders to create pools for fish, culvert replacement and the planting of riparian hardwoods including willow, alder and cottonwood. Other restoration activities in the Mill Creek area included trail restoration, fence construction, soil tilling of compacted soils, aerial winter wheat seeding, road restoration, repair, relocation and closure, restoration of water developments and springs, and noxious weed treatments.

The intent of these restoration efforts are to accelerate soil recovery, reduce threats of erosion and sedimentation, improve water quality, promote healthy habitat conditions for fish and wildlife, and allow for continued recreation use and livestock grazing.

*Mill Creek Restoration*



*Culvert Replacement on Mill Creek*

# National Fire Plan Contacts in Oregon and Washington

## **Interagency Fire Plan Coordinator**

Tom Schmidt, [taschmidt@fs.fed.us](mailto:taschmidt@fs.fed.us), (503) 808-2701

## **Bureau of Land Management**

Leo Sidebotham, [Leo\\_Sidebotham@or.blm.gov](mailto:Leo_Sidebotham@or.blm.gov), (503) 808-6748

Chris Strebig, [Chris\\_Strebig@or.blm.gov](mailto:Chris_Strebig@or.blm.gov), (503) 808-6003

## **Environmental Protection Agency**

David Powers, [powers.david@epa.gov](mailto:powers.david@epa.gov), (503) 326-5874

## **US Fish and Wildlife Service**

Pam Ensley, [pam\\_ensley@fws.gov](mailto:pam_ensley@fws.gov), (503) 231-6174

Bruce Babb, [bruce\\_babb@fws.gov](mailto:bruce_babb@fws.gov), (503) 231-6234

## **Bureau of Indian Affairs**

Cory Winnie, [corywinnie@bia.gov](mailto:corywinnie@bia.gov), (503) 231-6759

## **National Park Service**

Ken Till, [ken\\_till@nps.gov](mailto:ken_till@nps.gov), (206) 220-4257

Bob Appling, [bob\\_appling@nps.gov](mailto:bob_appling@nps.gov), (206) 718-4961

## **USDA Forest Service**

Laurie Perrett, [lperrett@fs.fed.us](mailto:lperrett@fs.fed.us), (503) 808-2145

Ken Snell, [ksnell@fs.fed.us](mailto:ksnell@fs.fed.us), (503) 808-2136

## **National Marine Fisheries Service**

Janet Sears, [janet.sears@noaa.gov](mailto:janet.sears@noaa.gov), (206) 526-6172

## **Oregon Department of Forestry**

Bill Lafferty, [blafferty@odf.state.or.us](mailto:blafferty@odf.state.or.us), (503) 945-7435

Charlie Stone, [cstone@odf.state.or.us](mailto:cstone@odf.state.or.us), (503) 945-7205

## **Washington Department of Natural Resources**

Bruce Monell, [b.monell@wadnr.gov](mailto:b.monell@wadnr.gov), (360) 902-1300

Bob Bannon, [b.bannon@wadnr.gov](mailto:b.bannon@wadnr.gov), (360) 902-1315

## **NFP Related Websites**

[www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov)

[www.nifc.gov](http://www.nifc.gov)

[www.nwfireplan.gov](http://www.nwfireplan.gov)



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