

Do fuels treatments really tame fires?

BY JENA VOLPE



In this photo composite, on the left side, the forest was left untreated for hazardous fuel reduction; on the right side, hand pile-and-burn fuel reduction were used to reduce the fuel load. Photo: L. Meredith/BLM.

Public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are interwoven amongst the communities and private properties in the Rogue River watershed, including the Applegate Valley. Each year, the BLM Medford District treats thousands of acres to reduce fuel loading by thinning (noncommercial and commercial), hand-piling, and underburning. Our fuel treatment objectives are to:

- Reduce fuel loading and negative post-fire effects, such as widespread canopy mortality;
- Provide strategic locations for fire personnel to safely engage wildfires and limit the growth of large fires;
- Improve overall forest health and promote long-term fire resilience; and
- Modify fuels for easy maintenance of forests and woodlands with periodic prescribed fire.

Since 2008, several wildfires have put our treatments for reducing hazardous fuels to the test. By monitoring fuel treatment effectiveness, we have been able to observe how effective our

treatments are at moderating fire behavior (the manner in which a fire reacts to the influences of fuel, weather and topography) and whether the treatments make it easier to put out wildfires.

We conduct field assessments wherever fuels treatments are intersected by wildfires, or used for wildfire control, within three months of the burn. First-hand accounts from firefighters, burn severity maps, and field measurements all inform these assessments. The goals are to determine if fire behavior was changed as a result of fuels treatments and to learn if the treatment helped control the fire.

Between 2008-2020, there were 219 fuel treatments intersected by 57 fires. Sixty-eight percent of the time, fuel treatments moderated fire behavior. Sixty percent of the time, the treatment contributed to wildfire control (extinguishing blazes).

We saw that reducing fuels allowed firefighters to safely use direct attack

methods for several reasons. It slowed the rates of fire spread and reduced fire intensity and flame lengths (to less than four feet). Strategic treatment locations provided safe anchor points for burnouts along roads. Thinned tree canopies allowed retardant and water to reach the forest floor. And dealing with less vegetation (fuel) in the treated areas helped firefighters build firelines more quickly.

In treated areas, fire stayed mostly on the ground (surface fire), reducing damage to soil and trees and resulting in less tree mortality than that in untreated areas. Fewer spot fires occurred in treated areas, and those that started were easily contained. Post-fire effects in treated areas were comparable to results anticipated after

a reduction of surface fuels, ladder fuels, and vegetation density from prescribed (controlled) fires.

These field observations are consistent with a growing body of evidence indicating that well-designed and maintained fuel treatments can positively influence wildfire effects and fire management capabilities. But our work isn't done—the study also found that treatments can lose effectiveness in just 15 years. We will always be conducting fuels treatments to help protect our local communities, create safer areas for firefighters to engage wildfires, and promote resilient forests and woodlands.

Jena Volpe, Fire Ecologist
Bureau of Land Management
jvolpe@blm.gov

Free anti-overdose drugs distributed

Free distribution of life-saving overdose medication and HIV tests is set for 10:30 am-1:30 pm on Sunday, September 5, at the Sugarloaf Center, 206 Tetherow Road, in Williams. Park in the parking lot and take a short walk to the center, which is at the end of the gated driveway.

Volunteers from the nonprofit group Rogue Harm Reduction will offer free doses of naloxone to take home, along with instructions for use. They'll also give out free fentanyl test strips, take-home HIV tests, and condoms and lube.

Free overdose response training takes about 20 minutes. Walk-ins are welcome.

Those who aren't vaccinated against COVID-19 are asked to please wear a mask.

Rogue Harm Reduction, a volunteer-run, nonprofit health collective, promotes community wellness and harm reduction strategies in response to substance use disorders and other community health concerns. The events are held the first Sunday of each month.

For more information, email rogueharmreduction@gmail.com.

Why do we no longer see children in leg braces, as we saw so often in the '50s? Because parents eagerly took their children to be vaccinated against polio when the vaccine came out.

GET VACCINATED.

MEDIATION: *A wise alternative to expensive litigation*

Mediation is a win-win voluntary process between two or more people who want to resolve their conflict or dispute and reach mutual agreement.



Services For:

- Divorce
- Unmarried Custody Agreements
- Divorce/Unmarried Custody Agreements
- Custody/Parent Plans
- Community/Restorative Justice Facilitation
- On-Line Dispute Resolution
- Workplace Agreement Contracts
- Real Estate Agreement Contracts
- Cannabis Agreement Contracts
- Crisis Intervention
- Confidential Mediation Contracts
- Pre-Nuptial Agreement Contracts
- Couples problem Solving Classes
- Anger Management Programs
- Zoom Mediation

Evening & Weekend Appointments Available

Phone
(541) 226-6654
or (541) 846-6092

Email
mediation.center@earthlink.net

432 NW Sixth St, Suite 209
Grants Pass, OR 97526



SOUTHERN OREGON MEDIATION CENTER



Ramsay Realty
The Applegate Jacksonville Experts
www.ramsayrealty.com

Serving our Community for **55 Years** and **Still Loving It!**

Come See Your Local Experts!

7604 Hwy 238 in Ruch
190 E. California St in Jacksonville

Visit our Mobile Friendly Website for Easy Local Listings and Information!







- **WE DELIVER**
- **YOU LOAD**
- **WE PICK UP**

MOVING • REMODELING • STORING HOME STAGING • RESTORATION

Looking for a better way to store your items? Call us to learn more and get a free quote!

Yes, it's that easy! Serving Josephine & Jackson counties

541.659.1800 • GoMinisSouthernOregon.com

► **Use PROMO CODE AG10 for \$10.00 off initial delivery.** ◀