



Project Highlight: Sand Creek Fuel Breaks

Following the 2018 Grassy Ridge Wildfire outside of Idaho Falls, concerned permittees, agencies, and stakeholders came together to discuss how to prevent future catastrophic wildfires in the region.

The Sand Creek Fuel Breaks were proposed in order to protect nearby wildlife habitat, resource uses, infrastructure from wildfire, and enhance public safety.

The fuel breaks will be alongside 103 miles of existing roads, reaching up to 300 feet wide. The first phase, completed in June 2019, was herbicide application. The second phase will be mowing, planned for fall 2020. Maintenance will be a combination of targeted grazing and repeated mowing as determined by monitoring.

This is a shared effort between IDL, BLM, Idaho Fish and Game, and landowners. Other involved agencies include Natural Resources Conservation Service, Office of Species Conservation, High Country Resource Conservation and Development, and Clark & Fremont Counties.

GNA Rangeland Background: The Bureau of Land Management and Idaho Department of Lands signed a five-year cooperative agreement in 2017. This agreement expanded the use of the Good Neighbor Authority in Idaho to rangelands. This allows the state to work with federal land managers to: (1) Treat insect and disease-infected trees; (2) Reduce hazardous fuels; (3) Implement any other activities that restore or improve forest, rangeland, and watershed health, including fish and wildlife habitat.

GNA Rangeland Program Overview

Agreement objectives include assisting with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, conducting public outreach, completing vegetation treatments related to restoration or fuels management, and collecting data in support of monitoring watersheds and vegetation treatments.

Issues identified by agencies, collaborative groups, and universities included the protection of rangeland resources via fuel breaks, wildlife habitat restoration, assistance with range improvements, expansion of rangeland monitoring, streamlined wildfire rehabilitation, and improved communication between agencies, permittees, and interested stakeholders.

GNA Rangeland Program Goals

- Increase the acreage of restoration across land ownerships
 - Habitat restoration
 - Wildfire rehabilitation
- Increase the acreage of fuels treatments across land ownerships
 - Invasive annuals treatments
 - Fuel breaks
- Increase monitoring across land ownerships
 - Assist in monitoring vegetation treatments and land health assessments
- Improve collaboration between agencies, permittees, and stakeholders
 - Disseminate information to state/federal agencies and stakeholders on relevant policies and procedures
 - Participate in collaborative meetings statewide