



FRONT RANGE FUELS TREATMENT PARTNERSHIP
2004 Annual Report

THE FRONT RANGE FUELS TREATMENT PARTNERSHIP

COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE • NATIONAL PARK SERVICE • USDA FOREST SERVICE

Colorado's Front Range includes an explosive mix of homes situated within forest areas. These wildland-urban interface zones place people, homes, communities, and natural resources at significant risk from catastrophic wildfires. Impacts to the Front Range from catastrophic wildfires in 2002 were some of the most devastating in the United States.

Increased community sustainability and safety provided through the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Implementation Strategy benefits local landowners, local governments, the State of Colorado, and the nation.

The Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership is a dynamic partnership comprised of federal, state and local governments, land-management agencies, private landowners, conservation organizations, and other stakeholders. The purpose of the Partnership is to reduce wildland fire risks through sustained fuels treatment along Colorado's Front Range.

The primary goal of the Partnership is to enhance community sustainability and restore fire-adapted ecosystems over a 10-year period. Key to success is extensive participation from local governments; public involvement; collaboration in identifying and supporting specific project areas and types of treatment;

and building on successful projects such as the Upper South Platte Watershed Restoration Project, the Winiger Ridge Project, research at Cheesman Reservoir, and the Polhemus prescribed burn.

Partnership agencies conducted a large-scale rapid assessment of hazardous fuel conditions along the Front Range to identify large areas where treatment needs are of greatest concern. As a result of the assessment, maps were developed that delineate areas of low to very high hazard, risk, and values. The most immediate needs are demonstrated where the ratings for hazard, risk, and value are all very high. A similar assessment was completed for non-federal lands in the interface where hazardous fuels place communities at risk. The assessments indicate that approximately 510,000 acres are high priority for treatment – 300,000 acres within the Pike National Forest, 140,000 acres within the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, and 70,000 acres of non-federal land.

The following report discusses the progress that has been made in fostering collaboration, working with communities to develop and implement Community Wildfire Protection Plans, and treating hazardous fuels along the Front Range of Colorado.

The First Full Year of the Front Range Fuels Partnership

GROWING UP FAST

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES

A year ago, the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership (FRFTP) was in its infancy. The strategy had just been officially adopted by the Colorado State Forest Service, National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. The Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service provided initial funding to jump-start the strategy. And the organizational framework was just beginning to gel. What a difference a year makes.

In 2004, the FRFTP was propelled from infancy to young adulthood. Not only did the Partnership aggressively plan and treat acres, it plunged headfirst into developing effective working relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders. The Roundtable came together and created a strategy to further the goals of the Partnership. And the passage of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act in December 2003 jumpstarted communities' efforts to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). Then there were the meetings with county commissioners and other local stakeholders, a host of educational programs and conferences, tours of treated areas, research studies, and implementers' meetings.

COLLABORATION

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

While the number of acres treated to reduce hazardous fuels and, thus, help protect communities, important watersheds and other natural resources, is a primary goal of the Partnership, the agencies recognized the need – and benefit – of working with local communities and other interested stakeholders. As a result, 20 communities took steps to begin developing CWPPs, seven completed plans, while 26 others are in the discussion stages. CWPP activity is expected to increase significantly in 2005, and the agencies have taken steps to make sure that the technical resources and expertise are available to help communities succeed.



Lop and scatter in the Upper South Platte.

Photo by Kristin Garrison.

In the spirit of collaboration, the Roundtable came together for the first time in May 2004. Since then, the group of state and federal agencies, non-governmental environmental and conservation organizations, local and county government representatives, academic and scientific communities, user groups and others have developed a mission statement, objectives, and strategies to foster support for the Partnership and involve local stakeholders in planning future fuels reduction projects that consider community protection and ecological restoration. Stay tuned, because 2005 promises to be an action-packed year for the Roundtable.



SCIENCE AND COMMUNICATION

GETTING IT RIGHT

Scientists conducting research funded by the Partnership and the Rocky Mountain Research Station were also busy in 2004. They have been studying everything from mixed conifer fire history and landscape ecology, to the ecological impacts of mechanical treatments, to the social acceptability of fuels treatments – and many other issues specific to fuels treatment on the Front Range. Scientists will summarize their findings and make the information available to foresters, other resource managers, and the public alike to help facilitate informed discussion.

Communication, education, and outreach activities also occurred in abundance in 2004. The Partnership produced an



*Wildfire hazard risk within the Partnership area.
Graphic by Skip Edel.*

information brochure and accomplishment updates; developed poster exhibits that were displayed at local, state and national events; hosted tours of project areas; brought together agency partners to discuss issues and barriers; participated in Roundtable meetings; assisted with CWPP activities and events; and established a new web site to help raise awareness of issues and accomplishments. These activities will increase and become more effective with the help of a new communications and marketing strategy in 2005.

REMEMBERING OUR ROOTS

ACRES TREATED, ACRES PLANNED

Finally, Partnership agencies treated a total of 33,378 acres on the Front Range in 2004. With an infusion of \$2,100,000 from the National Forest System in the form of forest health and Stevens Authority funds, as well as State Fire Assistance grants and other funding, CSFS treated 16,625 acres. The U.S. Forest Service treated 16,141 acres at a cost of \$7,900,000, and the National Park Service treated 612 acres at a cost of \$326,570. Decisions for the treatment of an additional 91,000 acres of federal land are now complete, and management plans have been prepared for more than 19,000 acres of state and private land.

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

MANAGING FOR THE FUTURE

The Partnership will continue to define success based on collaboration to cultivate support for implementing cross-boundary fuels reduction projects, extensive participation from local governments and communities, rapid and efficient implementation of hazardous fuels treatment projects, and significantly increasing the number of acres treated. Ultimately, though, success will be based on Partnership impacts on community and watershed protection.

No longer in its infancy, the Partnership made significant progress in 2004, but there is still much to do – and neither time nor Mother Nature will wait. Just as it did in 2004, the Partnership must continue to mature quickly. And in order to achieve success on a cross-boundary, landscape scale, the Partnership must capitalize on the collective wisdom of the agencies, local governments, the Roundtable, and involved, informed citizens.

*In 2004, the FRFTP was propelled
from infancy to young adulthood.*



Roundtable: A Wealth of Expertise

COLLABORATIVE MODELS

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A LONG-TERM VISION

Collaboration is the cornerstone of the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership. It helped make the Upper South Platte Watershed Protection and Restoration and Winiger Ridge projects successful. It also made the research at Cheesman possible.

Building on lessons learned from these collaborative models, in May 2004, the FRFTP Roundtable convened for the first time. And this diverse group of stakeholders has made significant progress in its short time together.

The Roundtable is comprised of nearly 40 representatives from state and federal agencies, local governments, academia, the scientific community, user groups, industry leaders, and non-governmental environmental and conservation organizations. The role of the Roundtable is to develop a long-term vision for all lands along the Front Range to achieve comprehensive forest management goals by engaging communities and building support for forest management and restoration activities.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

SYNTHESIZING THE KEY ISSUES

During four meetings in 2004, the Roundtable developed a mission statement, agreed on its role relative to the overall goals of the Partnership, discussed the benefits of a long-term vision, developed objectives and strategies, recruited a facilitator, established an organizing committee, and identified four working groups – ecology, economics, action advisory, and community engagement – to synthesize findings on key issues and provide recommendations to the Roundtable.

The mission of the Roundtable is “To serve as a focal point for diverse stakeholder input into the Partnership’s efforts to reduce wildland fire risks through sustained fuels treatment along the Colorado Front Range.”



Roundtable Work Group.

Photo by Mitzy Forbes.

The objectives of the Roundtable are to:

- Synthesize stakeholder input in order to ensure Partnership awareness of diverse impacts of fuels reduction work on public and private lands, including rural economies, community planning, risk reduction, homeowner protection, wildlife habitat, and ecosystem function in order to refine strategic treatments;
- Work with the leadership of the Partnership to facilitate consideration of forest restoration and risk reduction objectives in project planning and implementation strategies;
- Facilitate the inclusion of diverse viewpoints in fuels treatment project planning along the Front Range of Colorado;
- Ensure fuels reduction and forest restoration treatments are consistent with community-level priorities, and that those communities are included in appropriate dimensions of project planning and execution; and
- Assist in dispersing information and communicating the Roundtable’s work to the public.



THE VISION

FUELS REDUCTION AND FOREST RESTORATION

In addition, the Roundtable identified strategies to facilitate the Partnership's processes for planning fuels treatment projects. Agency scientists, academic contributors, other experts, and interested stakeholders participating in the workgroups are crafting a vision document, which will take about a year to complete. Using the vision document as a guide, the Roundtable will work to ensure that planned and future fuels reduction and forest restoration projects are consistent with the vision. When engaging in non-federal fire management planning, the Roundtable will encourage the adoption of planning processes that are consistent with local governments' landscape-scale vision and foster support for implementation of the vision.

The Roundtable also will work with media to generate public awareness and interest in their work, and to reinforce successes.

The Roundtable's work in 2004 is the cornerstone of a strong, sturdy foundation for Colorado's Front Range communities, natural resources, and economy.

Potential benefits of a Front Range Vision, as viewed by the Roundtable:

- Develop public, environmental, business, and legislative support for accelerated fuels reduction and forest restoration programs.
- Expand the pool of resources, both public and private, available to support restoration activities.
- Increase likelihood that federal and state agencies and local communities work in concert.
- Act for the benefit of society:
 - Maximize the future health of ecosystems
 - Minimize danger to existing development and reduce risks to future development
 - Focus mitigation resources on the highest-priority areas
 - Reduce long-term costs to society of fire and fire mitigation

FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE

FOUR WORKING GROUPS

ECOLOGY <i>Create long-term vision for Front Range forest restoration</i>	ECONOMICS <i>Develop economic framework for achieving restoration goals</i>	ACTION ADVISORY <i>Identify challenges to CWPP implementation.</i>	COMMUNITY <i>Engage communities in Front Range restoration needs and challenges</i>
Comprehensive assessment of restoration needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and desired future condition maps for the Front Range • Prescriptions and rationale for fire treatment regimen • Fire treatment maps for each planning region and community • Summary of implications for annual treatment needs 	Combined public and private restoration business plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget of costs, revenues, and timing of treatments • Inventory of small-diameter timber (SDT) resources and sustainable supply • Comprehensive analysis of tools for optimizing restoration economics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDT commercialization • Private landowner incentives • Public funding and capacity needs 	Toolkit that identifies resources and agency directories to be used by local governments and communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest management • Ecology • Economics • Public participation • Role of local governments 	Outreach to Front Range communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct outreach events in 6-10 Front Range communities • Engage local community members in restoration issues • Share insights/recommendations from Roundtable process • Gather feedback on long-term forest health vision



FRONT RANGE ROUNDTABLE

DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

<p>ENVIRONMENTAL/CONSERVATION NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalition for the Upper South Platte • National Forest Foundation • Southern Rockies Conservation Alliance • The Wilderness Society • The Nature Conservancy • Upper South Platte Watershed Association
<p>STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCY/POLICY REPRESENTATIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Land Management • National Park Service – Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument • National Park Service – Rocky Mountain National Park • Natural Resources Conservation Service • USDA Forest Service – Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests • USDA Forest Service – Pike National Forest • USDA Forest Service – Rocky Mountain Research Station • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Geological Survey
<p>STATE/LOCAL COMMUNITY LEADERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boulder County Land Use Department • Colorado Air Pollution Control Division • Colorado Counties, Inc. • Colorado Department of Natural Resources • Colorado Department of Public Health and Safety • Colorado Division of Emergency Management • Colorado Fire Chiefs Association • Colorado State Forest Service • Colorado State Parks • County Sheriffs of Colorado • Governor’s Office • Great Outdoors Colorado • Jefferson County Open Space • Grand County • Trust for the Public Land
<p>ACADEMIC/SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center of the American West • Colorado State University • University of Colorado • University of Colorado-Denver
<p>USER GROUP/INDUSTRY LEADERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Springs Utilities • Colorado Timber Industry Association • Denver Water • Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association • State Farm Insurance



Connecting with Communities: Community Wildfire Protection Plans

GRASSROOTS BEGINNINGS

MEETING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In March 2004, county commissioners and staff from 10 Front Range counties convened in Golden to participate in a briefing and discussion on the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership. The meeting highlighted the role of local governments in the Partnership and encouraged them to participate and facilitate action in their jurisdictions. The importance of developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) was also emphasized. With the newly passed Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) and plans to step up efforts to reduce fuels on national forests, local/county involvement in the Partnership is critical.

By April, Teller County Commissioners passed a resolution to establish the Teller County CWPP Commission, which was charged with developing a countywide plan. The group has worked diligently during the last year to draft an action plan that addresses treatment on adjacent public and local private land.

Between May and June, the CSFS and USFS Partnership coordinators and other key personnel met with agency staff in five locations to gain a better understanding about past and on-going efforts within individual counties. They also discussed strategies to foster effective collaboration with counties and communities on the Partnership, CWPPs, and fuels reduction projects. Based on these meetings, it was clear that additional discussions with counties were warranted to determine how to involve local communities in the development of CWPPs and engage them in FRFTP fuels treatment projects.

It's also important to note that prior to the passage of HFRA and the advent of CWPPs, several Front Range communities were hard at work completing hazard assessments and county fire plans, as specified in the National Fire Plan. Some of these plans will be revisited to meet the intent and requirements of a CWPP.

GROWING PAINS

LEARNING TO VALUE INDIVIDUALITY

As with most new programs, there has been a steep learning curve for all involved in developing CWPPs. The variability of individual communities has resulted in different approaches. The Larimer County Coordinating Group developed a CWPP template



Community FireWise meeting in Estes Park.

Photo by Katherine Timm.





Red Feather Lakes Community Work Day.
Photo by Denise White.

to use for all CWPPs in the county. Teller County charted its path with only a general handbook and few models to follow. It also was the first to use the CSFS community assessment model that considers community values at risk. Realizing that the model did not precisely fit its needs, the county modified it.

Most CWPPs are unique to the political, social, environmental, and jurisdictional settings of communities. Each plan also addresses individual community issues, challenges, opportunities, and benefits. For example, Allenspark, has few year-round residents and is divisive over mitigation actions; actions on the South Platte are influenced by Denver Water, which owns large pieces of

land; Boulder County has more than 19 fire districts with differing needs and priorities; Teller County has a small population; Jefferson County has a large population; and Grand County is dealing with a major mountain pine beetle outbreak. These differences make each community and each Community Wildfire Protection Plan unique.

THE PLAN

HELPING COMMUNITIES PROTECT THEMSELVES

Despite these challenges, seven CWPPs were completed on the Front Range in 2004. In addition to the Teller County plan, 20 CWPPs are in progress or near completion, and another 26 communities have expressed a strong interest in developing CWPPs. While challenges abound, so does the gratification of completing a plan that can help protect a community and surrounding natural resources from the potentially devastating effects of wildfires. And while community protection is the primary goal of CWPPs, a greater benefit is perhaps the strong sense of community and the capacity-building that evolves during the planning process.

Somewhat different from many other planning processes, CWPPs foster local grassroots collaboration, which helps communities identify priorities and action strategies to ensure that implementation occurs. This new tool enables communities to coordinate plans with the U.S. Forest Service to accomplish cross-boundary protection that benefits Colorado's communities and natural resources.

Most CWPPs are unique to the political, social, environmental, and jurisdictional settings of communities.



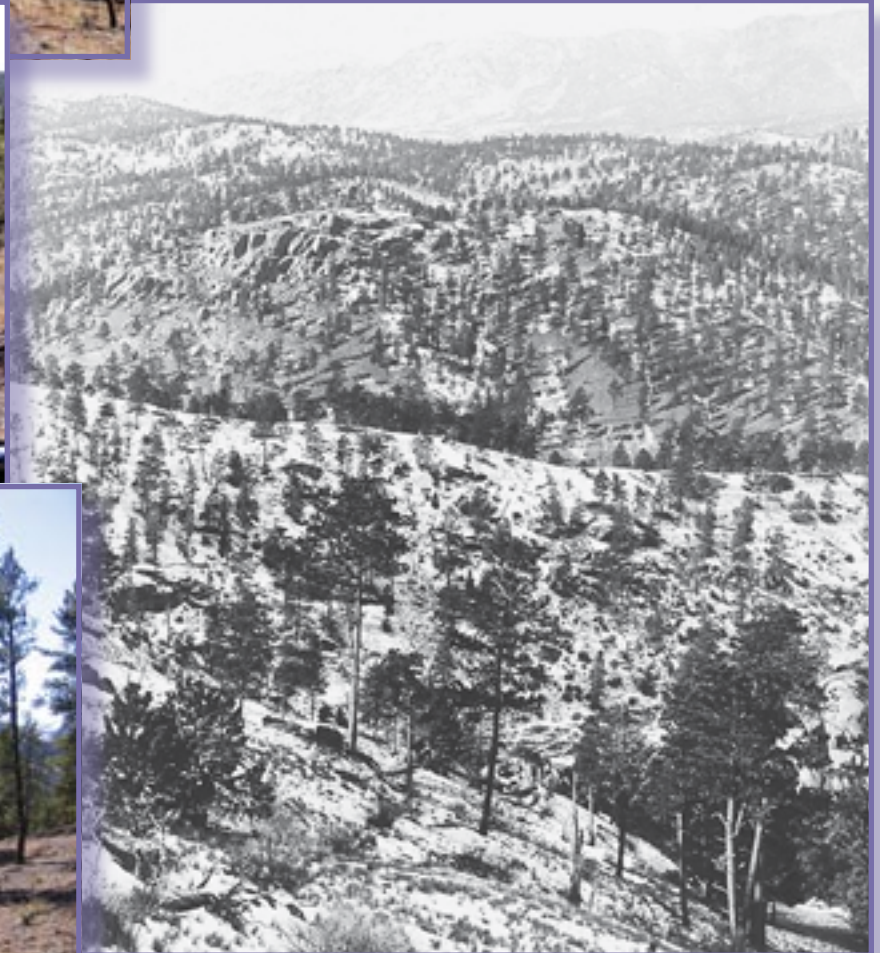
Research: Examining the Ecological and Human Dimensions of Fuels Treatment



MORE THAN JUST A FUELS ISSUE

UNDERSTANDING FRONT RANGE ECOLOGY

In 2004, the Rocky Mountain Research Station helped natural resource managers, communities, non-governmental organizations and others determine appropriate forest management strategies to achieve the fuels reduction and forest and watershed restoration goals of the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership.



*Cheesman Reservoir 100 years ago and today after treatment.
Three photos (left) by Merrill Kaufmann. Photo (above) courtesy of Denver Water.*

Scientists from the Research Station and Colorado State University studied the ecological and human dimension elements of fuels treatment and restoration.

The following ecological and biophysical studies focused on understanding Front Range ecology, and evaluating and planning treatments to improve ecological conditions and reduce fuels.

MIXED CONIFER FIRE HISTORY AND LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY

Mixed conifer forests occupy much of the upper montane zone of the Front Range, but it is unclear if their present ecological condition warrants restoration. Studies focus on historical conditions to determine if significant changes have occurred since Euro-American settlement. These studies also will help determine fuel hazard treatments in the wildland-urban interface that are consistent with good ecology.

FIRE AND FUEL TREATMENT EFFECTS ON UNDERSTORY BIODIVERSITY

Understory plant communities and fuel inventories provide a sensitive indication of forest response to restoration, fire, and post-fire rehabilitation activities. Plot sampling in lower montane ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir forests provides baseline data on species composition and fuel accumulation for evaluating natural and human disturbances and treatment outcomes.

INSECT MORTALITY AND FIRE SEVERITY

The Rocky Mountain Region Forest Health Protection team conducted aerial surveys and used the data to relate fire severity in the Schoonover and Hayman fires to the location of insect-caused tree mortality. In general, areas previously defoliated by the Douglas-fir tussock moth had relatively low fire severity. In contrast, areas where Douglas-fir beetle mortality occurred had relatively high severity.

PREDICTING FUEL-GENERATING DISTURBANCES ALONG THE FRONT RANGE

Diseases, insect pests, strong winds, human activities, and other types of small-scale disturbances create major sources of fuels. Studies helped determine the spatial distribution of fuel-generating disturbances and resulting fuels, and diagnostic tools for identifying and quantifying these disturbances.

ADVANCED REMOTE SENSING TECHNIQUES FOR CLASSIFYING AND MAPPING FRONT RANGE FORESTS

State-of-the-art remote sensing methodologies are being tested to determine if more accurate and detailed assessments can be made of the structure of Front Range forests. In a test area, scientists estimated canopy cover and successfully distinguished between ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir at a scale of 17-m pixels. These results are being used in an examination of restoration and fuels treatments (see next item).

EFFICIENT SPATIAL PLACEMENT OF FUEL TREATMENTS

A series of linked studies in a 90,000-acre test area are examining future approaches for restoration and fuels management in lower montane forests. These include optimizing fuels treatment placement to disrupt the spread of crown fire; incorporating ecological models to assure an appropriate ecological outcome; and optimizing treatment selection, placement, and timing to make efforts economically efficient.

ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF MECHANICAL TREATMENTS

Studies compared the effects of in-the-woods chipping of unmerchantable wood biomass and mechanical mastication, or “chunking,” of the material on subsequent understory vegetation development and soil nutrient dynamics. A workshop was also held to assess use of chipping and mastication treatments. The workshop highlighted the general lack of research information on the ecological impacts of these treatments, and the effects of mulching on fire behavior.

MESOSCALE REAL-TIME FIRE WEATHER PREDICTION

High-resolution model forecasts for fire weather and smoke impacts in the southern Rocky Mountains and Southwest are available through the Rocky Mountain Center, a weather intelligence and tech transfer system on the RMC web page at <http://fireweather.info>.

MORE THAN JUST AN ECOLOGY ISSUE

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN DIMENSIONS

Accomplishing fuels treatment objectives often means identifying and overcoming barriers to public acceptance of those treatments. The following human dimension studies investigated barriers to public acceptance of fuels treatment and methods for communicating complex forest management issues.

PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF FUELS TREATMENTS IN THE COLORADO FRONT RANGE

Agency professionals often attempt to change attitudes and behaviors through information and education, but by itself this approach is inadequate for building the necessary capacity to organize, fund, and start fuels reduction projects in interface communities.

Wildfire and fuels management is viewed by some professionals as a landscape-scale problem requiring a cultural shift over the long term, whereas homeowners view the problem as one of short-term evacuation-suppression-public safety.

Forest conditions and community protection are both important to the success of the FRFTP, but professional and public



understanding about the relationship between restoring “healthy” conditions and reducing fuels for community protection often don’t match.

Public relations professionals should be clear with the public that Front Range forests are characterized by different conditions, vegetation types, and fire regimes than forests found in the Southwest. The one consistency that is important to communicate is that Front Range forests tend to burn and wildfires most likely will continue to occur.

Collaborative partnerships and coalitions are valuable for relationship building and establishing credibility for fuels reduction projects, especially when some of the partners actually reside in or are respected leaders in communities. These partners must bring to local community discussions their expertise and established relationships of trust.

STAKEHOLDER FRAMING OF MECHANICAL TREATMENTS

Building common understanding is essential in collaborative planning. In the decision sciences, “framing” is widely viewed as a fundamental factor that affects collective decision-making. Four

frames capture the breadth of public support for mechanical thinning as a central component for effective implementation of the Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership:

- (1) forests are unhealthy and should be immediately managed to improve forest health conditions;
- (2) forests are not all unhealthy and management may not be necessary, but if it does occur, activities should comply with existing laws;
- (3) forests should be immediately managed for fire mitigation; and
- (4) thinning is necessary, but financial responsibility must be considered.

Statements from the public suggest areas of potential agreement among diverse stakeholders, given opportunities for dialogue about mechanical thinning. Positive statements indicate opportunities to build common understandings. At the very least, highlighting such commonalities may help dispel myths and temper such rhetoric as the HFRA being a giveaway for the timber industry, or that large, old trees will be logged just to generate profits for logging contractors.

Building common understanding is essential in collaborative planning.



Project Accomplishments: 2004 Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership Districts and Projects

Partnership agencies treated a total of 33,378 acres on the Front Range in 2004. Decisions for the treatment of an additional 91,000 acres of federal land are not complete, and management plans have been prepared for more than 19,000 acres of state and private land. Following are highlights of some of those accomplishments.

ARAPAHO AND ROOSEVELT NATIONAL FORESTS

SOUTH ZONE FUELS PROGRAM (BOULDER AND CLEAR CREEK RANGER DISTRICTS)

In 2004, hazardous fuels reduction treatment was accomplished on 1,926 acres all within the wildland-urban interface. Of these acres, 1,426 were accomplished through mechanical thinning, and 500 through prescribed fire. Initial treatment work was completed on the Winiger Stewardship Project, one of the pilot stewardship contracts, as well as in the Sugarloaf Stewardship project area. Additionally, in 2004, decisions were made to reduce hazardous fuels on more than 11,000 acres.

Sugarloaf Fuels Reduction Project – Initiated in 2002, the Sugarloaf Fuels Reduction Project covers roughly 5,000 acres. The project decision notice was signed in January of 2004. Located just west of Boulder, the Peak-to-Peak Scenic Byway defines the western boundary of the project area. The entire treatment area includes about 15,187 of National Forest System acres and 11,584 of non-Forest System acres. Under the direction of South Zone implementation foresters, crews began thinning operations in the Sugarloaf project area in March and about 1,000 acres will be treated or are under contract to be treated. Treatments under consideration include forest thinning, tree pruning, prescribed burning, and tree removal.

James Creek Fuels Reduction Project – The decision notice for this project was signed in September 2004 and includes 6,402 acres of treatment. Crews have marked and laid out

the treatment units. All areas being prepared surround the Overland Fire area, located near Jamestown. While activities occur on national forest lands, the Colorado State Forest Service is working with Jamestown on a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

St. Vrain Project – This project includes approximately 4,500-5,000 acres of proposed treatment. A preliminary plan was introduced to the community in April 2004. Boulder County and the Colorado State Forest Service are concurrently facilitating development of a CWPP in Allenspark. This project gives priority to community/neighborhood protection with some emphasis on wildlife habitat and forest restoration in specific areas.

Yankee Hill Project – This project was recently selected as an Integrated Landscape Design to Maximize Fuel Treatment Effectiveness Pilot project. The team is formulating broad areas (1,000-3,000 acres) of potential treatment based on Forest Plan constraints. It will be a neighborhood/community protection-focused project, with special attention given to watershed and recreation resource protection.

Evergreen Fuels Project – The project decision notice was signed on this 1,000-acre project on September 30, 2004. The project is located in the Yankee Creek area within the Elk Creek Fire Protection District near Evergreen.

CANYON LAKES RANGER DISTRICT

In FY 2004, hazardous fuels reduction treatment was accomplished on 2,057 acres, all within the wildland-urban interface. Of these acres, 553 were accomplished through mechanical thinning, and 1,504 through prescribed fire. Also in 2004, decisions were made to reduce hazardous fuels on more than 7,000 acres.

Crystal Lakes Fuels Reduction Project – Located north and west of the community of Red Feather Lakes, the planned treatment area is 3,332 acres in size. The Crystal Lakes subdivision has been recognized as a National Firewise Community. The decision document was signed in 2004, and treatment areas were completely laid out. Forest service crews have mechanically treated three acres on national forest lands.





*Moving timber at a demonstration site on the Front Range.
Photo by Katherine Timm.*

Sheep Creek 2 – The project area plan decision notice was signed in 2004. The project includes mechanical treatment and prescribed fire on 4,200 acres. Implementation will occur in 2005.

Stringtown West Fuels Reduction Project – Approximately 4,062 acres, this project received a categorical exclusion to address the NEPA process. This project complements previous projects completed in the area on national forest land and extends work being done by the Colorado State Forest Service in conjunction with homeowners in the area.

Lone Tree Fuels Reduction Project – This project involves approximately 2,400 acres. The NEPA process has been started and a categorical exclusion is being used. The first public meeting for this project was on September 30, 2004. If the NEPA is completed in time, implementation may occur in 2005.

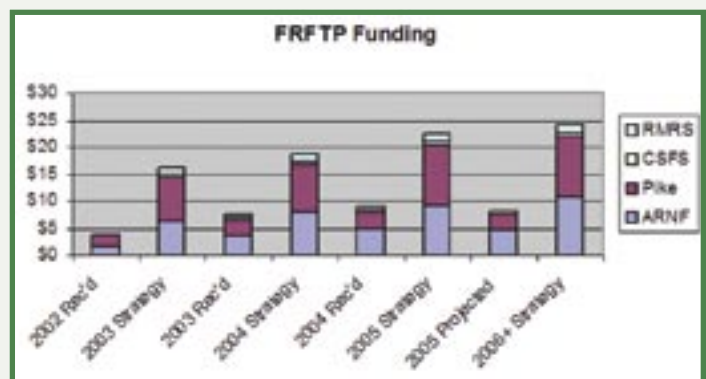
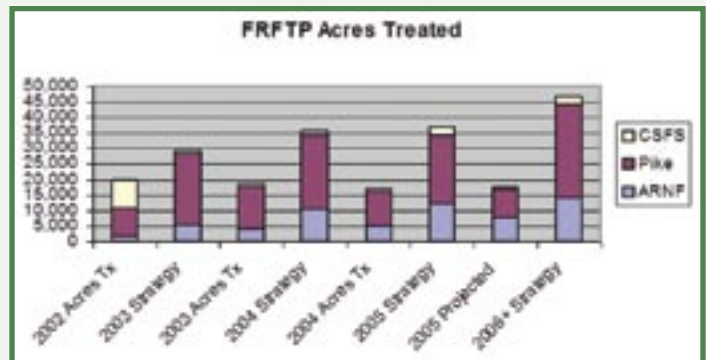
Estes Valley Fuels Reduction Project – This 8,000-acre project surrounds the community of Estes Park. It is a Healthy Forest Restoration Act project and the NEPA is started. When this report went to press, three public meetings had been held. One meeting took place on August 26, 2004, and two meetings took place in February 2005. Cooperators, homeowners, and environmentalists also participated in a field trip. This is a wildland-urban interface project that contains numerous acres of private land. Many private landowners are currently engaged in fuels reduction activities guided by the Colorado State Forest Service. Treatment on private land is being integrated into the planning of this project on national forest lands.

SULPHUR RANGER DISTRICT

In 2004, hazardous fuels reduction treatment was accomplished on 1,180 acres, and 66 percent within the wildland-urban interface. Of these acres, 280 were accomplished through mechanical thinning, and 900 through prescribed fire. Decisions were also made to reduce hazardous fuels on more than 2,000 acres.

Arapaho National Recreation Area Forest Health Project – Located within the Arapaho National Recreation Area, the planned treatment area is 2,515 acres in size to reduce hazardous fuels and reduce the threat of an ongoing mountain pine beetle epidemic. A record of decision (ROD) addressing areas outside of inventoried roadless areas was signed in 2004. A ROD addressing treatment within inventoried roadless areas will be signed in 2005. The treatment areas are being laid out. This area will be proposed as a stewardship contract area in 2005.

Upper Fraser Valley Forest Health Project – The project area is located west of the Winter Park Ski area and includes portions of the Fraser Experimental Forest. Initial project design has begun with a decision planned for 2005. Treatments to reduce hazardous fuels and reduce risk from mountain pine beetles have been proposed on about 5,000 acres.



COLORADO STATE FOREST SERVICE

In 2004, the Colorado State Forest Service treated a total of 16,625 acres on state and private land. Prescribed burns were completed on nearly 900 of those acres. In addition, management plans were prepared for 19,100 acres. The Partnership provided funding for 45 high-priority projects on the five CSFS Front Range districts, the Granby District, and the Broomfield Office. Districts also were heavily engaged in the development of more than 30 Community Wildfire Protection Plans. Seven plans were completed in 2004 and another 20 are currently being developed. Following is a brief summary of district activity.

Boulder District – The district treated a total of 2,707 acres in 2004, and prescribed fire was applied on nine acres. Management plans were completed on 2,443 acres. The Partnership funded five district projects in 2004. District personnel also participated in the development of CWPPs at the county, city, fire department, and community levels.

Broomfield Office – Prescribed fire was used to treat 124 of the 2,321 acres on special project lands. Management plans have been completed for 7,407 acres. Twelve projects were funded by the Partnership. Special project foresters also participated in the development of the Harris Park and South Platte CWPPs.

Fort Collins District – The district completed management plans on 803 acres, and treated 393 acres, 26 with prescribed fire. The Partnership provided funding for five projects on the district in 2004. The district has also been involved in the development of CWPPs at the county and community levels.



Slash piles from a fuels reduction project to remove beetle-infested trees in Grand County.

Photo by Katherine Timm.

Franktown District – The district treated 534 acres and completed management plans on 460 acres.

Golden District – Prescribed fire was used to treat 724 of the 2,270 acres treated on the district in 2004. Management plans were completed on 3,636 acres, and the Partnership funded 11 projects. In addition, the district has been working with Jefferson County and several fire departments to develop CWPPs.

Granby District – The district completed management plans on 2,231 acres; treated 708 acres, including prescribed burning on eight acres; and received Partnership funding for two projects. District personnel have also been involved in the planning process for the Grand County CWPP.

Woodland Park District – The district treated a total of 7,692 acres and prepared management plans for an additional 2,120 acres. The Partnership funded 10 projects on the district in 2004. The district has also been participating in the development of the Teller County and Carroll Lakes CWPPs.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

An Environmental Assessment for wildland-urban interface fuels management, covering 3,670 acres, was finalized in 2002. During 2004, the fire and fuels management crew accomplished several fuels reduction projects in the wildland-urban interface along the park boundary, including 489 acres on the projects described below.

Crews will complete an additional 554 acres of fuels reduction treatments during 2005. Projects will continue on Deer Mountain, Emerald Mountain/Glacier Basin, Grand Lake, and Eagle Cliff. In addition, a 37-acre prescribed fire is planned for Moraine Park.

HAZARD FUELS REDUCTION PROJECTS

Deer Mountain – Park staff and a contract crew thinned 107 acres of dense vegetation on the Deer Mountain Project. Slash from a 110-acre fuel reduction project completed last year was also burned.

Emerald Mountain – The park crew manually thinned vegetation and constructed slash piles on 20 acres during phase 3 of the Emerald Mountain Project. They also burned slash from a 35-acre project that was cut last year near the YMCA of the Rockies.

Mill Creek – Park crews cut, piled and burned slash on a 21-acre project near the Mill Creek Ranger Station, extending the previously completed work on the Emerald Mountain Project.





Fuels reduction display at Elk Fest in Estes Park.

Photo courtesy of National Park Service.

Eagle Cliff – Crews burned slash piles from a 61-acre thinning project to protect the community of Estes Park.

Grand Lake – Contractors thinned and cut trees on 90 acres of park lands near the community of Grand Lake. The park fire crew also burned slash piles from a 22-acre thinning project completed the previous year.

Hidden Valley – Park crews burned several slash piles from 2 acres near park structures in the Hidden Valley area.

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE AND OUTREACH PROJECTS

Rural Fire Assistance – \$25,900 in Rural Fire Assistance funding available through the National Fire Plan was provided to volunteer fire departments in Allenspark, Estes Park, Glen Haven, and Grand Lake. Funding was used to purchase personal protective equipment and wildland fire suppression equipment.

Community Assistance – A \$15,000 Community Assistance grant was obtained through the National Fire Plan to continue an interagency fire education program in the Estes Valley.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans – Private citizens from several local homeowners associations are working with officials from the YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park Volunteer Fire Department, Larimer County, Colorado State Forest Service, U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service, have formed the East Portal FireWise Coalition to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Community Outreach – Produced and mailed a Fire and Fuels Management Update newsletter to approximately 8000 residents within Allenspark, Estes Park, Glen Haven, and Grand Lake.

FLORISSANT FOSSIL BEDS NATIONAL MONUMENT

HAZARD FUELS REDUCTION PROJECTS

Manual fuels reduction projects were completed on 123 acres in the wildland-urban interface along the park boundary in 2004. Crews are planning to complete an additional 175 acres of manual fuels treatments on the Northeast Boundary project in 2005.

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

Rural Fire Assistance – \$10,000 in Rural Fire Assistance funding was provided to the Teller County Office of Emergency Services, and \$10,000 was granted to the Florissant Fire and Rescue District.



Limbing a tree at Cal-Wood in Boulder County.

Photo by Katherine Timm.

PIKE NATIONAL FOREST

SOUTH PLATTE RANGER DISTRICT

In 2004, the South Platte Ranger District completed 9,617 acres of hazardous fuels treatment. These efforts occurred mainly within the wildland-urban interface. Prescribed burning accounted for 2,266 acres, while mechanical treatment occurred on 7,351 acres. The mechanical treatment included projects that were completed through 2003 funded contracts (4,500 acres), as well as projects that were initiated and completed in 2004 using that year's funding (2,851 acres). The 30,000-acre Harris Park fuels management environmental assessment was initiated in February 2004 with a decision expected the first week in June 2005. Further, planning proceeded on a 118-acre treatment project on



A hydroax at work on the Upper South Platte.

Photo by Kristin Garrison.

the Pike National Forest in an area that interfaces with Perry Park. A categorical exclusion decision notice on this project was issued in early 2004. Treatment for that project is expected to begin in the fall of 2005.

The underpinning for the hazardous fuels achievements on the South Platte District is the Upper South Platte Watershed Protection and Restoration Project, chartered in May 1999. This collaborative project included the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, Denver Water, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other interested agencies.

The Bureau of Land Management Indefinite Delivery and Indefinite Quantities (IDIQ) contract, which allows task orders to be issued for actions such as mechanical treatment, also contributed to the success of this project. Seven task orders were issued in federal fiscal year 2004 for mastication of undesirable vegetation and thinning to an average basal area of 50 square feet, reducing the probability of a large catastrophic fire in the area. Four of the units were completed this year and the remaining three units were held open to further reduce the basal area through logging. The 2,266 acres of prescribed fire were accomplished with U.S. Forest Service employees and cooperators such as the Colorado State Forest Service and West Metro Fire Department.

Harris Park Fuels Environmental Assessment – In early 2004, nine federal, state, county, local, and private agencies and organizations entered into the 285 Conifer-Bailey Fuels Management Initiative, a collaborative project that addresses hazardous fuels and treatment priorities across jurisdictional boundaries in and around the Pike National Forest southwest of Denver. The partners focused their efforts on protecting several foothills

communities at risk, irrespective of jurisdictional borders, within a 94 square mile assessment area along a 13-mile populated corridor. Most of these communities have either been impacted or immediately threatened by numerous major wildfires since 1996. Project partners include the South Platte Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, Park and Jefferson counties, and the Platte Canyon and Elk Creek fire protection districts. Three private consulting organizations in Colorado are also active members of the partnership.

Nighthawk Project Area – As part of the overall Upper South Platte Watershed Protection and Restoration Project (USPWPRP), this project resulted in treatment on 2,702 acres separated into six project units; five were mechanically thinned through contract and one unit was treated through prescribed burning by in-house Forest Service resources. Treatments in this project area include:

- **Bear Mountain** – 815 acres (1,700 ccf) of timber were removed as part of a service contract. This timber was then scaled and sold to Enviro-Land Management who sold it to various mills throughout Colorado.
- **The Russell Ridge II and Bennett Mountain Units** – 168 and 774 acres, respectively, were treated through mechanical thinning. Additional basal area was to be removed as part of a service contract and then decked by the contractor with the volume to be scaled and sold to the contractor. A prescribed burn was subsequently completed on 20 acres of the Russell Ridge II Unit in 2004.
- **The Noddle Head and Nighthawk Units** – 365 and 560 acres, respectively, were each treated through mechanical thinning.

Spring Creek Project Area – This project, which is part of the overall USPWPRP, entailed mechanical thinning on 1,818 acres in three separate project units. The units include Spring Creek, Dell, and Kelsey.

Lower Saloon Gulch Project Area – Also part of the overall USPWPRP, this project involved mechanical thinning on 1,051 acres in Saloon Gulch north of Trumbull and Deckers. The completed project was managed as two units.

Upper South Platte Watershed Protection and Restoration Project Treatment Units – In 2004, 1,800 acres of miscellaneous mechanical thinning projects were contracted as part of the overall Upper South Platte Watershed project. These treatment units include Long Scraggy (639 acres), Gunbarrel (380 acres), and Pine Creek (497 acres, contracted in 2004 and still ongoing). A final unit, Jenny Gulch (284 acres) was completed in 2004. Some thinning continued in this area through the Colorado State Good Neighbor Agreement. Work will begin in summer 2005.

PIKES PEAK RANGER DISTRICT

Ridgewood-Trout West – District fuels managers completed 150 acres of thinning in the Ridgewood subdivision near the Manitou Experimental Forest. The work performed in this area included thinning and broadcast burning to move the forest into an improved condition class. Another bi-product is a more fire-tolerant timber stand. Additional work includes a contract for mastication in early 2005 that will involve thinning on about 800 acres.

Trout Creek Timber Sale – Fuels work in El Paso County included a 400-acre timber sale, machine piles and 160 acres of broadcast burning. Burn cooperators included the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and other USFS units. In addition to forest health work, the project served as a training exercise for prescribed burning qualifications. Goals included fuels reduction, reducing the potential for crown fire, improved condition class and treatment following timber sale activity. Because the Hayman Fire affected only a portion of this project, it also was important to treat adjacent areas. Managers hoped that biomass utilization would be an option for fuels removal, but when that did not occur, they opened the area to the public. The public responded by removing 1,500 cords of firewood. Managers are preparing for more broadcast burning and 600 acres of thinning in ponderosa pine by the end of 2006.



Chipping at a demonstration project in Boulder County.

Photo by Katherine Timm.

FRONT RANGE FUELS TREATMENT PARTNERSHIP

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Vaughn Baker, Park Superintendent
Rocky Mountain National Park

Jim Bedwell, Forest Supervisor
Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland

Bob Leaverton, Forest Supervisor
Pike-San Isabel National Forests, Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands

Marcia Patton-Mallory, Station Director
Rocky Mountain Research Station

Reggie Piller, Park Superintendent
Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
ON THE FRONT RANGE FUELS TREATMENT PARTNERSHIP,
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