

# Snapshots 2003

September 19

## California

### Interagency Efforts Provide Services for Shasta Homeowners

The first interagency hosted Student Conservation Association Fire Education Team in California has just completed their first summer in Shasta County.

This region of California can claim several of the state's most severe fires in terms of structures lost. The Fountain Fire in 1992 and the Jones Fire in 1999 collectively consumed close to 1,600 structures. Tragic losses like these have motivated BLM's Redding Field Office and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to work together as co-hosts to the team that has been based in Redding since June 1.

The two agencies agreed to focus the team's efforts on the west Redding neighborhoods of Keswick, Victoria Dr., Swasey, Lower Springs, and Middletown Park. These neighborhoods have not seen a major fire since 1972 when the Swasey Fire consumed 3,214 acres of undeveloped land. Since then hundreds of new homes have been built in the area with little attention given to reducing



*Smokey Bear, a.k.a. Daisy Patterson - SCA Team Leader, greets children at the Fire Prevention Day at Shasta Mall, Redding, CA.*

the fuels and fire hazards. The fuels have continued to build, and if a similar fire were to run through that area now, the resulting number of homes destroyed could be catastrophic.

A major focus of the team's efforts this summer was interacting with homeowners on an individual basis to promote defensible space through home inspections. As they distributed information about fire safe landscaping, the fire education team also gathered data that will aid in future fire suppression, including mapping fire hydrants and identifying fuel loads. The team also participated in various public events on behalf of or with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Volunteers in Prevention program.

Another project the team worked on was in support of an effort to manage BLM lands that abut private parcels in wildland urban interface areas. To help determine which of the many scattered BLM parcels are the highest priorities for future fuel reduction treatments, the students collected information on vegetative types and available access to public lands while conducting home inspections. With the data now compiled into a database, and additional data being collected, BLM will be



*Brian Murphy assesses potential access issues and takes a GPS reading at the edge of a private parcel overlooking BLM lands.*



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better able to plan the locations of, and methods for, future federal fuel reduction projects.

The success of the summer Student Conservation Association team has led the BLM Redding office and the California Department of Forestry to sponsor a fall team to continue the work already begun and to pursue other projects to help reduce the risk of wildfire in the area.

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*Homeowner learns about ways to prevent wildland fire from consuming her home.*



*Patricia King, SCA team member, provides information to the public during the District Fair in Anderson, CA.*



*Team Redding radios in a fire while patrolling Mule Mountain*

## Fire Prevention Takes Center Stage at Summer Events

The National Fire Plan has been instrumental in mobilizing communities at risk throughout California to become more fire safe. Complimenting the many new projects and programs that originated with this effort are traditional wildfire prevention activities that provide an opportunity to keep wildfire awareness at the forefront of public attention. BLM offices

throughout California have used various summer events to remind adults and children to be especially careful with fire as they go about their summer activities.

For example, the Surprise Field Office fire staff recently worked at a fire prevention booth at the Modoc County Fair alongside colleagues from the



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U.S. Forest Service and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. This event, one of the best attended annual events in the rural northeast section of California, provides an excellent opportunity to remind the public of their responsibilities to be fire safe. The BLM staff answered questions at the booth, escorted Smokey Bear throughout the fairgrounds, rode a BLM fire truck in the parade, and contributed to a radio interview that focused on local fire prevention activities. Collectively these efforts provided a consistent wildfire safety and prevention message to local residents.

Another successful fire prevention event just completed was BLM's participation at the 150th California State Fair. The Camp Smokey interagency exhibit there consists of five fire education houses, Woodsy Owl's tree house, a forested nature trail, a fire-resistant garden, and visits with both Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl. Children of all ages are guaranteed a hands-on learning experience focused on reducing California's unwanted wildfires. Children received "Passports to Fire Prevention" upon arrival at the exhibit and then spend the next thirty or so minutes visiting each activity while learning about fire safety and prevention.

California BLM hosted members and leaders from the Student Conservation Association's Fire



*Smokey attracts the attention of some young fairgoers.*



*Staffing the fire prevention booth at the Modoc County Fair.*

Education Corps who assisted in staffing the exhibit. In addition, the Folsom BLM office developed the exhibit's well received fire-resistant demonstration garden.

All told, over the 18 days of the fair, over 10,000 children completed their passports and received their fire prevention reward – a special edition Smokey Bear bandana. In a world of corn dogs, fried Twinkies, roller



*Fire resistant plants were on display at Camp Smokey.*



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coasters, and other distractions, Camp Smokey and its wildfire prevention activities continues to be a very popular part of the California State Fair.

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## Juniper Removal Benefits the Environment and Needy Seniors

BLM's Alturas Field Office fuels crew has recently been working on an on-going hazardous fuels reduction project near the town of Madeline, California. Located in northeastern corner of the state, the Tule project has thus far treated over 65 acres of juniper woodland and provided multiple benefits including reducing the risk of catastrophic fire and improving public land health.

The Tule project is being implemented to create a fuel break along a road that will give firefighters an area of defensible space in case of a wildfire. It also protects the Tule Wilderness Study Area from any encroaching wildfire from the east.

A large number of junipers have been removed to create the fuel break and to also halt juniper encroachment in the area. This thinned vegetation isn't going to waste – instead it is being utilized for firewood for local senior citizens. The BLM crew is bucking up the Juniper, cutting it into rounds and then transporting the wood into Alturas.

The wood is then split and stacked by inmate crews from California Department of Correction's Devils Garden Conservation Camp. The firewood will be delivered during the fall and winter by BLM to needy seniors to heat their homes. The result is a community assisted and protected by a hazardous fuels reduction project.

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