



UPPER COLORADO RIVER INTERAGENCY FIRE MANAGEMENT

NPS Colorado National Monument
BLM Grand Junction and Colorado River Valley
USFS White River, Grand Mesa and
Uncompahgre National Forests



The Meadow Creek Fire

Background

The fire program at White River National Forest has evolved from one of *suppressing* fire to *managing* fire. Suppression is appropriate at times, but under favorable conditions, fire can be used as a tool to enhance forest health.

Historically, fire had a positive influence on this landscape but years of suppression disrupted that cycle. Fire historically maintained a healthy balance but now forests are overcrowded and more susceptible to insects and disease. Combined with other human influences, these factors have increased the likelihood for extreme fire behavior.

Determining an Appropriate Response

This fire met the criteria to be managed rather than suppressed because it was lightning caused. The terrain on Clinetop Mesa is steep, inaccessible, and unsafe for firefighters. Forecasts called for favorable weather conditions that would support fire growth but not extreme fire behavior. Risks were assessed and determined to be minimal. The Forest Plan identified the need for large-scale restoration projects at this location. A decision was made to manage rather than suppress the Meadow Creek Fire.

Managing the Fire

Skilled personnel are actively managing and monitoring the fire's movement to ensure that desired objectives are being met. The fire is being allowed to take its natural course within a defined area. Contingency plans have been established to respond to changing conditions as the fire progresses. Line has been constructed to stop the fire's spread to the southwest. The strategy will be altered or suppression actions taken if the fire becomes detrimental at any time.

Desired Objectives

- Reduce dead vegetation on the southwest flanks of the Flat Tops, creating a natural fuel break that will slow the spread of future fires
- Promote vigorous growth among oak, aspen, spruce, and fir
- Improve wildlife habitat, specifically for bighorn sheep

Smoke

White River National Forest's Fire Management Plan calls for fire to be reintroduced to fire-dependant ecosystems, either by natural means or through prescribed application, because fire is one of nature's most powerful means of renewal. Smoke impacts from these activities are inevitable, but fire managers choose tactics to minimize smoke impacts.