



Joe's Valley Fuels Reduction Project  
Ferron/Price Ranger District  
Manti-LaSal National Forest  
Central Utah

A Wildland Urban Interface unit encompassing approximately 10,000 acres surrounds Joe's Valley Reservoir on the Ferron/Price Ranger District. In the 1960s, portions of this area were chained to remove pinyon and juniper trees. The chaining improved wildlife habitat and reduced potential sediment production. These areas functioned as sagebrush meadows for several decades.



Photo 1 - Prior to thinning

In the 40 years since the original treatment, pinyon and juniper trees have again encroached into these areas. They have gradually overtopped the sage and grasses, and reduced the vigor of sagebrush and other ground vegetation. Pinyon and juniper trees are also competing with ponderosa pine, willow and cottonwood in riparian habitat (see Photo 1). As a result, wildlife habitat quality, including big game winter range and forage for cattle has declined. There are also three Wildland Urban Interface

units, which border Joe's Valley Reservoir; Reeder subdivision to the north, Swasey subdivision to the west, and Sportsman's Lodge to the east. In addition to the homes in the area, there are many recreational facilities and improvements along the reservoir that include: boat ramps, day use shelters, campsites and several trail heads. The encroaching pinyon and juniper have created hazardous fuel conditions within the subdivisions and around the facilities.



Reeder Subdivision – Joe's Valley

In May of 2004 work began on pinyon pine and juniper (PJ) removal around the three subdivisions. Crews also began cutting and piling PJ in the Joes Valley Reservoir area. Fire crews from the Bureau of Land Management and the State of Utah joined Forest Service fire crews. The crews cut and piled PJ on approximately 220 acres within the riparian areas and in areas too steep and rocky for mechanical equipment to operate. Forest Service range management personnel will use the large, straight juniper poles that were cut during the thinning operation as fence posts.



Photo 2 - Post treatment



Unit thinned by the Bull Hog

“Dedicated Hunters”, a local volunteer group, have assisted in the piling of cut pinyon and juniper at Joes Valley. They have spent over 125 person-hours on the project. These piles will be burned in the fall of 2004.



“Dedicated Hunters” piling PJ slash

With the cooperation of several federal and state government agencies, volunteer, and sportsman’s groups, the Joe’s Valley project will be successful in lowering the fire danger, enhancing the winter range for deer and elk, improving summer range for cattle, and providing raw materials such as fence posts for future projects on the Manti-La Sal National Forest. More collaborative fuels reduction projects are planned for the Joe’s Valley area in the near future.

The Forest Service awarded a contract for pinyon and juniper removal on approximately 520 acres in areas that were more flat and had fewer rocks. Beginning in July, the trees were “mulched” using equipment fitted with a Bull Hog head. Partial funding for this contract came from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, which considers the Joes Valley area to be one of their Sagebrush/Steppe Habitat Initiative Focus areas. Additional funding for the removal work came from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.