WILDWEST INSTITUTE

Protecting & Restoring Forests and Wildlands

WildWest Institute's Ecologically-Based Fuels Reduction Pilot Project

This project originally started in April 2004 when WildWest Institute, National Forest Protection Alliance and Wildlands CPR took a field trip to the proposed Monture Creek Fuels Reduction project just north of Ovando, MT with Seeley Lake District Ranger Tim Love and his staff.

On more field trips to the area during the summer and fall of 2004 we expressed some concerns with the fuel reduction project as proposed, especially concerns with soil damage and an excessive cutting of trees within this very diverse, mixed conifer forest. We asked Ranger Love if he'd be willing to let us put our restoration and fuel reduction vision to work on a small parcel of the project as a pilot project. The type of ecologically-based fuel reduction work that we wanted to complete on the site was to be guided by the Restoration Principles, which WildWest and others helped develop through a three-year bridge-building effort between conservationists and community-based forestry advocates.

Ranger Love agreed and we partnered with Wildland Conservation Services, a local logging and restoration contracting outfit, in July 2005 to demonstrate the effectiveness of an ecologically-based approach to community fuel reduction on a small pilot project on the Lolo National Forest just north of Ovando. Our project successfully demonstrated the viability of a forest restoration approach that enhanced ecological integrity, protected soils and reduced fuels while putting money into the pockets of some local workers.

Along the way, we also gained valuable hands-on experience with various ecologically-based fuel reduction and forest restoration techniques from Wildlands Conservation Services, as well as continued to build a solid working relationship with Ranger Tim Love and his staff.

For more information, contact WildWest Institute's Restoration Coordinator Jake Kreilick at 406.542.7343 or jkreilick@wildrockies.org.

At left is a view from within WildWest Institute's pilot project at the completion of our ecologically-based fuel reduction work.