

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Colorado State Forest Service Success Story Update

Community Wildfire Protection Plan Implementation Grant

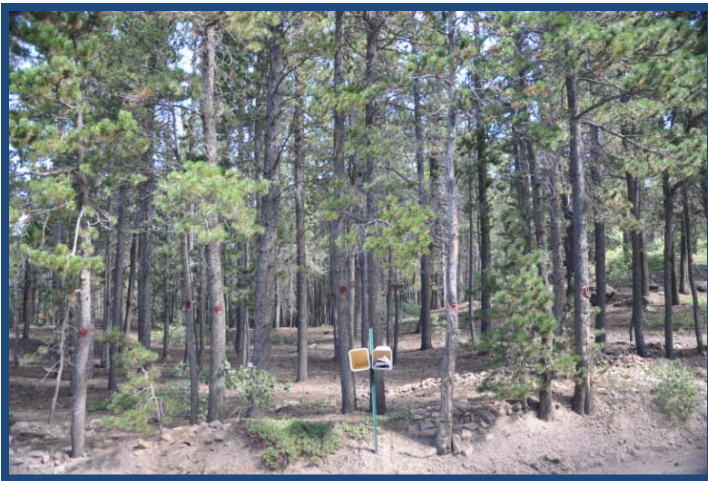


FIRE MANAGEMENT

Anchor Point Group, LLC, a wildfire management consulting firm based in Boulder, is wrapping up fuels mitigation projects in Boulder, Gilpin, Grand and Larimer counties. The project areas have high or very high wildfire risk ratings and existing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs).



Anchor Point's first ARRA project was a Grand County road easement thinning project in the spring of 2010. The projects that followed tended to be more complex, and most involved multi-ownerships in subdivisions. Although a subdivision as a whole may embrace the fire-mitigation concept, but when the talk turns to how many trees should actually be cut and where, the community sometimes becomes an assortment of individuals with different ideas. It often is a balancing act between fire safety, vegetative screening for privacy and what is considered aesthetically pleasing. Project set-up can be very time consuming, and requires people skills as well as fire mitigation knowledge.



Fuelbreaks, which are areas with significantly less live and dead material available to burn than in the surrounding forest, were created in various lengths and widths in the four counties. Some Anchor Point projects focused on the reduction of vegetation in road corridors to allow safer vehicle travel. Other projects connected previous fuels reduction projects accomplished by landowners or a subdivision and thereby increased the effectiveness of both new and previously completed projects. By the end of July 2011, all grant work was completed; 21 projects totaling 357 acres were implemented and three fire department mitigation crews and seven private businesses received contract work.



"The ARRA grant allowed Anchor Point to hire three full-time employees and several short-term employees that greatly increased our collateral value," said Chris White, Anchor Point co-founder. "We now have foresters and an arborist on staff, and the grant led us to some new business contacts."

This spring, the Front Range experienced two human-caused wildfires that qualified as Type 1 incidents, which are complex to manage. Both fires are reminders that fuels reduction projects need to remain a priority.

In 1982, Rick Herwehe established a tree and forest management business, A Cut Above Forestry. Twenty-nine years later, the business has expanded to include landscaping and design, but still retains its roots in forestry. In autumn 2010, a crew of six, including two new local hires, thinned 23 acres of residential property near Rollinsville. The purpose of the project was to improve evacuation safety on a dead-end road in case of an emergency and to improve forest health by removing dwarf mistletoe-infected trees. "The residents were great," said Herwehe. "They started out leary, but as work progressed, their comfort level increased. We heard only positive comments. Anchor Point did a ton of upfront work that saved us time as the contractor."



In June 2011, the business returned to Gilpin County to complete a fire mitigation project next to the Gilpin County School. Branches were chipped and tree trunks quickly became firewood for local residents. The school maintenance yard and nearby daycare center now are better protected from wildfire.

The Rocky Mountain Fire District, located at the south end of Boulder County, formed a wildland fire mitigation crew in 1994. Disbanded in 2008, it was reinstated in 2011. Courtney Wenzel and crewmember Keith Holder began the half-mile fuelbreak project west of Eldorado Springs in May 2011. Both men, who have seasonal positions, worked in their fire-resistant clothing so they could respond quickly to a wildfire on the district. The fuelbreak was their first project



together, and so far, so good. They developed a productive system for cutting and chipping the trees, and Karl Kumli, Anchor Point project administrator, was happy with the results.

Kumli, who became an Anchor Point employee in December 2009 as a direct result of the ARRA grant, was charged with management and project oversight of ARRA projects in Boulder and Gilpin counties. He identified potential project areas and contacted the landowners. Some landowners were excited to participate, others wanted to see how the neighbor's property looked after being thinned before making a decision, and others had no interest.



Of the 11 potential project areas, 10 signed on to have the work done. Karl worked with the participants to determine project boundaries and identify which trees should be cut. Potential contractors were notified and, based on bids for the job, a contractor was selected. Kumli then worked with the contractor to make sure the project was completed to the agreed-upon standards.

"The job has been challenging and rewarding," said Kumli. "Designing and implementing the projects required problem-solving skills and thinking on your feet. The best part is seeing the success of the projects and the contentment of the landowners upon project completion."