Healthy Forests Report

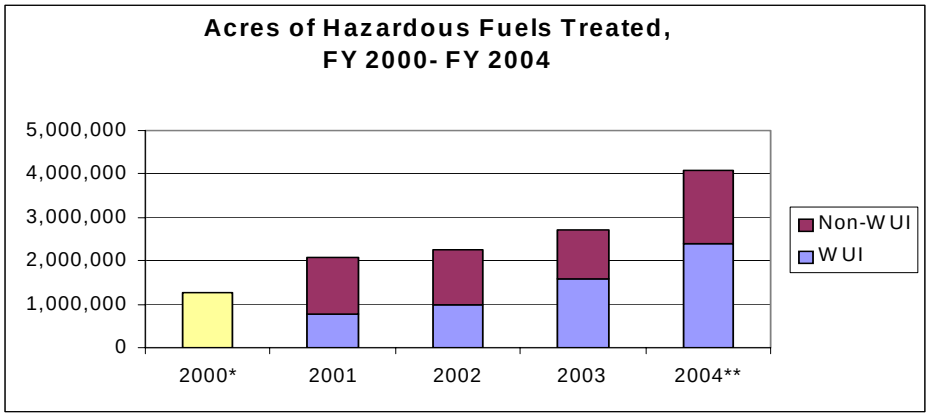
October 08, 2004

(All acres reported in this report are rounded to the nearest thousand.)

The Healthy Forests Initiative is an ongoing commitment to care for America's forests and rangelands, reduce the risk of catastrophic fire to communities, help save the lives of firefighters and citizens, and protect critical natural resources. Coupled with the 2003 Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the National Fire Plan, much progress has been made under the Healthy Forests Initiative to reduce the threat of wildland fires and restore the health of our public lands.

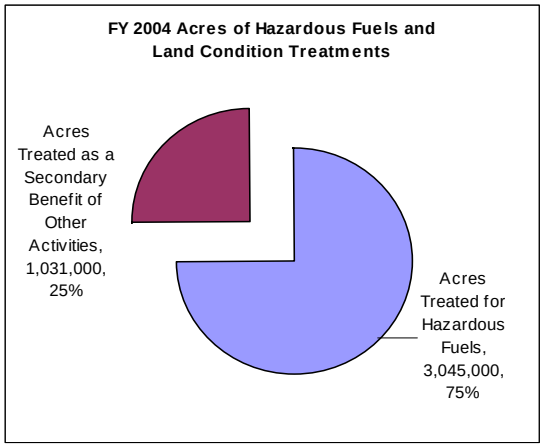
HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION

Since 2001, Federal land management agencies have treated 11 million acres of hazardous fuels on public lands. In 2004, the Federal agencies' combined target for hazardous fuels treatment and improving land condition is 3.7 million acres. By October 1, 2004, the Forest Service and Department of the Interior land management agencies had treated 4 million acres or 109 percent of the 2004 goal. Of these acres, over 2.3 million were in the wildland-urban interface (WUI).

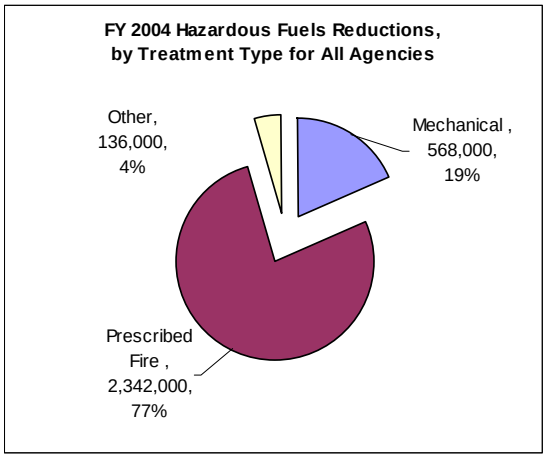


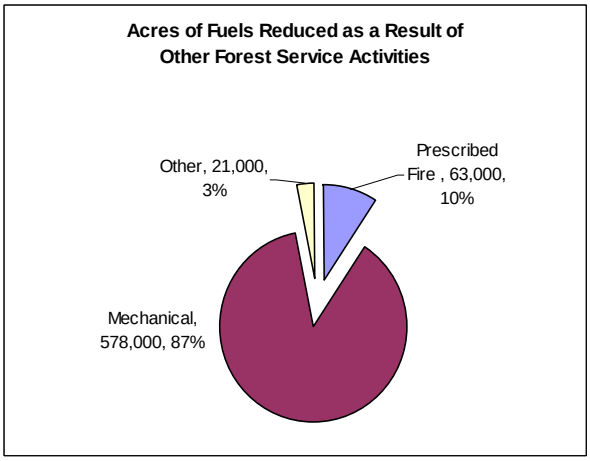
* The 2000 data was not aggregated by WUI vs. non-WUI treatments.
** The 2004 acres include treatments from other land management activities.

The majority of the 4 million treated acres are the result of projects that are designed to directly reduce hazardous fuel levels using mechanical means (e.g., thinning, chipping, and mechanically removing brush), prescribed fire, other types of non-fire activities (e.g., grazing), or some combination of the three. However, many other land management activities, such as wildlife habitat improvement projects, timber sales, and silvicultural treatments reduce hazardous fuel levels as a secondary benefit. The following illustrations show treatment types used for the hazardous fuels program and other



vegetative treatments that have a secondary benefit of improving the fire condition class.





Hazardous Fuels and Land Condition Treatments, FY 2004*

	Acres treated under hazardous fuels			
	Prescribed Fire	**Mechanical and Other**	**Acres treated w/ a secondary benefit**	**Total FY 04 Acres Treated**
DOI	814,000	419,000	370,000	**1,603,000**
FS	1,528,000	284,000	661,000	**2,473,000**
Total*	**2,342,000**	**703,000**	**1,031,000**	**4,076,000**

*Acres treated as of 10/01/2004

In addition to the treatments above, land managers may choose to allow fires that started naturally (usually from a lightning strike) to burn to accomplish specific resource management objectives in predefined areas. This management technique is known as Wildland Fire Use (WFU). WFU produces many of the benefits of prescribed fire and mechanical thinning by reducing hazardous fuel levels and thinning understory vegetation and brush. As reported by the National Interagency Fire Center, the Forest Service and Department of the Interior managed fires for WFU on 120,000 acres in 2004 (these acres are not included in above table; 2004 figures for WFU in Alaska are not yet available).

UTILIZATION OF FOREST BYPRODUCTS

In FY 2004, 34 percent (277,000 acres) of the Forest Service's 858,000 mechanically treated acres have produced byproducts that were utilized. These byproducts were used in a number of products, including timber; engineered lumber; paper and pulp; furniture and other value-added commodities, bio-energy and bio-based products, such as plastics; ethanol; and diesel. This number is on track to meeting the Forest Service's 2008 Strategic Goal of obtaining byproduct utilization on 40 percent of all mechanically treated acres.

HEALTHY FORESTS AUTHORITIES

The above table details the current and planned use of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA) authority and the Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI) administrative tools (e.g., categorical exclusion for hazardous fuels). Public land managers are forming coalitions with state and local stakeholders to use new and existing tools and authorities to protect communities and critical natural resources at unprecedented levels. These coalitions are working together to identify critical projects and the most appropriate authorities and funding sources. A record 4 million acres of public lands were improved this year.

Healthy Forests Authorities

	FY 2004		FY 2005	
	Projects	**Acres**	**Projects**	**Acres**
HFRA Authority (EA and EIS)	60	228,000	107	439,000
HFI Administrative Tools	564	442,000	642	351,238

STEWARDSHIP CONTRACTS

	Bureau of Land Management		**Forest Service**	
2003	2 contracts	300 acres	50 contracts	14,000 acres
2004**	34 contracts	26,000 acres	59 contracts	40,000 acres
Total	**155 contracts for 80,000 acres***			

*The 2004 figures are estimated.
**Not all projects in table above were authorized under HFRA.

HFRA TITLE IV: INSECT INFESTATIONS AND RELATED DISEASES

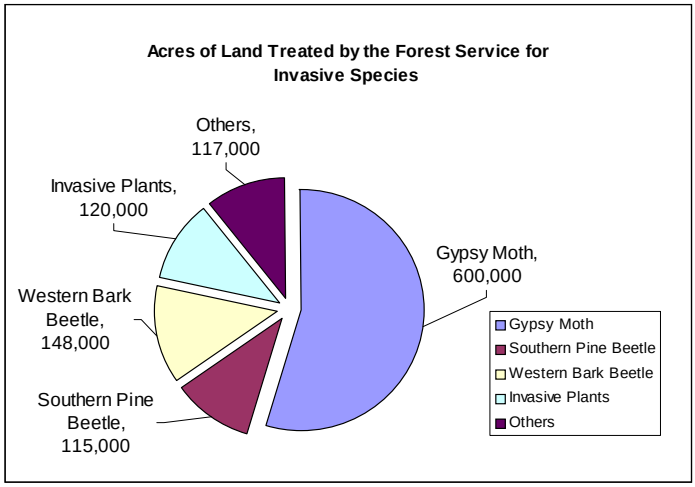
Using authority provided under Title IV of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, the Forest Service currently has six landscape-scale research project planned on nearly 3,000 acres. The purpose of the projects is to conduct landscape-scale applied research to address insect infestations and diseases.

- Effects of the gypsy moth on the George Washington Jefferson, Monongahela, and Wayne National Forests
- Hemlock wooly adelgid in North Carolina
- Red-oak borer on 400-600 acres on Ozark and Ouachita Mountains in Arkansas
- Gypsy moth and oak decline in the Daniel Boone National Forest
- Southern pine beetle in southern pine stands west of the Mississippi River
- Hemlock wooly adelgid on the Allegheny National Forest

Also under Title IV of HFRA, the Forest Service is conducting 7 accelerated information gathering efforts on diseases and pests that pose significant threats to our nations' forests and grasslands. One of these efforts is developing and testing trapping systems for exotic beetles and wood-boring insects that could cause extensive damage.

INVASIVE SPECIES AND FOREST HEALTH

In FY 2004, Forest Service Forest Health Protection (FHP) projects and programs included both prevention efforts and the restoration of lands impacted by native and nonnative invasive species. For example, the southern pine beetle (SPB) poses significant threats to forests in the Southern United States. The Forest Service FHP program provided $10 million to implement a SPB initiative that includes prevention and restoration activities on 115,000 acres of Federal, state and private lands. In the Western United States, a complex of western bark beetles (WBB) has caused outbreaks in many States. The Forest Service FHP program provided $20 million to implement a WBB initiative to treat 148,000 acres. Other funds have been allocated to control and manage invasive pests, including hemlock woolly adelgid, white pine blister rust, gypsy moth, and invasive plants. A total of 1.1 million acres will be treated as a result of these efforts.



HEALTHY FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES

Under the Healthy Forests Initiative, communities in the WUI have been prioritized for forest thinning activities. Since 2001, more than 5.5 million acres have been treated in the WUI, amounting to almost half of the overall treated acreage.

To further protect communities, the Western Governors' Association, the National Association of Counties, the Society of American Foresters, the Communities Committee, and the National Association of State Foresters compiled the handbook *Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan* (CWPP) to educate communities in the Wildland-Urban Interface about fire prevention. According to the National Association of State Foresters, the following States have Community Wildfire Protection Plans completed or in progress:

- Arizona (50 plans in progress)
- New Mexico (13 plans in progress)
- Idaho (11 plans)
- Colorado (3 plans)
- Nebraska (3 plans in progress)
- California (more than 100 plans in progress)
- Oregon (17 plans in progress and/or completed)
- Washington (25 plans in progress)
- South Carolina (33 plans completed and 7 in progress)
- Minnesota (discussions in progress)
- Alaska (several community plans are in progress on the Kenai Peninsula)