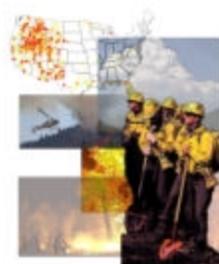


# N ational Fire Plan

H azardous Fuels /  
H abitat Im provem ent  
C olorado  
2003



Continued drought conditions in Southern Colorado led Rio Grande National Forest staff to identify alternative methods for accomplishing vitally important fuels reduction projects as well as wildlife habitat improvement. The Wolf Mountain area in Rio Grande County is a good example of an area in need of both types of management.

This area was previously identified for several prescribed burns; however, the extreme drought conditions over the past several years precluded those plans. This area was also identified by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as a high priority area for habitat improvement work due to loss of winter forage as the result of encroaching pinyon-juniper and the development of adjacent private lands. In response to the need for fuels reduction in this area, coupled with their inability to use fire to accomplish this goal, Forest personnel identified another fuels reduction tool: the hydro axe.

This project recently completed its third year of implementation with 1,850 acres treated to date and additional work planned for 2004. This work has been possible thanks to funding from the National Fire Plan and other Forest Cooperators, such as the Colorado Department of Wildlife and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.



Hydro Axe in Use



Pre Treated Area



Post Treated Area - 2<sup>nd</sup> Season