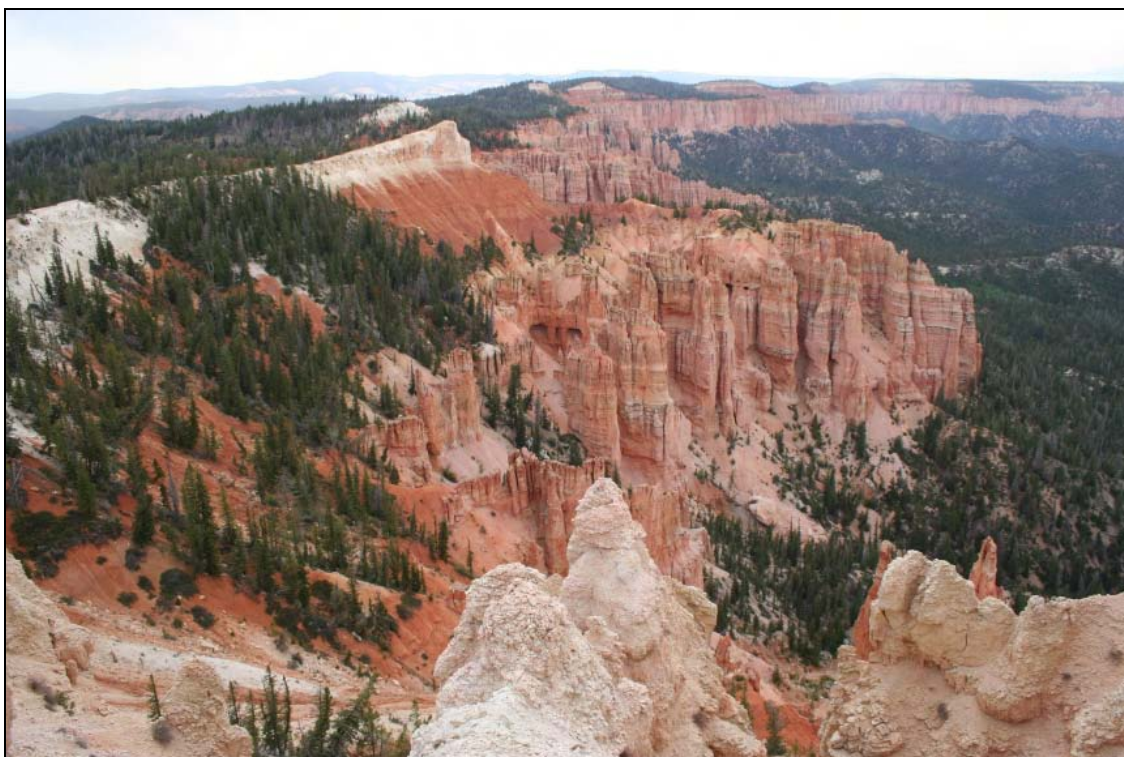


Vegetation Management on National Park and National Forest Lands in Southern Utah

Friday and Saturday, May 18 and 19, 2007



View from Fairyland Point

John Shaw, Utah Chapter Chair

Utah SAF held a meeting at Bryce Canyon National Park on May 18 and 19. The topic was fire use on National Park Service lands and cooperation between the Bryce Canyon NP and the Dixie NF. Over 20 people attended.

On Friday afternoon at the Bryce Visitor Center, Bruce Fields, the Fuels Specialist/Assistant Fire Management Officer for Bryce NP, gave an overview of fire planning on the park and how the Park and Forest coordinate operations. The first stop in the field was the site of a prescribed fire that was conducted last year in ponderosa pine. The group had a lively discussion about acceptable levels of mortality and the long-term implications of prescribed fire in the Park.



2005 prescribed burn site, Bryce Canyon National Park near Fairyland Point.

The next stop was on the southern end of the Park, where a 4000-acre unit (NPS and NFS land combined) is scheduled for burning this fall. Most of the unit is dense mixed conifer forest, where the ponderosa pine component is losing out to more tolerant species, and there is considerable white fir mortality from fir engraver beetle. Plans are to burn the entire unit over a period of less than a week. Fire effects modeling by the Park indicates that 20 to 30 percent of the area is expected to experience stand-replacing fire under the proposed prescription. On the Park portion of the unit there are no plans for mechanical pre-treatment, but several thinnings are underway on the Forest portion of the project (see below).



A view of the mixed conifer area proposed for burning

Following dinner at Bryce Canyon Lodge, Kristin Legg, the Chief of Resources for the Park, gave an informative slide show on vegetation management and other resources issues in the Park.



Girdled trees in stand treated to control dwarf mistletoe

On Saturday morning Phil Eisenhauer, Forest Silviculturist for the Dixie NF, showed the group treatments in the ponderosa pine and mixed conifer types. The first stop was a ponderosa pine stand that had been heavily infected with dwarf mistletoe. A commercial timber sale was not feasible on the site, so infected trees smaller than 14 inches were dropped and made available to firewood permittees. Larger trees were girdled and left standing. The stand will be broadcast burned to reduce slash fuels and understory vegetation and then planted with containerized ponderosa pine seedlings.

Finally, Phil took the group to one of the thinning areas in the Forest portion of the 4000-acre fire treatment area. The thinned stand was on the Park-Forest boundary, so the group was able to see pre- and post-treatment conditions on either side of the boundary. Another lively discussion

took place, with many in the group expressing concern that the Park was assuming a high level of risk by attempting prescribed fire in the existing, untreated conditions in the mixed-conifer forest. However, most, if not all, agreed that the present conditions required some level of treatment, and that the cooperative effort between Bryce NP and the Dixie NF was necessary and productive.



Mechanically treated National Forest on left; untreated National Park on right

The meeting adjourned about 12:30PM at Ruby's Inn.