

Fire fueled by failed range management

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With all the fires in the news and the smoke in the air, I think it is important to give credit where credit is due.

The Three Creek fire is currently the largest rangeland fire in Idaho State history. The Bureau of Land Management calls the current fires in the Three Creek area the Murphy Fire Complex. It would be more appropriate to call it the Jon Marvel-Western Watersheds Memorial Fire.

I say that because Jon Marvel has been able to impose his range management philosophy and prescriptions on the Jarbidge Resource Area. In 2005, after years of lawsuits and litigation, he was granted, by a federal district court order, a stipulated agreement that severely reduced grazing in the Jarbidge Resource Area. It's no coincidence that in most of the area that recently burned, grazing utilization levels were lowered to 30 percent. Spring grazing was reduced or eliminated.

The Jarbidge Resource Area is 1.2 million acres, and this fire alone has burned more than 600,000 acres. To put this issue in perspective, from 1984 to 2004, an average 38,576 acres of federal land burned. The most recent three years, including 2007 and this year's fire season is only about half over, an average of close to 10 times that historical average has burned. In addition, the costs of fire suppression and fire rehabilitation are staggering. In excess of \$5 million has already been spent on this fire alone in fire suppression efforts.

The evidence is clear: Jon Marvel's management strategies have gotten us where we are today. Failed policy based on flawed science.

We have lost the majority of the prime sage grouse habitat and big game winter range left in the Jarbidge Resource Area which may impact those wildlife populations.

Albert Einstein is credited with the following quote. "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." This Jon Marvel experiment is insane policy and must be stopped. The rest of the public has too much at stake to allow this to continue. Catastrophic wildfire endangers recreation opportunity, such as hunting, fishing and wildlife, and threatens adjoining private lands and neighboring lands such as wilderness and the Air Force training range.

If you are concerned and want to join a broad-based coalition to sustain multiple-use management based on sound science, please get hold of me or send a letter to the BLM supporting the community-based alternative submitted by Twin Falls and Owyhee counties and others for the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan process.

Rep. [Bert Brackett](#), R-Rogerson, owns and operates the Flat Creek Ranch near Rogerson and, as a representative for District 23, Owyhee and Twin Falls counties, serves on the Appropriations and Resources and Conservation committees.