

## Applying Forestry Practices to Reduce Hazardous Fuels

### Rum River Boy Scout Camp Becomes Firewise

#### The Challenge

More than 10,000 scouts visit the 110-acre Rum River Boy Scout camp near Ramsey, Minnesota, each year. The camp is sited in an overgrown red pine (*Pinus resinosa*) plantation established in the 1940s that was posing a wildfire threat to the buildings in and around the scout camp. Excess forest fuels raised the potential for destructive and dangerous crown fires. In addition, the number of wildland fires in the surrounding area was increasing because of debris burning.

#### The Solution

Beginning in 2006, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Firewise Specialists and the Rum River Boy Scout Camp jointly developed a plan to mitigate wildfire hazards and improve wildlife habitat and aesthetics at the camp. Using State Fire Assistance funds provided through a Hazard Mitigation grant from the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry unit of the U.S. Forest Service, the Minnesota DNR helped the camp implement the plan, which included thinning the red pine plantation as well as establishing firebreaks, upgrading access, and widening roads for emergency and rescue vehicles. Project personnel also applied erosion control measures and Firewise principles, such as moving propane tanks and establishing 30-foot clearances from habitable structures.

#### Resulting Benefits

The Rum River Boy Scout Camp Firewise Project reduced fuels within the camp, providing a safer experience for the 10,000 Boy Scouts that visit each year. Project personnel worked with Minnesota DNR Firewise Specialists and local foresters in applying sound forestry practices to reduce



*Leo Larkin (left), Minnesota DNR, and Bob Litke, Rum River Boy Scout Camp Manager, developed the plan to mitigate fire hazards and improve wildlife habitat on the camp in Minnesota. Photo credit – Rum River Boy Scout Camp, Ramsey, MN*

hazardous fuels. Campers and local residents also had an opportunity to observe the thinning operation and learn about the benefits of forest management. Applying Firewise practices lessened the threat of wildfire to approximately 25 residences in and around the camp. The Rum River camp also addressed serious safety issues for its campers while establishing a Firewise program on the site.

#### Sharing Success

The success of the Rum River Boy Scout Camp Firewise Project was directly attributed to the availability of the U.S. Forest Service grant and Minnesota DNR technical assistance. There are numerous woodland camps located within wildland-urban interface areas of the Northeastern and Midwestern States that are facing similar hazards. Hazard reduction projects that combine local, State, and Federal funding assistance as well as provide technical expertise and educational opportunities would help many at-risk communities reduce the threat of wildland fire.

*The Rum River Boy Scout Camp used State Fire Assistance Hazard Mitigation grant funds matched by in-kind services to reduce the threat of wildfire and improve wildlife habitat.*



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