

# Vegetation Grinder Saves Time Accessing Wildfires

THOMPSON FALLS, Mont. – When the Thompson Falls, Mont., fire was raging in the summer of 2003, Western Processing, Inc., a land management company based in Sandpoint, Idaho, was called in to open up an access road.

Co-owner Jerry Luce decided to try a new technology – a grinder mounted to a rubber-tracked front-end carrier. His intuition proved right, as it allowed crews to bring the fire under control faster.

"These roads were closed for more than 20 years," said Luce. "There were 15- to 20-foot tall trees and brush intermingled thick enough that you could hardly walk through it."

The ASV mounted Bull Hog grinder, manufactured by Fecon, a forestry prod-

ucts processing equipment manufacturer in Lebanon, Ohio, was able to cut a 5-foot wide swath. Luce's excavator could only do a 31 inch path and that method was too slow to stay head of the fast moving fire.

"In one pass in each direction [with the Bull Hog] and we opened the entire road base back to where it was before it was overgrown," said Luce. "I think we did 10 or 12 miles of road on that particular fire – it just went so much faster. We would have been there a month with just the excavator – instead it took us four days or so with the Bull Hog."

Hydraulically powered by the ASV,

the Bull Hog grinder uses fixed cutter teeth to shred materials up to 10-inches in diameter, including standing trees, according to the manufacturer.

The mulched material is discharged back onto the ground. Because of the size and consistency of the output, it poses no puncture threat to vehicle tires.

Rapidly opening up the access road gave fire crews significantly more time to fight the fire.

Luce estimates that crews were dropped off within a mile of where they had to start working. The road was so densely overgrown that walking

through with any equipment would have been impossible.

"If they had not opened that access they would have to fly people in to that area, more than likely, because it would have been more than a 10-mile walk," Luce said. "From the time we left fire camp till the time we got to the end of the road, it was only an hour and a half's drive – by opening up that 10 miles it definitely provided access with pickups and crew-carrying vehicles and got them closer to the fire."

**FECON: 800-528-3113**  
www.fecon.com



The hydraulically-operated Bull Hog was mounted to a rubber-tracked front-end carrier which was able to push through vegetation.



**YOU NEED TO GET OUT MORE.**