

**Gyro-Trac's GT-18 demonstrates its hazardous fuel management effectiveness for Lynn Scarlett, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior and chairwoman of the Federal Wildfire Fighting Committee.**

By RON WORD, Associated Press  
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PALM COAST — The gigantic machine roared into action, its front rotor grabbing small trees, palmetto leaves and other potential fire hazards and quickly converting it to mulch, leaving a path cleared of heavy vegetation. The use of the GyroTrac, which resembles an army tank, as a means to reduce fuel for fires was demonstrated Wednesday for The Federal Wildland Fire

Leadership Council, which visited this north Florida community that has been devastated by wildfires twice in its short history. "We're here to see what is going on in Florida by way of mitigation, fuel reduction and land management" to reduce catastrophic wildfires, said Lynn Scarlett, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior and chairwoman of the federal wildfire fighting committee. Scarlett said the council had spent a lot of time in the West, examining what causes wildfires, but members felt it was important to understand the situation in the Southeast. "We recognized the problem is not just one of the West, it is nationwide," she said. Joining Scarlett on a bus tour were Dale Bosworth, chief of the Forest Service; Rebecca Watson, assistant secretary for land and minerals management with the Interior Department and Mike Long, a Florida state forester. The council was touring areas in Florida to study a variety of fire management activities on state, private and federal lands. At a stop in the Cypress Knoll subdivision in Palm Coast, 60 miles south of Jacksonville, state officials demonstrated the GyroTrac and talked about efforts to reduce future wildfires in Florida by reducing vegetation, educating homeowners and becoming proactive in fighting wildfires. John Kern, deputy chief of field operations for the Florida Division of Forestry, told the council about the development of four wildfire mitigation teams in Florida.