

Glenda Wiles

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Subject: News Release: Spring Burning Planned on the Forest
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Spring Burning Planned on the Forest

Hamilton, Montana (April 12, 2019) – Over the next two months, the Bitterroot National Forest is planning to implement several prescribed burning projects. Fire crews will conduct the prescribed burns to reduce forest fuels, improve conditions within the Wildland Urban Interface, and restore characteristics of a fire-adapted ecosystem. Timing of the burns will be dependent on favorable weather conditions.

All total, fire managers plan to burn approximately 3,400 acres this spring. Smoke from the burns will likely be visible from West Fork Highway, East Fork Road, or Highway 93.

Treatment areas include:

Darby/Sula Ranger District – 2,050 acres are planned:

- Waddell Units, south of Lake Como
- Como/Horse Lick, south of Lost Horse and north of Lake Como
- Trapper Bunkhouse, SW of Darby between Little Tin Cup & McCoy Creeks
- Cameron Blue and Middle East Fork, along East Fork road between Guide Creek and Tolan Ridge

West Fork Ranger District – 900 acres are planned:

- Lower West Fork Units, south of Trapper Creek and north of Lloyd Creek
- School Point Ecoburn Units, west of Ward Creek and east of Halford Creek
- Soda Springs Ecoburn, east of Little West Fork and west of Halford Creek along Forest Road 5633B
- West Fork Horse Pasture, north of the confluence of the Nez Perce Fork and West Fork Rivers at Lone Pine Helibase

Stevensville Ranger District – 450 acres are planned:

- Larry Bass Units, within the Bass Creek Recreation Area north of Stevensville.
- Sweeney Creek Units, west of Florence

The burns will only be ignited if operational safety, fuel moisture, weather conditions, and air quality parameters can be attained. Fire crews will monitor all burns after ignition to ensure that they stay within prescribed boundaries until declared out. Major roads in the area will be signed and local residents who have requested prior notification will be contacted in advance of burning.

Low intensity prescribed fires have several objectives including:

- Maintain forest health and ecosystem restoration
- Improve wildlife habitat – many plants respond favorably to fire providing new food sprouts for wildlife.
- Reduce the potential of large, high intensity wildfires by reducing the amount of downed fuel to burn.

- Post-harvest slash treatment – reduce residual slash created by thinning operations and personal use firewood cutting.

Spring prescribed fire activities normally take place in April and May and burning is highly weather dependent. A mosaic pattern of burned and unburned areas will remain after treatments.

For public safety, recreationists are asked to be aware of fire crews and vehicles in these areas. The public is also asked to avoid traveling in prescribed burn units while crews are present, as well as trails and roads directly adjacent to the units. Please take caution as roads and trails used as control lines for the burn could be temporarily impacted by low intensity fire and smoke.

Fire managers plan to conduct the burning as quickly as possible to limit impacts to recreational users and the general public. Overnight, there is potential for smoke to settle into the bottom of valleys and corridors that may cause short term smoke impacts for residents and travel. The smoke is typically visible for a short duration, 1-2 days, and managed to minimize impacts to communities.

For more information about specific burns or to be placed on a pre-burning notification list, please contact your local ranger district. For burn updates, maps, and photos of project areas, visit us at www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot or *Discover Bitterroot National Forest* Facebook page.

Darby/Sula Ranger District – 406-821-3913
West Fork Ranger District – 406-821-3269
Stevensville Ranger District – 406-777-5461
Forest Supervisor’s Office, Hamilton – 406-363-7100

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