

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service Pacific
Umatilla National Forest

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UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST FALL PRESCRIBED BURNING PLANS

"Cooler temperatures and scattered rain showers have improved conditions enough to begin implementing the Umatilla National Forest's fall prescribed burning program," announces Chris Johnson, Fuels Management Program Lead. Forest visitors can expect to encounter prescribed burning activities this fall and need to be cautious when hunting or camping near a treatment area.

Prescribed burning is highly dependant on weather conditions. "Conditions have to be within a narrow window in order to implement prescribed fire," said Johnson. Fall and spring weather provide the best conditions for prescribed burning: moist soil, dry material and cooler temperatures.

Prescribed burns are used to achieve several goals. Most often the goal is to reduce the risk of intense wildfire by reducing dead fuel accumulation. "In areas where prescribed burning has taken place, wildfires are more likely to stay in the surface fuels, close to the ground, and out of the tree crowns," said Johnson. "A wildfire in surface fuels is much easier to control than a crown fire." Prescribed burning is also used to significantly lower the risks that wildfires represent to local communities. Other objectives include big game and other wildlife habitat improvement and activity slash reduction. Activity fuel, such as slash, is the non-merchantable material that remains after harvest and other mechanical treatment activities. Natural fuel burns, or "landscape burns," are low intensity burns over larger areas that can sometimes take weeks to complete.

All prescribed burning will comply with federal, state, and local air quality and smoke dispersal guidelines to reduce the impacts of smoke on forest visitors and local communities. Prescribed burning should be completed by the end of November.

"Now that weather conditions have changed, the public can expect to see several public land management agencies taking advantage of suitable burn days," said Johnson. In addition to the Umatilla National Forest, other National Forests will also implement a fall prescribed burn program. For information on burning on privately owned land, contact your local Oregon Department of Forestry office.

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Maps of the proposed prescribed burns are available on the Umatilla National Forest website www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma or at any forest office. It is important to note that not all proposed burns listed are likely to be completed this fall as typical weather conditions provide for limited burn windows. For more information concerning the Umatilla National Forest Prescribed Burning program, contact Chris Johnson in Pendleton at (541) 278-3704 or one of the following Ranger District contacts:

--Scott Wryn	Heppner Ranger District	(541) 676-2138
--Scott McDonald	North Fork John Day Ranger District	(541) 427-5332
--Tyson Albrecht	Walla Walla Ranger District	(509) 522-6283
--Steve Carlson	Pomeroy Ranger District	(509) 843-4633

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