

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service Pacific
Umatilla National Forest

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The Umatilla National Forest To Begin Spring Prescribed Burning

Pendleton, Oregon. Fire management staff on the Umatilla National Forest is preparing to begin spring prescribed burning projects as snow melts and warmer, drier weather arrives.

Prescribed burning is done to achieve a variety of objectives including reducing hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface, reducing activity slash to facilitate planting, reducing the risk of large-scale wildfires, enhancing wildlife habitat, and restoring fire as a disturbance factor on landscapes.

In many areas, prescribed burning is the last of a series of treatments for vegetation management and fuel reduction projects. Burning often follows harvest or other thinning activities that remove some trees while retaining the largest, healthiest trees of the most fire-resistant species, such as ponderosa pine and western larch. Smaller trees (ladder fuels) are removed leaving stands less susceptible to crown fires. Prescribed burning completes the treatment process by consuming much of the surface fuel accumulation.

Prescribed burning is conducted using federal, state and local agency employees and contracted personnel and equipment. Crews, engines, dozers, and helicopters, typical resources used on a prescribed burn, monitor and maintain the burn within the fireline perimeter. Areas to be burned are often prepared by constructing a fire line around them. Firing or ignition of the area will be accomplished by ground personnel utilizing drip torches and, on larger projects, by a helicopter mounted firing devices. Each prescribed burn has an organized command structure including a burn boss, firing boss, and a holding boss that provides and implements management of the burn.

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Prescribed burning is not without impacts. Managing the smoke produced by prescribed burns is a significant challenge and the hardest to forecast in the implementation planning process. Prescribed fire managers work closely with the Oregon Department of Forestry and the Washington Department of Natural Resource in accordance with their smoke management plans to determine when, where, and how much can be burned on a daily basis. Unfavorable weather conditions, especially those leading to an adverse smoke management forecast, are the primary reason a prescribed would be postponed.

The actual burning accomplished this spring will be determined by weather, fuels conditions, and forecasted smoke dispersion. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 6,000 acres will be burned on the forest this spring. Planned prescribed burning projects exist on all four ranger districts on the forest; however, it is likely that only a portion of the total acres planned will be accomplished. Approximate numbers of units and acres available to burn are:

- Pomeroy Ranger District – 14 units for 1,158 acres
- Walla Walla Ranger District - 24 units for 551 acres
- North Fork John Day Ranger District – 10 units for 2,479 acres
- Heppner Ranger District – 16 units for 24,963 acres

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. For more information concerning the Umatilla National Forest Prescribed Burning program, contact Chris Johnson, Deputy Fire Staff Officer/Fuels Program Manager, in Pendleton at (541) 278-3704 or one of the following Ranger District contacts:

Steve Carlson	Pomeroy Ranger District	(509) 843-1891
Tyson Albrecht	Walla Walla Ranger District	(509) 522-6283
Mark Johnson	North Fork John Day Ranger District	(541) 427-5357
Dale Boyd	Heppner Ranger District	(541) 676-9187

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