Bass Lake Ranger District plans to initiate winter/spring prescribed burning

North Fork, CA. November 28, 2022 – Sierra National Forest: With the changing seasons, the Bass Lake Ranger District announces the winter/spring prescribed burn season, with the arrival of cooler weather and increased moisture leading to desired prescribed burning conditions. Due to reduced fire activity throughout the state and across the country, Sierra NF fire crews have returned from their fire assignments, becoming available to support and manage local prescribed fire projects. This work is a proactive approach to fire and vegetation (fuels) management on the Sierra NF, lessening the impact and intensity of catastrophic wildfire seen during the year, providing healthier resource conditions, and increasing protection to our mountain communities.

Sierra Fire Managers expect to begin ignitions in Early December. Active ignitions will continue throughout the winter, and spring months, December – March, as weather, smoke dispersion impacts, and fire resources conditions allow. Ignitions may extend further into the spring months, March - May if conditions remain optimal for prescribed fire activity.

The Forest Service coordinates all burning activities with the Mariposa County and San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and National Weather Service in Hanford to time the project to coincide with favorable weather conditions and smoke dispersion. Also, coordination with Cal Trans and local law enforcement agencies to keep traffic flowing smoothly along Hwy 41, and along Bass Lake Roads 274 and Rd 223. Local community residents and visitors to the forest can learn more about air quality and smoke by visiting either www.airnow.gov or www.valleyair.org.

Please see the attached map for general locations. These projects areas are located throughout the district in both Mariposa and Madera Counties. Fire Managers and Fire Crews will focus their efforts on Bass Lake, with the piles that where developed from the Madera county roads project, but will not be limited to this area. Burning will also be done in areas where recent fires have impacted to aid in the Fire Recovery and Restoration: Washborn, Oak, Creek and Railroad, fires.

The prescribed fire objective is to remove vegetation (fuels) accumulations due to, tree mortality, timber harvest work and fires. Listed above. These burns are conducted within the proximity of urban interface, as part of an on-going wildfire defense system across the forest designed to slow the progression of wildfires into surrounding communities such as Jerseydale, Ponderosa Basin, Sugar Pine, Fish Camp, Cedar Valley, Bass Lake, North Fork and Oakhurst. This fuels reduction activity allows firefighters a safe area to engage in suppression activities. Recurring treatments are necessary to promote ecosystem health, restoration, and resiliency.

Winter moisture is now providing favorable conditions at some project areas and conditions are ideal to begin prescribed fire ignitions and activity. Some project areas require additional winter moisture, burning will be delayed until those specific areas meet desired burning conditions.

These projects may result in a temporary reduction in air quality in the communities of North Fork, Ponderosa Basin, Jerseydale, Oakhurst, Fish Camp, Sugar Pine, Cedar Valley, Bass Lake, Ahwahnee, and surrounding areas.

Burning operations will be visible from portions of Highway’s 140, 49 & 41, as well as other major roadways throughout the district. Smoke may also be visible from various vantage points in the Foothill and Mountain communities in Mariposa County, Bass Lake and North Fork in Madera County region. The prescribed fire projects will be patrolled and monitored daily during the project required multi-day burn phase, and while all signs of smoke and heat dissipate.

A public notice will be issued through the Forest’s FaceBook account prior to individual prescribed burn ignitions taking place. Additionally, signs will be placed strategically in the areas of these projects to inform Residents and the visiting public of these operations for public and firefighter safety. For more information on these prescribed fire projects and associated activity’s please contact the Bass Lake Ranger District Office at 559-877-2218.