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Kaibab National Forest
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National Park Service
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News Release

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North Zone fire managers announce plans for upcoming prescribed fire season on Kaibab Plateau

Fredonia, Ariz., Oct. 23, 2015 — For Immediate Release. North Zone fire managers on the North Kaibab Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest and the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park plan to conduct the following hazardous fuels reduction treatments throughout the fall and winter months. Up to 9,200 acres are scheduled for treatment this prescribed burn season.

“By reintroducing fire in these project areas, our goal is to decrease fuel loads, reduce the risk of future high-severity wildfires, improve forest health, and encourage more wildfire resiliency in key wildlife habitat values,” said North Kaibab Ranger District Ranger Randall Walker.

This season’s planned treatment areas are as follows:

Moquitch 4 Prescribed (Rx) Fire: Earlier this month, fire managers successfully conducted 100 acres of prescribed fire treatments in the Moquitch 4 project area, and as weather permits fire crews will continue fuels treatment efforts throughout the 1,104-acre project area.

Tipover East Prescribed (Rx) Fire: The total Tipover East project area is 10,296 acres in size, but the entire project area will not be burned at once. Fire managers have divided the project area into separate burn units that will be treated over the next 3 to 5 years. They are focusing on approximately 3,000 acres for this season.

North Rim Slopes Prescribed (Rx) Fire: Continued fuels treatment implementation in the North Rim Slopes Rx fire project area is intended to aid fire managers in reducing fuel loads and containing wildfires in that area to the west of Arizona State Route 67. The North Rim Slopes Rx is located both within and adjacent to the Tipover East project area.

Vegetation in both the Tipover East Rx and North Rim Slopes Rx project areas includes first-entry mixed conifer, which in this case means the area has not seen fire disturbance in more than 100 years and therefore contains above average fuel loads potentially posing a higher risk of a large-scale wildfire.

“Factors like heavier fuels, lower canopy base heights, and increasingly heavier tree densities of small-diameter trees (less than 6 inches) makes first-entry more challenging,” said North Zone Fire Management Officer Ed Hiatt. “This is why prescribed fire implementation is so critical. As fire managers we need to take advantage of the winter-weather opportunities Mother Nature gives us so we may use prescribed fire to ward off the potential devastating effects that a larger, high-severity wildfire

could bring to our doorstep. We don't want a wildfire to get started in areas like this during the peak of a hot, dry summer month because the effects would be highly undesirable."

Jacob Ryan North Prescribed (Rx) Fire: The total Jacob Ryan North project area is 12,957 acres in size, but the entire project area will not be burned at once. Fire managers have divided the project area into five separate burn units that will be treated over the next 3 to 5 years, focusing on 2,000 acres for this prescribed burn season.

Since vegetation management efforts have begun under the Jacob-Ryan Vegetation Management Project, *"portions of the Jacob Ryan North project area have been logged prior to the prescribed burn resulting in current fuel loads that are lower than other first-entry prescribed fire burn units here,"* Robinson added. *"This pre-burn logging activity is a valuable tool in helping to reduce the risk of future catastrophic wildfires because when used in combination with prescribed fire the risk of future high-severity wildfires is greatly reduced,"* said North Zone Fuels Specialist Dave Robinson.

Dry Park 422E Prescribed (Rx) Fire: The Dry Park 422E prescribed fire project is 1,226 acres. Fuels reduction implementation in this project area is intended to increase landscape resilience to wildfire, insects and disease, and help return a fire disturbance in a fire dependent ecosystem while continuing to improve forest health and sustainability.

Miscellaneous Prescribed (Rx) Fire Piles: There are approximately 500 acres of piles located throughout the North Kaibab Ranger District. Piles are constructed by hand or machine and are a result of fuels reduction treatments. These piles are composed of vegetative materials, commonly called slash, such as: tops, limbs, branches, brush, and other recently cut miscellaneous materials resulting from forest management activities such as thinning, pruning, timber harvesting, and wildfire hazard mitigation. Upon arranging slash into compact, teepee-shaped piles and allowing the piles to dry, fire managers will burn the piles during safe burning conditions, generally after snowfall or significant wetting-rain events.

Prescribed fire, wildfires managed for multiple objectives, mechanical thinning and logging are all tools fire managers use to reduce fuels that could potentially contribute to more destructive wildfires, and planning efforts for prescribed fire operations start many months or even years before fire is ever put on the ground. Fuel loads and fuel moisture data is collected, burn plans are written and coordinated with all cooperating agencies, and specific procedures are followed when determining what areas of the forest to treat, how much to treat and when to do so.

During prescribed fires, forest visitors are cautioned that smoke may be present in short durations, which may impact roads and populated areas, and are reminded to use caution, drive slowly, turn on headlights, and avoid stopping in areas where fire personnel are working.

All prescribed burning on the Kaibab National Forest is subject to approval by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and appropriate weather conditions. For additional information on the Smoke Management Division of the ADEQ and to view prescribed burns authorized on any given day, please visit <http://www.azdeq.gov/environ/air/smoke/index.html>.

Prior to any given prescribed fire, additional information will be released regarding location, timing and anticipated smoke impacts. Kaibab National Forest fire information is also available through the following resources: InciWeb <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4622/>; Kaibab National Forest Fire Information Phone Line (928) 635-8311; Text Message – text 'follow kaibabnf' to 40404.

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