



# NEWS RELEASE

## *Lolo National Forest*

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## **Ninemile Ranger District May Conduct Spring Season Prescribed Burning**

Missoula, MT. – The Ninemile Ranger District, as part of their seasonal prescribed burning to reduce fuels, promote vegetation regeneration, and enhance the habitats for multiple species may conduct burning over the next two months if weather, fuel conditions, and air quality allow for safe and effective ignition and burning. The prescribed burns that may occur are associated with the Frenchtown Face Ecosystem Restoration Project, South Fork Fish Timber Sale Project, and the Upper Madison Fuels Reduction Project. Future notifications will be provided as burn locations come into prescription.

### **Roman and Mill Creek Drainages: Located 1-3 miles north of Frenchtown.**

The Frenchtown Face Unit located in the Roman Creek drainage is approximately 42 acres in size. The Frenchtown Face Units located in Mill Creek are approximately 275 acres in size and will be burned in phases over several burning periods. These projects focus on restoring forest and habitat conditions in ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir stands located in yearlong big game and wild turkey habitat in the Frenchtown Face Management Area. The units will be implemented through collaborative efforts with the Ninemile Ranger District and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Additionally, these projects will reduce fuels in close proximity and adjacent to private property. All of these units will be implemented using hand ignition. The units are located north of Interstate 90 and smoke from the burns will be visible from the Interstate, Frenchtown, and Missoula.

### **Stoney and Sixmile Creek Drainages: Located 1 mile north and four miles east of the Ninemile Ranger Station.**

The Frenchtown Face Units located in the Stoney and Sixmile Creek Drainages are a total of 500 acres in size and may be completed with both aerial and hand ignition over several days of implementation. The units will be implemented through collaborative efforts with the Ninemile Ranger District, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the National Wild Turkey Federation. Efforts will be restoring forest and habitat conditions in ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir stands and enhancing and restoring elk and wild turkey habitat located in the Frenchtown Face Management Area. Additionally, these projects focus on fuels reduction in close proximity to private property. The units are located north of Interstate 90 in the Ninemile and Sixmile Valleys and smoke from the burns is likely to be visible from the Interstate, Frenchtown and residents of the Ninemile Valley.

### **South Fork Fish Creek; Lupine and Owl Creek Drainages: Located 25 miles south of Interstate 90 in the Fish Creek Drainage.**

There are four potential units scheduled for ignition in the Lupine and Owl Creek Drainages totaling 225 acres. Objectives of the units are to re-introduce fire into the ecosystem, reduce fuels accumulations adjacent to private property, and enhance wildlife habitat for big game species. These burns may be visible to residents of the South Fork Fish Community.

**Petty Creek/Madison Gulch Drainage: Located 4-5 miles south and southeast of Alberton and Interstate 90.**

The Upper Madison Unit located in the Madison Gulch Drainage of Petty Creek is approximately 175 acres in size and focuses on reducing fuels accumulations and restoring forest and habitat conditions in ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir stands. This burn will be visible to the south of Interstate 90.

All burning will be weather and fuel condition dependent. If ignition takes place there is the potential for temporarily limiting public access in these areas during implementation. For public safety, recreationists are asked to be aware of prescribed fire crews and vehicles in these areas. Prescribed fire road signs will be posted along roads where burning is taking place. Not all prescribed burns will be ignited simultaneously, and will be ignited only if operational safety, fuel moistures, weather conditions and air quality parameters are met.

If members of the public have any questions or if they wish to be placed on a day-of-burning notification list they may contact the Ninemile Ranger District at 626-5201.

The objectives for these burns include:

- Reintroducing low intensity surface fire to benefit ponderosa pine forest restoration.
- Reducing surface fuel concentrations from the Frenchtown Face Timber Sale, South Fork Fish Timber Sales, and Upper Madison Fuels Project.
- Enhancing yearlong habitat for populations of elk on public lands.
- Enhancing the habitat for populations of wild turkey on public lands.
- Top-killing shrubs to optimize forage for big game wildlife.
- Promoting the vigor of ponderosa pine, rejuvenate forest floor vegetation, and restore the composition and structure of plant communities.