



U.S. Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST
Truckee Ranger District
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www.fs.usda.gov/tahoe/



News Release

Contact: See Below

October 8th, 2018

Tahoe National Forest's Truckee & Sierraville Ranger Districts to Begin Fall Prescribed Fire Operations as Conditions Permit

Tahoe National Forest, Calif. – The Truckee and Sierraville Ranger Districts on the Tahoe National Forest will conduct prescribed fires this fall/winter to reduce build-up of hazardous fuels and to continue restoring forest ecosystems. This year's fire season is again a good reminder of the importance of prescribed fire, especially in our fire prone environment.

Fall and winter bring precipitation and cooler temperatures which are ideal for prescribed fire operations. Planned projects include low-to-moderate intensity understory burns of vegetation on the forest floor and burning piles of stacked woody material.

The goals of these projects are to reduce the severity and intensity of future wildfires. These project areas provide a safer environment for firefighters to engage a wildfire and provide added protection for communities in the wildland urban interface (WUI). Another goal is to re-establish natural ecosystems using fire. Reintroducing fire through prescribed fire helps to promote a diverse and more resilient forest, as well as improve habitat and forage for wildlife. The Forest Service is also working to reduce fuels by thinning dense stands of trees and brush using mechanical thinning, mastication, and hand removal of vegetation throughout the Tahoe National Forest.

All prescribed fire projects are conducted in accordance with a specific, approved prescribed fire burn plan. Burn plans describe the specific conditions under which prescribed fires will be conducted to safely meet objectives. These include weather, fuel moisture, number of personnel, and opportunities to minimize smoke impacts. This information is used to decide if, when and where to burn. "We do our best to give as much advance notice as possible before burning, however, some operations may be conducted on short notice when the "the burn window" opens, meaning conditions become conducive to implement a burn," stated Robert Hilfer, Acting Truckee Ranger District Fuels Specialist.

The Truckee Ranger District is planning to implement around 500 acres of understory burning and 280 acres of pile burning this season. All prescribed fires will be north of Truckee, and west of Hwy. 89 North. These projects are all located in the Sagehen Hills from Prosser Hill to Sagehen Summit.

The Sierraville Ranger District plans to implement around 500 acres of understory burns and 500 acres of pile burning across the district. Underburn projects are available in the areas of Little Truckee Summit along Hwy. 89 North and Sierra County Road 451 (Cottonwood Road), northeast of Independence Lake area along the Forest Service 07-10 Road, and near the Lewis Mill Guard Station along Sierra County Road 860 (Smithneck Road). Pile burning projects are planned near the communities of Sierraville, Calpine, and Loyalton Pines, as well as in the general Little Truckee Summit/ Independence Lake area, and various other areas throughout the District.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after ignition. Smoke settles in low lying areas at night and into the morning and usually lifts out during normal daytime warming. Fire crews conduct small test fires before lighting a larger area to verify how effectively fuels will be consumed to ensure the burn and smoke management objectives can be met. All prescribed fires are monitored closely for burning and smoke dispersal conditions and, if necessary, action is taken to mitigate concerns as they arise. Fire personnel will continue to closely patrol the prescribed fire based on weather, fuels, and smoke considerations. Forest Service fuels management personnel work closely with the California Air Resources Board and the local air quality management districts to minimize smoke impacts to communities.

“We are sensitive to the impact smoke has on people, especially those with respiratory conditions and allergies and we make every effort to conduct prescribed fire operations during weather patterns that carry smoke away from communities,” said Hilfer. “This summer’s wildfires are a reminder of the importance of fuels reduction and that smoke produced during a prescribed fire is much less intense and of shorter duration than that of a wildfire. Fire is a natural part of the Sierra ecosystem. Our prescribed fire program introduces fire into the landscape and re-creates ecological benefits that are essential to our efforts in restoring a more natural and resilient ecosystem and to minimize the severity of wildfires. A moderate amount of smoke now could prevent a lot of smoke later, as well as reduce risks to the public, firefighters, and natural resources.”

For more information, or to receive prescribed fire notifications via e-mail, call or email the following contacts: Truckee Ranger District- Robert Hilfer, Acting District Fuels Specialist, at (530) 587-3558 #251 or rhilfer@fs.fed.us; Sierraville Ranger District- Ruby Burks, District Fuels Specialist, at (530) 994-3401 #6621 or rubbyburks@fs.fed.us.

For more information on prescribed fire on the Tahoe National Forest, visit www.fs.usda.gov/tahoe or to participate in the conversation at twitter.com/Tahoe_NF and www.facebook.com/TahoeNF.

If you would like to learn more about prescribed fire vs. wildfire, please visit www.smokeybear.com/prescribed-fires.asp.

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