

# Why prescribed fire.....

The Truckee Ranger District has been working very hard to reduce forest fuels in the area surrounding Truckee. We have done mechanical thinning, mastication, hand thinning/pile burning and the final step in the fuel removal process is prescribed fire. Prescribed fire will remove the understory vegetation that machines cannot.

Prescribed fire **now** will benefit the community later when there is a wildfire. Prescribed



**Photo 1: Burning behind Klondike Flats 10-7-15**

fire **now** will benefit firefighters by giving them a safer place to start suppression activities in the event of a wildfire. Many firefighters have lost their lives over the past few years trying to protect homes. We want to give firefighters a safer place to engage in wildfire suppression and we also want to have a better chance at protecting homes in the event of a wildfire.

There are only a handful of days when prescribed fire can take place. We must have the right weather/fuel conditions and enough fire suppression resources to support a prescribed fire operation. The burn plan must

be followed, with specific weather and fuel parameters that must be met. We cannot burn if it is too dry, or too wet. We have a strong fire management team on the forest and we look at weather conditions and fuel conditions carefully before any fire is put on the ground.

With all fire there is smoke and we know it is an inconvenience. A smaller inconvenience now will have big rewards later. Less smoke for a shorter duration is preferred over uncontrolled long-term dense smoke from a large wildfire. We work with the air quality districts and the weather service very closely to help determine the least amount of smoke impacts. Our goal is to burn on days where there will be minimal smoke impacts. However, at times nighttime inversions are stronger than expected and smoke pools into drainages. As the day heats up the smoke will rise and disperse.



**Photo 2: Truckee during the King Fire, 9-30-14. Prescribed fire is one tool to prevent catastrophic wildfires and long-term heavy smoke impacts.**

Photo 3: Prescribed fire column near Russel Valley. Dispersion is good and the smoke is going in the direction we want it to go.



## More about prescribed fire.....

Did you know fire can be good for people and the land? After many years of fire exclusion, an ecosystem that needs periodic fire becomes unhealthy. Trees are stressed by overcrowding, fire-dependent species disappear, and flammable fuels build up and become hazardous.

### **The right fire at the right place at the right time:**

- Reduces hazardous fuels, protecting human communities from extreme fires
- Minimizes the spread of pest insects and disease
- Provides forage for game
- Improves habitat for threatened and endangered species
- Recycles nutrients back to the soil
- Promotes the growth of trees, wildflowers, and other plants

The Forest Service uses prescribed fire to benefit natural resources and reduce the risk of unwanted wildfires in the future. The agency also uses hand tools and machinery to thin overgrown sites in preparation for the eventual return of fire. More prescribed fire means fewer extreme wildfires.



**Photo 4: Prescribed fire near Stampede Reservoir burning the vegetation that a machine cannot get. It is also cycling nutrients into the soil that plants need to grow.**

Specialists write burn plans for prescribed fires. Burn plans identify – or prescribe – the best conditions under which trees and other plants will burn to get the best results safely. Burn plans consider temperature, humidity, wind, moisture of the vegetation, and conditions for the

dispersal of smoke. Prescribed fire specialists compare conditions on the ground to those outlined in burn plans before deciding whether to burn on a given day.



**Photo 5: Firefighters lighting a test fire to determine if burn plan objectives will be met. Smoke dispersal is also being observed to ensure it rises out of the area.**

For more information, or to be placed on the prescribed fire notification list for the Truckee Ranger District, please call Linda Ferguson at (530) 587-3558 ext. 251 or contact her at [lmferguson@fs.fed.us](mailto:lmferguson@fs.fed.us). Notifications are sent via e-mail when a prescribed fire is planned on the Truckee Ranger District.

For more information on prescribed fire on the Tahoe National Forest visit [www.fs.usda.gov/tahoe](http://www.fs.usda.gov/tahoe) or like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/TahoeNF](https://www.facebook.com/TahoeNF).

If you would like to learn about prescribed fire vs. wildfire, please visit <https://smokeybear.com/en/about-wildland-fire/benefits-of-fire/prescribed-fires>