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Forest Service Announces Timber Sale on North Kaibab Ranger District

FREDONIA, Ariz. – The Kaibab National Forest will soon award its second timber sale as part of the North Kaibab Ranger District (NKRK) Plateau Facilities Fire Protection Project (PFFPP). Following the required 30-day bid advertisement, the PFFPP South timber sale will be auctioned to the highest qualified bidder.

This project started in 2008 during discussions among North Zone fire management officials regarding how wildland firefighters could proactively protect structures located on the NKRK. The project falls within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), which is defined as an area where structures are built near or among lands prone to wildland fire. Its purpose is to protect infrastructure in wildland areas like communications facilities, homes or other facilities paid for with taxpayer's investment dollars, according to North Zone Fire Management Officer Ed Hiatt.

The goal of PFFPP South is to restore forest conditions in fire adapted ecosystems so fire managers can reduce fuel loads adjacent to these facilities, create a less dense forest canopy, improve surface fire manageability and lessen the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the area.

“What most people don't realize is that timber sales such as this are just another necessary tool we use to make our forest healthier,” said North Kaibab District Ranger Randall Walker. “Timber sales are used to reduce some of the overcrowding in our forest and help decrease the wildfire risk to life, property and public safety.”

Planning for the project included collaborative efforts between multiple forest resource specialists, to include the NKRK timber staff officer, who created two distinct 3-year-contract timber sales to support the fire protection project -- PFFPP Jacob and PFFPP South.

In January 2013, the PFFPP Jacob timber sale was awarded locally to Canyon Country Mill and Resources, Inc., and treated 478 acres around the Jacob Lake Inn, Kaibab Plateau Visitor's Center and gas station, as well as the Jacob Lake Admin Center, Kaibab Camper Village, Jacob Lake Campground, the Arizona Department of Transportation Maintenance Yard, and two communications towers.

The next stage of the project is the PFFPP South timber sale, which will treat an additional 702 acres surrounding the Dry Park Lookout Tower, DeMotte Campground, North Rim Country Store and Kaibab Lodge. The 702-acre mixed-conifer timber sale is part of a larger 5,081-acre fire management project area in which treatments will also include prescribed burning and mastication to get rid of activity fuels, which are fuels generated from mechanical thinning.

As part of the ongoing effort to provide a safer forest for the public, the North Zone fire management staff initiated the larger Plateau Facilities Fire Protection Project earlier this year by implementing mechanical fuels reduction efforts at Le Fevre Overlook, a popular scenic viewpoint of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument along Highway 89A.

“Together, we are aggressively trying to protect these structures, and I commend the fire shop for the work they are doing to reduce fuels, using mechanical and prescribed fire tools. It appears Canyon Country Mill will also be completing PFFPP Jacob well ahead of schedule. All of these tools are critical to this vegetation management project,” said NKRD Timber Specialist Paul Callaway.

The NKRD provides the main access to the Grand Canyon National Park North Rim and acts as both a recreational opportunity for tourists and a resource opportunity for the public living in the surrounding area.

“The work we are doing on this project borders numerous structures and facilities,” said Hiatt. “The work we are doing here is going to reduce the wildfire risk to our community.”

With more than 30 structures and local businesses located on 24 separate sites, mostly located in the western and central portion of the NKRD of the Kaibab National Forest, these timber sales are just one of three approved treatments that fire management officials are implementing to reduce the risk that wildfire poses to the surrounding community and fire crews. They are mechanized thinning (timber sales or chainsaws), hand thinning, prescription burns or a combination of any of those treatments.

The overarching goals of this project are to reduce hazardous fuels accumulations, create a defensible cushion to help reduce the fire threat to local businesses and public use areas, and improve overall forest health on the plateau.

For more information, please contact the North Kaibab Ranger District Public Affairs Specialist, David Hercher, at (928) 643-8110.

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