



USDA
Forest
Service

White River National Forest Rifle Ranger District

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The Flat Tops is home to one of Colorado's largest elk herds.

TIPS FROM TIMBER:

- ◆ Watch for log trucks when traveling on forest roads
- ◆ "Eye to the sky" for falling trees, especially when windy
- ◆ Christmas is just around the corner. Buy your Christmas tree permit NOW for only \$10!

What is the local Forest Service office and staff up to and how does it affect you and the community? This biannual newsletter shares the latest news from some of our departments and specialists. Please take a moment to review this information and contact us if you have questions. We welcome any suggestions or requests. Happy Hunting Season!

THAT TIME OF YEAR THAT WE ALL LOVE...TO FILL THE FREEZER!

This time of year hunting and selling wood permits keep us pretty busy. We are grateful to all wood cutters for helping clear downed trees in the forest. More people are cutting their own wood to save on heating bills. Permits are \$10/cord with a 2-cord minimum purchase.

Archery hunting season started off well, with a good number of archers searching for the perfect cow or bull. Archery will end September 26 and

Muzzleloader ends Sept. 19. October brings rifle season. All dates have been moved ahead one week as follows: 1st (Elk only) Oct. 16-20; 2nd Oct. 23-31; 3rd Nov. 6-13; 4th Nov. 17-21. Please be sure to wear **hunter orange** if traveling in the woods during this colorful period.

The Forest Service, BLM, State Parks, and DOW will be at the Rifle Information Center Hospitality Room on Oct. 21-22 and Nov. 4-5 to

greet the hunters visiting our beautiful forest. This year we will also have an information tent set up at Triangle Park off of FS Road 245. We are always seeking volunteers to assist with providing information and patrolling. If interested, contact the district for more information. Have a safe fall and hopefully, all of you who hunt will fill your tags! And remember, **PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT.**

MEADOW CREEK FIRE

In late June, a series of lightning storms moved through our region creating spectacular light shows at night. They also ignited many wildfires in the area, one of which is still being managed today on the district. The Meadow Creek Fire was discovered on June 28 burning in a canyon above the confluence of Main Elk and Meadow creeks, approximately 8 miles north of New Castle.

Fire management demands a careful balance between suppressing unwanted, often human caused wildfires, and allowing for the positive attributes of fire under favorable conditions. The Meadow Creek Fire met several criteria to be managed rather than suppressed. It was lightning-caused. The terrain is steep, inaccessible, and unsafe for firefighters. Weather conditions that would support fire growth but not extreme fire behavior were

forecasted. The Forest Plan identifies this area as a fire-dependent ecosystem and recommends reintroducing fire, natural or prescribed.

Risks were assessed and determined to be minimal. These factors helped the district decide to manage rather than suppress this wildfire.

The fire continues to burn at a very low intensity in the upper reaches of Main Elk Creek canyon and is likely to continue until the snow falls. The fire perimeter is estimated at 1,450 acres, with patches of unburned vegetation in between. Fire is one of nature's most powerful means of renewal; it reduces dead debris to ash, adds nutrients to the soil and promotes



vigorous new growth, in turn improving habitat for many species of birds and mammals. Another benefit is this fire has created a natural fuel break on the southwest flanks of the Flat Tops that can help slow the spread of future wildfires.

We want to remind everyone that the Meadow Creek Fire is still active. The Main Elk Creek Research Natural Area remains closed for your safety. Be aware, weather conditions and the potential for increased fire activity can always change.



Divide Creek Unit winter well inspection and staff snowmobile training



The White River National Forest (WRNF) Leasable Minerals Program (LMP) staff is comprised of six dedicated program members. The LMP staff works at fulfilling the federal government’s policy to “foster and encourage private enterprise in the development of economically sound and stable industries, and in the orderly and economic development of domestic resources to help assure satisfaction of industrial, security, and environmental needs” (*Mining and Minerals Policy Act, 1970*).

In working toward fulfilling this policy, the WRNF LMP staff puts every effort into planning and implementing projects with a fo-

cus on the continued sustainability of the land’s productivity for other uses and capability to support biodiversity goals as required by Forest Service Minerals Program Policy.

each location. The LMP staff works in the WRNF Supervisor’s Office in Glenwood Springs, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Colorado River Valley Field Office in Silt, and the Rifle Ranger District in Rifle. The current focus and efforts of the staff at each of these locations is as follows:

WRNF Supervisor’s Office (1 employee): a) WRNF Leasable Minerals Program Management. Program management includes budget, personnel management, and training. b) Forest Wide Program Planning. The WRNF is currently in the process of revising their existing 1993 Oil and Gas Leasing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision. The EIS is in the analysis phase, with a Draft EIS expected in the winter of 2011. c) Other than Oil and Gas Leasable Minerals Program Planning. The LMP on the WRNF manages other leasable minerals, including coal and geothermal resources.

BLM Colorado River Valley Field Office (3 employees): a) Oil and Gas Leasable Minerals Program Administration. Oil and gas program administration includes permit processing, surface compliance, and enforcement. b) Current Program Administration Projects. EnCana Divide Creek

Unit Master Development Plan and Antero Lava Boulder Creek Exploration Project. c) Current Surface Compliance and Enforcement. Summer and winter site inspections for the Wolf Creek Storage Area, Divide Creek Unit, and Hell’s Gulch Project Area. d) Support of the Interagency Energy Team. The Colorado River Valley Field Office is home to an Interagency Energy Team consisting of BLM and Forest Service (FS) employees. The FS employees work on both BLM and FS projects. Current ongoing interagency projects include the West Mamm Master Development Plan and Cache Creek Phase II Master Development Plan.

Rifle Ranger District Office (2 employees): a) Oil and Gas Leasable Minerals Program Lands / Realty Administration. Oil and gas lands / realty program administration includes special use permit processing and pipeline surface compliance and enforcement. b) Current Special Use Permit Projects. Black Diamond Minerals temporary surface pipeline and Noble Energy Cache Creek Master Development water and gas pipelines. c) Program Oversight. The LMP staff officer is also the Rifle District Ranger and is overall responsible for the WRNF LMP.

For additional information regarding any of the current WRNF LMP projects, contact David Francomb, WRNF Leasable Minerals Program Manager, at 970.945.3293.

Figure 1: Land Availability

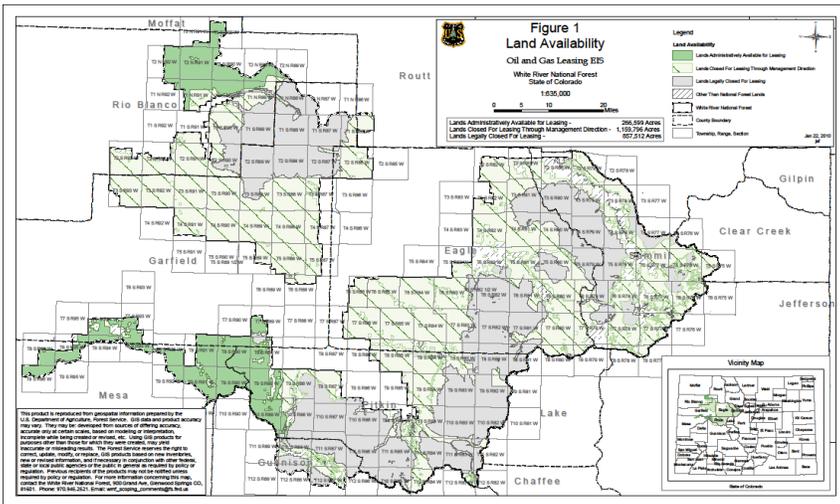


Figure 1 WRNF Oil and Gas Leasing EIS Proposal

WRNF Oil and Gas Leasing EIS Revision Planning Map. Find other maps and info at: www.fs.usda.gov/whiteriver under Lands & Resources Management / Projects.