



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Mt. Magazine
Ranger District

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File Code: 1950

Date: June 15, 2010

Dear Reader:

The Mt. Magazine Ranger District is proposing to prescribe burn approximately 2,369 acres of National Forest land in Logan County, Arkansas. This burn would be located in Sections 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 29 of T6N, R25W; and in Sections 17, 18, 19, 20, 29 and 30 of T6N, R24W. An attached map shows this proposed action. This project has been named the Mt. Magazine/Bear Hollow Prescribe Burn Project.

The burn is set up in seven separate burn blocks. The 2,369 acres of proposed burning would likely be done in one to three block increments.

Aerial ignition using a helicopter could be used in the interior of the burn and burning crews on the ground would be used for line ignition. The proposed burn would be done on an approximate two to three year rotation for the next 10 years. This rotational burning could begin sometime in October 2010 and continue through 2020.

The primary purpose of this burn is to reduce hazardous fuels. About 84% of the area is hardwood and hardwood-pine forest types with the remaining acreage being in pine and pine-hardwood forest types. The area is currently covered with a moderate to heavy accumulation of fuel.

Prescribed burning would be used to reduce these fuels and mitigate the impacts of a possible wildfire. In 5 to 6 years, heavy accumulations of fuels can build up, posing a threat from wildfire to all forest resources. Prescribed fire is the most practical way to reduce accumulations of combustible fuels in large forest acreages. Wildfires that burn into an area where fuels have been reduced by prescribed burning cause less damage and are much easier to control.

The main focus in fuels reduction burning is to protect the communities at risk. The Mt. Magazine State Park is located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and is at risk of a wildland fire that may occur within the National Forest lands that border this state park. There are several residences, communication sites and towers, and structures such as cabins, a lodge, a visitor center, campground, and picnic areas located in the park that are at risk from wildland fire.

In addition to fuel reduction benefits, burning would also have beneficial effects on the wildlife habitat in this area. Prescribed burning would temporarily remove some small trees and shrubs, but not roots, bulbs, and seeds. These would be stimulated by fire and would soon sprout. Yield and quality increases occur in herbage, legumes, and browse from hardwood sprouts. Openings are created for feeding, travel, and dusting. These new sprouts would provide forage for certain

wildlife species. Burns also increase production of fruits such as blackberry, low bush blueberry, and grasses. As a result, many small mammals that feed on seeds and grass usually increase after prescribed fire.

Approximately 175 acres of the burn area is being burned in a cooperative effort with The Nature Conservancy and Mt. Magazine State Park. These areas are located behind the Visitor Center, around Signal Hill, and in the Cameron Bluff Campground. This collaborative effort is focusing on restoring habitats of species identified by Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (CWCS) as being species-at-risk. These species occur in open and dry vegetation types typical of Arkansas woodland, savannas, prairies, and glades. These species are dependent on open woodland structure and herbaceous understory habitat maintained by periodic fire during their life cycles. As a result of fire suppression, most of this type of habitat has become increasingly limited due to densification of vegetation. In addition, the glade habitat has been encroached by surrounding vegetation including eastern red cedar. This current condition plays a large part in the loss of degradation of habitat suitable for pine/oak woodlands and glade dependent species-at-risk in these areas. Restoring these habitats requires establishing a suitable fire regime that promotes open oak woodland and open and shrubby glade habitats.

Control firelines for the burn units would consist mainly of existing roads, trails, dozer lines, and natural barriers. These existing firelines total approximately 17 miles. Bulldozed firelines would be rehabilitated following completion of the prescribe burn by waterbarring and seeding with wildlife seed mixtures.

Additional management activities that have occurred in the project area include prescribed burning for wildlife habitat and fuel reduction. This previous burning has covered approximately eighty percent of the area. The remainder of the area has been subjected to over 50 years of fire exclusion.

Historic occurrence of fire in the project area is not known for certain. Mean fire return interval for the project area is expected to be similar to that which has been found for study sites in the Boston Mountains as documented by recent research. This research has found the Mean Fire Interval (MFI) for three study sites in the Boston Mountains ranged from 4.6 – 16 years for the period of 1680-1821, 2.0-3.1 years for the period 1821-1880, and 62->80 years for the period of 1921-2000. Based upon this research and the similarity of the project area to the research sites, occurrence of fire and ecological benefits from it have been severely curtailed in the project area.

I invite your comments on this proposed action. Please use the enclosed comment form. Comments must be postmarked on or before July 2, 2010.

The Interdisciplinary Team will use your comments as they identify issues about this proposal and as they develop alternatives to the proposal for my consideration. The team will analyze the proposed action and alternatives and summarize the disclosure of environmental effects in an environmental document.

If you have questions on this proposal or the analysis and decision process, please contact Vicki Weindel or me at 479-963-3076.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mark Burge

for

ROB KOPACK
Deputy District Ranger

Attachments

**MT. MAGAZINE RANGER DISTRICT
OZARK-ST. FRANCIS NATIONAL FORESTS**

MT. MAGAZINE/BEAR HOLLOW PRESCRIBE BURN PROJECT

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE # (DAYTIME): _____

COMMENTS:

(Attach additional sheets if needed)

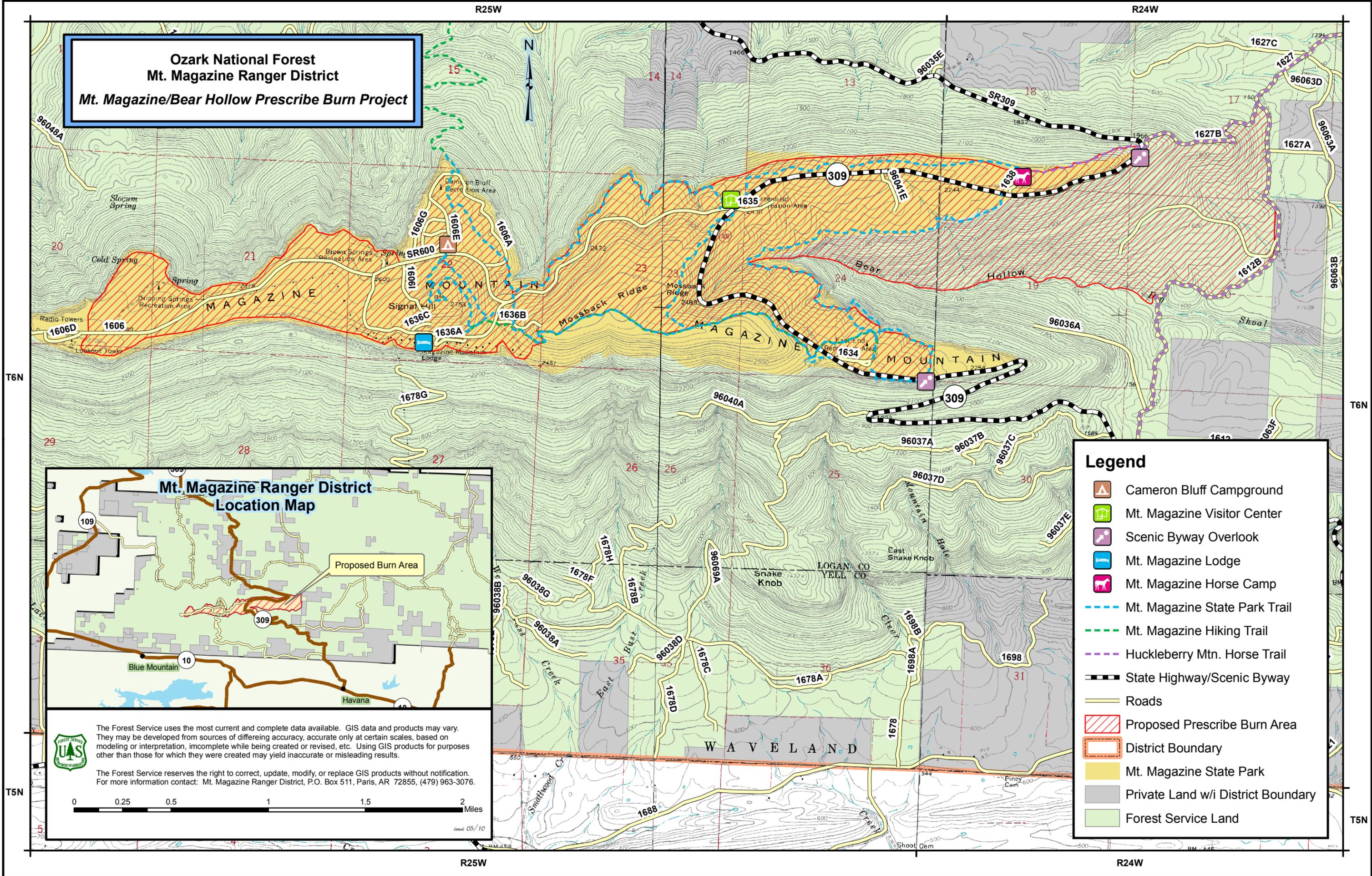
SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

PLEASE POSTMARK OR RETURN BY JULY 2, 2010:

**Rob Kopack
Deputy District Ranger
Mt. Magazine Ranger District
P.O. Box 511
Paris, AR 72855
Phone: 479-963-3076**

**Ozark National Forest
Mt. Magazine Ranger District
Mt. Magazine/Bear Hollow Prescribe Burn Project**



Legend

- Cameron Bluff Campground
- Mt. Magazine Visitor Center
- Scenic Byway Overlook
- Mt. Magazine Lodge
- Mt. Magazine Horse Camp
- Mt. Magazine State Park Trail
- Mt. Magazine Hiking Trail
- Huckleberry Mtn. Horse Trail
- State Highway/Scenic Byway
- Roads
- Proposed Prescribe Burn Area
- District Boundary
- Mt. Magazine State Park
- Private Land w/i District Boundary
- Forest Service Land

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Date 05/10