



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Region One

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**File Code:** 5470/5100/2670/2470

**Date:** October 27, 2011

**Route To:**

**Subject:** Whitebark Pine Restoration with Planned and Unplanned Ignitions

**To:** Forest and Grasslands Supervisors

This letter is a reminder of whitebark pine restoration opportunities that exist in Region 1. There is great potential to improve the health of these ecosystems by reducing competing species and promoting regeneration with prescribed fire and response to wildland fire (fire managed for multiple objectives).

Whitebark pine is a keystone species and serves many vital functions, including snow pack retention, visual aesthetics and forage and habitat values for wildlife. Whitebark pine ecosystems have been declining across much of the historic range due to combined effects of mountain pine beetle epidemics, fire exclusion and exotic blister rust invasion.

Because of that decline, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined listing *Pinus albicaulis* as threatened or endangered is warranted. Until the species is listed, it will be designated as a Region 1 sensitive species. This designation will take effect by the end of 2011.

The promotion of fire used as a tool for ecological restoration is amply supported in forest plans, manuals and direction letters from both the Regional Office and Washington Office. In addition, the fire budget advice does not mandate fuel treatment *only* occur in the WUI (Wildland Urban Interface).

There are opportunities to allow fire to improve the condition of whitebark pine habit in Region 1. Work closely with your local specialists to determine where planned and unplanned ignitions may meet restoration needs in whitebark pine. The attached technical overview describes desired conditions, management concerns and approaches for whitebark pine ecosystems. An interactive pdf map is also available at O:\NFS\R01\Collaboration\WhitebarkPine\Maps that displays blister rust infection, mountain pine beetle mortality, fire history, lynx habitat and plus tree locations in the range of whitebark pine. There is manual guidance (FSM 2475) to protect existing cone-collection plus trees that are marked in the field with three paint strips and metal tags. Tree improvement coordinators on units have location records.

If you have questions, please contact Cathy Stewart at (406) 329-3534, Steve Shelly at (406) 329-3041 or Barry Bollenbacher at (406) 329-3297.

/s/ Frank D. Preite (for)  
LESLIE A. C. WELDON  
Regional Forester



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