



## Flathead National Forest

## Media Release

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# Prescribed Fire Projects Planned on Swan Lake Ranger District

BIGFORK, MT - The Swan Lake Ranger District of the Flathead National Forest is planning to conduct multiple spring prescribed fire projects, when weather, fuel conditions, and air quality become favorable. Smoke will be visible from various places in the Flathead Valley and the Swan Valley depending on the location of the burn units and weather conditions.

Each project follows a Prescribed Fire Burn Plan. The prescribed fire projects are located and designed to be controlled to reduce the potential for adverse effects, or to escape as a wildland fire. These projects will be in compliance with Montana air quality standards and coordinated with Montana State Department of Environmental Quality to reduce the impacts of smoke to our neighbors, cooperators, and surrounding communities. The project areas include:

**Blacktail Mountain Area** – Up to 310 acres of logging slash from previously logged areas will be treated with fire to reduce hazardous fuels as well as create favorable conditions for natural regeneration of plant and tree species. In addition, prescribed fire will treat 22 acres of natural fuels on Kerr Mountain to obtain multiple objectives such as fuels reduction and wildlife habitat improvement.

**Haskill Mountain Area** – This ecosystem burn project targets 128 acres of mid to upper elevation brush and conifer. Fire suppression has caused a change in species composition resulting in accumulations of woody material and an increased risk of stand replacement fire. Prescribed fire will reintroduce fire to overall improve forest health and reduce the likelihood of intense wildfire.

**Crane Mountain Area** – This work includes three units in the Estes Lake, Hunger Creek, and Crane Creek areas. The area is located several miles south of Ferndale, above Woods Bay, totaling 506 acres. The objective is to reintroduce fire to the landscape to reduce hazardous fuels that have accumulated over the years. A temporary closure on Trail #96 into the Estes Lake Area may occur during burn operations.

**Piper Creek Area** – The Mission Upland Burning Project will be implemented in phases during the spring and fall. A total of 1,036 acres will be treated in the Piper Creek Drainage. The project will help allow future lightning-caused fires to play a more natural role within and outside Mission Mountain Wilderness. There may be temporary closures in the area including the Piper Creek Trail # 119 during different phase of burning.

**Meadow Smith** – This project includes underburning timber stands located within the Meadow and Smith Creek areas of the Swan Valley. These treatments will use prescribed fire for fuels reduction, vegetation regeneration, and wildlife habitat improvement.

**Pile Burning** – Hand or Machine piles are located in several locations within the Swan Valley and Blacktail Mountain as a result of but not limited to: logging, hazardous fuels reduction in the wildland urban interface, hazard tree removal, and trail or road construction. These piles are burned to reduce the fuel loads in these areas. These piles are strategically burned based on their location, access, and weather conditions.

For additional information about these projects contact the Swan Lake Ranger District in Bigfork at 406-837-7500.

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