



News Release

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland
<http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>

Contact: Aaron Voos, (307) 745-2323 or Larry Sandoval, (307) 745-2420

Steamboat Ski Area Pile Burning Highlights Collaboration

(LARAMIE, Wyo.) December 13, 2012 – Weather conditions this past week provided the U.S. Forest Service a window of opportunity within which to safely burn multiple slash piles in and around the Steamboat Ski Area. The lighting of the piles highlighted collaborative efforts between the ski resort and the Forest Service to address Forest health issues and the removal of hazardous fuels generated from the bark beetle epidemic over the last decade.

Two large piles, approximately 100'x75' wide and 20' high, were burned over the past two days, as well as numerous smaller piles. Smoke has been visible from the town of Steamboat Springs. The decision to burn piles was made due to recent snowfall which has allowed for safe burning and eliminated the threat of fire spreading to unintended areas.

A large portion of the Steamboat Ski Area is on National Forest lands where operations take place under a special use permit from the Forest Service. The ski area is considered Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) within the Routt National Forest. Removal of hazardous fuels within WUI areas is a priority of the Forest Service due to the presence of values at risk.

Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation and the Forest Service work together as stewards of the land while providing a safe recreation experience for visitors. The ski area's progressive approach to forest health in and around their boundaries has resulted in several years of active timber management to remove dead and diseased trees. Fuels remaining from timber projects include mechanically and hand piled slash. The Forest Service then burns the slash piles when conditions are right. Removal of these fuels lowers the overall risk of wildfire in the area and is in the best interest of long-term public safety.

This timber management work is part of the ski area's Master Development Plan, developed in cooperation with the Forest Service.

In the long term, these forest health projects may ultimately open up additional skiable terrain, however, visitors are reminded to please respect current closures of these areas until they are deemed to be safe for public use. The areas contain many atypical hazards which users may be unaware of and that could cause injuries. Additionally, some terrain may be permanently closed because it is not suitable for skier traffic or to promote forest health.

Pile burning is part of the normal program of work for the Hahns Peak/Bears Ears (HPBE) Ranger District. A press release publicizing this work was distributed earlier this fall and individual operations are given public notice via the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland's official Twitter feed, @ MBRNFsTBNG.

For more information contact the HPBE Ranger District at (970) 870-2299 or visit our website at <http://fs.usda.gov/mbr>.

###