

 <p>Green Mountain National Forest</p>	 <p>Finger Lakes National Forest</p>	<p>Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests</p> <p><i>For Immediate Release</i></p> <p>Wednesday, April 10, 2013</p>
<p>News Release</p>		<p>Contact: Ethan Ready 802-747-6760</p>
<p><i>Caring for the Land and Serving People</i></p>		

FOREST SERVICE TO USE PRESCRIBED FIRE TO IMPROVE WILDLIFE HABITAT

RUTLAND, VT. (April 10, 2013) – Finger Lakes National Forest (FLNF) officials announced today that they, in partnership with local fire departments, are planning to use prescribed fire to treat approximately 450 acres of the more than 16,000-acre national forest. The Forest Service says that it will use prescribed fire as a management tool to reduce hazardous fuel accumulations, to promote perennial and annual grass production, and to mitigate non-native invasive plant species; in order to restore critical wildlife habitat, improve grazing allotments, regenerate early successional growth, and improve overall watershed conditions on the national forest in New York.

In the coming weeks, FLNF fire personnel will use prescribed fire in certain areas on the Forest. The prescribed fires are not likely to impact local residents, although smoke will be visible from the surrounding area. Nearby residents may smell smoke. The timing of the prescribed burns depends on weather and vegetation conditions that meet very specifically defined limits – called the “prescription” -- so the ignition dates are subject to some adjustment, though the “burn window” is not likely to exceed more than two weeks. The Forest Service will announce additional details on burn locations closer to the date of planned ignition. If a burn cannot be completed during the designated burn window it will likely be postponed until the fall or the spring of 2014.

Prior to each prescribed fire, crews will have already prepared the burn area by constructing control lines on the ground. On the first day of ignition, crews will further secure the burn perimeter by “blacklining,” (a method of applying fire to a swath of vegetation immediately inside the control lines) to create a wide barrier that contains the fire within the designated area. On the second day, firefighters will use drip torches to light vegetation in the interior of the burn area.

Prescribed fire restores declining wildlife habitat and improves watershed conditions. The areas planned for burning are now overgrown with thick brush and have been identified by the Forest Service as being critical wildlife habitat. Plants in the area used as forage by wildlife have become coarse, dense, and overcrowded. The post-fire landscape will support a more diverse variety of grasses and forbs, which will be more palatable and nutritious for wildlife species. Each burn site will be closed to the public, and access will be limited for the duration of prescribed fire activities. If it is necessary to temporarily close Forest roads and trails, the Forest Service will notify the public of these closures by posting signs. Such closures will be subject to modification based on the actual date of ignition during the burn window. Firefighter and public safety will be the highest priority for each prescribed fire.

National forests provide clean drinking water to more than 180 million people from coast to coast. Twenty nine percent of America’s forested watersheds have been identified as having high or very high wildland fire potential. On national forest system lands, approximately 80 million acres are in need of

restoration treatments. Last year alone, more than 3.7 million acres of restoration treatments were completed on watersheds, forest, and wildlife habitats. In fiscal year 2012, the Eastern Region completed more than 250,000 acres of restoration treatments on watersheds, forest, and wildlife habitats.

America's forests are a sustainable, strategic asset in achieving and enhancing the nation's water and air quality, economic vitality, and community safety. Covering a third of the country's landmass, forests store and filter more than half of the nation's water supply and absorb 20 percent of the country's carbon emissions. But many forested areas are in dire need of extensive restoration because of cumulative impacts from wildfire, insect disease, and drought. This year, more than 60 percent of the contiguous U.S. is currently in a moderate or worse stage of drought, with 20 percent of those areas experiencing exceptional drought conditions. In part, because of these climate conditions, 26 states were recognized as natural disaster areas in 2012.

Most of the Eastern Region's national forests have two fire seasons, spring and fall. In recent years, the fire season has started early across the southern tier of the Region (Missouri, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio). In 2012, Missouri's Mark Twain National Forest experienced fire starts until August, which is very unusual. The 2012 drought across the Midwest and Lake States has moderated; however, conditions continue to be monitored by fire managers. In fiscal year 2011, there were a total of 585 fires reported by Eastern Region national forests, with nearly half of the incidents occurring on the Mark Twain, Huron-Manistee, and the Wayne National Forests. In the last decade, the Eastern Region averaged about 600 wildfires per year.

The U.S. Forest Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with a mission of sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. Recreational activities on the country's national forests contribute \$14.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy. The agency manages 193 million acres of public land, provides assistance to state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forestry research organization in the world. The Forest Service's Eastern Region includes twenty states in the Midwest and East, stretching from Maine, to Maryland, to Missouri, to Minnesota. There are 17 national forests and one national tallgrass prairie in the Eastern Region.

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