

DECISION MEMO
BLANCO MAINTENANCE BURN

USDA FOREST SERVICE
ESPANOLA RANGER DISTRICT
SANTA FE NATIONAL FOREST
RIO ARriba COUNTY

DECISION AND RATIONALE: Based on the scoping and analysis conducted it is my decision to implement a maintenance burn program on 3600 acres in the ponderosa pine vegetation type in the Abiquiu Ecosystem Management Area in T.21 N., R.7E., sec. 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28. The area will be divided into blocks with the largest being three hundred acres. The blocks will be burned every five to eight years. Approximately ninety percent of the area has been burned once under various intensities either through prescribed fire or wild fire. Heavy fuel accumulations and crown densities have been reduced and herbaceous response has been excellent. Continuous fine fuels and reduced heavy fuel accumulations will permit prescribed fire to mimic the historical frequent low intensity fires that research has demonstrated burned in the ponderosa pine previous to the late 1800's. Burning will take place when soil moisture levels are high to minimize deleterious impacts and when atmospheric conditions permit smoke dispersion. Existing fire lines, roads, trails, and natural barriers will be used to contain the burn blocks.

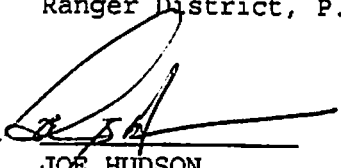
This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) since the project is a burn to reduce natural fuel build-up and improve plant vigor as identified in FSH 1909.15, 31.2 category 6.d.

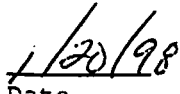
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: A letter was sent to twenty two individuals and organizations. Several field trips have been conducted. The response has been favorable.

FINDINGS: The project is located within Management Area "E" in the Forest Plan and is consistent with the standards and guidelines for that area. Flood plains, wetlands, prime lands, threatened and endangered species, minerals and heritage resource management implications have been considered and these resources will not be adversely affected. A Biological Assessment and Evaluation and Heritage Resource Clearance Report are in the project file.

APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION: This decision is not subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 215.8. Implementation of this project will begin in the spring of 1998.

CONTACT: For further information please contact Bill Armstrong, Espanola Ranger District, P.O. Box 1346; Espanola NM 87012; 505-753-7331.


JOE HUDSON
District Ranger


Date