

NEWS RELEASE

Pacific Northwest Region - Wallowa-Whitman NF
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Spring Prescribed Burning Projects to Begin on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

BAKER CITY, OR – The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest will begin implementing its prescribed burning program as the snow melts and drier weather conditions prevail. Prescribed fire managers are planning to implement hazardous fuel reduction burns beginning at many project sights.

Prescribed fire is a major component of the Cohesive Wildfire Strategy to meet the goals of restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes and creating fire adapted communities. Prescribed burning is done to reduce dead and down fuels, selectively thin understory trees in dense forested stands, stimulate fire tolerant plant species, enhance forage and browse, reduce the risk of large stand-replacement fires, create strategic fuels breaks in the urban interface, and restore fire under controlled conditions as a disturbance factor in these landscapes. Prescribed burns can range from ten acres to thousands of acres in size. Prescribed burns often are accomplished with combined resources of local rural fire departments, contractors, and State and other federal fire agencies.

Fire history studies have shown that fire was a dominant natural process in the Blue Mountains, maintaining a more open and park-like condition throughout the low- to mid-elevation forests. Low-intensity surface-fires burned throughout these drier forests and grasslands perpetuating open, park-like stands of fire tolerant tree species such as ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and larch.

Hazardous fuel reduction is not without impacts. Smoke associated with prescribed burning is a major concern and the hardest to forecast in the implementation planning process. Prescribed fire managers work closely with the Oregon State Smoke Forecast Center in accordance with the Oregon Smoke Management Plan to determine when, where, and how much is burned on a daily basis. Smoke dispersion models are used to look at the volume of smoke, the direction of spread and the mixing height prior to each burn. If a burn is forecasted to produce smoke that will be a significant impact to a community or sensitive area it is rescheduled until there is a more favorable weather forecast.

Burning is part of the series of fuel reduction treatments intended to decrease the damage done by wildfires, including reducing the amount of smoke that typically impacts



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communities during the fire season. The intent is to keep smoke out of populated areas. Burning under controlled conditions reduces surface and ladder fuels setting the stage to limit future high intensity unplanned fires and the smoke that they would produce. Many areas are burned on 10 to 15 year rotations to limit fuels accumulations and enhance forage and browse important to wildlife.

Wallowa-Whitman forest managers have been successfully conducting prescribed burning operations for fuel reduction for over 30 years, and plan to continue into the foreseeable future. In the last 5 the forest has increased prescribed burning by 20%. Twenty thousand acres of hazardous fuels were treated last year.

Actual acres within a project area may vary due to fuel conditions, smoke dispersion, wind patterns, and other variables. Acres may be higher or lower in some project areas than listed. Weather patterns, fuel conditions, and smoke dispersion will determine exactly where and when units are ignited within the project areas. It is anticipated that not all areas will be within prescription and will not be implemented this spring, while other project areas may have additional acres within prescription that may be implemented.

The Wallowa-Whitman plans to burn approximately 8000 acres across the forest this spring. For more information about the Wallowa Whitman prescribed burning program, you may contact Steve Hawkins at 541-523-1262, or visit the Blue Mountain Prescribe Fire Council website at <http://bluemtnprescribedfire.blogspot.com/> to view the spring 2018, burn unit maps.

Whitman Ranger District (WRD) – 541-523-4476 (Baker, Halfway, and Unity). The WRD plans to conduct prescribed burning on 5,000 acres this spring, which may include:

- **Foothills (200 acres)** – 4 miles west of Baker City ,OR
- **Deer (1000 acres)** – 1 mile northeast of Sumpter, OR
- **Union Miners (300 acres)** – 7 miles east of Sumpter, OR
- **Mile 9 (150 acres)** – 5 miles west of Unity, OR
- **Goose (250 acres)** – 17 miles northwest of Richland, OR
- **Sparta (350 acres)** – 1 miles north of Sparta, OR
- **Barnard (300 acres)** – 6 miles northwest of Halfway, OR
- **Little Dean (300 acres)** – 2 miles north of Phillips Lake
- **Broman (2500 acres)** – 8 miles northwest of Unity, OR
- **Pine Valley (500)**- 5.5 Miles North of Halfway,OR



The Wallowa Fire Zone (WFZ) - 541-426-4978 (Wallowa Valley Ranger District, Hells Canyon NRA and Eagle Cap Ranger District). The WFZ plans to conduct prescribed burning of up to 5,000 acres this spring, which may include:

- **Ches Elk (5,300 acres)** – 30 miles northeast of Enterprise, OR
- **B-Vine (7,900 acres)** – 30 miles north/northeast of Enterprise, OR

The Grande Ronde Fire Zone (GRFZ) – 541-963-7186 (La Grande Ranger District). The GRFZ plans to conduct prescribed burning on up to 1000 acres this spring, which may include:

- **Blue Fly (400 acres)** – 15 miles southwest of La Grande, OR near Vey Meadows and Blue Springs
- **Medical Springs (600 acres)** – 15 miles southeast of Union, OR

