



Pacific Northwest Region
Umatilla National Forest
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www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Darcy Weseman (541) 278-3722

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Forest prepares to implement fall prescribed burn plan

PENDLETON, Ore. - Fire management officials on the Umatilla National Forest are preparing to implement the forest's fall prescribed burn plan, which could impact camping and hunting opportunities in several hunting units across the forest. Any associated road and trail closures will go into effect prior to and during burn operations, which typically take 2-5 days to complete. Hunters are advised to plan ahead and avoid camping in the designated prescribed burn areas during the upcoming 2018 hunting season.

Frequent, low-intensity fire is essential for healthy forests and reducing the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire caused by excessive fuel buildup. Prescribed burning is an effective tool for removing excessive amounts of brush, shrubs, and trees, while also encouraging the growth of native vegetation. However, prescribed burning is highly dependent on weather conditions, which have to be within a narrow criteria window in order to use prescribed fire. Factors such as wind speed and direction, temperatures, relative humidity, and fuel moistures are all taken into consideration prior to implementing a prescribed burn operation.

"From a restoration objective standpoint, late summer and fall provide the best opportunities for the timing of prescribed fires," said Andrew Stinchfield, Deputy Fire Staff Officer. "Fire behavior during fall weather conditions are more likely to align with how the native vegetation has adapted to fire."

The Forest Service recognizes that hunting season coincides with prescribed burning season and can impact hunters, but controlled burns are necessary to reintroduce fire to the landscape and encourage healthy vegetation that will ultimately improve landscapes and forage for big game.

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Hunters should be cautious when entering a recently burned area and be aware of increased hazards, particularly snags. Dead or dying trees that remain standing after a fire are unstable, especially in high winds.

“Don’t camp or hang out in the burned area. And, as always, let someone know your planned route, destination and expected return time,” said Stinchfield.

Each prescribed burn represents many years of planning and preparation to ensure burn operations meet prescriptive conditions that allow for successful burns that provide multiple benefits to resources. The forest works closely with the Oregon Department of Forestry and Washington Department of Natural Resources in accordance with the State’s Smoke Management Plans to determine when, where, and how much is burned on a daily basis. Potential smoke impacts, looking at volume of smoke, direction of spread, and mixing heights, are determined prior to each burn. All burns will be monitored until a season ending rain or snow occurs.

The Umatilla National Forest has developed a prescribed fire interactive map displaying planned burning activities, which is available at <https://tinyurl.com/y8b433th>. The interactive map allows the user to zoom in on certain areas and click on a burn unit for more information (such as acreage, status, etc). When burning operations begin the interactive map will be updated to display which burn units are actively burning. Maps of the proposed prescribed burns are also located on InciWeb at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/5808/>. Additional information on prescribed burning is available on the Umatilla National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/umatilla/ or at any forest office.

For more information about the Umatilla National Forest’s Prescribed Burn program, please contact one of the following Forest Service personnel:

- Tara Mackleit, Pomeroy Ranger - (509) 843-4676
- Joby Sciarrino, Walla Walla Ranger District - (509) 522-6283
- Jesse Bohnsack, North Fork John Day Ranger District - (541) 427-5399
- Kristen Marshall, Heppner Ranger District - (541) 676-2130

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