



News Release

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Forest Service
Lewis and Clark National Forest
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESCRIBED BURN IMPLEMENTED IN EAST LITTLE BELTS

Forest Service personnel ignited a 1700-acre prescribed burn on Saturday, May 6, in Stevens Gulch on the east end of the Little Belt Mountains, Musselshell Ranger District, Lewis and Clark National Forest. The burn was about 4.5 miles west of Judith Gap.

The Stevens Gulch burn was implemented to reduce forest fuels and enhance forage for big game and livestock by removing small diameter trees, juniper and dead fuel. Historically, the area burned at intervals of 5-35 years, but had not had fire for more than 90 years. The decision to burn was part of the decision made in the Musselshell Range Environmental Assessment which was completed in 2003.

Forest Service crews used a helicopter for aerial ignition, which was safer and less expensive than lighting by hand. Though the smoke was spectacular at times, the prescribed fire remained within containment lines prepared prior to the burn. Also, rain received prior to the burn provided soil and fuel moisture within specified burn parameters. The prescribed burn resulted in some larger openings on the northwest portion where canopies were dense, and there was a volatile understory of juniper. On the south and east portions of the burn, most of the larger trees were retained while small trees and juniper were reduced, resulting in conditions less likely to support a large wildfire and increasing forage for big game.

Crews will continue to monitor the perimeter during the next few days. For more information, call Darwin Reynolds in Harlowton, (406) 632-4391.

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