

Roaring Fork Prescribed Burn

The aspen forest on the west slope of the Sierra Madre Range is the largest continuous stand of aspen in Wyoming. Two thirds of this aspen is old and dying out while only 4% is young, and most stands have become heavily populated with subalpine fir trees. Fire control since 1900 is one factor leading to the conversion of aspen to subalpine fir.

The 2003 Forest Plan directs us to manage aspen in a range from seedlings to mature and old stands. To shift the balance in aspen toward a younger forest, the Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District is planning prescribed burns in Elk Area 21 and Deer Area 82 over the next several years. The purpose for burning is to maintain and promote fire-adapted aspen and improve habitat for big game.

The first burn is planned for fall of 2008 depending upon fuel and weather conditions, and will encompass 1700 acres on the east side of the Roaring Fork drainage (see map). The burn will be ignited from the air, and will last 3-5 days. We plan to treat conifers and aspen, producing a mosaic of burned and unburned vegetation. The fire will kill encroaching conifers and promote resprouting of aspen, increasing wildlife forage and cover.

The area will remain open for all uses until conditions are right to start the burn. The Forest Service will close the area to all uses during actual ignition to provide for public safety, and any camps in either the primary or allowable burn expansion area will need to be relocated. If you are planning to camp in this area, please do not leave your camp unattended for extended periods of time.

Because ignition will depend upon having the proper mix of weather and fuel conditions, the specific date for burning will be chosen immediately prior to ignition. Signs will be placed around the area in early summer, and Forest Service personnel will be posted at roads and trails to inform the public of the closure during burning days.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact:

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