

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service

Coronado National Forest

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<http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado>



For Immediate Release

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JOHNSON PEAK BURN CONTINUES TO MEET FIRE PLANNING OBJECTIVES

DOUGLAS, AZ (November 29, 2005) – Coronado National Forest fire managers continue to conduct this prescribed burn as planned in the Chiricahua Wilderness north of Douglas, Arizona. The desired results have been achieved in the treated area – now totaling 5500 acres. The burn objectives should be reached by the end of this week. Higher humidity is forecasted along with partly-cloudy skies and minimal wind which will reduce fire activity.

“We’re monitoring this fire closely, letting it back down the mountain into the oak brush landscape,” said Dean McAlister, Fire and Aviation Program Manager for the Coronado National Forest. Firefighters are focusing on using existing control features such as trails to check the further advance of the fire. This planned fire is located south of Turkey Creek which runs in an east to west direction down the mountain from the peaks in the Wilderness.

The fire burned slowly in the initial stages, taking a long time to burn a few hundred acres. Over the weekend high winds ventilated and helped burn concentrations of woody material. These high winds on Saturday also helped to clear the smoke that a temperature inversion last week had trapped close to the ground. Currently firefighters are burning out toward the west side of the fire. There are six to twelve inch flame lengths.

As of today Johnson Peak Prescribed Burn has burned pine and mixed conifer. One purpose of conducting this controlled burn is to help protect some of the last old growth timber in the Chiricahua Mountains from burning in a future catastrophic wildfire. Most of the similar old growth was lost during the Rattlesnake Fire of 1994. The burn will clean up accumulations of fuels on the forest floor, releasing nutrients and providing space for new plant growth that has been suppressed. This new vegetation benefits the habitat of a variety of wildlife species. Portions of all three of the Mexican Spotted Owl Protected Area Centers (PACs) have been involved in the area burned so far. It is important to treat each PAC with low intensity fire, along with the adjacent surrounding areas, to prevent the protected area from blowing up in a hot wildfire with summer burning conditions and erratic wind activity. Additionally, the fire has burned in a mosaic pattern which will help with fire fighting activities in any future wildfires.

Note: A map of the area should be on our website (listed above) within the next day.

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