

News Release
USDA Forest Service
Coronado National Forest
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www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado



Effective Immediately

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AGUA CALIENTE PRESCRIBED FIRE COMPLETED

Burn Achieved Significant Natural Resource Benefits

TUCSON, AZ (May 16, 2008) – The Agua Caliente Prescribed Fire was completed on May 16, having accomplished predetermined natural resource objectives which were to restore wildlife habitat, improve watershed conditions, and reduce future wildfire potential in the area. Redington Road will again be open to the free flow of traffic the afternoon of May 16.

The fire, which encompassed 11,000 acres, burned approximately 60% of the project area. This resulted in the desired mosaic burn pattern to increase the diversity of vegetation. The area had become overgrown with thick brush. Wildlife forage plants were coarse, dense and overcrowded. Natural resource objectives which were achieved include opening of the canopy and reduction of woodland and brush species to improve browse and forage conditions.

The fire regime in the project area had been altered from that of frequent low-intensity fires which maintained favorable wildlife habitat, to infrequent high-intensity fires with the potential to move upslope from Redington Pass into the Santa Catalina or Rincon Mountains. By conducting the burn during fire season, fire managers attempted to mimic natural fire that had historically passed through the area. Another objective which was achieved was movement of the fire-adapted ecosystem nearer to its natural fire regime.

The burn, which began May 12, produced no smoke which impacted the Tucson Basin until a storm cell formed late May 15 that funneled smoke south and west into Tucson. Although this was a temporary inconvenience for residents, it is comparable to smoke generated by the Bullock wildfire which started in the same vicinity in 2002. Smoke from the Bullock Fire was present for weeks. With the Agua Caliente Prescribed Fire, the small amount of smoke generated under controlled conditions was a trade-off for the ecological restoration of the fire-adapted landscape, and the decreased potential for catastrophic wildfire (such as Bullock), from which Tucson residents could be highly impacted by heavy smoke over long periods of time.

For more information about the Agua Caliente Prescribed Fire, the public can visit www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado.