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Roosevelt/Duchesne District Prescribed Burns

Roosevelt/Duchesne Ranger District
Ashley National Forest
Duchesne County, Utah

I am inviting you to comment on the following proposed actions. The Ashley National Forest is planning several prescribed burns on the Roosevelt-Duchesne Ranger Districts. The burn treatments will occur over a six-year period starting in the spring of 2007 and ending in the fall of 2013. Please see attached maps for detailed views of the prescribed burn areas. Target and project areas are delineated for each burn. Target areas are those areas where prescribed fire will be applied and where burning is expected to occur. Project areas are those areas that are adjacent to, buffer, or serve as firebreaks for the target areas. Prescribed fire will not be intentionally applied to outside target areas; however, it will be acceptable if burning occurs within the larger project areas. The effect of fire on the entire project area for each burn will be analyzed. A list of proposed prescribed burns, the purposes of these burns, and additional expected benefits are presented below.

1. The primary purpose of the following prescribed fire is to reduce the build-up of hazardous understory fuels (i.e. dead fallen trees, broken branches, pine needles, pine cones, brush, etc.) associated with forested areas. A secondary purpose is to apply fire within the historical return interval for the ponderosa pine community. Other benefits include enhanced forage for domestic and wild ungulates and a short-term increase in the density and diversity of herbaceous plant species.

Area Name	Project Area (Acres)	Target Area (Acres)
Dry Gulch	63	63

2. The primary purpose of the following prescribed fire is to reduce the build-up of hazardous fuels (i.e. excessive woody canopy cover, dense sagebrush shrub communities) associated with shrub areas. Secondary purposes are to deter the encroachment of conifers into valued shrub lands and to apply fire within the historical return interval for basin big sagebrush. The removal of sagebrush with fire is expected to increase ground cover and increase the density and diversity of herbaceous plant species. This is considered beneficial for basin big sagebrush communities. Another benefit is enhanced forage for livestock and wild ungulates.

Area Name	Project Area (Acres)	Target Area (Acres)
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Left Fork Indian Canyon	4,382	702
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3. The primary purpose of the following prescribed fires is to deter encroachment of pinyon, juniper, ponderosa pine, and/or Douglas fir trees into sagebrush-grass, mountain brush-grass, or Salina wildrye communities in order to maintain these seral vegetative components. The shrub lands targeted for treatment are beneficial to many wildlife species, including wild ungulates who use the areas as fall and winter habitat. Forest monitoring data indicates that historic wild fire has maintained the existence of these shrub lands on the landscape. Barring occasional disturbance (i.e. fire), the shrub lands are at risk of being replaced by conifers. Secondary purposes include fuels reduction and to apply fire within the historical return interval for these shrub and grasslands. Another benefit is enhanced forage for livestock and wild ungulates.

Area Name	Project Area (Acres)	Target Area (Acres)
Pole Creek	2,706	530
Farm Creek	16,368	7,408
Antelope Canyon	5,360	2,000

4. The primary purpose of the following prescribed fires is to apply fire within historical return intervals for aspen-conifer ecosystems. Fire will curtail the displacement of aspen by conifers, increase vegetative ground cover, and enhance the frequency and diversity of plant species associated with aspen. Aspen is valued by many wildlife species and maintaining it on the landscape is highly desirable. Secondary benefits include fuels reduction and increased forage for livestock and wild ungulates.

Area Name	Project Area (Acres)	Target Area (Acres)
Fossil Ridge	24,450	300
Horse Ridge		500
Flat Ridge		500
Tub Ridge		300
West Reservation Ridge	2,411	700

5. The primary purpose of the following prescribed fires is to establish several treatment study areas within mountain big sagebrush for the Anthro Mountain Sage Grouse Study. Burned areas will range from 5 to 300 acres and will be monitored to determine their habitat value for sage grouse. Cooperators in this study include the USDA Forest Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, and Utah State University. Mosaic patterns within the project area following prescribed fire are desirable and benefit a number of wildlife species. Other benefits include fuels reduction, increased forage for livestock and wild ungulates, and to apply fire within the historical return interval for the community.

Area Name	Project Area (Acres)	Target Area (Acres)
Anthro Mountain	13,995	1,200

6. The primary purpose of the following prescribed fire is to burn selected stands of Douglas fir in the Lake Canyon drainage to provide travel corridors and improve habitat for Rocky Mountain big horn sheep. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is anticipating the reintroduction of big horn sheep to the area and has requested the burn treatments to facilitate reintroduction. Other

benefits include fuels reduction, increased forage wild ungulates, and to invigorate the vegetative understory (i.e. ninebark).

Area Name	Project Area (Acres)	Target Area (Acres)
Lake Canyon	2,676	1,000

7. The primary purpose of the following prescribed fires is to apply fire intervals that have been historically consistent for mountain big sagebrush ecosystems. Sagebrush communities associated with these burns have not been burned for at least 30 years and, as a result, have shrub canopy covers that exceed 25%. Fire will reduce or temporarily eliminate existing shrub canopies, which will result in the increase of vegetative ground cover, and enhance the frequency and diversity of plant species. Mosaic patterns within the target areas following prescribed fire are both desirable and expected, and will result in different age classes of shrubs that tend to support and appeal to a greater number of wildlife species. Other benefits include deterring encroachment of pinyon, juniper, ponderosa pine, and/or Douglas fir trees into sagebrush-grass communities, fuels reduction, and increased forage for livestock and wild ungulates.

Area Name	Project Area (Acres)	Target Area (Acres)
Flat Ridge	24,450	1,580
Fossil Ridge		2,515
Horse Ridge		1,349
Tub Ridge		1,450
West Reservation Ridge	2,411	1,600
\$1200 Ridge	3,650	1,258

Our intent is to burn approximately 10 to 80% of the acres included within each target area, except the ponderosa pine burn at Mud Springs, where 100% of the acres are targeted to be burned. Fire intensity and percentage of each area burned will vary with conditions and objectives. Future prescribed burning in these areas will be periodic and will fall within historic fire intervals for each vegetative community considered for treatment.

We anticipate these projects will meet the requirements for categorical exclusion from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) as described in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Section 31.2 (Categories 6 and 10), which include wildlife improvement and hazardous fuels activities. These categorically excluded activities are subject to notice, comment and appeal under the 36 CFR 215 rule.

The public is invited to offer comment at this time. Comments received in response to this notice, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project. Send your written comments to: John R. Kirkaldie, District Ranger, Roosevelt-Duchesne Ranger District, at 650 W. Highway 40, P.O. Box 127, Roosevelt, Utah 84066. Comments may also be hand delivered to the above address during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays; or submitted electronically to comments-intermtn-ashley@fs.fed.us. Electronic comments should include the project name in the subject line and be submitted in MS Word (*.doc) or rich text format (*.rtf). All comments should be received within 30 of the publication of the public notice in the Uintah Basin Standard.

If you have any questions regarding these proposals, please contact Project Leader Allen Huber at (435) 781-5226 or e-mail: ahuber@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

JOHN R. KIRKALDIE
Responsible Official
District Ranger

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