



## Forest Service News Release

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<https://www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot>

### Spring Burning Planned on the Forest

*Burns Could Begin as Early as Next Week*

**Hamilton, MT, April 17** —With the arrival of spring weather, firefighters across the Bitterroot National Forest are gearing up for their annual prescribed burning operations to reduce hazardous fuels, restore wildlife habitat, and better protect communities from future wildfires.

Pending favorable conditions, underburning operations could begin next week on the forest. Underburning, a type of prescribed fire treatment, ignites vegetation under the forest canopy or in open grassy meadows and focuses on the consumption of surface fuels. Frequent, low-intensity fire is essential in improving habitat conditions by regenerating fire-adapted vegetation and encouraging the growth of new forage and food sprouts for wildlife.

“Winter has had a tight grip on Montana this year,” said David Tingley, Bitterroot National Forest Fuels Fire Management Officer. “Windows for burning are likely to be compressed with green-up quickly chasing eventual typical spring weather. It will be our focus through May to take every opportunity possible to safely implement prescribed burns that maximize treatment objectives to restore healthy forest conditions while minimizing smoke impacts to our community.”

Spring prescribed fire activities normally take place in April and May and burning is highly weather and fuels dependent. A mosaic pattern of burned and unburned areas will remain after treatments.

All total, fire managers plan to burn approximately 6,713 acres this spring. Smoke may be visible at times from West Fork Highway, East Fork Highway, or Highway 93. Treatment areas include:

**Stevensville Ranger District** – 2,450 acres are planned:

- Big Creek North - Bitterroot Mountains, five miles northwest of Victor
- Threemile Units - east of Florence in the Threemile Wildlife Management Area

**West Fork Ranger District** – 2,366 acres are planned:

- Lower West Fork Project - south of Trapper Creek and north of Boulder Creek
- School Point Ecoburn - west of Nelson Creek and east of Halford Creek
- Piquett Creek Project - east of the West Fork of the Bitterroot River and north of Piquett Creek

- Soda Springs Ecoburn - east of Little West Fork and west of Halford Creek
- Upper Nez Ecoburn - Sheephead Creek, north of Nez Perce Creek and Fales Flat Campground

**Darby/Sula Ranger District** - 1,897 acres are planned:

- Waddell Units - south of Lake Como and north of Tin Cup Creek
- Como/Horse Lick Units - south of Lost Horse and north of Lake Como
- Trapper Bunkhouse Units – One mile west of Connor along the 374A road
- Cameron Blue Ecoburn - along East Fork Hwy near Guide Creek
- Teepee Face Ecoburn - north of East Fork Hwy and northwest of Springer/Bonanza
- West Tolan Ecoburn - east of Sula between Reimel and Tolan Creeks
- Middle East Fork Units - north of East Fork Hwy and west of Guide Creek
- Sula Work Station – administrative site horse pasture and ditches

Prescribed burning operations will only be conducted if conditions are favorable. Favorable conditions include correct parameters for temperature, wind, fuel moisture, and ventilation for smoke. When prescription criteria are met, firefighters implement, monitor, and patrol each burn to ensure it meets forest health and public safety goals.

All prescribed burns will be implemented in compliance with Montana air quality standards and coordinated with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to reduce the impacts of smoke to neighbors, cooperators, and surrounding communities. Smoke may settle in the valley bottoms and drainages overnight, but it is expected to dissipate within a few days.

For public safety, recreationists are asked to be aware of fire crews and vehicles in these areas. The public is also asked to avoid traveling in prescribed burn units while crews are present, as well as trails and roads directly adjacent to the units. Please take caution as roads and trails used as control lines for the burn could be temporarily impacted by low intensity fire and smoke.

For more information about specific burns or to be placed on a pre-burning notification list, please contact your local ranger district. Visit our interactive map with the latest planned areas of prescribed fire treatments <https://arcg.is/OPqzHOO> or the *Discover Bitterroot National Forest* Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF](http://www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF).

- Stevensville Ranger District – 406-777-5461
- Darby/Sula Ranger District – 406-821-3913
- West Fork Ranger District – 406-821-3269
- Forest Supervisor’s Office, Hamilton – 406-363-7100

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