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Subject: News Release: Prescribed Burns Planned for West Fork & Sula Areas
Attachments: Fall RX Fire - South Zone.docx

Prescribed Burns Planned for West Fork & Sula Areas

Hamilton, Montana (September 26, 2017) – The South Zone of the Bitterroot National Forest is planning, weather permitting, to implement fall prescribed burning projects as early as this week. The majority of the burns planned consist of pile burning to reduce residual slash from thinning and timber harvest operations. Fire crews will also be conducting several prescribed burns to reduce forest fuels and restore characteristics of a fire-adapted ecosystem.

All total, fire managers on the West Fork and Darby/Sula Ranger Districts plan to burn approximately 2,000 acres this fall. Smoke from the burns will likely be visible from the West Fork Highway and east of Sula. Treatment areas include:

Darby/Sula Ranger District

- Tepee Face Ecoburn (*prescribed burn*)
- Swift Creek Units, east of Echo Gulch and in Swift Creek (*pile burning*)
- Guide TSI Units – north of Guide Saddle (*pile burning*)

West Fork Ranger District

- Lower West Fork Units north of Lavene and south of Baker Lake Road (*prescribed burn*)
- Upper Nez Units near Watchtower and Flat Creeks (*pile burning*)
- School Point Ecoburn, east of Nelson Creek and east of Halford Creek (*prescribed burn*)
- Lower West Fork Units near Troy and Pierce Creeks (*pile burning*)
- Piquett and One Creek (*pile burning*)

The burns will only be ignited if operational safety, fuel moisture, weather conditions, and air quality parameters can be attained. Fire crews will monitor all burns after ignition to ensure that they stay within prescribed boundaries. All areas will be signed and notifications will be made to local residents.

Low intensity prescribed fires have several objectives including:

- Maintain forest health and ecosystem restoration
- Improve wildlife habitat – many plants respond favorably to fire providing new food sprouts for wildlife.
- Reduce the potential of large, high intensity wildfires by reducing the amount of downed fuel to burn.
- Post-harvest slash treatment – reduce residual slash created by thinning operations and personal use firewood cutting.

Fall prescribed fire activities normally take place between September and November and burning is highly weather dependent. A mosaic pattern of burned and unburned areas will remain after treatments.

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 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.

Fire managers hope to conduct the burning quickly, with limited impacts to recreational users and the general public. For more information or to be placed on a day-of-burning notification list, please contact your local ranger station.

For the latest burn announcements, burn updates, maps, and photos of projects visit us at www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot or www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF and www.twitter.com/BitterrootNF

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