

Prescribed burns planned in forest

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Up to 12,000 acres of national forest system lands in North Idaho could be burned this spring and fall depending on conditions. The Idaho Panhandle National Forests announced it plans to conduct prescribed burning on multiple locations in the coming months. Prescribed burning will be done only when certain weather, fuel moisture and smoke dispersion criteria are met, so the exact timing of burning is unknown.

"These prescribed fires complement local community wildfire protection plans, and provide great benefits to forest health," said Forest Supervisor Mary Farnsworth. "The end result will be reduced wildfire risks for local communities, improved wildlife habitat and a large step toward restoring the forest's resiliency to threats such as uncharacteristic fires, insects and disease."

A complete list of planned prescribed fires including contact information and planned fire locations is available on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests website, [Prescribed fire information](#). Additionally, prescribed fire information will be maintained on a hotline at 1-800-232-FIRE.

"Prescribed fire areas can be dangerous, so we urge members of the public to stay away from these areas during our burning operations and for a few days afterward," Farnsworth said. Forest visitors who encounter active burn areas are advised to travel downslope or away from the predominant path of flames because fire typically burns fastest upslope.

When burn dates or date ranges are forecast, signs will be posted along access roads and near affected trailheads and trail junctions.

Temporary access restrictions or closures may be put in place. "We will minimize the use of closures by closing the smallest areas possible, and for the shortest time period necessary to protect public safety," Farnsworth said.

The forest service cautions that although areas will be monitored and inspected prior to ignition in an attempt to ensure that no members of the public are present, people who frequent these areas must inform themselves and use caution.

A helicopter will be used to ignite many of the areas, and active burning will occur for a period of 2-3 days, with smoldering fire afterward until rains extinguish the fires.

Burn areas can pose very hazardous conditions such as rapid and unpredictable spreading of flames, falling trees, heavy smoke and limited visibility, and rolling rocks and logs.

Prescribed burns, especially those within areas that contain a high volume of vegetation often produce large amounts of smoke. The Idaho Panhandle National Forests is a member of the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group, which monitors and limits the accumulation of smoke from controlled burns through scientific monitoring of weather conditions and formal coordination of burns. People who are sensitive to smoke may want to avoid these areas during burning operations.