



Forest Service
San Juan National Forest
15 Burnett Court
Durango, CO 81301
(970) 247-4874
www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan/

News Release

Prescribed Burn Planned for Beaver Meadows and First Notch Areas

BAYFIELD, Colo., March 15, 2021 –The Columbine Ranger District is planning a prescribed burn this spring in the Beaver Meadows/First Notch areas of the San Juan National Forest 14 to 18 miles east of Bayfield. Burning operations in the area may continue through early May, weather permitting. This planned event will use both ground and aerial ignition methods, while also following the weather and fuel perimeters stated in the prescribed fire plan.

Vallecito-Piedra Unit 1

The VP Unit 1 prescribed fire encompasses a total of approximately 3500 acres between Beaver Creek Road and First Notch Road, north of highway 160 between Bayfield and Pagosa Springs. However, only 1051 acres are planned for spring prescribed fire; the remaining acres are planned for autumn of 2021.

The Vallecito-Piedra prescribed burn may begin in early April, weather permitting. The project may take several weeks to complete.

Reintroduction of prescribed fire is necessary to improve and restore vegetative conditions. The prescribed burns will improve habitat for deer and elk by encouraging re-sprouting of oak and allowing sunlight to stimulate the growth of grasses and forbs. These projects are also designed to improve the health of ponderosa pine stands by reducing competition from Gambel oak, removing ground litter to expose mineral soil for seed germination, and releasing natural minerals and nutrients into the soil. Prescribed fire also reduces the ladder fuels that can carry fire into the canopy, killing mature trees.

Daytime smoke is expected to travel to the north/northeast and to be lofted high into the atmosphere. However, nighttime smoke will travel downslope into the Beaver Creek drainage, the Piedra River, and south to the Pine River just north of Ignacio. Smoke will be heavier in the mornings following burning operations, lifting and clearing out by mid-day, and will be visible from Bayfield, Pagosa Springs, and along the Highway 160 corridor between those two towns.

Prescribed fire smoke may affect your health. For more information see:

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/wood-smoke-and-health>

For more information call 970-884-2512. Visit our Website at: www.fs.usda.gov/sanjuan, or follow the San Juan National Forest on Twitter @SanJuanNF and on Facebook.

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