

Hundreds of Debris Piles Being Burned in Crescent Ranger District

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Firefighters to ignite hundreds of debris piles through Thanksgiving â€œ Caution recommended to drivers and residents for drifting, settling smoke

Deschutes National Forest fire specialists have begun their fall program for burning hundreds of debris piles on the Crescent Ranger District. Oregon Department of Corrections inmate crews previously made many of the piles to reduce woody debris that can feed wildland fires. Heavy equipment formed other piles, following timber harvests. Firefighters trained in the use of prescribed fire will ignite the piles through Thanksgiving as fall precipitation arrives and patrol them for several days to ensure the blazes do not spread.

The piles are spread across hundreds of acres from Highway 97 west to the Cascade Range and from Davis Lake south to within a few miles of Chemult. All of the burns will be located on federal land in Northern Klamath County.

Fire specialists on the Bend/Fort Rock Ranger District will also burn piles along the Cascade Lakes Highway, beginning Friday and continuing through next week. They hope to complete the high country burns while snow covers piles, but has not made it too difficult for firefighters to reach and ignite them.

Smoke might settle onto roads so motorists should reduce speeds and turn on headlights if they encounter smoke anywhere on the national forest. It might also settle in low areas so nearby homeowners should close doors and windows to keep smoke out.

Local, state and federal fire specialists used controlled burns to safely reduce woody debris on about 4,200 acres in the Deschutes National Forest in fiscal year 2006. They treated an additional 18,000 acres on the forest during that time through chainsaw thinning, mechanical mowing and debris pile burning that reduced the need for large controlled burns.

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