

4,000-acre controlled burn slated for Branson-Fossil Creek area

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

PRINEVILLE, Oregon — The Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management in partnership with the National Park Service, John Day Fossil Beds National Monument will be conducting the Branson North controlled burn on approximately 4,000 acres between Branson and Fossil Creek.

Ignition will be between September 4th and October 1, 2007. Fire Specialists indicate the prescribed burn will help improve wildlife habitat, reintroduce the role of fire in rangeland ecosystems, reduce the expansion of invasive juniper woodlands and create a mosaic of ecological conditions. This burn will take advantage of the burned area created by the 2007 Fossil Creek Fire by using a control line along the north perimeter of the fire.

All controlled burns are weather-dependent and completed in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Forestry smoke management plan. Smoke may intermittently impact public land users such as hunters, campers, and hikers recreating in the area. Smoke will likely settle into drainages during nighttime hours when the air cools and forces it downward. This may impact visibility for motorists. Signs will be posted identifying burn areas for residents and motorists and flaggers will be positioned along State Hwy 19 between Kimberly and Dayville. If smoke drifts onto roadways, motorists should reduce speeds and turn on headlights.

Firefighters trained in the use of prescribed fire will ignite the burn and patrol it for several days to ensure it does not cross containment lines.

The lightning-caused Fossil Creek Fire started July 12, 2007, in grass and juniper, which grew to 3,270 acres before it was contained on July 21, 2007. Some of the ecological objectives that were outlined in the Branson burn plan were achieved naturally within the affected portion of the Fossil Creek fire. Fire specialists will be taking advantage of the black line that is in place from the Fossil Creek fire and therefore using fewer fire specialists to staff the controlled prescribed fire with a reduced overall expense.

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