



U.S. Forest Service
Coconino National Forest
1824 S. Thompson Street
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

News Release



Public Information: (928) 527-3600
www.CoconinoNationalForest.us

MEDIA CONTACTS
Brady Smith – Public Affairs Officer
George Jozens – Dep. Public Affairs Officer
Media Only: (928) 224-8306

Unique prescribed burns planned for next week on Coconino NF

Flagstaff, Ariz., Oct. 13, 2017, For Immediate Release — Two prescribed burns are planned next week south of Mormon Lake on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District and also the Flagstaff Ranger District, which will both be used to introduce fire in habitat of the Mexican Spotted Owl.

The 1,200-acre Sawmill project is scheduled to begin Monday at approximately 9:30 a.m. and is located on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District about six miles southeast of Mormon Lake on the east side of Lake Mary Road.

The Roundup Gash project is planned to begin Tuesday evening on the Flagstaff Ranger District approximately six miles south of Mormon Lake on the west side of Lake Mary Road and will eventually cover 2,253 acres in total.

The Sawmill and Roundup Gash prescribed burn projects will treat areas that are listed as Mexican Spotted Owl Protected Activities Centers (PACs). Each burn will be longer in duration and is expected to produce more dense smoke than what is normally produced since the PACs have not seen wildfire in many years and have accumulated large fuel loads in the area.

Typically, fire managers avoid using prescribed fire in PACs in order to preserve habitat. However, the Forest Service has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to study the owls in these PACs, while simultaneously studying owls in different PACs not being treated with prescribed fire. Introducing fire into these areas is also important to help restore the ecological integrity of the area and reduce the risk of severe wildfire in the future.

Given the complexity of introducing fire in PAC areas while at the same time trying to preserve vital habitat, burning will be slower and more methodical. Burn ignitions will last several days, as opposed to being a single-day operation.

Due to the extreme fuel loading in the area of the Roundup Gash project, ignitions will begin in the evening when temperatures are cooler and relative humidity is higher. This will allow fire managers to better control fire activity and provide for safer conditions. However, this means smoke will likely drain down canyons nearby and impact communities such as the Village of Oak Creek during the evening and early morning hours.

Favorable weather and ventilation is forecasted during daytime hours, with winds predicted to transport and disperse smoke toward the northeast.

Prescribed burns are always dependent upon weather and wind conditions, which can differ drastically across the forest. Prescribed burns are also subject to approval from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, so all or some of these burns could be canceled if conditions are not suitable.

MOGOLLON RIM RANGER DISTRICT

Sawmill Project

When: Ignitions for this project begin Monday (Oct. 16) morning at 9:30 a.m. and continue throughout the week. The estimated duration of this project is two to three days.

Where: The burn area is seven miles southeast of Mormon Lake, east of Lake Mary Road, using Forest Roads 638, 124H, 92C, local topography and FR 6045 as boundaries. (34°49'05.6"N, 111°22'32.4"W)

Size: 1,200 acres in total.

Closures/Restrictions: None.

Smoke Impacts: Smoke is predicted to move toward the east/northeast and may impact local communities such as Mormon Lake Village and motorists on Lake Mary Road. Cooling temperatures in the evenings may cause smoke to settle in the Happy Jack area and drain down nearby canyons.

FLAGSTAFF RANGER DISTRICT

Roundup Gash Project

When: Planned ignition will be Tuesday evening at about 5 p.m. and the project is scheduled to last for three days (Oct. 17-19).

Where: Approximately six miles south of Mormon Lake on the west side of Lake Mary Road. (34°50'28.9"N, 111°28'11.7"W)

Size: Approximately 2,253 acres total.

Closures/Restrictions: None.

Smoke Impacts: Smoke is predicted to drain down Rattlesnake Canyon and impact the Village of Oak Creek in the evening and early morning hours. By the each afternoon, smoke is predicted to rise and move toward the east/northeast and will be seen by motorists in the area on Lake Mary Road.

Notifications of upcoming prescribed burns are provided regularly by news releases throughout the season and also by the following online resources:

- Sign up to receive news releases from Coconino NF: www.fs.fed.us/news/subscription.shtml
- Coconino NF's Inciweb page: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/unit/303/> (under Fall 2017 prescribed burns)
- Coconino NF's Twitter account: www.twitter.com/CoconinoNF
- Coconino NF public website: www.coconinonationalforest.us, (Under News and Events)
- Coconino NF's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/coconinonf



Flagstaff Ranger Station: (928) 526-0866
Mogollon Rim Ranger Station: (928) 477-2255
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