



Forest Service News Release

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Prescribed fires planned for the Columbine Ranger District

BAYFIELD, Colo., March 12, 2024—The San Juan National Forest’s Columbine Ranger District is planning to conduct several prescribed burns between late March and early May. Ignitions will take place over several consecutive days and operations may take several weeks to complete. These burn units are part of the larger Vallecito-Piedra and Fosset Gulch/Northern HD’s Integrated Vegetation Management projects aimed at reducing hazardous ground fuels and long-term risk of catastrophic wildfire, as well as restoring ponderosa pine ecosystems, and improving wildlife habitat.

Project areas identified for burn implementation are:

- **Beaver Meadows:** 1100 acres – approximately 10 miles northeast of Bayfield
- **Sauls Creek:** 1600 acres – approximately 2 miles east of Bayfield

The forests in Southwest Colorado are part of a fire-adapted ecosystem, which has historically experienced frequent, low-intensity fires on a large scale. Prescribed fire replicates that fire regime under controlled conditions. Prescribed fires will only be ignited when all weather, fuels, and smoke requirements are met. Burning operations will be conducted by district personnel and other fire resources from the Forest Service and partner agencies, using both ground and aerial ignition.

Daytime smoke is expected to travel to the north/northeast. Nighttime smoke is expected to travel downslope into Beaver Creek, Bear Creek, and the Pine River. Smoke will be heavier in the mornings that follow burning operations, although should clear by mid-day. Smoke will be visible from Durango, Ignacio, Bayfield, Pagosa Springs, as well as the U.S. Highway 160 corridor near those towns. Smoke monitoring will be conducted and ignitions will be scheduled to minimize smoke impacts to communities. **Prescribed fire smoke may affect your health.** [More information can be found online.](#)

Maps of the prescribed burn units and additional San Juan National Forest prescribed fire program news can be found on [InciWeb](#). For more information, please contact District Assistant Fire Management Officer Noah Daniels, by email at noah.daniels@usda.gov.

For information on current conditions and recreation opportunities on the San Juan National Forest, call (970) 247-4874, visit the [forest website](#), or follow us on social media ([Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)).

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