



Flathead National Forest

Media Release

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Paint Emery Prescribed Burn on Flathead National Forest is Successful

The Hungry Horse District of the Flathead National Forest was successful in a 1,500-acre Paint Emery Prescribed Fire last week. The burn was located on the east side of Hungry Horse Reservoir, adjacent to the Great Bear Wilderness in steep, remote and thick vegetation. Many Flathead Valley residents may recall a plume of smoke above Desert Mountain, east of Hungry Horse, that was produced by the burn.

District Ranger Jimmy DeHerrera said, “We used fire as a tool to enhance wildlife and manage whitebark pine, as well as reduce downed fuel accumulations on about 1,500 acres of National Forest System lands. Our fire specialists did an outstanding job with this burn.”

This project stems from a 1999 environmental assessment in which Flathead Common Ground, a diverse collaborative group, provided input to the Forest Service for the Paint Emery Resource Management Project. The burn took place in an area managed for resources other than timber harvest.

Due to the terrain of the project area, it was inaccessible and ineffective to have folks on the ground managing this burn, so aerial ignition was used. A helitorch attached to a helicopter ignited the vegetation as directed from a burn boss located on a nearby ridge top. Less than 20 individuals were assigned to the project, mostly helping with helicopter operations.

This project is one of the largest prescribed burns on the forest in recent history. Plans are for more prescribed fire, with a maximum of 6,000 acres to be treated with fire in this particular area. DeHerrera said, “The cost of managing a prescribed fire is much less than responding to a wildland fire and the associated suppression costs.

According to DeHerrera, the Paint Emery Burn compliments the Hungry Horse-West Glacier Fuels Reduction Project completed earlier in the year. Through these types of projects, the forest is reducing hazardous fuels in urban interface areas, as well as managing for other resource benefits.

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