

**Project Location:**

The White Sulphur Prescribed Burn Project Area is nine non-contiguous treatment areas (County Line, Peach Orchard, Hopkins, Rucker Gap, Meadow Creek Mountain 1, Meadow Creek Mountain 2, North Lick, Lick Mountain, and One Mile Run) within the Anthony Creek fifth-level watershed (nestled in the fourth-level Greenbrier River watershed) in Greenbrier County. The project area is just north of the Blue Bend Developed Recreation Area and can be accessed using State Routes 11 and 21. The city of White Sulphur Springs, WV is approximately nine miles south of the project area, as shown on the maps.

**Background Info:**

The proposed prescribed burn treatment areas are all within Forest Management Prescription 6.1, as designated by the 2006 MNF – Forest Plan. This Prescription is designed to use vegetation management to enhance the variety of wildlife habitat on the Forest. The Fire Regimes and Conditions found in the area represent the best opportunity to use prescribed fire to restore natural habitat structure and stand density, species composition, and disturbance regimes.

One overall goal of the Forest Plan is to use prescribed fire to establish, maintain, control, or restore forest vegetation (e.g. oak regeneration and fire-resilient stands) (FP II-15). An objective for the Forest is to use prescribed fire on 10,000 to 30,000 acres over the next 10 years, partly to maintain, restore or enhance wildlife habitat or other ecosystem components. (FP. II-15)

**Purpose and Need for Action:**

All nine proposed treatment areas are within Forest Management Prescription 6.1, as designated by the 2006 Monongahela National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The management emphasis for this prescription is to enhance the variety of wildlife habitat on the Forest, including restoration and management of fire-adapted oak-pine and oak-hickory communities, to provide for a sustainable production of mast and other plant species that benefit wildlife and active restoration of oak-pine and oak-hickory communities. These communities have been altered from their former extent, composition and structure, primarily due to fire suppression, a disruption in fire cycles, and an increase in shade-tolerant and fire intolerant species such as red maple and white pine.

The desired condition for these areas is a diversity of wildlife habitat with oak-dominated species composition, as well as more open stand structure. Where the pine component is being lost, it is also desirable to maintain and enhance mixed pine-oak stand composition. Age class distribution goals range from maintained wildlife openings to late successional, but the dominate age class should be mid and mid-late successional stands that feature sustainable mast production.

In order to move the project area from the current condition toward the desired condition described above:

There is a need to provide conditions that will favor the oak-hickory and oak-pine communities and provide for more open stand structure while reducing red maple and white pine populations. By providing less understory density, natural ecosystem processes would be restored and maintained by creating open, savannah-like woodlands that are missing from the landscape. Reduced competition from other trees such as red maple would stimulate (encourage) root development and growth of existing, advanced oak regeneration, and reduce the thick understory cover of mountain laurel and rhododendron on the drier slopes.

There is a need to increase wildlife habitat diversity on the Forest by favoring tree species and forest communities that are beneficial to wildlife. Wildlife species like the Indiana Bat, Golden-winged warbler, Wild Turkey, Northern ruffed grouse, Allegheny woodrat, several species of woodpecker as well as numerous species of small mammals prefer the open park like conditions. Wildlife related benefits would come by reducing the vegetation in the understory, thereby creating a grassy, park-like open understory that provides breeding and nesting habitat.

There is a need to improve fire protection within the wildland-urban interface and reduce the threat (risk) of potentially catastrophic wildfires to natural resources, life or private property. By reducing the amount of ladder fuels (understory and midstory), subsequent wildland fire would burn with a lower intensity.

**Proposed Action (What and Where):** Because the proposed treatment areas are located within fire regimes and condition classes that represent excellent opportunities to use prescribed fire to restore oak-pine and oak-hickory communities, I have identified an opportunity to achieve these management objectives through prescribed fire. Prescribed burning would be the method used to accomplish the purpose and need, discussed above.

Fire would favor the development of oak seedlings in the understories of the treated stands. These seedlings would be available to create a new stand of oak trees when a natural or human-caused disturbance removes or reduces the existing overstory. Upon maturing, these new oak trees would help sustain acorn production that otherwise will decline as the existing trees age. Acorns are an important food source for turkey, bear, squirrel, deer, and many smaller non-game species.

The proposed action would be the nine non-contiguous areas totaling approximately 4,429 acres. An estimated nine miles of control line would be created with approximately seven miles created mechanically (tractor with disc, mowing, ATV with rake or plow attachments, bulldozer) and approximately two miles created using hand tools (pulaski, leaf blower, chainsaw, shovel, etc.). The burning, or prescribed fire, would occur in each block, but not all of the burning would be done at the same time, but it would be done over a period of years. The plan is to re-introduce fire into each block on a 5 to 15 year cycle. The first burns would occur over the next 5 to 8 years depending on weather and burn windows.

The majority of control line created mechanically would be on existing trails and roads that may need to be mowed, disced, plowed, or scraped with a bulldozer blade. Use the attached maps to view the approximate locations of the control lines (hand and mechanical) and to see where each of the units is located within the Anthony Creek watershed.

Additional minor components of the project would be to do erosion seeding as needed on parts of firelines, and to plant American chestnut trees in open areas within the burns to develop additional future mast production that is a rare part of the oak-dominated ecosystem of the area. Tree seeds and seedlings are expected to become available that are somewhat resistant to the chestnut blight that reduced this component of the forest. Less than 30 acres of seeding and planting would occur, scattered within the project area.

Burn Area	Approximate Acres	Approximate Miles of Control Line	
		Hand Tools	Mechanical
County Line	435	0	0
Hopkins	955	0.1	1.5
Lick Mountain	405	1.3	0
Meadow Creek Mountain 1	111	0	0.4
Meadow Creek Mountain 2	81	0.1	0.5
North Fork	318	0.3	0
One Mile Run	662	0.2	1.5
Peach Orchard	1,078	0	0.5
Rucker Gap	384	0	2.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,429</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

**Decision to Be Made:** The District Ranger expects to make a decision for this project in September, 2008 on whether to implement the proposed action as described above; to meet the purpose and need through some other combination of activities; or to defer any action at this time.

**Comment Form**  
**White Sulphur Prescribed Burn Project**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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I wish to receive the following documents:

- White Sulphur Prescribed Burn EA (approx. 150-200 pages)
- I prefer to receive these documents on a CD
- Please send me an e-mail when the EA is posted on the Forest web page. (Send your email address, so you will be notified.)