



For immediate release
Monday, April 6, 2009

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BLM Prescribed Fire Projects Planned For Routt County

Routt County – The Bureau of Land Management Little Snake Field Office is set to conduct two spring prescribed burns to improve big game habitat and reduce built up fuel loads. In order to avoid impacting elk during calving season, the burns must be completed prior to April 16.

The 915-acre **Blacktail Prescribed Burn** is a joint effort on Colorado Division of Wildlife and BLM managed lands on the southwest side of Blacktail Mountain directly north of Stagecoach Reservoir. The objective is to burn 40 to 70 percent (366-640 acres) of the mountain shrub and sagebrush within the treatment area, which will leave a mosaic of burned and unburned areas that benefit wildlife. This area is critical winter habitat for elk, and habitat quality has been deteriorating for years due to declining shrub species productivity and increased browsing and grazing pressure brought on by shrinking habitat.

The 660-acre **Elk Mountain** prescribed burn is located on the southern side of Elk Mountain (Sleeping Giant), six miles northwest of Steamboat Springs. The predominant vegetation is sagebrush, mountain shrub with patches of aspen. The goal is to limit fire to 30 to 70 per cent (198-462 acres) of the understory to create mosaic and edge effects which will improve wildlife habitat.

“These projects will aid in reducing accumulated natural fuels and fire hazard on BLM and state lands in the area,” said Dale Beckerman, BLM Fuels Specialist. “Burning also stimulates plant production, and that new is highly beneficial to wildlife.

“Spring is the optimal time to conduct these projects. That’s when there is snow or moist conditions at the highest elevations and on northerly facing slopes to keep the fire in check,” Beckerman said “The required burn plans and permits have been submitted and approved.”

Winter storm conditions could postpone the project until spring 2010.

All prescribed fire plans contain specific criteria regarding weather conditions and air quality that must be met to help ensure adequate smoke dispersal, and minimize the potential smoke impacts to local communities. Smoke will be visible to Routt County residents from both project areas. Most of the smoke will lift and dissipate during the warmest part of the day. Some smoke may linger over the area and in drainages as temperatures drop during the evening.

For additional information, contact Dale Beckerman or Gail Martinez at 970-826-5000, BLM.