



Carson National Forest

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News Release

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Prescribed Pile Burns Planned on Carson National Forest on the Canjilon, El Rito, Tres Piedras, Questa, and Camino Real Districts

TAOS, NEW MEXICO – November 6, 2020 - Fire managers on the Carson National Forest are planning to take advantage of favorable conditions, including fuel moisture levels, air quality, winds, and weather forecasts to implement several prescribed pile burns between Nov. 6 and Dec. 31, 2020.

The planned treatment areas are:

- Canjilon WUI Piles is an 85-acre pile burn located near Canjilon, New Mexico.
- El Rito Canyon Piles is a 238-acre prescribed pile burn, located near El Rito, New Mexico.
- Maquinitas Piles is an 862-acre pile burn, located in the Tusas Valley west of Tres Piedras, New Mexico.
- Deer Trail Piles is a 158-acre pile burn, located in the Tusas Valley west of Tres Piedras, New Mexico.
- Tio Gordito Piles is a 604-acre pile burn, located near Tres Piedras, New Mexico.
- Kiowa San Cristobal WUI includes 404-acres of available piles and is located near San Cristobal; 111 acres were successfully burned in this unit earlier this year.
- La Jara Piles is a 50-acre piles burn, located adjacent to Taos Pines Community near Palo Flechado Pass on Hwy 64.

Smoke may be visible from the surrounding areas during and after ignitions begin.

Prescribed fires are one of the most effective tools available to resource managers for restoring fire-adapted ecosystems. To return the fire-adapted forest to their historic conditions, and thereby mitigate unplanned fire risk to adjacent values at risk, the Forest Service and partners prioritize the use of prescribed fires in concert with mechanical treatments. These fires reduce forest fuels, recycling nutrients and increase habitat diversity. Prescribed fires are managed with firefighter and public safety as the highest priority.

Piles vary in size and are constructed using the slash created from mechanical treatments. Pile burn operations require moisture in the surrounding vegetation and as such typically produce lighter smoke than a prescribed broadcast burn.

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A high priority of these prescribed burns will be to minimize smoke impacts to the surrounding communities by utilizing any available Emissions Reduction Techniques (ERTs). Fire managers will consult with the National Weather Service, New Mexico Environment Dept of Air Quality, and the local Health Departments to assess potential smoke impacts to the adjacent communities in order to minimize degradation of air quality that could exacerbate COVID-19 symptoms.

Prescribed fires have short-term impact to air quality but are always planned in coordination with the New Mexico Environment Department Air Quality Bureau to ensure regulation standards are met. This planning helps to avoid smoke levels that would be considered harmful to smoke sensitive populations. Smoke-sensitive individuals and people with respiratory problems or heart disease are encouraged to take precautionary measures. Information on air quality and protecting your health can be found online at the New Mexico Department of Health's website at <https://nmtracking.org/fire>.

UPDATE: Previously planned Prescribed fires on the Forest including Ensenada (1,243 ac), Canjilon WUI-Mesita (902 acres), Valle Vidal-Ring (4,968 acres), and La Jara (1,200 acres) have not yet been implemented due to recently dry conditions on the forest and national/regional/local fire activity. Fire managers will continue to evaluate conditions to implement these projects through the fall. Updates on these prescribed burns will be provided if favorable conditions are met, however optimal conditions may not be attained until the spring of 2021.

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