

NEWS RELEASE

Pacific Northwest Region - Willamette NF
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Prescribed Burn Planned Near Oakridge to Improve Fire Resiliency

This spring, the Middle Fork Ranger District plans to underburn the recently thinned area that is closest to town (Unit 17), and potentially underburn 150 acres outside of Westfir, along Aufderheide Drive (Forest Service Road 19.) Fire crews will conduct prescribed burns in the area that was recently thinned to clear the ground of the majority of downed tree tops and limbs

The underburn outside of Oakridge is expected to take two days to complete and would cause a temporary closure or delay of a section of High Prairie Road. The underburn outside of Westfir is expected to take several days to complete and also cause a delay on Aufderheide Drive.

“This area has seen wildfires many times before, and eventually will again,” said Jose Mercado, Fire Management Officer for the Middle Fork Ranger District. “The combination of thinning and prescribed fire is the best method to protect the community from an intense and unstoppable crown fire.”

While this project will produce smoke in the area, fire fighters will make every effort to avoid impacting local residents. They will burn carefully - utilizing weather patterns and burn tactics to generate the least amount of smoke possible. Exactly when the prescribed burns occur depends on when weather conditions will allow for a successful operation.

“We want to make sure that everyone in the community is aware of this upcoming project and gets the information they need,” said Mercado. “We are going door-to-door near the area, updating our Facebook, Twitter and website, and putting up signs to make sure everyone understands the goals and gets all their questions answered.”

If you are concerned about the smoke impacts, the best way to be notified of when it will occur is to contact the Middle Fork Ranger District and leave your phone number or email. Since underburns require precise weather conditions, fire managers won't know the exact date until the day of the event.

This project is the result of a team effort between the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Hazeldell Fire Protection District, the Oakridge Fire Department, several interested members of the community and the Middle Fork Ranger District for reducing the risks associated with wildfires in and near Oakridge and Westfir.

For more information or to leave your contact information, contact the Middle Fork Ranger District at 541.782.2283.



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