

Star Valley Front Vegetation Treatment Project

Afton, Wyo. – The Greys River Ranger District of the Bridger-Teton National Forest plans to implement a phase of the Star Valley Front Vegetation Project located east of Star Valley and consists of a 64,612 acre project area with 31,477 acres of proposed burn units extending from Strawberry Creek south to Cottonwood Creek, from the forest boundary to the top of the Salt River Range. The main purpose for treating vegetation in the Star Valley Front Project Area is to begin restoring a balance of age classes in mountain shrub land, mountain big sagebrush, aspen, and conifer communities. The mix of succession stages is currently heavily skewed toward older age classes. Another important purpose is to improve the vigor of vegetation on mule deer and elk winter and transition range, which is particularly relevant given the great interest in deer and elk populations in the Star Valley area.

Burning will start this year in the far northeast corner of the project area in unit # 8 an 11,000 acre unit starting in Strawberry Creek and heading south along the Salt River Range. The initial acres to be treated in Strawberry Creek will be between 2000-3000 acres.

The objectives of the burn are to:

- a) Contribute to a balanced mix of successional stages of major vegetation types.
- b) Reduce the abundance and canopy cover of conifer trees in mountain shrub land, big sagebrush, and aspen types.
- c) Rejuvenate shrubs and aspen trees, especially on mule deer and elk winter range.
- d) Restore fire to its natural role on the landscape.
- e) Reduce fuel loading on the landscape in order to reduce the extent and severity of future wildfire, both for firefighter safety and for resource protection.

This project is expected to be carried out anytime between September 1 and Oct 30. Actual ignition dates will be dependent on meeting strict parameters for weather and fire behavior conditions. The communities of Bedford and Turnerville, as well as Forest visitors camping and recreating in the area, may experience short term smoky conditions in the vicinity of the burn unit during ignition operations. Smoke may linger in valleys during the evening and early morning hours, potentially affecting community residents. Temporary trail and road closures may also occur, if necessary, to provide for public and firefighter safety.

Roads and trails should remain open to the public, however certain areas may be closed for a short period of time if deemed that public and firefighter safety may be impacted during portions of the burn.

This vegetation treatment is an interagency cooperative effort with Wyoming Game & Fish Department and the United States Forest Service.

For more information about this project, contact Greys River Ranger District at 307-886-5300.