

Grouse Mountain Whitebark Pine Restoration Project



Prescribed Fire Treatments on Grouse Mountain 10/4 thru 10/8, 2021

Acres: Burn unit equals a total 365 acres, not all the area within the unit will be treated. Firefighters will focus on burning pockets of conifer within the unit to help improve sunlight reaching the forest floor and allow for new whitebark seedlings to start propagating. See attached map for location of earlier treatments and this year's unit.

Duration: Weather following ignitions will determine the duration of the project. Burn specialists are planning on up to 4 days of ignitions. After ignitions firefighters will remain in the area to work and secure perimeters and keep fire in the area where we want it. The exact length of this phase is much harder to estimate as it will be largely weather dependent. Resources supporting the burn include the local interagency helicopter and 30 wildland firefighters who will remain camping in the area.

Special considerations: Smoke maybe visible from the Moran and Buffalo Valley areas. It is likely the unit will continue to smolder and produce smoke for several days and until snow blankets the area. There are no closures within the project area. Anyone hunting in the unit area is reminded to use caution and stay alert for falling snags and ash pits left from treated trees.

The noble whitebark pine is a keystone species within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and can be found all over the Bridger Teton National Forest at higher elevations. Many species rely on the white bark pine as a food source such as the Grizzly Bear and Clark's Nutcracker. Over the last three decades the whitebark pine has been rapidly declining throughout the northwestern United States due to an infection called Blister Rust and outbreaks of Mountain Pine Beetle, which have been intensified by recent warmer climates. Research scientists and public land managers are taking great care to preserve and protect the remaining whitebark stands by developing techniques to enhance and restore whitebark habitat within the Greater Yellowstone area. This project and treatment with live fire is part of that greater effort to preserve whitebark pine habitat.

The Grouse Mountain Restoration Project is located on the Blackrock Ranger District of the Bridger Teton National Forest and one of the first study areas documenting the effects of various treatments for whitebark pine survival, vigor, and cone production. Through a 15-year implementation phase, scientist continue to investigate the results from treatments applied through silvicultural and prescribed burning treatments, while examining wildland fuels, tree survival and mortality, and understory vegetation. Scientists have placed 10 plots in each unit of the study area, including a control unit where no treatments are implemented. This experiment will measure fuels, trees, and vegetation at several intervals: pre-treatment, post-treatment, 5 years post-treatment, 10-years post treatment, and 15 years-post-treatment.

Scan Code to learn more about fuels projects on the Bridger Teton National Forest or call 307-739-5424

