Old Flames Revisited

Fire in the wildland can be either beneficial or destructive, and sometimes both. It all depends on where, what and how it is burning. Fire is a natural event. The climatic pattern of spring drought followed by summer lightning storms has persisted for thousands of years in the southwest. These summer lightning storms ignited fires that burned unchecked across our landscapes. These fires determined the composition, structure and natural processes, which make up the western forests.

During the 1980's, scientific research was revealing the important role of fire in the environment while drought induced wildfires raged in an unnatural and uncontrolled manner. Data collected during fires, like those that burned in Yellowstone National Park, opened new avenues of research and helped build a knowledge base of predicting extreme fire behavior. We know from experiences with the Buffalo Creek Fire of 1996, the Snaking Fire of 2002 and the Hayman Fire of 2002, that the structure of our forests has changed.

All of the above fires, except Yellowstone, were on the Pike National Forest. We have large concentrations of combustible material (fuel). Historically, frequent low to moderate intensity fires burned throughout both the Continental Divide and Sangre De Cristo mountain ranges. Most of these fires were caused by lightning, extinguished themselves naturally, and reduced the level of combustible forest fuels at regular intervals. Since the early 1900's, fuels have been allowed to build up to levels that can result in major catastrophic fires. If the forest is not allowed to do its "housekeeping" with fire, the inevitable consequence is higher intensity fires that are harder (and sometimes impossible) to control.

Decisions about fire management strategies are based on a multitude of concerns including safety of firefighters and the public, how fire might behave, air quality, vegetation, weather, funding, protection of property, cost efficiency, public sentiment and damage or benefit to the environment. We choose the most appropriate management response, based on the above concerns, when a fire occurs.

Prescribed (RX) Fire on the Pike National Forest

...to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations

Pike & San Isabel National Forests
Cimarron & Comanche National Grasslands

Prescribed (RX) Fire

Fire Management Specialists may prescribe fire to treat the forest in much the same way a doctor prescribes medicine to treat a person. When a doctor prescribes medicine, it is under very specific conditions that the medicine is taken. When a prescribed burn is implemented, it is conducted under very specific parameters, which are identified in a detailed burn plan that was developed as a result of years of planning.

The burn plan provides guidelines for what objectives are desired, when and where to burn, under what conditions to burn, acceptable fire behavior, contingency plans for fire control, smoke management and public concerns. Also identified is the organization which will be involved in the implementation of the burn and each person's role on the burn.

Daily weather conditions play a key role in whether a burn can be accomplished or not. This is one reason why prescribed burns get cancelled and why it is commonly difficult to predict the exact day a burn will be implemented. Fire managers evaluate conditions and forecasted weather to make the best decision as to when to burn.

Planned Prescribed (RX) Fire Events

Pikes Peak RD ***719-636-1602***

- Trout Creek Aprox 300 Acres
  Located 8 miles north of Woodland Park
- Rampart Forest Rd Up to 250 Acres
- Woodland Piles 300 Acres
  Piles will be done in the winter in various locations around the Pikes Peak RD

South Park RD ***719-836-2031***

- Wilson 370 Acres
- Wagon Tongue 900 Acres
- FR 251A Piles 20 Acres
- Messenger Piles 45 Acres
  Piles will be done in the winter, all burns are SW of Lake George.

South Platte RD ***303-275-5610***

- AG Ranch Piles 252 Acres
  Located 5 miles west of Bailey
- Bear Mountain Piles 235 Acres
- 550 Fuel Break Piles 375 Acres
  Located 5 miles south of Buffalo Creek

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#TroutCreekRx

#RampartRx

#PikesPeakRDPiles

#LkGeoRx ~ *For all RX burns in the Lake George area*

#SouthPlatteRDPiles