



Information Sheet

Dixie National Forest

TOPIC: WILDLAND FIRE USE (WFU) (SEPTEMBER 3, 2008)

What is Wildland Fire Use?

Wildland Fire Use (WFU) is one of the appropriate management responses to wildland fire ignition that Forest fire managers use. Each natural ignition (e.g., lightning strike caused fire) during the fire season is evaluated against a number of criteria to determine the appropriate management response. When conditions are right, fire managers can use WFU to accomplish beneficial ecosystem improvements. WFU allows fire to play its natural and historical role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Because other management tools are unavailable in wilderness, WFU is an especially important tool in wilderness areas.

Why does fire help the ecosystem?

Fire contributes to the ecosystem primarily through change. It reduces unhealthy accumulations of organic material, recycles nutrients, alters soil chemistry, and changes plant succession. Historically, fire and other disturbances changed ecosystems to make them more "healthy" over time. Currently many of our forest and rangelands are unhealthy due in part to a lack of fire and accumulation of fuel.

When will WFU be used and not used?

"WFU is an option we will use to restore forest and rangeland health and reduce hazardous fuels," according to Rob MacWhorter, Dixie National Forest, Forest Supervisor. However, "Fires that present unacceptable risks or may threaten public or firefighter safety will be suppressed."

Key Points on WFU

- ? Allows fire to play its more natural role in the ecosystem.
- ? Breaks up continuous vegetation and reduces the potential hazard of future fires.
- ? Improves wildlife habitat and species regeneration.
- ? Returns valuable nutrients to the soil.
- ? Promotes greater public safety by placing firefighting resources on higher priority suppression fires instead of in remote areas.

For more information visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/fireuse/>.

Details of WFU on Dixie National Forest

The **Forsyth Ridge WFU** has been burning for two weeks. It is located in the Pine Valley Wilderness area about 2.5 miles from Pine Valley. It is about 5 acres in size. Over the weekend, the fire made a run into Forsyth Canyon. Smoke is visible from Pine Valley. In congressionally designated wilderness areas, fire is primary tool for managing vegetation. The Forsyth Ridge WFU is burning the dead understory and will likely result in regeneration of some aspen. Additionally, burning small holes in the vegetation will reduce the potential for larger fires in the future.

The **Fife Ridge WFU** has been burning for a couple of days. It is less than an acre in size, but it is expected to make some runs and increase in size in the next several days. It is most visible from the Zion Overlook on Highway 14. It is burning in steep aspen and conifer stands. This area will benefit from reintroduction of fire to the ecosystem. Burning in decadent stands will provide a healthier and younger forest in the area. It will also benefit wildlife and public safety by thinning an unnaturally thick forest. There are currently no closures associated with this WFU, but as the fire grows there may be need to close areas for public and firefighter safety.

The **Straight WFU** has been burning for about a week. The approximately 170 acre fire is burning underneath the Paunsaugant Rim about 400 yards south of the Straight Canyon Trailhead. Over the weekend, the fire received 7/10 of an inch of rain. Despite the rain, the fire continues to burn slowly in the litter and understory of a forest of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and aspen. As the fire area dries out, it is expected that smoke will be visible from this fire again by the weekend. For public and firefighter safety, the Grand View Trail between Mill Hollow and Swapp Canyon (including the Straight Canyon Trail) has been closed. Also, Forest Road 31177 (otherwise known as the Swapp Canyon Road) has been closed as well as the ATV route from Mill Hollow to the Straight Canyon Trailhead.