



WGFD

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News Release

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Prescribed Fire Conducted for Wildlife

Big Piney- Wildlife and Natural Resource managers from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Bridger Teton National Forest and Bureau of Land Management worked together to complete a prescribed fire in the Wyoming Range that will promote aspen and improve habitat for a number of wildlife species. The 2,000 acre burn was conducted in the Maki Creek drainage west of Daniel starting in the fall of 2008 with the final portion being completed June 29-30 of 2009.

“Both the fires conducted last fall and this spring resulted in a nice mosaic pattern of burned and unburned areas that should be great for promoting aspen,” said Jill Miller, Pinedale Habitat Biologist for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. “With the slash piles that had been created a couple years ago, we had the flames necessary to kill conifers and with all the spring moisture this year we should see a great response of young aspen and other plants in the coming years.”

This habitat treatment is part of a larger project to promote aspen all along the Wyoming Range front. “We emphasize aspen because so many different wildlife species depend on it, but there is also a great diversity of grasses, forbs and shrubs that come back after a fire like this.” says Miller. It is estimated that over 200 species of wildlife utilize aspen habitat. It is also estimated that over half of the aspen habitat has been lost across the West, primarily due to fire suppression.

Additional acres are scheduled for treatment in future years as conditions allow. The next prescribed fire is scheduled to take place in the North Cottonwood drainage. Crews are currently cutting trees to create slash piles this summer. Once the slash piles dry and the right weather conditions occur the burning can begin, possibly as early as the spring of 2010.

Miller applauded the work of the many firefighters from the Teton Interagency Fire crews and Bureau of Land Management who contributed to make the Maki project a success. In addition to the agencies, funding for the project was provided by the Governor's Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust Fund, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Governor's Big Game License Coalition. "There are always a number of players necessary to pull off a project like this and it's very gratifying when it all comes to fruition, knowing that the wildlife resource is going to benefit for many years to come."

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