

## **Pike National Forest Hazardous Fuels Reduction Activities For 2003**

*Last Updated March 2003*

The Pike National Forest contains a tremendous amount of dense vegetation and dead or diseased trees that have resulted from the overcrowded vegetative conditions in the forest. That's why we are placing such a tremendous emphasis on both planning for and implementing fuels reduction projects, not only to reduce fuels available to wildland fires, but also to create better habitat for wildlife and to reduce susceptibility to disease and insect infestation.

We have a number of on-the-ground projects that are currently on-going to thin the forest, as well as some large fuels reduction/thinning projects that are now in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) planning process. Currently, this planning process can take some time to complete; however, there are some administration proposals to allow the planning process to be expedited while still maintaining public input/involvement as a key element of the process.

With that said, **some** of the actual on-the-ground thinning/fuels reduction work we have going on now on the forest along the general Colorado Springs to Denver corridor includes:

- Thinning along Russell Ridge, near the north end of Rampart Range Road (160 acres) (Thinning completed, awaiting prescribed burning).
- Thinning near Trumbull (780 acres), (Thinning completed; likely wait a year for fuels to dry to enable burning)
- Thinning (and pile burning) at Spring Creek near Buffalo Creek (110+ acres). (Added thinning & pile burning ongoing)
- In NEPA planning for fuels reduction projects along approx. 76 miles of road to create shaded fuels break along several forest roads. Projects entail thinning of vegetation 100-150 feet on either side of the roads (roughly 3,000 acres total for planning purposes). One particular area is along Rampart Range and Dakan Roads ... designed to help protect urban interface areas like Roxborough, Perry Park, Shamballah, etc. Another area is along Forest Road 550 and a couple smaller roads that would help protect such communities as Buffalo Creek, Pine, some Bailey area subdivisions, etc. Depending on resources and this year's fire season, some on-ground work could start as early as this summer/fall.
- Currently have ongoing a fuels reduction project (roughly 250 acres) in the Top of the World area along Hwy 126 burned by the Buffalo Creek Fire: This entails permittees removing fuelwood (dead trees) created by the Buffalo Creek Fire. We are also "roller-chopping" residual debris left in that area to reduce fuel size and potential fire intensity. Eventually we may consider prescribe burning these reduced fuels.
- We have a variety of other pile and prescription burning projects planned once the proper weather, fuel moisture, smoke dispersal and other conditions exist.
- Two Christmas tree cutting programs, Rampart Range area (cutting area is roughly 5,000 acres) and Buffalo Creek (10,000+ acre cutting area)

Additionally, we have some larger projects either in the NEPA process or in the queue for on-ground work. We hope to implement portions of these projects sometime this calendar year, depending on budget and personnel resources available, as well as, of course, any wildland fires we may experience this next fire season. A couple of these major project areas include:

- The Trout-West Fuels Reduction Project: You can read about this on the Pikes Peak Ranger District (Colo Spgs) web page at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/spl/twest.htm> That project includes approximately 20,000 acres to be treated. It's designed to reduce fuels to the west and northwest of Woodland Park. A draft Environmental Impact Statement has been released (Dec. 2002) for public comment and can be accessed on the web page. The overall original project was approximately 32,000 acres with 25,000 acres to be treated;

however, several thousand acres were burned in the Hayman Fire, so the project size has been adjusted downward from the original.

- Upper South Platte Watershed Restoration Project. This project was originally 17,400 acres; however, the Hayman fire consumed approximately 6,600 acres, leaving about 10,600+ acres. The NEPA process was completed for this and we survived a couple of appeals against the project, but which delayed implementation some. Some of the on-ground work mentioned above includes work for this project. Details, including the 2002 Annual Report on this project, can be seen on the South Platte Ranger District (Morrison) web page at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/psicc/spl/uspwrp.htm>
- The attached map gives an indication of the work we have completed or have had planned on the Pike Forest. It also shows some of the larger fires we've had in recent years, particularly those which impacted our treatment plans. In the past two months we have identified other project areas beyond those on the map and we're now in the midst of a planning and prioritization process for those.

Finally, the Forest Service region HQ located in Lakewood has initiated a Front Range Fuels Reduction Partnership involving both the Pike and Arapahoe-Roosevelt National Forests, state and other entities to identify, help coordinate and prioritize fuels reduction projects that can be implemented over the next several years. We're now in the process of seeking funding and resources that would enable this large scale effort to move forward.

The next few months will be significant in allowing us to identify the amount and locations of the on-ground work we'll be able to complete in the short and long-term. Much will depend on both the financial and personnel resources we have available to complete the various planning and on-ground work. The work that needs to be done on the ongoing Hayman rehab work also is a factor when considering resources available. The rehab work is critical because of the potential impacts of runoff, erosion and flooding as well as the safety concerns associated with hazardous trees and the need to salvage and have dead trees cost-effectively removed through commercial contracts.



Map rmnews2 final.pd