



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEWS RELEASE

FALL PRESCRIBED BURN PLANNED

Jemez Springs, NM – The Valles Caldera Trust will implement a prescribed burn project that will begin Monday September 24th and possibly run through Wednesday September 26th if weather and associated conditions permit. The prescribed burn will be on the Valles Caldera National Preserve, south of NM Highway 4 near mile marker 30. Because of the location and elevation, smoke from the burn will be visible from all directions coming into the Jemez Mountains area.

The burn is the final stage of a project to reduce fire hazard and improve forest health. The area has been thinned and most of the wood by-products were removed or previously burned. This pretreatment will allow safe use of low intensity fire to clean up residual slash and remove ponderosa pine seedlings that sprouted since the thinning.

The parameters for implementing a prescribed burn are based upon specific assessments, agency guidelines and safety protocols. Managers continuously monitor weather conditions during a burn including wind, temperature, and relative humidity. Fuel quantity and moisture are also measured.

Smoke will be visible and is expected to have variable effects on neighboring communities including Ponderosa, La Cueva, Sierra Los Pinos, Jemez Pueblo and areas near NM Hwy 4. Communities along US Highway 550 including San Ysidro, Zia Pueblo, Bernalillo and Rio Rancho may also be affected. The project will not begin unless all conditions support the burn and associated resources are available.

The pretreatment of the forest substantially reduced the amount of fuel in the project area and lessened the associated production of smoke. However, smoke from any prescribed fire can be a nuisance to some people. It may be a health concern for children, pregnant women, senior citizens, and those suffering from allergies, asthma, chemical sensitivities, or other heart or lung diseases. To reduce exposure to smoke, stay indoors as much as possible with windows, doors and vents closed. Avoid or limit physical activities outdoors.

In the evenings, smoke settles into low lying areas, including drainages and lifts by mid-morning when the sun rises. Residents living in such low-lying areas may be most affected. Information on health impacts from smoke can be found by calling the New Mexico Department of Health at 1-888-878-8992, or visit:

http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/documents/Health_Effects_Smoke_06152010.pdf

The Valles Caldera Trust oversees the Valles Caldera National Preserve, formerly the privately owned "Baca Ranch." The 89,000 acre property is located in the Jemez Mountains in northern New Mexico. It was purchased by the federal government in 2000 under the Valles Caldera National Preservation Act. The property is known for its huge meadows, abundant wildlife, meandering streams and remarkable scenery. More information about the Preserve can be found at www.vallescaldera.gov.

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