



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Intermountain Region

Bandelier National Monument
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Intermountain Region News Release

Prescribed Fire Planned for Bandelier National Monument

LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO: Bandelier National Monument Superintendent Darlene Koontz has announced that a prescribed fire is planned for this fall in the northern portion of the monument. The 377-acre Upper Frijoles (Unit 9) Burn Unit is located along State Road 4 near the head of Frijoles Canyon. The prescribed fire is planned for sometime between mid-October and December. The public will be notified, as much in advance as possible, when the burn will occur. This management-ignited prescribed fire is intended to achieve specific goals to decrease the risks from wildfire to the monument and surrounding lands. "Firefighter and public safety is the number one priority when conducting any fire management operation in Bandelier," said Koontz.

"After the Cerro Grande fire in 2000, everyone is asking us why we need to burn in Bandelier," stated Koontz. "The answer is that we have a responsibility as a land management agency to reduce our fuels and provide buffers to our neighbors. We have too much fuel in many hard-to-reach canyons. We cannot let these canyons become pathways for wildfires to travel into surrounding communities. We know that this is an issue that must be addressed collaboratively and with the full support of the community."

Since the Cerro Grand Fire, federal fire management agencies have taken a number of steps to prevent fires of this nature in the future. These steps include: improving interagency coordination and cooperation; identifying and having contingency resources available; conducting a peer review of all prescribed fire plans (also referred to as burn plans); improving the risk analysis process; reducing fire danger in the wildland-urban interface; and working directly with affected communities.

Bandelier has developed a comprehensive burn plan that has been approved by officials at the National Park Service. The burn plan has been reviewed by other local land management agencies. This plan addresses all the necessary components of the proposed prescribed fire including, but not limited to: visitor and firefighter safety, smoke impacts, number of firefighting resources needed, contingency plans and weather conditions under which the prescribed fire can be initiated. In addition, Bandelier's fire program is based on the most up-to-date scientific research and monitoring. The program also considers past and present human disturbances and effects on the environment.

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Prescribed fire is one of many fuel treatments used by Bandelier to reverse changes brought on by fire exclusion (suppression) and other activities that occurred prior to the monument's establishment, including grazing and logging. These past activities have contributed to increased fuel loadings and changes in vegetation structure in Bandelier. Mechanical thinning (the use of hand tools and mechanical equipment) is one of the fuel treatments used to thin areas in which prescribed fire may not be effective. The fuels removed by mechanical thinning are placed into piles and burned under favorable weather conditions. Although mechanical thinning is an important tool in fuel reduction, it does not provide the natural benefits to the forest that occur as a result of prescribed fire. Prescribed fire benefits include a reduction in fuel loadings, rejuvenation of fire-dependent/-adapted species (such as aspen), thinning of dense mixed-conifer stands and decreased risks from wildfires.

This fall's prescribed fire will be conducted under the guidelines of Bandelier's recently completed Fire Management Plan (2005). Several prescribed fires planned over the next few years will also be completed under the 2005 Fire Management Plan. The monument works very closely with other local land management agencies in the planning and management of these prescribed fires. The policy of using fire as a management tool will help decrease risks to life and property and help perpetuate the resource values for which Bandelier National Monument was established.

For more information regarding Bandelier's plans for a prescribed fire this fall -- or for information regarding other fire management projects at Bandelier -- call 505-662-7065 or email band_fire_comments@nps.gov.

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Notes to Editors:

- (1) In addition to contacting Bandelier's Superintendent or Bandelier's Fire Management Officer, for additional background information, you may also contact David Eaker, Fire Information Officer, at (505) 662-7065.
- (2) Attached is a PDF file containing a map that shows the location of the area scheduled for prescribed fire treatment.
- (3) Attached is a JPG file containing an image of Bandelier fire staff surveying fuel loads in Unit 9 during the planning phase of the project.

Media Advisory

Bandelier National Monument will conduct a media tour of the Upper Frijoles Burn Unit on Tuesday, September 20, from 9 a.m. to approximately 11 a.m. The tour will begin at the Cerro Grande Route parking area located on New Mexico State Road 4 and across from Bandelier's cross-country ski trailhead. Please RSVP to David Eaker at 505-662-7065.

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