



Bishop Creek Prescribed Fire – Begins October 24, 2011

Ignition of Rail Creek, Segment A, of the 5,224 acre Bishop Creek prescribed fire unit is beginning today, Monday, October 24, 2011. Segment A is 1,400 acres and one of five segments within the unit. Ignitions will begin today and tomorrow and it is estimated it four to five days to complete the project. The project will start with firing operations at the top of the unit near Badger Pass ski area and progress towards Wawona Road.

The primary objective of the burn is to protect the Wildland Urban Interface communities of Yosemite West, Wawona and El Portal, and the Glacier Point Historical District from unwanted wildfire by reducing the over accumulation of fuels. The start of the project will begin with a blackline firing operation at the top of the unit near Badger Pass ski area.

The project will build off the recent 1,068 acre Avalanche Fire, other prescribed fires and mechanical thinning treatments in Yosemite's suppression and wilderness fire management units. The Bishop Creek project is directly adjacent and east of the Wawona Road, and the Avalanche fire to the north. The unit is bisected by the east-west oriented drainages of Rail, Strawberry and Bishop Creeks with primarily west facing aspects.

Vegetation consists of long needle ponderosa pine and mixed conifer on the lower slopes, and short needle white and red fir mixed conifer further upslope. Pockets of chinquapin, whitethorn, manzanita and bear clover are also present. There is an accumulation of other dead and down vegetation, including logs, limbs, and other surface fuels.

Since 1930, there have been over 50 suppressed lightning ignitions within the project area. In 1981, there was a 2,100 acre prescribed fire. In 1997 a 100' to 200' wide mechanical thinning project occurred along the Wawona Road (Hwy 41). Prescribed fuel treatments occurred near the community of Yosemite West in 2005 and 2007. Between 1910 and 1926, the area was logged for prized Sugar Pine trees.

Most of the proposed project is within designated wilderness. In accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964, Minimum Impact Management Techniques will be employed to preserve the wilderness integrity. A resource advisor will be assigned to the project to advise on cultural and natural resources. The fall season is the preferred implementation period for this project. Fall benefits include fewer impacts to all wildlife, and more complete ground and surface fuel consumption and less resource damage due to post fire mop-up efforts. In all cases, mitigations will be taken to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources.

Smoke, which can affect health, is always a factor in the decision making process to conduct this and other prescribed fire projects. A smoke management plan has been submitted to the Mariposa County Air Pollution Control District (APCD), and a burn plan has been issued. The Tuolumne County, the San Joaquin and Great Basin APCDs have been advised of this project. Smoke monitors have been deployed in smoke sensitive areas.

Wawona Road will remain open; however traffic control may be necessary as operations commence along the road. Please use caution when driving in the area as fire fighters, equipment, smoke, and debris (rocks, logs, etc.) may be present on the roadway.

Additional Information:

- Fire Information for the Bishop Creek Prescribed Fire: Mark_Grupe@nps.gov (209) 375-9574
- Yosemite Fire Information and Education: Gary_Wuchner@nps.gov; (209) 375-9574 or (209) 372-0480.
- Yosemite Fire Management Website: http://www.nps.gov/yose/parkmgmt/current_fire.htm
- Air Quality: <http://www.nps.gov/yose/naturescience/airmonitoring.htm>
- Yosemite NP WEBCAMS: <http://www.nps.gov/yose/photosmultimedia/webcams.htm>
- Twitter: <http://twitter.com/YosemiteFire>,
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Yosemite-Wildland-Fire/124632964255395>