

1,500-acre controlled burn is planned near Three Rivers

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A plan to conduct a controlled burn on 1,500 acres of overgrown grassland near Three Rivers could be approved Thursday by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

If the district gives the green light, burning for the "vegetation management project" in Grouse Valley would begin about 9 a.m. Tuesday.

Despite the size of the area — six miles southwest of Three Rivers — the plan is to burn all the acreage by 5 p.m., said Larry Pendarvis, fire prevention specialist for CAL FIRE.

Fire officials want to burn heavy grass and shrubs that could fuel a major wildfire that might threaten Three Rivers. In addition, Pendarvis said, burning off the brush would make the land more accessible for grazing cattle and other wildlife as well as allow more water to be absorbed into the water table.

About 220 firefighters and firefighting equipment — including a pair of helicopters and two airplanes that can drop flame-retardant chemicals — will be on hand or on call to prevent the controlled burn from getting out of control, he said.