

Burning begins in the Giant Sequoia National Monument

Porterville Recorder, Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2013

SPRINGVILLE - Sequoia National Forest personnel are planning to begin prescribed burning in the Western Divide Ranger District, Giant Sequoia National Monument. Burning could start as early as the week of November 4. As soon as weather and smoke conditions are favorable for burning, fire crews are prepared to conduct the burns. As weather conditions and smoke dispersal allows, burning will continue through the winter and into spring.

The areas that fire management staff has targeted burning are near the communities of Ponderosa at an elevation of 7,500 feet and Sugar Loaf Village at an elevation of 5,000 feet. There are approximately 800 acres of hand piles of small limbs, brush, and trees that were created from a hazardous fuels reduction projects. The material removed posed a safety hazard to communities and forest visitors.

When the burning is completed, the piles themselves may not be entirely consumed in the fire. Typically, there are remnants of the pile left to protect the soil from erosion, and promote growth of new vegetation. Some piles will be intentionally left unburned to benefit wildlife.

Smoke from the prescribed burning operations will be visible in these communities. Forest personnel will be working closely with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to manage smoke production and reduce any local impacts.

Wildfire smoke a far-reaching health risk

Los Angeles Times staff reports

In the S.F. Chronicle, Wed., Oct. 30, 2013

Los Angeles -- Wildfire smoke poses a growing health risk to millions of Americans, even for those who live hundreds of miles from the flames, a new report by an environmental group says.

About two-thirds of Americans, or nearly 212 million people, lived in counties that two years ago contended with wildfire smoke linked to respiratory problems such as asthma, pneumonia and chronic lung diseases, according to a report released by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The group used satellite imagery of smoke plumes from the 2011 wildfire season - one of the worst in recent years - to take a nationwide snapshot of air quality. The analysis found that the extent of the country affected by wildfire smoke was 50 times greater than the area burned in the fires.

Some of the most harmful components of wildfire smoke are fine particles, which can lodge deep in the lungs and lead to a host of respiratory and cardiovascular problems. Particularly vulnerable are children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with heart disease and other conditions.

In one study cited in the report, UC Irvine researchers found that Southern California's 2003 wildfire season resulted in 69 premature deaths, 778 hospitalizations, 1,431 emergency room visits and 47,605 outpatient visits.

[Letter to the Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Oct. 31, 2013:](#)

We can combat Valley's poor air

The American Lung Association in California thanks Robert Price for raising the issue of local actions to clean up the air ("Our fatalistic acceptance of horrible air," Oct. 27). Our State of the Air 2013 report found Bakersfield to be the American city most polluted by particulates and the third most polluted by ozone. Along with the vitally important transition to cleaner vehicles, including battery electric and hydrogen-fueled models, we need to support the many public and private efforts underway to bring cleaner fuels to market if we are to have real choices.

One important way to reduce our dependence on dirty fuels at the local level is to engage in the Kern Council of Governments' ongoing effort to plan ahead for the transportation and housing needs of the county's growing population. Urban and community planning directly impacts how much and how far we have to drive, how much oil we use and how much pollution we put into the air. This process should focus first on revitalizing downtowns and investing in walkable communities served by transit, biking and

pedestrian travel options. Continuing to build single-family homes on the outskirts of towns and beyond also limits consumer choices, and separates people from jobs, shopping, schools and other daily needs so that even the shortest trips require car travel. With this planning process, we have a real opportunity to back away from the "fatalistic acceptance of horrible air" and envision a healthier, clean air future.

*Heather Dumais
American Lung Association
Fresno*