



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Jewel Cave
National Monument

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Jewel Cave National Monument News Release

Release Date: **September 10, 2010**

For Immediate Release

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Jewel Cave National Monument Plans Prescribed Fire

Custer, SD – Jewel Cave National Monument is planning to conduct a prescribed fire within its boundaries for mid-late September, depending on weather conditions. The burn is slated for the southern side of Lithograph Canyon, heading north toward Highway 16, turning west toward the Monument's entrance. The size of the fire is 145 acres and consists mainly of ponderosa pines and open meadows within the burned landscape of the Jasper Fire of 2000.

The prescribed fire is focused on three main goals. First, the fire is being used as a management tool in order to thin pole-sized ponderosa pines. This improves the overall forest health and strengthens the forest against mountain pine beetle infestation. Second, the activity is geared toward reducing the amount of accumulated ground vegetation that contributes to fuel buildup on the forested landscape. Third, the plan calls for a successful burn operation to cover 80 percent of the project area. Superintendent Larry Johnson states, "Prescribed fires are valuable tools in resource management. The process mimics natural forces that were historically present and thins areas for a healthier forest ecosystem."

Travelers and commuters on U.S. Hwy 16, approximately 13 miles west of Custer and 22 miles east of Newcastle, Wyoming should use caution on the days this project is underway. Smoke may cross the roadway, creating visibility issues. Smoke impacts on US Hwy 16 and near the Monument entrance will be monitored by fire personnel and action taken to assure public safety throughout the burn.

The Roof Trail and Canyons Trail within the Monument will be closed to the public during the prescribed fire. Interested hikers and user groups may wish to contact the visitor center for specific guidance and additional information. Scheduled cave tours will take place at normal times, and visitors are still encouraged to make advanced reservations. Johnson further comments, "Visitors wishing to experience an interpretive cave tour are still welcome to make reservations; however, we recommend all visitors for the next two weeks to plan additional travel time to the Monument."

For more information, contact the Monument at 605-673-8300 and select Option 2 or visit www.nps.gov/jeca. The Monument is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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