

# TUNNEL HILL PILE BURNING

The U.S. Forest Service plans to burn hand-piled slash on Tunnel Hill as weather allows beginning the **week of Nov. 4, 2013**, and continuing until too much snow accumulates to allow efficient and safe operations.

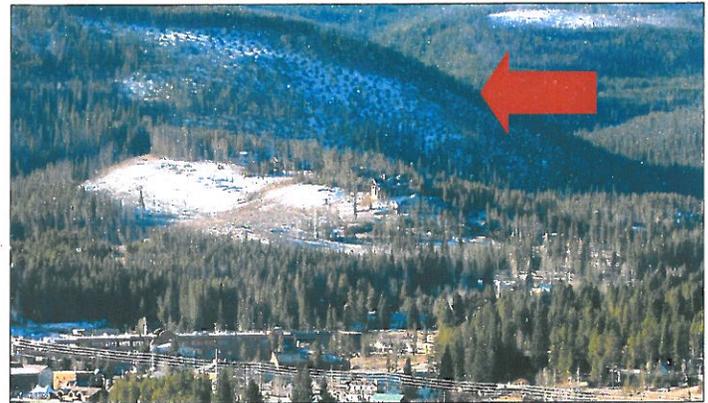
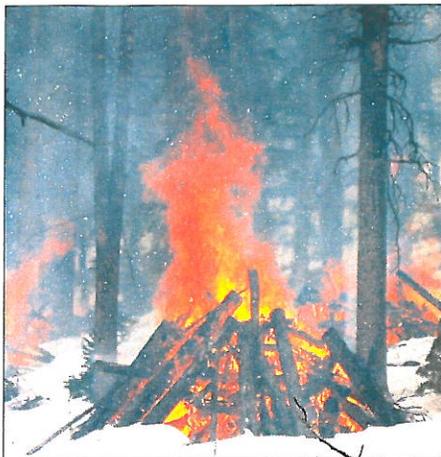
## What you need to know:

- ◆ Pile burning will be conducted by a team of U.S. Forest Service firefighters. **Firefighter and public safety will be the first priority.**
- ◆ Burning will occur when there is minimum of **3 inches of snow** on the ground in that area and when predicted atmospheric conditions are ideal for smoke dispersal.
- ◆ Due to the prominence of Tunnel Hill, **flames and heavy smoke could be visible on burn days.** Forest Service personnel will closely monitor air quality and the burn area perimeter.
- ◆ Residents of the Fraser Valley may be impacted by smoke, especially in the evening and early morning. **Smoke sensitive residents will need to plan accordingly on burn days.**
- ◆ The U.S. Forest Service has installed three particulate monitors in strategic locations around the Fraser Valley and will review results daily. Burning operations will be adaptive to maintain air quality standards set by the EPA.

◆ **An area safety closure will be in effect** on Tunnel Hill from the National Forest boundary outside Winter Park to the ski area boundary, including roads and trails east of Vasquez Road to the railroad tracks. User-created routes that enter the forest from private lands in this area may not

be signed but violators could be prosecuted for entering the closure area. This closure will remain in place until burning is complete.

**(See map on reverse side of this flier.)**



Tunnel Hill is located on U.S. Highway 40 between the Town of Winter Park and Winter Park Resort.

Sign up for email notifications:

SRDupdates@fs.fed.us

Get the daily pile burning report:

Call 970-887-4116



[www.fs.usda.gov/arp](http://www.fs.usda.gov/arp)

## About the project:

The 400-acre Tunnel Hill Fuels Reduction Project is creating a critical fuels break, protecting infrastructure and reducing the potential impact of wildfire on communities and watersheds. Funded in large part by Denver Water's Forest to Faucets program, the project reduced thick stands of lodgepole pine growing on the hillsides between Winter Park's residential and business communities and the ski area. Due to steep terrain, the wood could not be removed, creating an estimated 20,000 piles. The fuels reduction project is not complete until the piles are burned.

To reduce the number of days that local communities are impacted by smoke from pile burning on Tunnel Hill, the U.S. Forest Service has obtained a non-traditional smoke permit from the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division. Through this pilot program U.S. Forest Service plans to burn between 1,000-4,000 piles per day on Tunnel Hill.

Under a traditional smoke permit, the state would limit pile burning on excellent smoke dispersal days to 250 piles. At that rate it would take many years for the Forest Service to complete the project. By working closely with state air quality regulators, the Forest Service hopes to burn more than half of the piles on Tunnel Hill in just 7 to 10 burn days this year.



## Tunnel Hill Q&A

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### **How many piles are there?**

There are 20,000 piles on 416 acres. Our goal is to burn a little more than half of the piles this year.

### **Why were the piles created?**

The project is creating a critical fuels break, protecting infrastructure and reducing the potential impact of wildfire on watersheds and communities.

### **Did the public have an opportunity to comment?**

Environmental analysis, including public scoping, a separate comment period and an objection period were provided. No objections were received. Prior to implementing this project, the communities of Winter Park and Fraser were approached for input and support. Both towns informed their communities on the benefits of this project, and the town boards resolved to support the work so long as the pile burning was made a top priority. Burning piled material in close proximity to communities is also a top priority of the forest.

### **Why couldn't the timber be used/purchased by the wood products industry?**

We worked hard to find a solution that would allow us to remove the timber, however, due to the steep terrain, all other options such as cable logging and helicopter logging were cost prohibitive.

### **Why can't you burn all the piles?**

A brief window of adequate weather conditions (just enough snow and not too much; good smoke dispersal conditions such as wind), proximity to communities and the ski area, and limits from the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division as to how many piles can be burned on good and excellent smoke dispersal days limit our ability to burn piles efficiently.

### **Is there any way to get these piles burned more quickly?**

To increase our effectiveness in pile burning and reduce the number of days that the community will be impacted by smoke from this burn, the U.S. Forest Service is working with the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division to improve our smoke management techniques. Under the state's normal smoke permit restrictions, the district would only be allowed to burn 250 piles on an "excellent" air quality day, requiring more than 80 "excellent" days (or many years) to complete the burning. Under this pilot project, the district hopes to burn about 1,000-4,000 piles a day, possibly completing burning on more than half the acreage in 7-10 days.

### **Is there any comparison to how much smoke we will experience?**

In 2010, the Church Park wildfire burned 500 acres in a single day in uncontrolled conditions. In 2013, Tunnel Hill will involve burning piled materials on some 300 acres over the course of many more days in a controlled environment and under ideal conditions (including snow cover and good air quality).

**How will you prevent the prescribed fire from escaping?**

Burning will not take place until there is a minimum of 3 inches of snow cover to reduce the risk of escape. Because some piles are located less than a mile from private residences and developed recreation areas, monitoring and patrolling of the burn area perimeter will be extended.

**We see trees catching on fire. Is the burn out of control?**

Due to the density of piles and standing trees, single tree torching will occur. There will be residual reddening and scorching of standing trees located near piles due to heat.

**Can we still recreate in the area?**

The immediate Tunnel Hill area, including roads, trails and the general forest area east of Little Vasquez Road, will be under an official forest closure during burning periods. Entry into the closure area will be prohibited except for certain administrative uses when conditions allow.

**Will we be impacted by the smoke?**

Flames and heavy smoke may be visible from a distance. Communities could be impacted by settling smoke, especially in the evening and early morning.

**How will you know if the amount of smoke in town is harmful?**

Air quality monitoring will take place through three particulate monitors strategically located along the U.S. Highway 40 corridor as well as visual monitoring by the burn boss to assess wind direction, lift, dispersal and overall visibility. Results from visual and particulate monitoring will be reviewed after each burn day and operations will be adaptive depending on results.

**I am allergic to smoke/have asthma/am smoke sensitive. What should I do?**

Smoke sensitive residents should consult their doctors and will need to plan accordingly on burn days. Smoke sensitive residents can sign up to receive email updates by emailing [SRDupdates@fs.fed.us](mailto:SRDupdates@fs.fed.us).

**How do I find out when burning will occur?**

Anyone interested in receiving updates about Tunnel Hill pile burning before, during and following the burning can sign up by emailing [SRDupdates@fs.fed.us](mailto:SRDupdates@fs.fed.us) subject line Tunnel Hill. A recorded message will be available at 887-4116. Please direct any concerns about this burn plan, smoke or air quality to Reid Armstrong at 970-887-4145

**What will the area look like after the burn?**

Burn scars associated with the piles may be visible for several years until the understory vegetation recovers. Large material greater than 7 inches will remain scattered across the forest floor.