

Fall 2019 Ferris and Seminole Mountains Habitat Work Updates

Seminole and Bennett Mountain Ranges

Vegetation treatments have occurred since the 2007 Seminole Fire in the Bennett Mountains, which was briefly managed for resource benefit before being fully suppressed. Large-scale prescribed fire was introduced into the Seminole Mountains on the south side of the Marking Pen Creek drainage in spring of 2011 and again in spring of 2012. The July 2012 Seminole Wildfire burned the northeast corner of the mountain range above Miracle Mile and Kortez Reservoir. This fire was managed under a full suppression strategy. Prescribed fire followed in spring 2013 to clean up a portion of the wildfire area above the Morgan Creek drainage. A guzzler was installed above the Bennett Mountains wildfire in 2011, and two guzzlers damaged by the 2012 wildfire were repaired in 2013 above Seminole Dam. During 2013, 2014, and 2017, mostly south and east facing slopes affected by and adjacent to fire activity have been treated for cheatgrass by aerial application of plateau herbicide.

Future planned actions include the replacement of both guzzlers above Seminole Dam with new, more efficient designs. Fuel breaks have been prepared to aid in holding the Indian Pass prescribed fire, which is planned to complete the remaining south half of the Marking Pen Creek drainage and south slopes of the Seminole Mountains above Hurt Creek, tentatively planned for spring and fall 2020. Mechanical cutting treatments are planned for the Morgan Creek Drainage to remove conifers from aspen stands and upland mountain shrub communities. These treatments will improve bighorn sheep, mule deer, and elk habitat, and also aid in mitigation of wildfire risk to deeded inholdings and structures (wildland urban interface or WUI) within the drainage.

Ferris Mountain Range

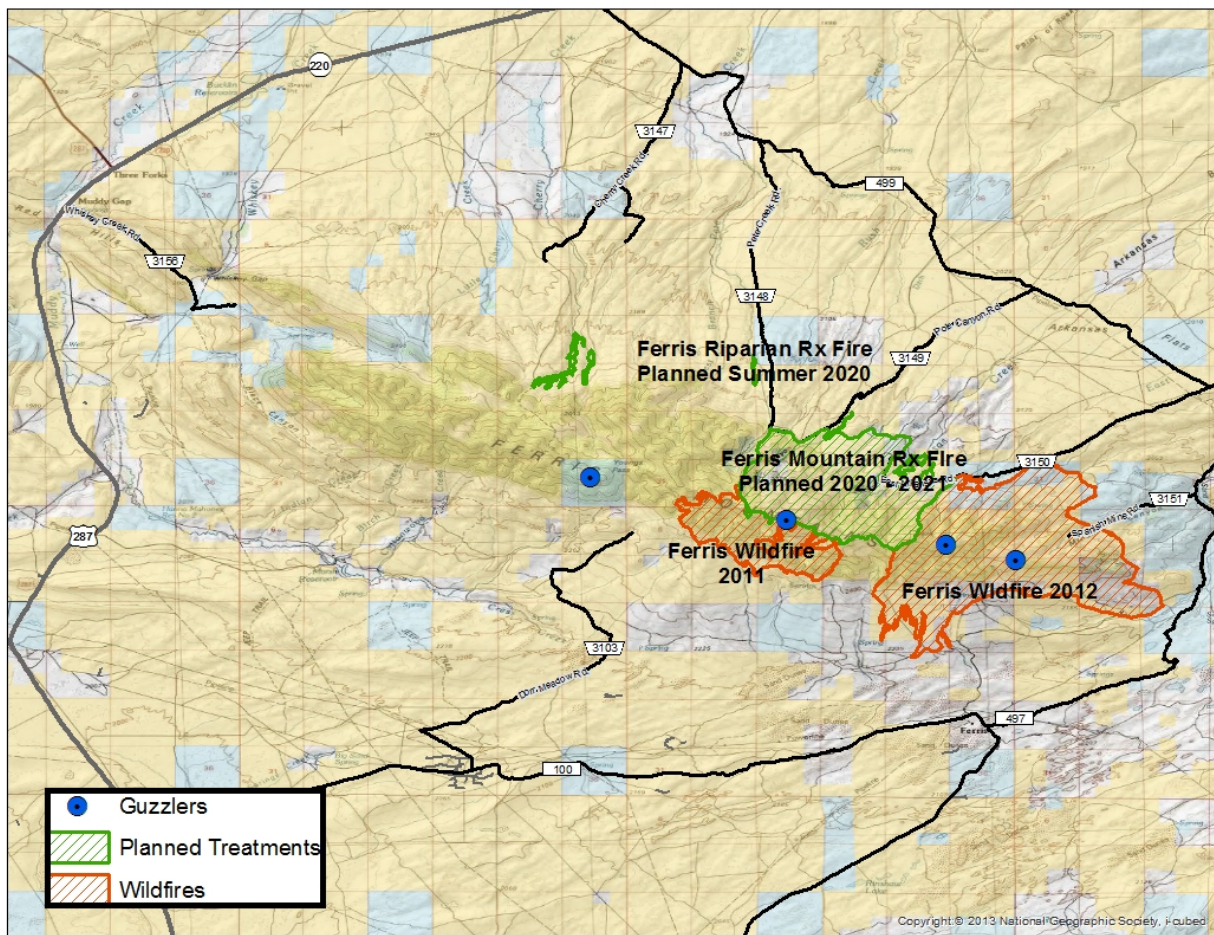
Vegetation treatments have been slower to develop in the Ferris Mountain range due to additional and different resource concerns. To offset this, extremely valuable habitat developments and improvements such as 4 new wildlife guzzlers installed on the mountain and significant wildfire activity have improved habitat conditions for bighorn sheep, mule deer, and elk on the mountain. In fall 2011 a managed wildfire on the south side of the mountain was allowed to burn until extinguished by fall weather. The 2012 Ferris wildfire during the height of a historic drought was managed under a full suppression strategy. Between the two, much of the eastern quarter of the range was treated. Four wildlife guzzlers were installed to provide water sources on the spine of the mountain range. Several riparian drainages on the north side of the mountain were prepared for broadcast burning by "slashing" conifers to create a fuel bed. In 2013, 2014, and 2016 south and east facing slopes were treated for cheatgrass associated with fire activities.

Planned management actions center on treating additional acreage through broadcast burning on the mountain itself and at its base. The riparian drainages prepared by cutting are planned to be treated with early summer prescribed fire. Working into the wind from the 2012 wildfire area, between 3,000 and 5,000 acres of timbered slopes will be targeted with prescribed fire in a late fall application. The planned prescribed fire activities are currently being analyzed for approval under an Environmental Assessment.

Both Ferris and Seminole mountain ranges are the subject of intense habitat and vegetation monitoring to ensure that current conditions and planned actions are beneficial to the multiple uses in the area.

Partners in all of the treatments, improvements, and habitat work on both mountain ranges include the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI Bureau of Reclamation, deeded landowners and grazing permittees (ID Ranch, Ferris Mountain Ranch, Pathfinder Ranch, Stone Ranch), United States Forest Service, Rawlins Fire Department, Carbon County Fire Department, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Wyoming Muley Fanatics, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, Mule Deer Foundation, Carbon County Weed and Pest, Saratoga Encampment Rawlins Conservation District, Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative, Wyoming State Forestry and State Land Board, and of course, key resources including funding, time, and labor from Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation and its dedicated members. Thank You!





Ferris Mountain Range