

DLA - U.S. Forest Service Information and Update on Prescribed Burn

Deer Lake Board <krys.rodriguez13@gmail.com>

Tue 2/14/2023 7:24 PM

To: glynt@hotmail.com <glynt@hotmail.com>

Good Evening Deer Lake Members,

Enclosed in this email is the [U.S. Forest Service Prescribed Burn](#) packet that was distributed to the public at last Thursdays Community Meeting regarding the prescribed burn around Deer Lake. It is being provided for your information and awareness.

Further, the prescribed burn was scheduled to start tomorrow, Wednesday, February 15, 2020. However the DLA Board received the following email from Mr. Patrick Petracca, District Ranger at the Cuba Ranger District Office informing us of a delay due to the current storm. See below.

Good Morning,

Due to recent heavy snows, the Deer Lake pile burn on the Cuba Ranger District of the Santa Fe National Forest has been postponed. Next likely target date for ignitions is Tuesday, February 21st, 2023.

While snow is necessary for successful burning of debris piles, too much snow creates dangerous working conditions for our staff. The current storm has brought another 12 inches with more to come in the next 48 hours. This will create waist-depth snow around the piles creating unacceptable risk of unsafe footing and employee exhaustion. The added snow on top of the piles will also reduce the effectiveness of the burn.

We will keep everyone apprised of a new ignition plan as conditions change in the burn unit.

Feel free to reach back to me with any questions.

Have a safe day.

Patrick

The DLA Board will continue to share information with the association members as we receive it. If there are any questions related to this information feel free to contact the board or the Cuba District Office directly. Mr. Petracca's telephone number is 575-289-3264 and his email is patrick.petracca@usda.gov.

Thank You,
Krystal Rodriguez
Secretary/Treasurer

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Community Meeting

Cuba Ranger District

February 9th, 2023

Discussion Topics:

- What is prescribed fire?
- What are the risks and benefits?
- Planned prescribed burning in the Cuba area for 2023.
- Question and answer period.

Prescribed fire is a planned fire used to meet management objectives.

Did you know fire can be good for people and the land? After many years of fire exclusion, an ecosystem that needs periodic fire becomes unhealthy. Trees are stressed by overcrowding; fire-dependent species disappear; and flammable fuels build up and become hazardous. The right fire at the right place at the right time:

- Reduces hazardous fuels, protecting human communities from extreme fires;
- Minimizes the spread of pest insects and disease;
- Removes unwanted species that threaten species native to an ecosystem;
- Provides forage for game;
- Improves habitat for threatened and endangered species;
- Recycles nutrients back to the soil; and
- Promotes the growth of trees, wildflowers, and other plants;

The Forest Service manages prescribed fires and even some wildfires to benefit natural resources and reduce the risk of unwanted wildfires in the future. The agency also uses hand tools and machines to thin overgrown sites in preparation for the eventual return of fire.

Cons of Prescribed Burning

The following are common arguments against prescribed burning. However, prescribed burns work to reduce or eliminate these risks from taking place on a much larger scale in the event of an uncontrolled wildfire in the same area.

Con #1: Poses Risk to People, Property, and Animals

Any fire, even if it is prescribed, poses a risk to people, property, and animals. If even one condition is not just right, or even if the entire procedure goes perfectly, fire is naturally a wild, unpredictable element. It can turn into a wildfire, at which point it could spread and destroy homes, injure humans, and displace animals from their natural habitats.

Con #2: Reduces Air Quality

Even when a prescribed fire is under the management of fire experts and officials, it still reduces air quality (if only temporarily). The smoke, ash, and other particulate matter that it produces make breathing difficult for people and animals in the area. It also reduces visibility, which can lead to vehicle accidents and other problems.

Con #3: Reduces Water Quality

Fires can significantly reduce the quality of natural drinking water. They do so by disrupting the soil and causing debris, sediment, and contaminants to flow into nearby streams, which can make the water dangerous to drink.

Con #4: Cost

If a prescribed burn turns into a wildfire, it could cost billions of dollars in resources and property destruction.

Fires, even if they are prescribed, should never be taken lightly. That is why it is important to learn about fire safety and to be prepared for a fire in any situation.

Pros of Prescribed Burning

Pro #1: Lowers Risk of More Dangerous Fires

Prescribed burning helps clear out densely grown vegetation on forest floors. Over time, the ground can become thick with dead leaves, twigs, needles, shrubs, and small trees. This overabundance of material serves as fuel for wildfires.

The easiest way to get rid of excess fuels is to start a fire and let the flames burn them up. By doing so in a carefully prescribed manner when conditions are not too dry or windy, it is possible to lower the risk of more dangerous fires starting in the same area by accident.

Pro #2: Increases Water Availability

Prescribed burns have the potential to increase water availability for animals that live in the area. They do so by burning away plants that are placing a high demand for water in the soil. When these plants – usually low-lying vegetation – are destroyed, the source from where they draw their water retains more of its contents, thus leaving more for animals to drink.

Pro #3: Increases Plant Diversity

Prescribed fires help increase plant diversity. This may sound counterintuitive, but when you burn away vegetation that has grown thick and dense, you allow room for other species of plants to grow in their place.

Pro #4: Helps Control Invasive Species

Fires, under prescribed conditions, can help control invasive plant species. These are plants that have managed to take root outside of their normal habitat, and lack the natural restrictions on growth that would be found in their native regions.

When a species of plant invades an ecosystem, it competes for precious soil and water resources with other species. Prescribed burns can destroy these invaders and give native plants a chance to reestablish themselves in the area.

Pro #5: Reduces Tree Competition

Prescribed burns are often used to reduce the number of trees that are using too much water and soil resources, as well as shading out other trees. This reduces tree competition so that more types of plants can exist in the same ecosystem.

Pro #6: Improves Wildlife Habitat

Fires benefit wildlife in many ways. They clear away dead material and provide ground space for new plant species to grow, which will serve as food and cover for many different types of animals. In addition, prescribed burns clear away vegetation that has been allowed to grow too long without a fire, rendering it too tall for deer and other animals to eat. The new vegetation that grows after the fire is much more accessible for herbivores.



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Santa Fe National Forest

Forest Service News Release

Santa Fe National Forest
11 Forest Lane, Santa Fe, NM 87508

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Prescribed fire planned on Santa Fe National Forest

Pile burning to occur on Cuba Ranger District

SANTA FE, NM – February 8, 2023: The Santa Fe National Forest (SFNF) plans to implement a prescribed burn (debris piles) on the Cuba Ranger District starting as early as Wednesday, Feb. 15. The Deer Lake project is approximately 110 acres and is adjacent to NM Highway-126 east of Cuba between mile-markers 7 and 9.5.

Recent snowfall in the burn area provides conditions that help limit fire from spreading to adjacent vegetation. Burning will be spaced out during the month of February when conditions are favorable. Upon completion of burning operations, the burned piles will be monitored throughout the winter. Every precaution will be taken to ensure the burned piles are out before the arrival of traditional spring wind and warming trends.

“During a lengthy pause in our burning operations, we worked through the actions outlined by the Chief of the Forest Service Randy Moore in the [USDA Forest Service National Prescribed Fire Review](#). These actions gave our fire managers and line officers improved processes such as ensuring prescribed fire plans are validated and up to date with the most recent science and modeling, to move forward in completing important hazardous fuels reduction work to help protect watersheds, infrastructure, and communities,” says Cuba District Ranger Patrick Petracca.

“The community has every right to feel hesitant about the resumption of prescribed burning in the Forest. Public trust is vital to our ability to implement prescribed fires and provide defensive zones around our communities. We are moving forward thoughtfully to demonstrate our abilities to use fire successfully as a tool on the landscape,” Petracca said.

The Deer Lake project is just one of the many projects within the [Rio Chama Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Project](#), which spans 3.8 million acres in New Mexico and Colorado to improve and maintain water quality and watershed function and restore natural fire regimes using prescribed fire, among other goals.

Burning these piles is one step in a series of actions to reduce the risks of wildfires from threatening our communities. The trees in these areas were thinned to remove ladder fuels and help prevent crown fires. The resulting piles are being burned to remove the fuel from the ground, further reducing the risk of wildfires from spreading as well as making it easier for suppression crews to work should a wildfire occur in the area.

Smoke from burning the piles may be visible from US-550, NM-96, NM-126, NM-197, and from the communities of Cuba, La Jara and Torreon. Minimal smoke is expected to impact NM-126 and FSR-70. Appropriate signage will be used to alert motorists in areas impacted by smoke.

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The SFNF manages all prescribed fires in compliance with New Mexico state regulations on air quality and smoke management. Smoke-sensitive individuals and people with respiratory problems or heart disease are encouraged to take precautionary measures. Information on air quality and protecting your health by using the 5-3-1 visibility method can be found online at the [New Mexico Department of Health \(NMDOH\) Environmental Public Health Tracking \(EPHT\)](#) website. People with health concerns can also call NMDOH at 505-827-0006 for additional information. Visit [Fire Adapted NM](#) for information on the HEPA filter loan program.

Stay up to date on burning activities via the [SFNF website](#) and following the forest on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Santa Fe National Forest

General Briefing

Cuba Ranger District
04B County Road 11
Cuba NM 87013

Contact: Patrick M. Petracca
District Ranger
575-289-3264

Deer Lake Project – Winter Pile Burn

February – 2023

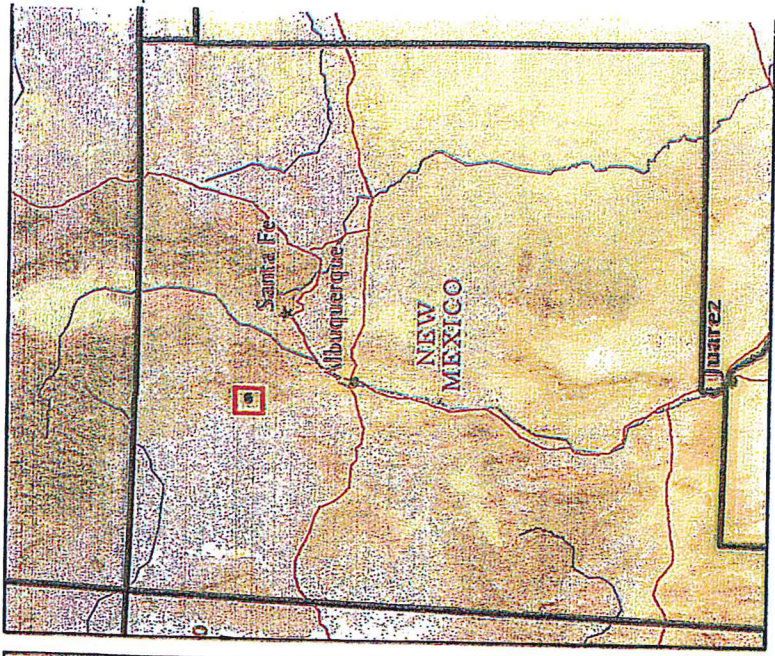
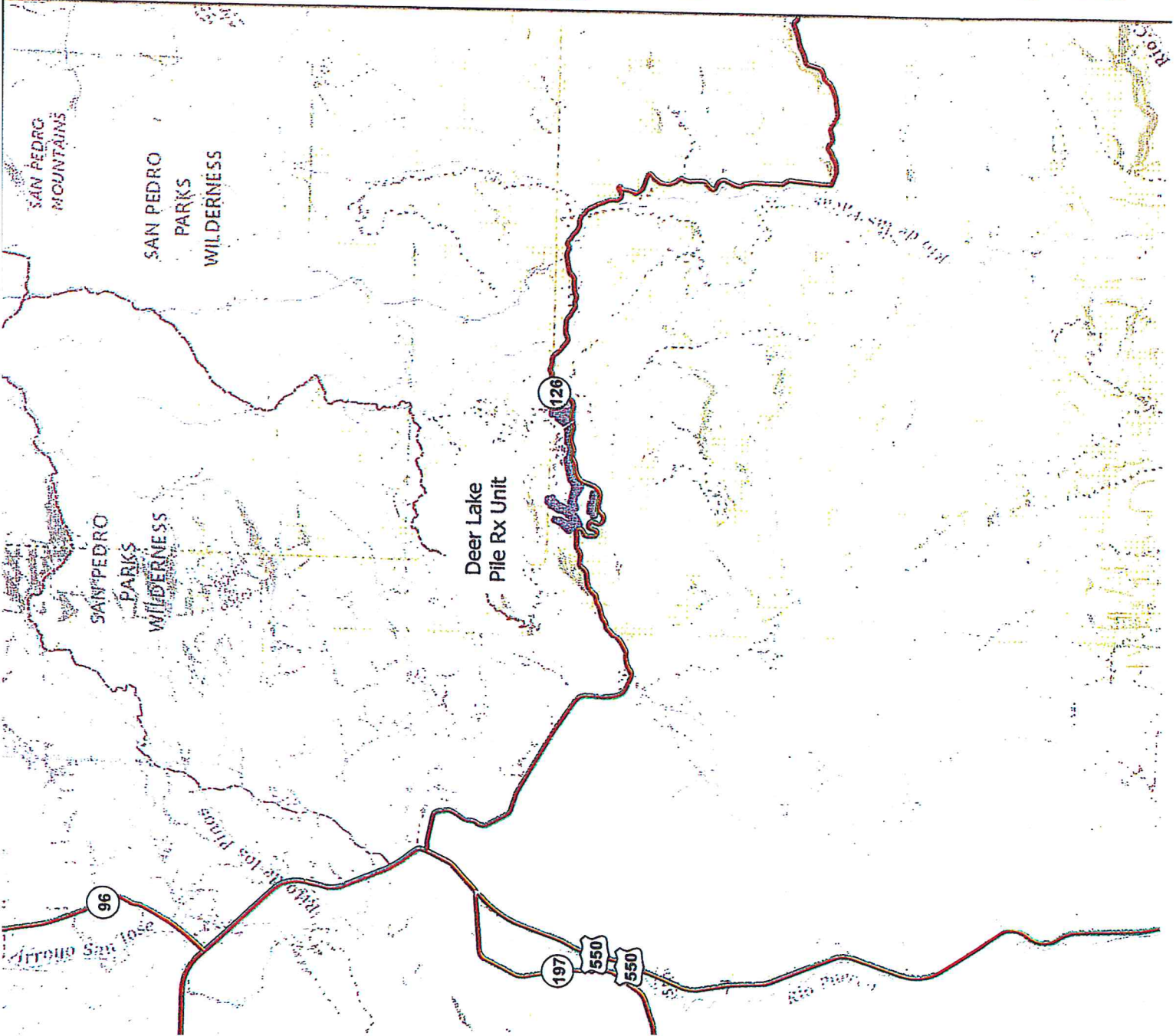
Overview: During the month of February, the Cuba Ranger District plans to use prescribed fire to burn fuel piles created by the Deer Lake thinning project. The project objective was to thin fuels and reduce catastrophic wildfire risk using hand-cutting, piling, and mastication of woody materials around the Deer Lake subdivision. The last step in the project is to burn the piled materials. The project area is approximately 110 acres of National Forest land around property along NM State Highway 126.

Objectives:

- Consume 95% of all fuels within the pile burn area
- Provide for safety and welfare of all personnel and public
- Protection of on-site and off-site values
- Improve forest health and resiliency to climate change by reducing competition for water, sunlight, and nutrients
- Reduce the risk of stand replacement wildfire events
- Reduce the understory density, fuel loading, ladder fuels in all timber cover types, and decrease encroachment within meadows
- Reduce natural and activity created fuel accumulations with the use of prescribed fire.
- Minimize smoke impacts to the surrounding communities by utilizing the emission reduction techniques.

Values at Risk: Wildland/Urban Interface includes about 100 private residences with associated out buildings on the boundary of the unit. Low probability of fire directly impacting residences with current snowpack.

Operations: Piles will be hand lit and monitored throughout the burn period. Additionally, the project area will be monitored regularly utilizing personnel and heat detecting devices until the burn is deemed “cold”. The monitoring time can be from a couple weeks to a couple months depending on weather conditions and remaining snowpack into the spring.

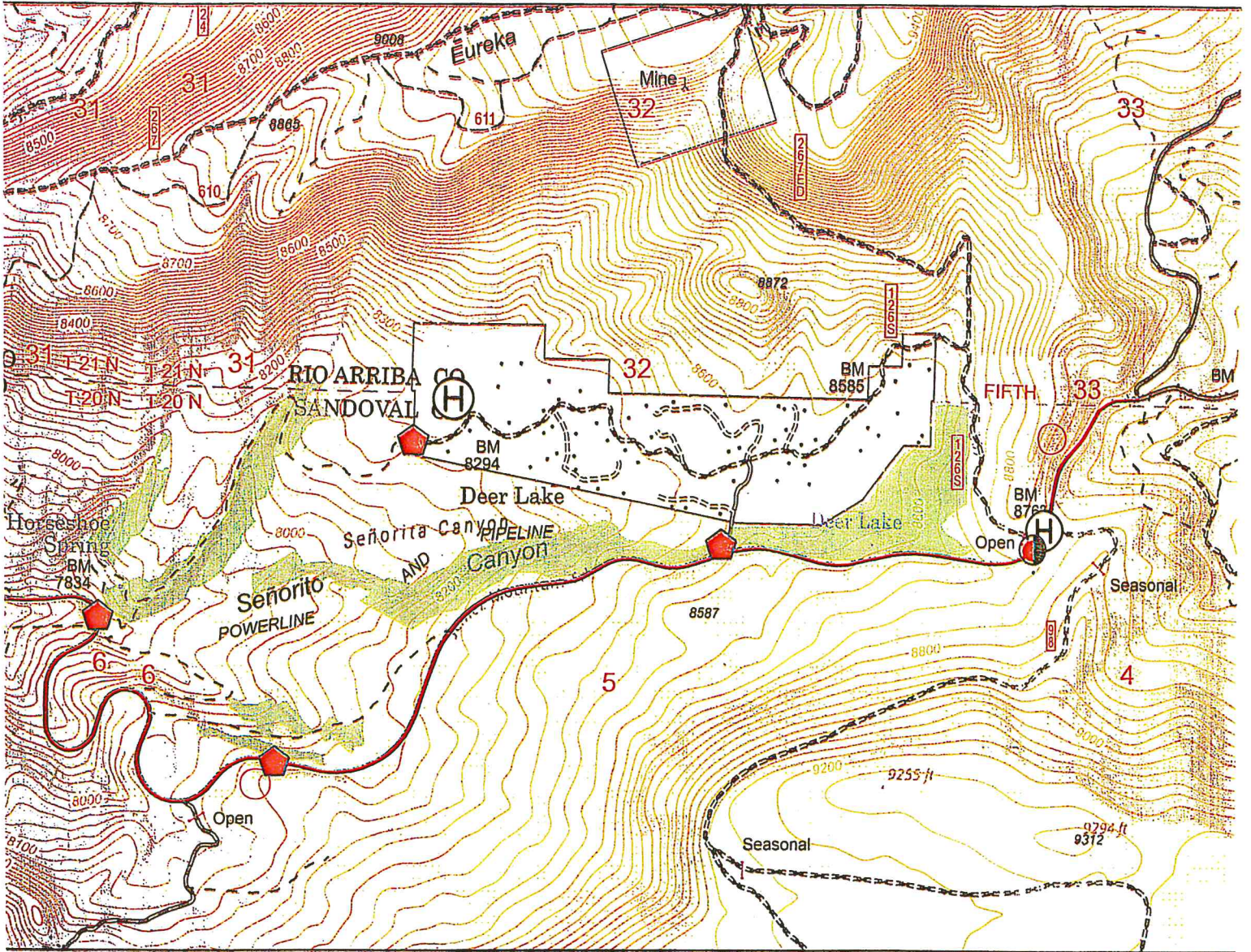


Deer Lake Pile Rx - 110 acres Cuba Ranger District Santa Fe National Forest

-  Interstate
-  US Highway
-  NM Highway
-  Other
-  Deer Lake Rx Unit



Deer Lake Pile Rx Operations and Vicinity Map - 110 Acres



-  Deer Lake Pile Rx
-  2 Track Road
-  Heli_Spots
-  Briefing_Area
-  Drop_Points



0 0.13 0.25 0.5 Miles

