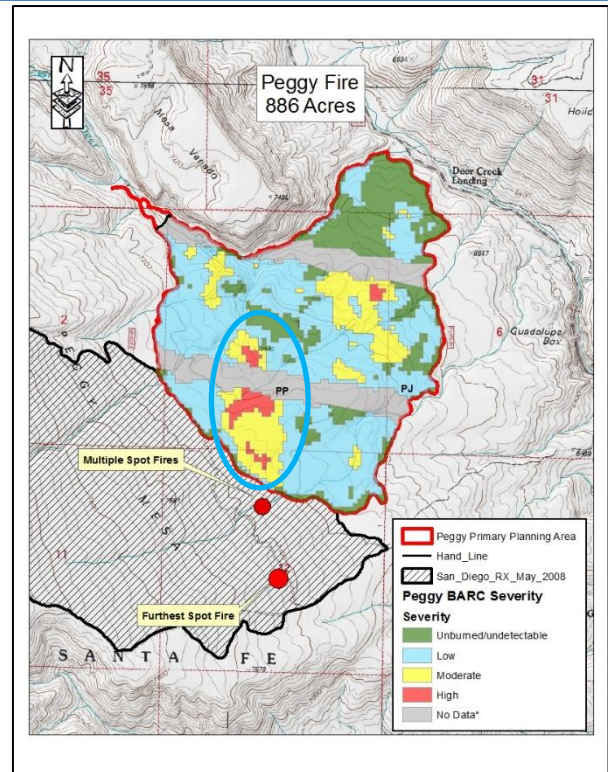


# Peggy Fire – Santa Fe National Forest (SNF)

Wildfire meets Prescribed Fire – Prescribed fire creates safe anchor points for managing unplanned wildfires.

## Introduction

The Peggy Fire was started by lightning on July 18<sup>th</sup> 2017. The fire was located on Peggy Mesa within the Rio Guadalupe watershed on the Jemez Ranger District. A decision was made to manage this fire for resource benefit. The adjacent San Diego Rx from 2008 served as a key anchor point in managing the Peggy Fire. Values at risk within the primary planning area (886 Acres) included: multiple historic and pre-historic cultural sites, range improvements and critical habitat for the Mexican Spotted Owl. Vegetation consisted of dense second-growth ponderosa pine with an intermixed pinon/juniper understory. Approximately ½ inch of rain accompanied the initial lightning strike. Contrary to imminent forecasts of rain, no rain fell for 12 days on the Peggy Fire allowing completion of the 886 acre planning area. However, without significant rainfall fire behavior was active and the initial objectives were to keep the black line ahead of the fire that was spreading interior.



## Fuel Treatment Effectiveness

On Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July about 1715 a storm approached from the north. No moisture made it to the fire, only 25-30 mph outflow winds that shifted 180 degrees and started blowing from the north. The increased wind speed and directional shift created an alignment of wind, slope and fuels. Within five minutes the fire began making a significant push to the south flank where resources were black lining (Figure 1). Resources acted fast and utilized their escape routes to move away from the oncoming fire. The fire pushed hard toward the south flank where the black line absorbed the energy and dropped fire from the crowns to the surface of already blackened fuels. Even with the effectiveness of black lining, multiple spot fires were found in the San Diego Rx unit adjacent to the primary planning area. There were over 15 spot fires ranging in size from ½ acre to 5' by 5' with the farthest spot fire reaching over 1/2 mile. All were identified and lined by 2100 that evening. There is one main lesson worth mentioning regarding past fuel treatments.

1). The 9 year old San Diego Rx was extremely useful as a safe anchor point and fuels reduction treatment that allowed safe and effective control of spot fires outside of the primary planning area.



Figure 2. Photo of fire's spread to the south

**Partners: Learning and Burning.** The National Planning Level was at 4 and it was understood that the SNF would have limited resources to staff the Peggy Fire. This resource benefit fire could not have happened without participation from Santa Fe County Black Canyon Handcrew, the Jemez Eagles from Pueblo of Jemez, the Abajo Fire Module and other resources from the SNF. There were more cooperators on this fire than SNF regulars. This is an extraordinary example of the vital role partners play in fire management on federal lands.

**Contact for More Information:** Dennis Carril, Fire Ecologist, Santa Fe NF, NM

[dcarril@fs.fed.us](mailto:dcarril@fs.fed.us)