

Reforestation the Hayman Fire Area

by Cass Cairns, Hayman Restoration Team Public Affairs Specialist



Photo courtesy of Joe Quevillon, Ute Pass Courier

Isn't reforestation severely burned portions of the Hayman Fire just a matter of obtaining and planting new seedlings? No, it's not that simple. In order to meet federal guidelines, new seedlings have to be germinated from seed collected within the geographic areas and elevational bands of the area where the fire occurred. This ensures the seedling stock will be best adapted to the area's climatic conditions and less prone to pest and disease common to the area. Planting hundreds of seedlings from other elevation geographic regions may result in a forest that is weak with a low survival rate.

It takes one year before a seedling is strong enough to transplant. To get local seedlings, foresters in charge of the Hayman Fire restoration projects, Diane Strohm and Jim Behm, turned to the USDA Forest Service's Bessey Tree Nursery in Halsey, Nebraska. The good news, the nursery had seed harvested from the correct geographic area and elevational band. The not so good news, the seed had been harvested more than 20 years prior to the fire and the success rate for seed germination decreases considerably after 10 years. The nursery was able to produce 22,000 seedlings for this year's reforestation efforts.

Planting began in early April within completed roadside hazardous tree salvage areas. This year's reforestation efforts cover 100 acres within the Hayman Fire area.

A contracted crew will do the majority of the planting. Rigid plastic tubing will be placed around the majority of the seedlings following the planting to protect them from animal damage. To monitor the effectiveness of this measure some seedlings will not have the plastic tubing. The Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) will provide volunteers to assist. Behm and Jinnie Brownfield, CUSP forest technician, are working closely for this year's planting scheduling and needs. The Forest is looking forward to continuing this relationship with next year's ongoing reforestation efforts within the Hayman Fire.

Reforestation plans to plant seedlings covering approximately 750 acres in severely burned areas in the Hayman Fire is targeted for next year. Seedlings will come from 450 bushels of seed cones collected in September of 2002 by contracted tree climbers. It will take about 250,000 new seedlings (85% ponderosa pine, 15% Douglas-fir) per year over the next several years to complete reforestation efforts for the Hayman Fire. More seed cones need to be collected to meet these objectives and foresters are hoping for a healthy crop this fall.



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Volunteers coordinated by the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP), and a partnership donation of \$75,000 from the National Arbor Day Foundation have been important contributions to the Hayman Fire reforestation efforts.