

FIRE EFFECTS ON POPULATIONS AND HABITATS OF SENSITIVE SPECIES OF WILDLIFE IN PONDEROSA PINE FORESTS OF THE INTERIOR WEST^{TWS}

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The USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, is leading the effort to examine fire effects on populations and habitats of wildlife in ponderosa pine forests on 12 sites in eight states across the western United States, including locations on national Forests, National Parks, and state and private lands. We have one site in Montana, in the Elkhorn Mountains on the Helena National Forest. Our goal is to understand the ecological consequences of fire management for wildlife in ponderosa pine forests. The target wildlife species are cavity-nesting birds and songbirds (also small mammals at selected locations). Cavity-nesting birds are a focus of this research because many of them depend on fire-maintained habitats for their dispersal and movements, they are designated as Management Indicator Species (MIS) and Sensitive Species by state and federal agencies, and they are responsive to timber and fire management activities. This presentation summarizes study objectives, methods, and some preliminary results for the Montana and western study sites.