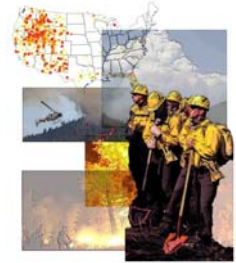


# National Fire Plan Hazardous Fuels Reduction Montana 2003



## Scapegoat Wilderness Prescribed Burn Lewis & Clark National Forest



Lighting operations west of Patrol Ridge operations with the Ranger and IC



Media members at Patrol Lookout watch lighting

On a gorgeous, cloudless Fall day, the Rocky Mountain District of the Lewis and Clark NF took the first giant step in lighting the South Fork Sun River Prescribed Burn; a project in the planning and coordination stages for over 8 years. The burn, located within the Scapegoat Wilderness west of Augusta, MT will ultimately introduce fire into 16,500 acres. This first lighting opportunity brought together Forest personnel, the Swope/Clifford Type II Incident Command Team, air quality, aviation and fire behavior specialists from across the Forest Service's Northern Region. After 3 days of hand lighting, helitorch and plastic sphere dispenser (PSD or ping pong ball dispenser) ignition, nearly 4,200 acres had fire introduced. Forest fire managers will hope for the right fuels and weather conditions next spring or fall along with the necessary resources to continue the work.

Since inception, the project has received public scrutiny and criticism regarding fears the fire would escape control and race eastward through private forest and ranch lands and on to Augusta. The District held numerous public meetings and worked with local landowners, media and representatives over the planning years. The night before lighting commenced, another meeting and power point program was offered in Augusta. In an effort to share information with the greatest number of people in the quickest time possible, the Forest arranged for 3 television stations, 2 newspapers and a field representative from Congressman Denny Rehberg's Great Falls office to fly to Patrol Lookout to observe lighting operations. At the lookout, they met with District Ranger Mike Munoz, Incident Commander (IC) Tom Clifford and others; providing ample opportunity for the reporters to ask questions and to learn more about the reasons for and the techniques employed to carry out a project of this complexity. Local news media were updated daily as were key community contacts.