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(Neb.)-Long-Term Reforestation Efforts To Begin Near Chadron



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 03/12/2014 09:33 AM

(PINE RIDGE)-A news release from the U.S. Forest Service says reforestation efforts will soon begin in this region of northwest Nebraska. The Pine Ridge Ranger District plans to reforest approximately 42,000 ponderosa pine seedlings in the Robert Tract, located 17 miles southwest of Chadron, and in Strong Canyon, located eight miles from Chadron in the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands.

Approximately 25,000 acres in these areas sustained heavy wildland fire damage in both the 2006 and 2012 fires. Officials say that even though some natural reforestation may occur, planting seedlings during the next few decades will improve the chances of ponderosa pine reestablishing in the burnt landscape.

According to Pine Ridge Ranger district forester John Lee, "These plantings will start the long process of reforesting the 2012 and parts of the 2006 burned areas." To regenerate a healthy forest ecosystem in these areas, Lee predicts more than 40,000 seedlings will need to be planted for the next 20 plus years.

The success of these seedlings is influenced by many factors, but climate is the most crucial. Rain in the first few months after planting the seedlings is a vital part of their success. Lee says, "To improve survival rates, we plant strategically by placing trees where they have natural shade, and planting some in small groups to create future micro-climate seedling sites."

A planting contractor will plant 40,000 seedlings, and USDA Forest Service personnel will plant the other 2,000 seedlings in mid-April, weather permitting. There are an estimated 300 acres of suitable planting sites available at these locations.

--U.S. Forest Service