



## SOUTHERN BIGHORNS



### 5.1 Area Description

Number of Points: 65

Number of Structures: 12

BLM Ownership: 2,500 acres

The area is west of the Arminto Stock Trail and consists of a lodgepole (*Pinus contorta*) and limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) overstory and a mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp. vaseyana*) understory, with some Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) occurring in the drainages. Non-serotinous lodgepole pine stands are expanding into the sagebrush steppe. The sagebrush is dense and in a state of decline.

There is a scattering of private ownership among the BLM lands. Twelve cabins are dispersed throughout the area as well as two campgrounds: Buffalo Creek to the south and Graves Springs to the north. During hunting season the areas is used significantly.



## **5.2 Arminto Stock Trail**

There is considerable lodgepole and limber pine encroachment and declining/decadent sagebrush (391-397).

Lodgepole pine is out-competing the aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and is succeeding to subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*). The open cone (non-serotinous) character of the lodgepole pine results in seedlings and intermediate size regeneration where subalpine fir and spruce should be predominate. There is a moderate loading of downed aspen and lodgepole present (398-404).

## **5.3 Larson Cabin**

The Larson Cabin area is alpine tundra that is heavily grazed, containing thin soils with little to burn and overlooked by the 9,000-foot Big Bald Knob. There are some older, isolated ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) scattered throughout the saddles.

## **5.4 Graves Springs Campground**

Post and pole size lodgepole pine are interspersed with small sagebrush meadows that are being encroached by the pine and fir. The area could support a commercial post-pole thinning.

## **5.5 North Plots**

Open grass and sage, with little soil. A subdivision is northwest on the north slope.

## **5.6 Management Recommendations**

1. *Prescribed Fire*. Broadcast burn sagebrush meadows and other areas to limit pine encroachment, expand existing meadows, and encourage grasses, forbs, and younger sage (776B, 779, 399, 430-433).



2. *Aspen Regeneration.* Target remaining aspen stands with low intensity surface fires to kill encroaching pine and fir and expand existing groves. When prepping these sites, tie into natural barriers (e.g., rock outcrops, cliff faces), game trails, roads, hiking trails, snow concentrations, or construct scratch lines for burning. Expanding aspen areas will enhance wildlife habitat, aid in water and soil stabilization, and create natural fuel breaks to modify the spread and intensity of crown fire runs in the conifer species. Grazing may need to be restricted to ensure adequate recolonization of aspen areas (382).

3. *Post and Pole Sales.* Use prescribed fire and a post-pole sale to bring declining sagebrush to an earlier seral stage (i.e., grass community). West of the road and east of the forest edge is the primary area of emphasis. Managers may try and run fire into the timberline early in the spring to expand the sage-grass areas and take advantage of the higher fuel moistures (391-396, 405-411, 416, 417).

## 5.7 Southern Bighorns Hazard Assessment Rating

<u>Total Rating Score</u>	<u>Hazard Level</u>	<u>Amount (%)</u>
1-14	Low	3
15-21	Moderate	80
21-28	High	17
29-35	Extreme	0