



Forest Service News Release

Media Contact: Tod McKay
(406) 363-7122

West Fork Ranger District Fire Update – Hunting Season

Hamilton, MT, September 14 — General firearms hunting season in Idaho begins tomorrow, September 15th, and the Bitterroot National Forest is reminding public land users to be aware of ongoing fire activity, especially in Wilderness areas on the West Fork Ranger District. “We recognize that the Selway Bitterroot and Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Areas provide once in a lifetime hunting opportunity and a place to get away into some peace and quiet. So, we are doing our best to keep that opportunity available while weighing the risks to the public and firefighters in proximity of wildfires” said West Fork District Ranger Dan Pliley.

Currently, there are 12 wildfires burning in the Wilderness areas on the West Fork District. These fires are being managed to provide protection of infrastructure in the developed recreation sites along the Magruder Corridor and Paradise Road. The largest of these fires is the Indian Ridge Fire at roughly 13,000 acres. Last night, the fire reached the road near Magruder Crossing. Current fire activity, rolling debris and falling snags has prompted the temporary closure of the Magruder Corridor north of the Magruder Ranger Station. Fire personnel are working to reopen the road for public travel as soon as conditions allow for safe passage.

The Twist Creek fire, roughly 2,300 acres, is burning near Horse Heaven Cabin and Salmon Base Camp. The fire impacted approximately 2 miles of the road prompting a closure of the Magruder Corridor between Observation Point Campground and Sabe Saddle. Falling teams are working to mitigate fire weakened trees along the road. As conditions allow for safe passage and fire behavior moderates, fire managers will reassess the need for a road closure in this area.

Aside from these two large fires, eight other fires are showing activity and range in size from 100 to 300 acres. Please be aware that these fires are on the landscape and conditions may change rapidly until the area receives moisture.

If you choose to venture into these areas, you need to be flexible. Fires are unpredictable. You may have to change and alter your plans depending on road and trail closures. Additional sections of the roads and areas may be impacted by the fire, causing additional closures and/or delays at any point in time. Firefighters are constantly reviewing the risk to public and fire management to inform any needed closures.

You will notice the recreation sites look a little different. Picnic tables, signs, and outhouses will be bright and shiny as they are wrapped with fire resistant structure wrap. This helps protect them from heat and embers if the fire approaches. Even though they are wrapped, outhouses are likely still open if accessible.

Please know where the fires are and their proximity to you. Stay aware of the conditions on the ground. Be flexible and patient with changes. For more information, visit the Indian Ridge and Twist Creek Fire Inciweb pages, Bitterroot National Forest website and Facebook page. See links below.

Finally, please give the West Fork Ranger District a call at (406) 821-3269 before you come out to check current conditions or new closures.

Inciweb: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/8319/> (Indian Ridge)

<https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/8377/> (Twist Creek)

Bitterroot NF Website: www.fs.usda.gov/bitterroot

Facebook: www.facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF

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