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News Release

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Fire crews responding to Pass Fire near Indian Creek Cabin

Lightning strike caused fire creeping through pine understory, consuming dead fuels

RESERVE, NM, May 22, 2023 – A lightning strike ignited the Pass Fire on the Gila National Forest the evening of May 18, located about ¼-mile from Forest Road 59 about 1 mile east of Indian Creek Cabin and 0.7-mile north of the Gila Wilderness boundary. The low-intensity fire is burning in grass and pine needles has grown to approximately 193 acres.

“We are applying a confine and contain strategy on this fire and allowing it to play its natural role in this fire-adapted ecosystem,” said Agency Administrator Elizabeth Toney. “We’re seeing really excellent fire effects, burning surface fuels in pine understory, consuming dead grass and dead and down logs.”

Fire weather conditions so far this season are much less volatile than this time last year, given the wet summer, fall, and winter of the past 11 months, as well as unseasonal rains that fell over the area last week. Recent and ongoing fuels sampling shows that trees and shrubs are holding enough moisture that they are not yet available for burning.

Limited values at risk will be protected as appropriate if fire reaches pre-identified management action points. Pass Fire produced low-lying smoke that settled overnight Sunday into the Indian Creek and the Gila River drainages, impacting the Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument, area campgrounds, and residential areas near Gila Hot Springs. Smoke-sensitive individuals should follow recommendations at [NM Fire Info | Smoke Management](#).

More information about the Pass Fire is available at [Nmgnf Pass Fire Information | InciWeb \(nwcg.gov\)](#) and on New Mexico Fire Information at [Fire crews responding to Pass Fire near Indian Creek Cabin](#) [NM Fire Info](#) For more information contact Maribeth Pecotte at 575-388-8211 or Maribeth.Pecotte@usda.gov.

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