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News Release

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Pass Fire update for May 28

Greening up of grasses and other vegetation produces minimal fire behavior

TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NM, May 28, 2023 – The Pass Fire on the Gila National Forest, Black Range Ranger District has grown to approximately 9,804 acres since it was ignited by lightning strike May 18. The Gila Las Cruces Zone Type 3 Team, led by Incident Commander Pete Valenzuela assumed command yesterday.

The low to moderate intensity of the Pass Fire allows firefighters time to get out ahead to assess values at risk and prepare holding features and protection before the fire's arrival. Yesterday, a helispot at Black Mountain was cleared of encroaching vegetation and the Black Mountain Lookout's cabin was wrapped.

"We're seeing some really good fire effects, consuming dead grass and pine litter, with heavy dead and down fuels burning down to ash," said Valenzuela. "Crews are doing a great job of keeping pace with the interior advance of the fire, burning out small pockets of vegetation between the fire and prepared containment features. A variety of tactics will be used to confine and contain the Pass Fire commensurate with firefighter safety, probability of success, and values at risk."

Weather over the fire area will be mostly sunny today, with highs from 69 to 84, depending on elevation. Relative humidity will drop to 8 - 11%. The fire currently has 115 people responding, including one Bureau of Land Management and two Gila National Forest fire engines, the Gila Regulars and Rio Puerco BLM hand crews, and one Type 3 helicopter in addition to incident command staff. Additional resources have been ordered and the size of the organization is expected to increase in the coming days.

Values at risk include small private land parcels, range fences, water pipelines and stock tanks, powerlines, recreation sites, roads, a research site, historic features, sensitive wildlife habitats, wetlands, and watershed resources. They will be protected as appropriate if fire reaches pre-identified management action points.

The Pass Fire is located south of New Mexico Highway 59, about 1 mile west of Wolf Hollow Campground, and along the northern Gila Wilderness boundary. Camping is not recommended at

Wolf Hollow due to the likelihood of fire reaching the area and heavy localized firefighter activity. Please use caution when entering or passing through the area, as heavy firefighter traffic and activity may exist along area roads. Air inversions are likely to cause low-lying smoke to settle into valleys overnight that may obscure visibility for travel. 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 [NM Fire Info | New Mexico Fire Information](#) For more information contact Maribeth Pecotte at 575-388-8211 or Maribeth.Pecotte@usda.gov.

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