



Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

Bitterroot National Forest



Bowles Creek Fire

INCIDENT COMMANDER: Greg Schenk

Fire Information: 406-865-0941

Email: Terina.hill@usda.gov

Inciweb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/mtbdf-bowles-creek>

Facebook: facebook.com/usfsbdf

facebook.com/DiscoverBitterrootNF

July 21, 2023

Location: 3 miles southwest of Skalkaho Pass in the Bowles Creek drainage

Start Date: 7/20/2023 **Cause:** Lightning **Estimated Size:** 150 acres **Completion:** 0%

Total Personnel: 53 **Engines:** 0 **Helicopters:** 1 **Hand Crews:** 1 (2 more on order)

A Type 3 Incident Management Team is on order.

The Forest received a smoke report in the Bowles Creek drainage area, following a lightning storm on the evening of July 20, 2023. Ground resources and a helicopter flight confirmed the location. Additional smoke reports, received by the Bitterroot Dispatch Center, were checked and confirmed by ground resources.

The fire is located approximately three miles southwest of Skalkaho Pass in the Sapphire Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in steep terrain, just north of the 2022 Hog Trough Fire. Fuels consist of thick timber and a heavy dead and downed fuel component. Two 20-year-old fire footprints from previous fires are located adjacent to this area. No structures are currently threatened.

CURRENT SITUATION & PLANNED ACTIONS

Ground resources and an early morning helicopter flight estimated the Bowles Fire to be approximately 50 acres and the Daily Creek fire on the Bitterroot side of the divide to be approximately 1-2 acres. Initial attack resources lined and “plumbed” (with water and hoselays) the Daily Fire. Fire operations officials pulled those individuals off the active fireline for safety reasons. Due to this active fire behavior and resulting growth, these fires have merged and will be referred to as the Bowles Creek Fire.

Two Type 2 Initial Attack crews, scheduled to arrive at the fire tonight or early tomorrow morning. Transfer of Command of the fire to a Type 3 Incident Management Team is scheduled for Sunday morning.

Those recreating or traveling in the fire area are encouraged to be aware of the situation and to pay attention to increased fire traffic.

WEATHER & FIRE BEHAVIOR

The fire is located at 7,800 feet in elevation. The weather forecast calls for high temperatures in the upper 80s and west-southwest winds in the 5 to 10 mph range. Warmer and drier conditions, conducive to active burning conditions, are predicted to last through the weekend.

Early fire behavior included creeping through ground fuels and isolated and group torching of trees, with high potential for spotting. Fire behavior increased to running, torching, and spotting, given the afternoon weather condition (hot and dry with

moderate upslope winds). The fire is producing smoke that is visible from numerous locations along the Skalkaho Highway and in the Bitterroot Valley and Philipsburg.

CLOSURES

Closures surrounding a fire area are necessary to protect the safety and welfare of the public and provide for safe firefighting efforts and access. Area closure often involve specific trail and road sections. The Forests are assessing the need and potential boundaries of a closure. Specific closure information and maps will be posted on the Forest websites and the fire's Inciweb page as they are implemented.

The Skalkaho Pass Road remains open.

A Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) is in effect over the fire area for the safety of the aviation resources.