



Inyo National Forest, Pacific Southwest Region

## Forest Service News Release

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### Lightning-caused Cowtrack Fire being managed to achieve multiple objectives

MONO BASIN, Calif., July 22, 2023 — Inyo is currently managing a lightning-caused wildfire, named the “Cowtrack Fire” that was discovered on Wednesday evening, July 19. Currently at a 1/4-acre, it is burning with a slow rate of spread in light to moderate fuels consisting of Jeffrey pine and sage brush in sandy pumice soils.

The fire is being managed for multiple objectives including removing fuels to reduce wildfire severity risk and improve Jeffrey pine and surrounding ecosystem health. This allows the fire personnel to both contain the wildfire while also restoring characteristic fire return intervals, increase forest resiliency and aid in protecting communities by reducing the threat of unnaturally accumulated fuels.

“I am pleased the analysis of the area adjacent to the Cowtrack Fire has found it suitable for managing a naturally-ignited wildfire to meet forest objectives,” said Stephanie Heller, Mono Lake District Ranger.

“This strategy is not only in alignment with our Forest Land Management Plan but will also aid in increase the place and scale of restoration on the landscape, moving toward a natural range of variation for fire regimes.”

There is no threat to any structures or property, and is located close to previous fire history footprints including the 2019 Springs Fire to the South, the 2001 Crater Fire to the Northwest, and the 2012 Indian Fire to the North.

Although smoke impacts are forecasted to be minimal, and predicted to flow northeast due to winds out of the southwest, fire managers have ordered an Air Resources Advisor for the incident. There are no recreation facilities or threats to structures in this area, only off-highway vehicle roads which are being used to not only gain access to this fire but also to aid in providing an anchor points for control lines for firefighters.

Fire managers will be standing up a Type 3 fire organization of approximately 70 people to manage this fire and safely and effectively contain it to a 360-acre or less “box”, with a less aggressive fire suppression strategy. The total number of acres burned could change depending on the availability of resources, weather forecast changes and fire behavior.

There is bi-state sage grouse habitat on both National Forest land and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land adjacent to the proposed “box”. The Forest Service has consulted with both the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure appropriate measures are in place to protect sage grouse habitat. A full suppression strategy will be implemented should the fire threaten to exceed the delineated boundaries.

For every fire, strategies are determined and adapted using a full spectrum of management actions that consider fire and fuel conditions, predicted short- and long-term weather conditions, values at risk, resource availability, land management plans and designations, smoke impacts, potential for successful consumption, and others. Managing fires to include spread to natural barriers (roads, trails, granite outcroppings, bodies of water, etc.) can also reduce unnecessary risk to firefighters.

An Inciweb page has been launched for the incident for more information:  
[inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/cainf-cowtrack-lightning-fire](https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/cainf-cowtrack-lightning-fire)

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