

Lowline Fire Update

Monday, July 31, 2023 – 9:00 a.m.

Rocky Mountain Complex Incident Management Team 1

Dan Dallas, Incident Commander

Information Phone: 970-648-4470 (public), 970-765-7123 (media)

Email: 2023.lowline@firenet.gov

Information Staffing Hours: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Current Situation: The Lowline Fire is currently 1331 acres and is 15% contained. Changing weather and its effects on the fire and our suppression activities was the predominant theme yesterday and continues into today. Aerial and hand-ignited burnout operations began yesterday morning, but a thunderstorm passed over the southern end of the fire around noon, causing heavy clouds, rising humidity, and minimal rain. This combination was sufficient to make burning marginally effective, those operations were mostly curtailed in early afternoon, a time when burning conditions are often optimal. Crews continued other suppression actions throughout the remainder of the day. They will resume burning to the extent possible today as conditions allow.

In **Division A**, a helicopter conducting aerial ignition supplemented by hand ignition crews on the ground began burning out the heavy fuels between the north end of the fire and indirect fireline still further north. This work progressed well until a thunderstorm arrived over the fire, at which time the aerial operations were shut down for safety. Ground crews continued lighting fuels and progressed westward along a ridge well into **Division W**. Weather permitting, this work will continue today with focus on filling in any unburned gaps and extending the burn further to the west.

Hand-ignited burning occurred in **Division Z** yesterday, but holding, patrolling, and mopping up along existing firelines were the primary activities. The same work will continue today. Structure Protection Group worked on structure assessments and mitigation work including sprinkler deployments on the south end of the fire. Structure assessment and preparation will progress eastward today.

In **Division Y**, an engine crew continued fireline prep and holding of a small area burned Saturday. This will continue today. The strategy is to follow the progression of the fire westward below a ridgeline, burning out only when needed to keep pace with the fire preventing it from crossing the ridge towards the south.

Weather & Fuel Conditions:

A thunder cell passed over the southern end of the fire yesterday, producing heavy clouds, rising humidity, but little rain. Today will see additional storms moving through. Temperatures will be slightly cooler and humidity slightly higher than yesterday. There is an 85% chance of rain today with up to 0.15” of precipitation, depending on the storm’s path. Wednesday will also likely be wet, but a drying trend begins on Thursday, with much warmer and drier conditions through next weekend.

Fuels in the fire area are mixed conifer with a heavy dead and down component, transitioning to grass and shrubs at the lower elevations. Fire spread in conifer fuels is moderate to high. Live herbaceous fuel moistures are stopping spread in the grass and sagebrush. Dead and down fuels are exceptionally dry, and mixed conifer is readily burning with group torching and short crown runs. Higher moisture levels reduced fire behavior yesterday, and predicted rains should moderate conditions for a few days.

Evacuations, Closures, and Fire Restrictions:

Mandatory evacuations are in place in the Squirrel Creek and Mill Creek drainages. For specific evacuation information, see Gunnison County Emergency Management at www.gunnisoncounty.org. You may sign up to receive emergency alerts on your phones or other devices at: <https://bit.ly/3QhZVZg>.

An area, road, and trail closure has been implemented on National Forest System lands near the fire area. For specifics see this link: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd1126172.pdf . BLM has implemented a temporary closure in the fire vicinity. For details see this link: www.blm.gov/programs/public-safety-and-fire/fire-and-aviation/regional-information/colorado/southwest-district . County Roads in the fire vicinity are barricaded. In the interest of public safety, fire officials ask visitors to be aware of fire traffic and avoid the area.

There are currently no fire restrictions in Gunnison County. Should restrictions be implemented, they will be posted at this site: <https://westslopefireinfo.com/gunnison-county/> .

Wildfires are a no-fly zone for unauthorized aircraft, including drones. **If you fly, we can't.** For more information, visit <http://knowbeforeyoufly.org>.

Lowline Fire Statistics: Size: 1331 acres Containment: 15% Total Personnel: 419 Location: 14 mi. NNW of Gunnison, CO Reported: 8:00 am July 26, 2023 Cause: lightning	For More Information: Information Phone: 970-648-4470 (public), 970-765-7123 (media) Email: 2023.lowline@firenet.gov InciWeb: https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/cogmf-lowline-fire Facebook: www.facebook.com/GMUGFireInfo
--	---

###