



United States Department of Agriculture

## Forest Service

### San Juan National Forest

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# News Release

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## Dry Lake Fire News Update

**Bayfield, CO, August 5, 2023** – Firefighters made progress during yesterday's blacklining operations on the perimeter of the Dry Lake Fire. The 300-acre lightning-caused fire is burning in the First Notch area of the Columbine Ranger District. It ignited within a network of off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails and National Forest System roads that are being used as containment lines. The blacklining operation was completed around roughly 45% of the containment line, removing fuel along roads and trails to effectively make them wider. Today's operations will focus on completing the blacklining operations, as well as burning out interior pockets of unburned vegetation using an unmanned aerial system (drone). This evening smoke may settle between Yellowjacket Pass and Chimney Rock on the Highway 160 corridor, and into the Piedra River drainage toward Arboles.

The fire is burning within an area that was treated by a prescribed fire in 2019 and was planned for a second prescribed fire this fall. Fire managers realized the fire could serve an important purpose in reducing future risk of catastrophic wildfire in the area. After a deliberate risk analysis, fire managers chose indirect suppression tactics for the incident so that fire could reduce hazardous fuels within established boundaries. This strategy is expected to reduce the risk to important values such as private residences, lands, and utility infrastructure serving local communities now and in the future by providing firefighters an advantage when conditions are less favorable.

Other benefits of this suppression strategy include reducing hazardous fuels, encouraging the growth of native plants, increasing species diversity in the understory, and restoring ecological balance. These efforts align with the Forest Service's 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy, which aims to increase the use of fire on the landscape as well as other treatments to improve forest resiliency for generations to come.

135 fire personnel are assigned to the Dry Lake Fire, which is under command of Incident Commanders Brad Pietruszka and Nate Christiansen (trainee) of the San Juan National Forest Incident Management Team (IMT).

Smoke will be visible to travelers along US Highway 160 between Bayfield and Pagosa Springs, and to some residents in Ignacio and Archuleta County. Please watch for extra fire traffic in the area and along First Notch Road (FR 620) this week and into this weekend.

Wildfire smoke may affect your health. For more information, please go to:

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/wood-smoke-and-health>

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