



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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News Release

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Dry Lake Fire News Update

Bayfield, CO, August 6, 2023. The Dry Lake Fire is now 11 percent contained and firefighters have completed “blacklining” the control lines around the 1372-acre fire. 135 fire personnel are assigned to the fire, located on San Juan National Forest land northeast of Bayfield. In conjunction with blacklining, interior pockets of vegetation were burned with an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS), or drone. Firefighters are now patrolling the perimeter and no further growth is expected. Continued burning and smoldering of interior vegetation will continue, though fire activity and smoke production will decrease. This evening, smoke may settle between Bayfield and Chimney Rock in the Highway 160 corridor, and into the Piedra River drainage toward Arboles.

The lightning caused fire started August 1 and has given fire managers the opportunity to directly address the long-term risk of catastrophic wildfire in this fire footprint. The San Juan National Forest Type 3 Incident Management Team (IMT) managing firefighting efforts have been suppressing the fire utilizing the indirect tactics as described above. Benefits of this strategy include reducing hazardous fuels, encouraging native plant growth, increasing species diversity in the understory, and restoring ecological balance. The Dry Lake Fire is burning at the northeast edge of a Potential (wildfire) Operational Delineation (POD). PODs are developed by local wildland fire management specialists to pre-identify a network of best-available control features. The work previously done near the POD boundary northeast of the Dry Lake Fire is serving its purpose as a control feature.

The comprehensive risk analysis completed by fire managers and selected fire management strategy aligns directly with the Forest Service’s 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy. This strategy aims to increase the use of fire on the landscape as well as other treatments to improve forest resiliency for generations to come. Additionally, these fire management actions are expected to reduce the risk to important local values at risk such as private residences, lands, and utility infrastructure. In fact, firefighters carefully burned vegetation under and around a 1/2 mile stretch of the Tri-State power line, which serves the community of Pagosa Springs.

Smoke will continue to 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 vehicle traffic in the area and along First Notch Road (FR 620) through the weekend and early into the coming week.

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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