



# Tin Soldier Complex Fact Sheet

Flathead National Forest Land Management

FLATHEAD INTERAGENCY TYPE 3 TEAM

INCIDENT COMMANDER: MIKE WEST

Fire Information: 406-758-6458

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<https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident-information/mtfnf-tin-soldier-complex>

**Monday, August 7, 2023, at 9:00 am**

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**Location:** 17 miles east of Swan Lake, Montana

**Start Date:** 7/30/2023

**Cause:** Lightning

**Size:** 2,580 acres

**Containment:** 0%

**Total Personnel:** 75

**Engines:** 2

**Type 2 IA Crew:** 1

**Masticators:** 1

**Water Tender:** 1

**Heavy Equipment Task Force:** 1

**Note:** Additional personnel from the Spotted Bear District are “on loan” and assisting with fire related operations. Priority will be given for initial attack if any other fires on the Spotted Bear District are detected.

## ATTENTION

To provide for public and firefighter safety, the East Side South Fork Road #38 is closed to public travel and the West Side South Fork Road #895 is closed to public travel near the 15 mile just past the Lid Creek Campground.

## SUMMARY

The Tin Soldier Complex was originally made up of 4 fires burning in timber litter with heavy dead and down fuels. The Tin Soldier Complex is located on the Spotted Bear Ranger District of the Flathead National Forests, approximately 17 miles east of Swan Lake. The fires associated with the Tin Soldier Complex started by lightning on Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup>. Past fire activity has included torching, spotting, and active consumption of heavy fuels.

Current Acres burned as of the morning of Monday, August 7<sup>th</sup>.

- Bruce Fire – 989 acres at 0% containment
- Kah Mtn Fire – 407 acres at 0% containment
- Sullivan Fire – 1,184 acres at 0% containment
- Con Kelly Fire – 0.25 acres – Out.

The Tin Soldier Complex is estimated at 2,580 acres in size and remains 0% contained. Fire activity Sunday was moderated between the 3 fires. An IR flight was done last night and found an increase of 212 acres with growth on all three fires. Kah Mountain and Sullivan have been the most active out of the three.

Please note, while the lower temperatures and higher relative humidities have lessened fire activity for the time being, potential for fire activity is still high. Lower temperatures and higher relative humidities only affect the fine fuels in the short term. The cooler weather we have been receiving is allowing firefighters to install additional structure protection around the values at place. There is a potential for increased fire activity in the future as temperatures and winds increase.

The Bruce, Kah and Sullivan fires are being managed with point source protection to protect values at risk. Values at risk include Stony Communications Site, hydro-electric plant, Heinrude residential community, commercial guest ranches and the Spotted Bear Ranger Station compound. Fire personnel have conducted initial assessments and preparations for structure protection in the above identified areas.

## **PAST AND PLANNED ACTIONS**

Fuel breaks have been established around the Wilderness Lodge and the hydro-electric facility. Hose line and sprinklers have been set up around the Wilderness Lodge. Exposed wood on the hydro-electric facility was wrapped and sprinklers were installed along Addition Bridge. Fire personnel are continuing structure protection efforts for the Spotted Bear Ranch, Diamond R Ranch and the Spotted Bear Ranger Station compound. A safety zone has been established on the Spotted Bear Ranger Station compound. Crews will continue installing hose line and sprinkler systems around the Spotted Bear Ranch, Diamond R Ranch, and the Spotted Bear Ranger Station compound. Fire personnel continue development of a structure plan for the Heinrude residential community. The plan for today will focus on where opportunities exist in order to establish fuel breaks with mechanical equipment.

## **EVACUATIONS, CLOSURES AND RESTRICTIONS**

**Evacuation:** An evacuation has been issued by the Flathead County Sheriff for Heinrude community.

### **Restrictions/Closures:**

- Stage 2 fire restrictions are in effect as of August 5<sup>th</sup>.
- A road restriction is in effect for the East and West Side South Fork Roads.
- An area closure is in effect for the front country of the Spotted Bear district as well the Gorge Creek drainage within the Bob Marshall Wilderness area, including Feather, Inspiration, Gorge, Canyon Trickle, and Stadium Creeks.
- A Temporary Flight Restriction is in place for air space over the Tin Soldier Complex to provide a safe environment for firefighting aircraft operating in the area. This includes the Spotted Bear and Meadow Creek Airstrips! Remember that temporary flight restrictions also apply to UAS or drones. **If you fly, we can't!**

## **WEATHER**

Partly cloudy weather this morning with a slight chance of thunderstorms this afternoon. The fires received very minimal rain the last two days and the wetting rains they predicted are no longer in the forecast. There will be a wind shift later today and into tomorrow from east to west. Winds will be picking up, with wind gusts of up to 30-40 mph possible Wednesday in the upper elevations.

Fire activity is expected to increase later in the week as temperatures rise and relative humidities decrease. This incoming warm weather with possible gusty winds will increase the chances of larger fuels (between 3 inches and 8 inches in diameter) burning, as the dryness of these fuels is still near record lows.