

Lowline Fire Update

Wednesday, August 2, 2023 – 9:00 p.m.

Rocky Mountain Complex Incident Management Team 1

Dan Dallas, Incident Commander

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



Current Situation: Firefighters focused on patrolling firelines, mopping up hot-spots, and strengthening firelines on the uncontained edges. As expected, wet, slick roads coupled with lightning hazard prevented access to some areas on the north side and no burnout operations occurred. Precipitation and weather conditions over the last several days, have significantly aided firefighters by dampening fire behavior allowing for accelerated fireline construction. Some amount of fireline is in place around much of the perimeter even though not all edges are contained yet. Firelines are made by removing unburned fuel sources, extinguishing or relocating heat sources, and preventing the fire's movement with lines dug down to bare soil, typically resembling the width of trail. Fire managers will not label a portion of fireline "contained" until they are confident there is no heat on the perimeter and no chance for growth. Today's containment is now 47% thanks to the very hard work of firefighters and favorable weather conditions.

Tonight, fire engines will patrol fire edges where roads are safe for travel and assess fire behavior. An additional wave of precipitation is expected before midnight, which will support continued fire suppression actions tomorrow.

Division A: Today's focus was on the northern side where firefighters continued progress to secure the fireline along Middle Creek. On the eastern edge, where containment is greatest, patrol and mop-up activities were ongoing.

Division Z: Existing firelines were patrolled, strengthened, and mopped-up. Firefighters were aided by data from an infrared flight last night which detected several heat sources near the line. These sources were burning stump holes and were quickly extinguished. Firefighters were unable to conduct burning operations in the timber stringer but will complete this action when conditions allow.

Division Y: Firefighters continued to patrol, mop up, and strengthen firelines in preparation for possible burnout operations later in the week. On top of the ridge, vegetation is predominately aspen, which has not sustained fire to date.

Division X: As planned, no actions occurred in this division today due to its location near the West Elk Wilderness and higher priorities in other Divisions. Fires in remote areas often pose additional hazards to firefighters due to limited access and steep, rugged terrain. Suppression activities in this area will weigh risk to firefighters while using natural features and weather to an advantage.

Division W: Firefighters expanded the primary fireline construction from the Division A break along Middle Creek to the intersection with the Lowline Trail. They also strengthened the contingency fireline following Price Creek. Both the primary and contingency firelines originate at the division break although connect to the Lowline Trail at two different locations approximately 1 mile apart forming a triangular shape. Should future fire conditions require a burnout operation, firefighters will burn the triangular area between the two firelines. Fire managers identified the location for fireline placement between the Lowline Trail west to the Division X break and construction began with additional work planned for tomorrow.

Structure Protection: Throughout this wildfire, focus has been two-fold: containing the fire and protecting infrastructure and private property along the eastern, southern, and northern edges while providing for firefighter and public safety. Structure protection in the form of assessments, sprinkler installation, and other measures provides an additional line of defense.

Weather & Fuel Conditions:

Starting tomorrow, skies will be mostly sunny although some chance of showers and thunderstorms, 35%, will remain. No wetting rain is expected and humidity is expected to be 10% lower than today in the low 30% range. Temperatures and wind will be similar to today, in the mid-70s at about 10-15 mph with gusts up to 25 mph, respectively. With these conditions, fire behavior will pick up with more smoke, darker smoke, and possibly a smoke column visible especially in the afternoon hours when the sun is most intensely warming fuels.

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>.

<p>Lowline Fire Statistics: Size: 1771 acres Containment: 47% Total Personnel: 394 Location: 14 mi. NNW of Gunnison, CO Reported: 8:00 am July 26, 2023 Cause: lightning</p>	<p>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</p>
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