



NORTHERN ROCKIES TEAM 5

INCIDENT COMMANDER: JOE SAMPSON

EAST FORK FIRE

SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

Location: 12 miles south of Trego, Montana **Information Line:** 406-285-8634
Start Date: 7/30/2023 **Cause:** Lightning **Size:** 5,144 acres **Containment:** 49%
Total Personnel: 311 **Engines:** 5 **Helicopters:** 1 **Hand Crews:** 4

CURRENT STATUS/ PLANNED ACTIONS

Fire crews continue to look for hotspots throughout the fire area. The UAS (Unmanned Aerial System) is flying the perimeter of the fire, searching for and mapping areas holding residual heat. Once identified, crews access these areas to mop-up the smoldering fuels and remove the heat. A few smokes were located along the southern edge of the fire area yesterday. Firefighters and heavy equipment are implementing repair plans and improving damaged roads and surfaces to pre-fire conditions. Excess resources no longer needed are demobilizing and returning home.

There was a decrease in acreage due to more accurate mapping of the fire area.

WEATHER AND FIRE BEHAVIOR

A weak weather system moved through the area late last evening, producing a few sprinklers. The system may linger into the morning hours, with a slight chance of additional showers and thunderstorms. Wetting rain is not likely, and the amount of precipitation is not enough to impact the larger fuels due to the closed canopy and their location on the landscape. Warmer and drier conditions are predicted through the end of the week, but they are not expected to cause concern.

There is still some heat found in the deep ravines on the east and north aspects. The rest of the fire activity is limited to creeping and smoldering. This fire behavior currently poses no threat to containment lines, though a few additional smoldering fuels were observed due to the slightly warmer and drier conditions.

CLOSURES AND EVACUATIONS

The Flathead National Forest rescinded its previously issued area closure order (#01-01-08-23-20) on September 2, 2023. The Kootenai National Forest-Fortine Ranger District and the Flathead National Forest-Tally Lake Ranger District have issued a new revised road closure order (#01-01-03-23-12), effective September 2, 2023.

The closure order is in place to provide heavy equipment and suppression repair personnel unhindered access to areas of the East Fork fire. Work in the area includes road repair, cleaning slash and other debris out of ditches and culverts, and strategically moving logs and other downed trees to prevent erosion in burned areas. The rest of the fire is creeping and smoldering. This fire behavior currently poses no threat to containment lines.

The roads in the area are narrow, and pullouts and turnarounds are too few for heavy traffic. Temporary closures are implemented during wildfire events to protect working firefighters and equipment operators. Once agency officials determine the area is safe, closure orders will be adjusted or rescinded.

