



NORTHERN ROCKIES TEAM 5

INCIDENT COMMANDER: JOE SAMPSON

EAST FORK FIRE

SEPTEMBER 9, 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:** 61%
Total Personnel: 296 **Engines:** 4 **Helicopters:** 1 **Hand Crews:** 4

CURRENT STATUS/ PLANNED ACTIONS

Fire crews continue to look for hotspots throughout the fire area, “mopping-up” the smoldering fuels and removing the residual heat. 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.

Joe Sampson’s Complex Incident Management Team will be transferring command of the East Fork Fire back to the local unit on Monday, September 11th. Incident Commander Ray Flannagan and firefighting/support personnel will “shadow” current resources on Sunday, ensuring for a smooth and seamless transition. The Incident Command Post (ICP) will relocate to the Murphy Lake Forest Service office and fire camp will move to the Ant Flat Road area.

WEATHER AND FIRE BEHAVIOR

A week upper-level disturbance moved across the incident yesterday with no measurable moisture recorded on the fire. Mostly cloudy skies gave way to clearing skies as the disturbance moved away. The temperatures across the incident climbed into the lower to mid-60s. Humidity in the afternoon fell into the 40th percentile. Winds were largely terrain driven with a slight southwest component. The weather across the incident will be quiet this weekend and into early next week. A ridge will be building across the region, giving the area warm and dry weather with little to no precipitation.

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 increased solar radiation. With the warmer weather, pockets of heat are easier to locate and extinguish.

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The Flathead National Forest rescinded its previously issued area closure order (#01-01-08-23-20) on September 2, 2023.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.