



Forest Service News Release

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www.fs.usda.gov/gwj

Matts Creek Fire Update - Wednesday, November 15 – 5 p.m.

Current Status: The Matts Creek Fire is 5 miles southeast of Glasgow, Virginia and 5 miles northwest of Big Island, Virginia. The fire is located south of US-501 and the James River within the James River Face Wilderness on the Jefferson National Forest.

The entire fire is on National Forest lands, there are no structures threatened.

Estimated Acreage: 2500 acres

County: Bedford County

Containment: 0% contained

Date and Cause Reported: The fire was reported on Sunday, November 12, 2023. The cause of this fire is undetermined.

Resources on the Fire: Approximately 120 firefighters and support staff, 6 fire crews, 1-hot shot crew, 2 type-6 engines, 3 Type 1 helicopters, and 2 fixed wing air tankers using water only.

Incident Objectives:

- Safety of the public, firefighters, and aviation resources is always the number one priority.
- Protect and minimize threats to all private property and other identified properties in and around Hunt Club Road (FSR54) and Peters Creek Road (SR600) in Bedford County utilizing manmade features such as trail systems, roads, and other natural barriers.

Smoke and Air Quality: Winds will be light today so smoke may occur in nearby communities. For information on air quality visit AirNow.gov

Cooperators: National Park Service-Blue Ridge Parkway, Bedford County Fire & Rescue, Amherst County Public Safety, Rockbridge County Fire-Rescue & Emergency Management, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Forestry.

Blue Ridge Parkway announces temporary closure from milepost 66.3 to 85.9 to assist crews battling the nearby Matt's Creek Fire. A full closure from milepost 66.3, near US Highway 501, to milepost 85.9, at VA Route 43, on the Blue Ridge Parkway will go into effect beginning Wednesday evening, November 15, 2023, until further notice. Park visitors should plan for a detour from the north or south using these adjacent routes and Interstate 81.

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Parkway officials are implementing the closure to assist US Forest Service crews fighting the [Matt's Creek Fire](#). The fire is located within the James River Face Wilderness and currently entirely on National Forest lands within the Jefferson National Forest. This proactive closure is due to worsening smoke impacts in the area and allows crews to stage equipment and conduct operations south of the fire boundary using Parkway lands to access the area.

Behind closed gates, the Parkway is closed to all uses including motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. The public's cooperation with these closures helps support the safety of staff, visitors, and fire crews.

Wilderness Area Closures: The James River Face Wilderness and all associated trails, including a section of Appalachian National Scenic Trail, are closed to all public use due to the on-going wildland fire.

The following areas are temporarily closed to allow for public and fire fighter safety:

- Appalachian Trail (FT #1) from James River Foot Bridge to Petite's Gap Road (FR #35)
- James River Foot Bridge Parking Lot

Wilderness Trail Closures Continued-

- Matts Creek Trail (FT #4/Old A.T.)
- Piney Ridge Trail (FT #2)
- Balcony Falls Trail (FT #7)
- Gunther Ridge Trail (FT #8)
- Belfast Trail (FT #9)
- Sulphur Springs Trail (FT# 3001)

Use caution and obey all road signs for your safety. Motorists should be alert for firefighter vehicles and smoke.

Fire Restrictions:

Stage 1 Fire Restrictions in effect: For the protection of public health and safety, the following acts are prohibited on all lands administered by George Washington & Jefferson National Forest.

1. Building, maintaining, attending, or using a fire or campfire outside of developed recreation sites.
2. Possessing, discharging, or using any kind of firework or other pyrotechnic device.

Campfires in a Forest Service provided metal fire pit, ring or grill at a developed recreation site are allowed.

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General Fire Information:

- Safety of the public and firefighters is always the number one priority when dealing with wildfires.
- Homeowners can learn how to make their homes less susceptible to wildfires by visiting: www.firewise.org

For fire updates: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/vavaf-matts-creek-fire>

Visit forest information for the George Washington & Jefferson National Forests website www.fs.usda.gov/gwj or follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/GWJNF