



Matts Creek Fire Update Tuesday, November 21, 2023

Hours: 8 am-8 pm **Phone:** (504) 313-4859 **Email:** 2023.MattsCreek@firenet.gov
InciWeb: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident-information/vavaf-matts-creek-fire>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GWJNF>

Acres: 11,016
Cause: undetermined
Containment: 33%
Total personnel: 380

Start Date: Sunday, November 12, 2023
Location: James River Face Wilderness
and Blue Ridge Parkway
Fuels: Mixed hardwoods, shrubby
vegetation, and leaf litter

A strong weather system with a large amount of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico and western Atlantic Ocean will bring “prolific rain” to the area today, according to Incident Meteorologist Christian Cassell. Rain will fall all day, intensifying in the evening, with a predicted 1-3 inches across the fire area. As a result, Fire Behavior Analyst Greg Titus said, “Due to the ongoing rain, fire spread is nearly impossible. Do not expect to see active fire today.” Due to the good work done to contain the fire, lack of active fire and concern over public and firefighter safety during heavy rain, firefighters will take a pause from field operations today and focus on training and equipment maintenance at the Incident Command Post. Tomorrow they will return to the fire area to continue work to contain the fire and begin repairs to areas affected by fire suppression operations.

Operations: Yesterday, firefighters continued to improve, mop up and patrol fire lines around the fire perimeter. The fire moved off slopes on the western side of the fire where firefighters conducted an aerial strategic firing operation on Sunday. Firefighters helped bring the fire to containment lines on flatter ground with tactical firing, closing gaps of unburned fuel between the fire and the control lines. Structure protection specialists assessed structures in the Hunt Camp Road area on the eastern side of the fire and in the Arnold Valley area west of the fire.

Investigators have determined that the small, 0.75-acre Hercules Fire near Snowden was caused by human activity and was not the result of a spot fire from the Matts Creek Fire. The Hercules Fire was contained and is in patrol status. The cause of the Matts Creek Fire is still under investigation.

Personnel and equipment on the fire include 7 hand crews, 15 engines, 4 helicopters, 2 water tenders and 1 drone.

Weather and Fire Behavior: With the rain, no active fire behavior is expected. Heat remains in larger fuels and in areas where vegetation is sheltered from the rain. Temperatures will remain in the lower 40s and easterly winds will be 5-10 miles per hour with gusts of up to 12 mph. For tomorrow, temperatures will increase to the mid-50s and northwest winds of 15-20 mph with gusts of up to 30 mph.

Smoke and Air Quality: An incident air resource advisor issues smoke reports at <https://outlooks.wildlandfiresmoke.net/outlook>. For more information on air quality visit AirNow.gov. Please use caution when driving in low-visibility areas.

Temporary Flight Restrictions: A Temporary Flight Restriction is in place around the fire area. Further information can be found at https://tfr.faa.gov/save_pages/detail_3_4016.html

Road Closures: Petites Gap Road (FSR35) is closed to all public use between the Belfast Trailhead and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Blue Ridge Parkway Temporary Closure: The Blue Ridge Parkway is closed from milepost 66.3, near US Highway 501, to milepost 85.9, at VA Route 43 until further notice. Park visitors should plan for a detour from the north or south using adjacent routes and Interstate 81.

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:

- Locher Tract
- Glenwood Horse Trail (FT#3004) from the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Hellgate Trailhead
- Appalachian Trail (FT #1) from James River Foot Bridge to Petites Gap Road (FR #35)
- James River Foot Bridge Parking Lot
- Matts Creek Trail (FT #4/Old A.T.)
- Piney Ridge Trail (FT #2)
- 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.