



Matts Creek Fire Update Wednesday, November 22, 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: 11,020
Cause: undetermined
Containment: 57%
Total personnel: 346

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

Note: The Blue Ridge Parkway along the fire (from milepost 66.3, near US Highway 501, to milepost 85.9 at VA Route 43) is now open. Due to yesterday's downpour, rocks and other debris may roll into roads in and around the fire area. Please drive carefully in these areas, especially in areas of low visibility. If you see hazards on roadways, please report them to the VDOT Customer Service line at 800-367-7623.

Yesterday 3.5 inches of rain fell across the fire area. That much rain equates to 1.1 billion gallons of water, the equivalent of more than three million type 6 (wildland firefighting) engines! Firefighters had made good progress building containment lines around the fire and Mother Nature came to their aid for mop up to remove fire threat.

Operations:

Yesterday: Because the fire was not expected to spread yesterday with firelines in place and predicted rain, firefighters took a pause from field operations and worked at the incident command post, maintaining equipment and taking training. They conducted drills of medical emergency response procedures.

Today: Firefighters will engage the fire as safety and road conditions allow today. They will continue to mop up and patrol firelines and begin repair of roads and areas affected by fire suppression. They will also identify and remove fire-weakened trees that may pose a hazard, especially with today's gusty winds. Firefighters will pilot a drone over the fire area to assess the fire in steep areas and detect remaining heat. Due to the shift from fire suppression to fire repair, many firefighters will be released from the incident.

Personnel and equipment on the fire include 6 hand crews, 1 camp crew, 11 engines, 2 ambulances, 1 water tender and 1 drone.

Weather and Fire Behavior: Today will be cool and breezy, with high temperatures in the low 50s and west-northwest winds 15-20 mph. Gusts will be to 30 mph this afternoon. Relative humidity will be 60-70 percent. No active fire is expected today, but large logs may smolder.

Smoke and Air Quality: An incident air resource advisor issues smoke reports at <https://outlooks.wildlandfiresmoke.net/outlook>. Due to lack of fire behavior, this will be the last day an air

resources advisor is assigned to the fire. 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 remains in place around the fire area until this evening. Further information can be found at https://tfr.faa.gov/save_pages/detail_3_4016.html

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

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 firefighting and fire suppression repair activities.

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.