



## Matts Creek Fire Update

### Wednesday, November 23, 2023

**Hours:** 8 am-8 pm **Phone:** (504) 313-4859 **Email:** [2023.MattsCreek@firenet.gov](mailto: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:** 84%  
**Total personnel:** 352

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

### HAPPY THANKSGIVING

As fire personnel (from 38 states and the District of Columbia) continue to focus on cooling remaining hotspots and removing weakened trees on the Matts Creek Fire, the Southern Area Red Team is thankful to the local community for your tremendous support, for the heavy rain in recent days, and for no serious public or firefighter injuries or loss of homes.

With clearer weather today, the fire team will continue to use techniques that minimize impact to the forest, protect water quality, and ensure public safety on forest roads and trails. While the Blue Ridge Parkway is now open, all roads and trails within the fire area remain closed.

Although smoke may be visible at times on high ridges and in valleys, especially as the fire area dries out, there is no expected risk of fire spread. Work continues today by ground crews and an aerial drone will be used today for reconnaissance. Firefighters will continue taking steps to cool smoldering areas, prevent soil erosion and repair areas used during firefighting back into as natural a condition as possible.

**Weather and Fire Behavior:** Meteorologists checking rain gauges yesterday discovered that up to 5 inches had fallen Tuesday in multiple locations on the eastern side of the fire. A drying trend is expected over the next few days, with mostly sunny weather today and light northwest winds between 5 and 10 miles per hour. A shallow surface inversion this morning will lift, with temperatures in the low 50s and humidity 40 to 50%. Cloud cover will increase through the night, with patchy dense fog possible in the valleys where winds will be lighter. Temperatures will drop overnight to the mid 30s and humidity will increase to 70 to 80 percent by morning.

**Operations:** Yesterday, firefighters began assessment and repair of roads leading into the fire area, strengthening existing fire lines where needed, and felling fire-damaged trees along roads and trails. On the west edge of the fire near the horse trail, firefighters safely dropped a burned tree that was leaning downhill, to remove a risk to a residence below. Today, ground crews continue to mop up remaining hot spots on the eastern side of the fire. They will begin suppression repair along interior trails with special attention to the Appalachian Trail. Patrol of the Blue Ridge Parkway continues. The gate at Petite's Gap remains closed, due to ongoing work and potential hazards, but the barricade has been relocated to provide residents access to a local spring.

Fire personnel and equipment include 6 hand crews, 13 engines, 1 water tender, 2 ambulances and 1 drone.

**Smoke and Air Quality:** Air quality reports can be found at <https://outlooks.wildlandfiresmoke.net/outlook>. For more information, visit AirNow.gov.

**Temporary Flight Restrictions:** A Temporary Flight Restriction around the fire area has been lifted.

**Road Closures:** Petites Gap Road (FSR35) remains closed to all public use above the local spring and the Blue Ridge Parkway. The Blue Ridge Parkway is now open along the fire perimeter (from milepost 66.3, near US Highway 501, to milepost 85.9, at VA Route 43).

**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 remaining hazards and fire suppression repair.

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.

**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.