



Matts Creek Fire Update Friday, November 24, 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: 88%
Total personnel: 249

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

Fire crews made continued progress yesterday to detect and eliminate hot spots, increase security of containment lines, and repair impacts to roads and trails. An infrared flight overnight showed that the immediate perimeter of the fire is cool, while heat remains on the interior. With yesterday's work completed, firefighters and support personnel enjoyed a well-deserved Thanksgiving dinner last night at the Incident Command Post.

Work also began yesterday with Forest resource advisors to repair areas impacted by initial attack efforts along the Appalachian Trail, close to where the fire started. With fire crews and heavy equipment still at work today, and hazard trees remaining across the fire area, all roads and trails within the burned area remain closed until public entry is determined to be safe.

Cloud cover, cooler temperatures, and higher humidity will facilitate progress on mop-up and suppression repair today. Based on the changing workload, some of the firefighters and many of the support personnel are being released. Command of the fire will be handed off at 6 p.m. to a local U.S. Forest Service Type 3 Incident Command Team, which will continue to keep the public informed of its progress.

The Southern Area Red Team has been honored to serve the George Washington & Jefferson National Forests over the last week and a half, and is grateful to all the cooperators, partners and local community members who contributed to us safely accomplishing our mission.

Weather and Fire Behavior: Temperature at the Incident Command Post this morning was 28 degrees, and temperatures in the fire area today will reach the low to mid 50s. Cloud cover remains across the fire area, with light northeast winds up to 7 mph after 10 a.m. Humidity will be 45 – 55%. Temperatures will cool further tomorrow with highs in the 40s. Smoldering continues in leaf litter and snags, with no fire spread.

Operations: The aerial drone and certified pilot will continue to support fire crews by searching for heat. A reduced number of crews will be moving and working across and around the fire, to further secure the burned area and work towards the Forest goal of safely reopening the wilderness for public use.

Fire personnel and equipment include 3 hand crews, 4 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: None.

Road Closures: Petites Gap Road (FSR35) remains closed to all public use between 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 Forests.

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.