



Matts Creek Fire Update Friday November 17, 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: 5,148
Cause: undetermined
Containment: 2%
Total personnel: 107

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

Residents and motorists in areas near the James River Face Wilderness should expect heavy smoke today. Please use caution when traveling. Please note that tomorrow, areas south and east of the fire should expect smoke due to a wind shift.

Operations: Yesterday firefighters improved handline from the James River to the Blue Ridge Parkway on the southeast side of the fire. They strengthened firelines south of the fire to Petite's Gap, including tactical burning, and cleared an old horse trail on the west side of the fire to serve as a containment line. Today the Southern Area Red Team assumed command of the fire. Fighters will continue to build, improve and mop up firelines and identify areas for making new firelines. They will concentrate on mopping up areas on the southern and eastern side of the fire in anticipation of winds shifting and blowing from the northwest tomorrow. More firefighters and equipment are on the way. Firefighters will work throughout the night to monitor and contain the fire.

Weather and Fire Behavior: Cloudy skies will arrive ahead of an approaching cold front today. Relative humidities will remain moderate today (50 – 70%) with increasing chances for showers through the evening. Rainfall around a tenth of an inch or less are expected. Winds today will be from the south- southwest, around 10 miles per hour, shifting to northwest winds tomorrow. Gusts tomorrow will be up to 25 mph. Today's fire behavior will be moderated by high humidity, giving firefighters opportunity to make good progress to contain the fire. However, the potential for active fire behavior exists, especially in areas with pine trees with low branches, large logs on the ground and falling leaves.

Smoke and Air Quality: Heavy smoke is likely in communities and along roadways northeast of the fire today. For information on air quality visit AirNow.gov. An air resource advisor is working on the incident to issue smoke outlooks (<https://outlooks.wildlandfiresmoke.net/outlook>) and install air monitors in nearby communities.

Closures and Restrictions: *The entire James River Face Wilderness is closed to all public use.*

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.

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 Petites Gap Road (FR #35)
- James River Foot Bridge Parking Lot
- 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)
- Glenwood Horse Trail (FT#3004) from the Blue Ridge Parkway crossing to the Hellgate Trailhead
- Locher Tract

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.