



Blacktail Canyon

Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

Fire Information: 406-865-0941 Email: 2024.blacktailcanyon@firenet.gov

<https://www.facebook.com/usfsbdf/>

<https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/mtbdf-blacktail-canyon>

July 23, 2024 9:00 a.m.

Incident Commander J. Willoughby

Location: southeast of Butte, MT between Interstate 90 and Highway 2

Start Date: 7/19/2024

Cause: Undetermined

Size: 76 acres

Resources on Site: 3 engines, 1 helicopter, 3 type 1 "hotshot" hand crews, 4 type 2 hand crews

Total Personnel Assigned: 179

KEY MESSAGES:

The evacuation warning issued by Butte-Silver Bow Law Enforcement Department for Blacktail Canyon Road southeast of Homestake Road, Homestake Road east of Blacktail Canyon Road, and Passmore Canyon is still in effect.

The weather forecast calls for critical fire weather conditions through Thursday, with the passage of a cold front. A Fire Weather Watch will be in effect over much of western Montana on Wednesday, for gusty winds, low relative humidity, chances for thunderstorms, and an unstable atmosphere. These conditions increase the risk for new and existing fires to spread quickly. Fire officials are keeping a close tab on these conditions, as they affect fire behavior and subsequent firefighting operations. Securing the fire edge is paramount, in anticipation of the cold front passage.

The combination of these weather conditions, the volume of fuel in and adjacent to the fire area, and the amount of internal residual heat result in significant potential for this fire. The public is advised to stay out of the area, as crews and helicopters continue their work. Ensuring firefighter safety and protecting life and property are of the utmost importance during any incident.

CURRENT STATUS/PLANNED ACTIONS:

An aerial mapping flight puts the fire at 76 acres, including a couple spots identified and suppressed by crews yesterday. The infrared guided aircraft assisted crews in locating and securing spot fires outside the line through residual smoke and dead and down fuels. Crews secured these "spots" by walking in a "grid" pattern along the fire edge.

Crews were able to complete sawline and associated handline around the fire perimeter, starting at the southwest corner of the fire in the Beaver Pond Meadows area and progressing northward around both flanks to meet at the head of the fire in upper Blacktail Canyon. The "hotshot" crews completed sawline by creating a pathway, removing dead and down fuels, and mitigating "snag" hazards. Additional crews completed handline by removing all fuels down to bare mineral soil and securing the fire edge. Crews will continue to hold and secure the constructed lines, "mopping-up" areas of residual heat, over the next couple of days. There is still a tremendous amount of residual heat in the smoldering fuels throughout the fire footprint. Crews have been able to complete these "mop-up" operations along approximately 20% of the southern portion of the fire's edge so far.



These crews will again camp near the fire to decrease travel time back and forth, maximizing efficiency and increasing firefighter safety. Helicopters will be available for aerial support with bucket drops and movement of supplies and cargo through "sling loads."

Working in cooperation with the Butte-Silver Bow officials, fire managers have identified and prioritized critical values at risk, focusing available resources and current efforts on the protection of the private structures in the Blacktail Canyon, Homestake Road and Passmore Canyon areas. (Local Fire Department engines have provided structure assessments.)

WEATHER AND FIRE BEHAVIOR

Fire behavior was moderate yesterday, with single tree torching, smoldering, and creeping observed, despite the hot and dry conditions. Residual smoke may be visible from numerous areas around Butte, as larger fuels consume interior to the fire's edge. Winds will be more westerly today, with potential gusts of 25-30 mph during the afternoon and evening hours. Hot and dry conditions continue through Wednesday, with isolated afternoon thunderstorms. Wednesday's conditions will be critical fire weather – hot, dry and windy with a chance of dry thunderstorms. Increased winds and showers enter the area, as the ridge of high pressure breaks down and a cold front moves through on Thursday.

