



Southwest Area Incident Management Team

TEAM 3 – MATT RAU – INCIDENT COMMANDER



Public Meeting scheduled for tonight in Pine, AZ Daily Update: September 6, 2024

Start Date: August 28, 2024

Location: Payson Ranger District, AZ

Personnel: 340

Containment: 0%

Cause: Lightning

Fuels: Ponderosa Pine, Mixed Conifer, Chaparral

Highlights: The Tonto National Forest and SW Area Incident Management Team will be holding a public meeting on Friday, September 6, 2024 at 6 p.m. at the Pine Community Center 3872 AZ-87, Pine, AZ, 85544. The public meeting will be in person and streamed through the Tonto National Forest Facebook page: @TontoNationalForest. If by chance we run into problems streaming, the meeting will be recorded and uploaded to view later.

Operations:

West Fire - 28 Acres: Removal of fuels along Milk Ranch Road continues to be the focus of the work. Today masticators will continue preparing this road to be defensible and hold the fire within the identified containment area. Additional engines and crews are removing dead trees along roads to prevent them from catching fire or falling onto roads. A crew is also constructing firelines from Bray Creek Ranch north to the Rim. In Camp Geronimo vegetation is being cut back from roads and structures are being prepared with hose and sprinklers. Dozers and equipment will continue improving existing fuel breaks just west of Pine.

Preacher Fire - 3 Acre: Yesterday, crews finished preparing firelines north of the fire. The southern lines are nearly complete. Crews from the northside of the Preacher Fire will relocate to the southern side to help accomplish the remaining preparation. Engines continue to patrol the lines.

Both fires are being managed under a confine/contain strategy with the goal of reintroducing fire into a fire dependent ecosystem. The intended result of managing naturally caused fires are to reduce hazardous fuels, encourage the growth of native forage, improve range conditions, increase species diversity, protect and improve wildlife habitat, improve watershed conditions and restore ecological balance. The total planning areas for the West Fire includes 16,700 acres, for Preacher Fire 3,200 acres. This will decrease unnaturally high accumulations of fuels and the potential for future fires to burn with unnaturally high severity, aligning with the Forest Service Wildfire Crisis Strategy: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/wildfire-crisis>.

Weather: Sunny and hot conditions persist with temperatures in the middle to upper 80's. The relative humidity has fallen to around 20% and the wind is terrain driven at speeds less than 10 mph with gusts to 15 mph. The overall weather pattern will not change through the end of the week with hot and dry conditions. Low shower and thunderstorm chances are anticipated to return to the region on the weekend.

Safety: With the weekend upon us, we want to remind local and visitors to use caution with the additional fire traffic in and around the communities of Payson, Pine, Strawberry, Tonto Village, Star Valley, and Whispering Pines.

Closure: The Tonto National Forest has issued a closure for land surrounding the West Fire.

<https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-publication/aztnf-2024-west-fire-tnf/us-forest-service-closure-order-for-west-fire-09-04-2024>

Smoke: Smoke from the West and Preacher Fires may be visible in the surrounding areas for many days. Smoke will be heavier in the mornings as it settles into the lower elevations and will lift as temperatures increase. As temperatures increase the volume of smoke may increase due to the drying and ignition of available fuels. Smoke-sensitive individuals and people with respiratory problems or heart disease are encouraged to take precautionary measures. Learn more about smoke impacts on the. <https://azdeq.gov/wildfire-faqs>

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<https://www.fs.usda.gov/tonto>

Phone Number: (928)-291-7354 (7 a-7 p) **Media Phone Number:** (928)-291-6528 (7a -7p.)

Inciweb: <https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/aztnf-2024-west-fire-tnf> **Email:** 2024.west@firenet.gov