



Sawlog Fire

Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest



Fire Information: 406-683-3920

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61563603874079>

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

May 4, 2025 9:00 a.m.

Incident Commander: Richard Griffin (Type 3 IC)

Location: 15 miles northeast of Wisdom, MT in the Sawlog Creek drainage

Start Date: 05/01/2025

Cause: Undetermined – under investigation

Size: 1,500 acres (estimate from a helicopter mapping operation)

Resources on Site: 1 crew; 1 engine; 1 light helicopter. Additional resources enroute.

Total Personnel: 51+

CURRENT STATUS/PLANNED ACTIONS:

Conditions, including dry fuels and gusty winds, precluded firefighters from implementing any strategic firing operations yesterday. The fire activity was driven by the dry fuels and gusty winds that aligned with the topographic features of the drainage.

Firefighters experienced extreme fire behavior, especially in the timbered areas with a heavy concentration of "dead and downed" trees. The fire progressed east across Sawlog Creek, toward the fire footprint from the 2021 Alder Fire. The fire footprint from the 2021 Christensen Fire lies to the south. The crews, assisted by the helicopter, directly attacked the fire until incoming weather prompted them to disengage in the afternoon hours. Winds up to 40-50 mph associated with passing thunderstorms resulted in gusty outflow winds and downdrafts, which present dangerous conditions for firefighters. Zero precipitation fell over the fire area. Fire officials were unable to get updated acreage from an overnight infrared (IR) flight. However, mapping operations from the helicopter yesterday afternoon estimated the fire at 1,500 acres.

Today's strategy is to secure the edges, mopping up hot spots and extinguishing areas of residual heat, especially on the west side of the river. As a precautionary measure, firefighters with engines will be providing structure protection measures for private structures on the western flank along the Big Hole River. A load of 8 smokejumpers will arrive today; given the limited access, the jumpers are the best resource to get into various inaccessible areas of the fire. They will assist in scouting opportunities for control and containment features to limit impacts to the critical values at risk (including the private land and infrastructure).

Fire investigators will continue their search to determine the fire's cause. Neither the Forest Service nor the BLM had any prescribed fires (commonly referred to as "controlled burns") in that area.

WEATHER, FUELS, AND FIRE BEHAVIOR:

Today's weather should be cooler, moderating fire behavior and presenting firefighters with better conditions.

The fire is burning mainly in sagebrush and Lodgepole pine timber. The north-facing slopes in the area consist of a high "dead and downed" fuel component in a mixed conifer forest, and numerous "snags" or hazard trees are present. This fuel combination poses additional hazards for firefighters and affects on-the-ground progress. Ensuring firefighter safety and protecting life and property are of the utmost importance during any incident.

The fire has exhibited moderate to extreme fire behavior, with 3 to 5-foot flame lengths in the sagebrush and isolated torching, group torching, and crown runs through the tops of the trees in the timbered areas. When winds have aligned with the orientation of drainages, fire behavior has been extreme. Fuel conditions, during this time of year (pre-green up), are extremely dry.

CLOSURES:

For public safety reasons, the Bureau of Land Management has issued a temporary closure for the Sawlog dispersed camping area, located at the Big Hole River ford site. Specific closure language can be viewed on the [Sawlog Fire Inciweb page](#), Closures tab.