

News Release



USDA Forest Service
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests
Gunnison Ranger District
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Gunnison, CO 81230-2197

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRE BURNING IN WEST ELKS

Gunnison, CO (July 14, 2008)- The Gunnison Ranger District of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest (GMUG) is managing a fire burning in the West Elks Wilderness. The fire, located in Township 50 N. Range 4 West, section 35, began from a lightning strike and was reported on July 1. At that time it was estimated to be less than an acre in size, burning in mostly insect-killed Douglas fir. Initial attack resources observed the likely cause, terrain, potential to burn, fuel type and loading and other pertinent factors, as well as, whether private lands were threatened. The fire is burning in an area with steep, rocky and rugged terrain requiring firefighters to complete several hours of hiking cross-country to access it.

In consultation, the Gunnison District Ranger made the determination to manage the fire under a “confinement” strategy. He based this decision on the need to provide for firefighter safety and to manage potentially high fire-fighting costs due to the rough terrain and relative inaccessibility of the fire.

District Ranger Jim Dawson stated, “We are very aware that there have been other wildfires around the State and that some Forests and locales are enacting fire restrictions.” Dawson went on to state, “This fire is a higher elevation fire, with cooler temperatures and higher humidity than some of the areas around us. We will “confine” this fire until such time that we can safely and cost-effectively suppress it and/or until our typical for this time of year, monsoon rains arrive in the area.”

When smoke from the California fires clears from the area, smoke from this fire will be visible from Highway 50 and to boaters on Blue Mesa Reservoir. Signs that a wildfire is in progress are posted in the area and the National Park Service and campground hosts have been notified and advised. The fire is currently estimated at 65 acres in size and burning in very rough and relatively inaccessible terrain. There are no trails in the area and the closest private land is some 4 miles to the south-southwest.

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