



Montrose Interagency

Fire Management

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Bureau of Land Management • Colorado State Forest Service • National Park Service • US Forest Service

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Fire Burning in West Elks Wilderness Heats Up - Closure Order Issued

Montrose, CO (September 9, 2008) – The Montrose Interagency Fire Management Unit (MIFMU) reported that a “Fire Use” fire is being managed on the Gunnison Ranger District of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest. The fire is currently about 850 acres in size, burning in the West Elks Wilderness about 18 miles west of Gunnison, Colorado. No private lands or structures are threatened

The Gunnison Ranger District of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest (GMUG) has enacted a temporary area closure around the West Elk Fire for public safety and protection. The public is prohibited from entering or being in the closed area. The closure area is bounded by the Soap Creek Road on the west and the Red Creek Road on the east. It extends from the West Elk Wilderness boundary on the south to Bonefish Peak to the north.

The fire has been burning in the West Elk Wilderness since it was ignited by lightning on July 1, 2008. The fire has been managed under a “confinement strategy” for firefighter protection and due to the extremely steep, rugged terrain and lack of access to the area. The fire, while continuing to burn, remains within defined management areas.

Due to winds from a front moving into the area, the fire has grown in size and intensity over the last few days. Fire managers are closely monitoring the burning in advance of winds from the approaching front that will likely continue to keep the fire actively burning. Fire fighting resources from the Montrose Interagency Fire Management unit

http://gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/dispatch_centers/r2mtc/

and additional resources in the area are available if any portion of the fire needs to be suppressed.

Meanwhile, smoke from the fire will be clearly visible from Highway 50 and to boaters on Blue Mesa Reservoir. Gunnison and Crested Butte may also be impacted by drifting smoke. Signs that a wildfire is in progress are posted along the highway in the area, and the National Park Service and campground hosts have been advised of the fire behavior and the closure and media outlets have been notified.

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