



**U.S. Forest Service
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests
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News Release

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Elk Fire Final Update

August 3, 2016

9:00 a.m.

Location:

- Lakeside Ranger District
- 4 miles northeast of Pinetop
- T9N R24E Section 18

Discovery Date: July 21, 2016

Size: 1,887 acres in size in light to medium fuels **Percent Contained:** 100%

Cause: Lightning

Resources Assigned: one Type 6 engine

Summary: The Elk fire is burning southwest of Turkey Mountain on the Lakeside Ranger District and smoke may be visible from the communities of Pinetop-Lakeside and Show Low, as well as State Highway 260 and U.S. Highway 60. Fire managers made the decision to confine this lightning-caused fire to accomplish multiple objectives. On July 29, crews completed burn out operations to extend the confinement area. The fire is expected to continue burning interior pockets of unburned fuels and stump holes within the fire area until completely extinguished by monsoonal rains.

Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) is the regulatory agency for monitoring air quality, and they monitor air quality year-round. Permanent air quality monitors are in place in the White Mountains, and when community concerns are elevated, ADEQ can place portable monitors where needed. Unlike prescribed fires, unplanned wildland fires are not submitted for approval by ADEQ. However, in a close relationship with ADEQ, fire managers will utilize smoke reduction techniques to minimize impacts to local communities.

Each fire is carefully considered with an extensive process that includes consideration of potential short- and long-term smoke impacts to communities. The intent is to re-introduce fire back into the adapted environment, enhance overall forest health, reduce hazardous fuel loads, and protect valued resources while providing for firefighter and public safety first.

Objectives for this strategy include using low to moderate intensity fire with occasional high severity intensities to consume accumulations of dead and down woody debris from the forest floor. Additionally, burning off the understory fuels help raise the canopy heights of the older trees ultimately protecting them from being lost to a potential catastrophic fire event in the future.

There are a number of additional benefits for allowing fire to burn in a natural setting, which include protection of wildlife habitat, historic heritage sites, vital watersheds, critical infrastructure, and residential expansions that fall within the urban interface where human developments meet the forest. Soils also become replenished with nutrients as burnt organic material decomposes into the ground stimulating new growth of native forbs and grasses.

Fire Information: Further information on this incident is available on Inciweb at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4890/>; 311 via your mobile device, landline 928.333.3412, https://twitter.com/A_SNFs and <https://www.facebook.com/apachesitgreavesnfs>.