



NEWS RELEASE

Lolo National Forest

United States
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Forest Service
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Above Average Totals for 2007 Fire Season

Missoula, MT. – The 2007 fire season on the Lolo National Forest was marked by above average totals for acres burned and also for the intensity of the fire behavior. Fire managers and firefighters reported conditions that many had not seen before in their careers.

As of October 5, The Lolo NF had approximately 139,370 acres burn. The ten year average is 16,139 acres. The forest averages three escaped, large fires, per year. This year the Lolo had four: Sawmill; Wyman II; Fisher Point, and the Conger Fires. The forest had 200 fires total – exceeding the ten year average of 179. The forest's containment rate for suppression fires this year was 98 percent.

Human caused fires totaled 74, or 37 percent of the total. On average, human caused fires represent approximately 35 percent of the total fires on the Lolo NF – most of them coming in the spring and fall. This year that pattern continued; the forest had 24 human caused fires before July 1. The Lolo NF persisted in a strong fire prevention campaign, with fire prevention and recreation specialists working hard to educate the public about fire hazards. They participated in numerous public events and routinely made public contacts at trailheads and campgrounds. Their activities included distribution of over 500 flyers; over 25 sidewalk displays; 15 electronic reader board displays; participation at several county fairs; 20 community/homeowner assessments for defensible space; numerous community meetings, and participation with Smokey Bear at a University of Montana football game and the UM 2007 Homecoming Parade. Their total public contacts exceeded 22,000.

The Northern Rockies remains in a long term drought and the 2007 fire season on the Lolo National Forest was made more intense by extremely dry fuels, both large and small. The fuel moisture content remained well below historic averages. Indicators for exceptional and intense fire behavior also were marked by record numbers – the Energy Release Component (ERC) figures during August were often in

the 80s, far above the typical number of 50 or 55. The ERC is a number related to the amount of available energy (BTUS) per unit area at the flaming front of a fire.

Firefighters this summer reported fires that were highly resistant to both ground and air suppression, and that some fires were burning into the wind, something most firefighters had never seen before. There were also reports that deciduous trees like alder were torching, another phenomena that firefighters rarely see, and an indication that even in riparian areas fuels were extremely dry.

The 2007 fire season on the Lolo National Forest also started earlier than normal, with several large fires igniting before August. Smoke persisted through much of August and September and Lolo forest officials and fire managers extended their thanks to the public for their support of firefighters and fire operations.

Lolo National Forest Fire Management Officer Chuck Stanich offered this thank you:

“We had closures in place for much of the fire season and we had impacts from smoke and evacuations. It was a long and sometimes trying fire season. The support we received from the local communities went a long way in helping us manage these large fires while also protecting life and property. So, we would just like to thank the public for that support – it made a tough job a lot easier.”

Forest-wide totals

	Total Fires	Total Acres	Human Caused	Escaped Large Fires
Ten Year Average	179	16,139	63	3
2007	200	Approximately 139,370	74	4

Total fires by Ranger District

Seeley Lake: 21

Missoula: 28

Ninemile: 37

Plains/Thompson Falls: 37

Superior: 77