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News Release

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Mason Fire expected to grow as drier conditions return to northern Arizona

Tusayan, Ariz., July 8, 2015—For Immediate Release. Kaibab National Forest fire managers expect the 450-acre Mason Fire that is being managed to achieve resource objectives on the Tusayan Ranger District to grow more rapidly over the next few days as drier conditions return to northern Arizona.

Mason is one of four lightning-caused wildfires being managed as part of the Jar Complex to improve forest health, allow fire to play its natural role as a disturbance factor in the ecosystem, enhance wildlife habitat, and reduce the potential for future high-intensity fires.

Today, firefighters will conduct management ignitions at strategic locations within the planning area established for the Mason Fire in order to protect fire-sensitive resources, reinforce predefined boundaries to fire spread, and create areas burned at low intensity ahead of the main fire in order to reduce the potential for any rapid, higher-intensity fire progression during windy, dry conditions.

Specifically, firefighters will use drip torches to burn fuels west along Forest Road 304 from the existing fire area to FR 2733 and then potentially south along FR 2733. FR 2733 serves as the western perimeter of the 16,100-acre planning area established for both the Mason and Old fires. The planning area is located about 7 miles southeast of the Town of Tusayan and 4 miles south of Grandview Lookout Tower. The Old Fire, which is also being managed to benefit forest resources, remains at about five acres in size but is also expected to become more active given the local drying trend.

“Prior to human settlement in this area, lightning would have caused fires during monsoon season that would have then spread unimpeded until they were rained out or moved into areas of sparse fuels,” said Tusayan District Ranger James Simino. “Managing these naturally-caused fires helps us mimic those historic conditions, which is critical to preventing high-intensity, potentially destructive fires during months like May and June when rain isn’t typically associated with them.”

A road crew is continuing to haul gravel, blade, and make other improvements to heavily-used roads in the fire area. Motorists using forest roads 301, 301A, 302 and 320 are asked to use caution due to the presence of heavy equipment for the road improvement work and firefighting trucks and personnel.

Smoke from the Mason Fire is becoming more prominent as it continues growing and becoming more active. Due to prevailing winds, smoke will largely be pushed toward the northeast, making it visible from Desert View in Grand Canyon National Park and from Cameron, Ariz. Smoke from the four fires may eventually become more visible from other areas including the Town of Tusayan, Highway 64 and Highway 180.

Additional Jar Complex information, photos and maps are available through the following sources: InciWeb <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4344/>; Kaibab National Forest Fire Information Phone Line (928) 635-8311; Text Message - text ‘follow kaibabnf’ to 40404.