

Wallow Fire Update

June 15, 2011 8:00 A.M.

Fire Facts:

Location: Apache, Navajo, Graham, and Greenlee Counties, San Carlos and Fort Apache Reservations, Arizona; Catron County, New Mexico;

Date Started: 05/29/2011

Cause: Human – under investigation

Size: 478,452 acres total

Percent Contained: 20%

Resources: 25 Helicopters, 5 Air Tankers available;
315 Engines; 78 Water Tenders; 19 Dozers

Injuries to Date: 7

Total Personnel: 4,656

Includes 22 hotshot crews; 72 hand crews

Residences: 2,714 threatened; 32 destroyed;
5 damaged

Commercial Property: 473 threatened; 4 destroyed

Outbuildings: 1,216 threatened; 36 destroyed;
1 damaged;

Vehicles: 1 destroyed.

Fire Update

Evacuation for Nutrioso and White Mountain Acres will be lifted at 10:00 AM for residents only.

Firefighters have achieved 20% containment of the 478,452 acre Wallow Fire. Significant progress was made toward containment of the fire with a successful strategic firing operation near Luna Lake. Firefighters continue with patrol, hazard tree removal, structure protection, holding the fire in place, containment line improvement and mop-up across the fire. Weather today will be mostly sunny, with highs in the mid 80s. Winds will be north northwest from 5 to 8 mph becoming southwest between 13 and 16 mph with gusts to 25 mph.

The burnout from FR 220 south to US 180 was completed last night and the containment line held overnight. Today, burnout will continue west towards Alpine. Firefighters continue to coordinate with local fire departments to remove hazards in preparation for eventual re-entry to Alpine and Greer. Fireline repair begins today in the South Fork area. Air support will continue work to slow the spread of the fire.

Operations south of Highway 260 and north of Black River are focused on fireline repair and mop-up. Firelines immediately south of Black River are holding. The construction of approximately 10 miles of indirect line on the Highland Trail between McBride Canyon and Hwy 191 on the south end of the fire is expected to be completed today, although firing operations are dependent on favorable weather. Structure protection continues in the Sunrise Ski Resort Area.

Public Safety

Residents returning to their homes in Nutrioso and White Mountain after evacuating from the Wallow Fire need to take precautions. Utilities have been restored but residents should check for gas leaks. Food left in refrigerators and freezers without electricity likely perished. Air quality due to the fire remains an issue and residents are advised to return to their homes in the afternoon or evening when air quality is better. An evacuee safety brochure distributed by Apache County can be found at <http://inciweb.org/incident/photograph/2262/3/>

Community Meetings Today and Tomorrow.

- Luna Community Center, Luna New Mexico 7:00 P.M. (NM) 6:00 (AZ) **today.**
- Burdette Hall in San Carlos, AZ, 10 A.M. Thursday, June 16
- The 6 P.M. community meeting in Eagar **is cancelled for tonight.**

Current Evacuations

- Evacuations remain in effect in Sunrise, Greer, Blue River and Alpine.
- The communities of **Greer, and Alpine remain evacuated due to continued active fire behavior** in unburned islands within and around these communities. Hazardous burned-out trees, unstable slopes and rockfall, as well as burned out power poles are being evaluated and mitigated.

Evacuee Information

- Today's 10 A.M. meeting for **evacuees only** will be held at the Blue Ridge H. S. in Pinetop/Lakeside.
- Evacuees whose Post Office is closed may pick up their mail at the Eagar Post Office.
- The evacuation center is located at Blue Ridge High School, 1200 W. White Mtn. Blvd., Pinetop/Lakeside. The phone number for the Red Cross operated evacuation center is (602) 336-6660.
- Residents with livestock or animals that need care should contact the Apache County Sheriff's Office (928) 337-4321 or the Greenlee County Sheriff's Office (928) 865-4149.

Pre-Evacuation Alert

- A pre-evacuation alert continues in Apache County for Greens Peak, Hidden Meadows Lodge and surrounding areas.
- A pre-evacuation alert by the Catron County Sheriff's Office continues for Luna, New Mexico.
- Residents in the communities affected by this fire are asked to remain prepared for evacuation.

Road Closures according to Arizona Department of Transportation: <http://www.azdot.gov>

- US 191 is closed between Alpine and north of Clifton (milepost 176-253).
- SRs 261 (mileposts 395-413) and 273 (mileposts 378-394), the main access roads to Big Lake and Crescent Lake in the White Mountains, are closed.
- SR 373 that connects the town of Greer with SR 260 west of Eagar is closed (mileposts 386-391).
- US 180 is closed between SR 260 junction near Eagar and New Mexico state line (mileposts 403-433).
- In southern Arizona, SR 366 is closed at milepost 118 leading up to Mount Graham (milepost 143) near Safford after the U.S. Forest Service determined the risk of wildfire is too extreme to allow access.
- Partial area closures are in effect for the eastside of the Fort Apache Reservation.

Road Openings:

- SR 260 reopened yesterday. Motorists are asked to drive carefully as heavy fire traffic may be present.

Closures and Restrictions

- **Apache – Sitgreaves National Forest** The Apache portion of the Forest is closed to all public entry. For the Sitgreaves portion of the National Forest, a temporary emergency closure order is in effect. For further information call the Arizona fire restrictions hotline (877) 864-6985 or www.publiclands.org/firenews/AZ.php.
- **Gila National Forest** A closure is in effect for the western portion of the Gila National Forest. See <http://www.fs.usda.gov/gila> or call (575) 388-8201, TTY (575) 388-8497.
- **Fort Apache Reservation** Fire restrictions remain in effect. See <http://www.wmat.nsn.us/>

Public Information

The public may call the following numbers for area specific fire information:

- Spanish fire information 877-632-6678
- Springerville, Eagar, Greer, Alpine (928) 333-3412 or 702) 308-3238, (702) 308-3357,
 - (702) 308-8227 from 8 A.M. to 8.P.M.
- Luna and Reserve, NM (575) 533-6928
- Areas south and west of the fire including San Carlos and Fort Apache tribal lands:
 - (877)701-8201 or (928) 205-9884
- Information is also available at: **Website Info:** www.inciweb.org
 - **Twitter:** www.twitter.com/AS_NF **Flickr (photos):** www.flickr.com/apachesitgreavesnf

Media

- Media briefing will be conducted at Round Valley **High School dome** in Eagar at 10 A.M. and 9 P.M.
- Media should call the following numbers to coordinate interviews:
 - Springerville, Eagar, Greer, Alpine Media # (480) 331-9554.
 - Luna and Reserve, New Mexico (east side of fire) Media #: (575) 533-6928
 - Southwest (San Carlos and White Mountain Apache Reservation) Media #: (602) 803-4270