

Saddle Complex Fire Update

September 13, 2011
Bitterroot and Salmon-Challis National Forests

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Date Started: 8/10/2011

Cause: Lightning

Size: 31,397 acres (16,247 on SCNF, 15,150 on BNF)

Percent Contained: 0%

Resources: 3 Helicopters; 1 Water Tender
11 Engines; 6 Crews

Total Personnel: 234

Residences: 20 threatened, 0 destroyed

Residence: 20 threatened; 0 destroyed

Outbuildings: 10 threatened; 0 destroyed

Injuries to Date: 5

Location:

The Complex was comprised of two fires – the Saddle and Stud Fires – which merged on August 22nd into one fire which is burning on the Salmon-Challis and Bitterroot National Forests in Lemhi County, Idaho, and Ravalli County, Montana. Portions of the fire are within the Frank-Church River of No Return Wilderness.

Overview:

MONTANA: The Stage 1 Evacuation was lifted for all homes south of Painted Rocks Reservoir on Sunday September 4, 2011. However, if fire activity increases and causes a threat to private property, the evacuation warning could be re-instated.

Yesterday the smoke cleared sooner in the day and as a result there was more active burning in the area in the areas of the fire that are still holding heat. While single torching trees were observed in limited areas, most of the fire activity consisted of slowly moving surface fire. Two isolated areas of the fire (the southeast and northeast corners) experienced small uphill runs of active crown fire for short periods during in late afternoon. The helicopters dropped a lot of water today, near Dear Creek Point to keep the fire from becoming established in the Deer Creek drainage. Also helicopters dropped water on the east edge of the fire to check fire spread towards the West Fork of the Bitterroot River. Firefighters strengthened and improved fire line and water hose lay in the northeast corner of the fire between Woods Creek and Devil Creek. Where it was feasible fire crews mopped up the fire edge.

Today weather is predicted to be similar to the past few days, but only cumulus clouds are predicted, not thunderstorms. Winds are predicted to be 5-10 miles per hour, with gusts up to 15. Fire activity could increase slightly due to clearer skies and continued warm and dry conditions. Only little spots and no big fire runs are anticipated. Actions planned today are a repeat of those yesterday. Helicopters will continue to be used in all divisions of the fire. Direct suppression by fire crews will continue in the northeast corner of the fire. A hoselay and sprinkler system from Coopers meadow south to the junction of Forest Roads #5677 and #5676 to keep the fire west of the West Fork of the Bitterroot River.

The Smoke Monitoring Station near Painted Rocks Reservoir indicates unhealthy sensitive to good air quality for the last 24 hours. On-line access to real-time smoke monitoring for the local area is available at; <http://www.satguard.com/USFS/aqi.asp>, once on the site select real time data, location Montana.

Closures and Restrictions:

Stage 1 fire restrictions, prohibiting campfires, with certain exceptions, and prohibiting smoking, except in a vehicle, building, developed site or 3 feet diameter cleared area, are in effect in portions of the Bitterroot National Forest that lie within Montana, except the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, AP wilderness and developed sites listed in the closure order.

The previously reported area closures are still in effect on the Bitterroot National Forest; and will remain until access is safe for the public and firefighters. The Salmon-Challis National Forest has lifted the Closure Order for the area between the Squaw Creek road, west to the Spring Creek road, with a south boundary of the Salmon River road and a north boundary of the Idaho/Montana border. The remainder of the closure area is still in effect. (New Closure Order 9/10 at inciweb.org.)

For additional information on the closure areas, as well as the entire Saddle Complex, visit www.inciweb.org/incident/2496, or contact the **West Fork Ranger District (Bitterroot NF) at 406-821-3269** or **North Fork Ranger District (Salmon-Challis NF) at 208-865-2700**.