



Flathead National Forest

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Media Release

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Flathead National Forest Fire Update

Several fires continue to burn in the Flathead National Forest (Flathead NF) prompting new or continued trail closures. It is important that visitors remain aware of these closures, especially given that early season rifle hunting starts tomorrow in parts of the wilderness. Visitors are therefore encouraged to contact the Spotted Bear Ranger District (SBRD) at 406-758-5376; the Hungry Horse Ranger District at 406-387-3800; or the Lewis and Clark National Forest's Rocky Mountain Ranger District (RMRD) at 406-466-5341 for current updates and alternate routes. Additional information, including specific trail closures and maps, for area fires can also be found online at <http://inciweb.org/>. Despite this fire activity, there are over two thousand miles of open trails on which to safely recreate in the Flathead NF.

Fires on the Hungry Horse Ranger District

The **Puzzle Fire** is currently 1579 acres and is being managed by a type III team. It was not highly active yesterday due to the cooler weather. However, the fire has now crossed the Continental Divide onto the RMRD of the Lewis and Clark National Forest. This has prompted additional trail closures and impacts those using the Continental Divide Trail; alternate routes are available.

Firefighters are protecting values at risk in this area, including in the Badger Two Medicine, and are building and implementing a long-term response plan consistent with a confine and contain strategy. Structure protection for cabins and bridges is occurring. Firefighter and public safety is of the highest priority.

The **Square Fire** is a one acre lightning-caused fire which also began on September 9. Together with the Puzzle Fire, these fires are referred to as the Puzzle Fire Complex.

The following closures are in place in the Skyland Area due to the Puzzle Fire Complex: Upper Skyland Road #569 at the junction with Granite Creek Road, including Morrison Trailhead and Trail #154 south to the Spotted Bear District boundary (Star Creek); Puzzle Ridge Trail #264 from the beginning of Skyland Road #569 to its terminus; East Skyland Trail #251 south of the junction with the Elkcalf Mountain Trail #382.

Officials note that Granite Creek Road #9634, Granite Creek Trailhead, and Granite Creek Trail #165 **remain open** to the public. Parties wishing to access Schafer Meadows and the Upper Middle Fork of the Flathead will need to use the Granite Creek Trail to the Big River Trail #155.

Current trail closures in the Lewis and Clark, RMRD's Badger Two Medicine Area are: Lee Creek Trail #141; Kip Creek Trail #142; North Fork Badger Trail #103 from the junction with trails #141/144, south to Big Lodge Mountain at the Continental Divide; and Elbow Creek Trail #145 from the junction with Trail #103 southeast to trail #147.

An **alternate route** for the Continental Divide Trail is available by traveling north along Crucifixion Creek Trail #146 to South Badger Creek Trail #104; northwest along Two Medicine Trail #101 to Badger Cabin and the original trail route.

Spotted Bear Ranger District

A type III team will begin managing both the 449-acre **Stadler Creek Fire** and the 155-acre **Upper Ayres Fire** today. Though the Stadler Creek Fire remains active along most of the perimeter, there was less activity and growth yesterday than in previous days. The Upper Ayres Fire has burned about 12 acres across the Continental Divide onto the RMRD. Both fires are being managed jointly by the RMRD and SBRD. The Upper Ayres Fire was relatively inactive yesterday, but it has the potential to grow to the East. Preparations are being made to take predominantly aerial actions to keep the fire from crossing the South Fork of the Sun River. *Current trail closures around the fire area include: Ayers Creek Trail #273 and Fiction Creek #272; Hoadley #226 over Stadler Pass to Stadler Creek #271 to the junction with the Basin Creek Trail #267; and the South Fork of the Sun #202 from Hoadley to its junction with Trail # 248.*

The **Big Salmon Lake Fire** is currently 4966 acres. Most of the recent fire activity is in the Brownie Creek area burning to the West. There is also some activity as the fire backs slowly down towards Little Salmon Creek, but the fire is still high on the ridge. Monitors at the Salmon Forks Cabin and at the Mud Lake Look out are also providing the public in the area with information. *Trail # 110 Big Salmon Creek is closed between the junction of the West Side South Fork River Trail and the junction of Trail # 451. Trail #111 and Trail #451 are also closed.*

The 5750-acre **Hammer Creek Fire** has been most active in the Shale Lake Area above the South Fork of the White River. Monitors stationed north of the fire are allowing the public to travel along the East Side Trail #80 as fire activity permits. *The Lime Creek Trail # 193, Tillson Peak #127, Sandstone Trail # 7435 are all closed in their entirety.*

The Clack Creek fire remains 106 acres and has been relatively quiet. *There are no closures associated with this fire.*

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