

Saddle Complex Fire Update

August 25, 2011
Bitterroot and Salmon-Challis National Forests

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www.inciweb.org/incident/2496

Date Started: 8/18/2011
Cause: Lightning
Size: 21,152 acres (9,625 on SCNF, 11,527 on BNF)
Percent Contained: 0%
Resources: 4 Helicopters;
11 Engines; 6 Crews

Total Personnel: 174
Residences: 4 threatened, 0 destroyed
Commercial Property: 1 threatened; 0 destroyed
Outbuildings: 7 threatened; 0 destroyed
Injuries to Date: 0

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:

The Saddle Complex was more active on Wednesday afternoon than it had been the previous day. It continued to make short uphill runs and grew mainly toward the northeast, further into Montana. A spot on the Montana side of the state line was the location of most of the fire growth, which is occurring in the direction of Blue Nose Lookout. In some places, such as near Gattin Ranch, the fire moved slowly downhill, in what is called “backing” fire.

At 6 AM this morning, a Type 2 Incident Management Team and the Painted Rocks Fire Department took over the Montana side of the fire and will begin to manage it under a unified command structure. The Idaho side of the fire will still be managed by the current Type 3 team. A National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) team has arrived on the Salmon-Challis National Forest to assist with logistics and long-term planning on all fires currently burning on the Forest and also to facilitate some of the coordination between the Salmon-Challis and Bitterroot National Forests as they work together on many aspects of the Saddle Complex.

In the West Fork drainage, in Montana, the Ravalli County Sheriff’s department initiated Stage 1 evacuation notices for about 50 residences. Stage 1 evacuations are meant to provide an alert and warning to homeowners that they should be prepared to leave as quickly as possible should evacuations become necessary. The West Fork Ranger District is staffing a Firewise trailer at the Painted Rocks Reservoir where residents and visitors can receive additional information on the fire and also on how to prepare their homes to withstand wildfires.

In Idaho, firefighters are assessing private properties in the Spring Creek area to determine what needs to be done to protect them in the event the fire does get closer to that area.

Firefighter and public safety remains the first priority on this and every fire. Therefore, the area closures on both the Salmon-Challis and Bitterroot National Forests will remain in effect as long as necessary.

Closures and Restrictions:

SCNF: From the junction of Squaw Creek Road #039 and the River Road #030 heading north to the Stateline along Squaw Creek Road and then Squaw Creek. Then following the Stateline West to the #158 trail. Follow #158 trail to Square Top. From Square Top Southeast on the #203 trail to #164 trail. Continuing on the #164 trail to Colson Creek Road #123. South along Colson Creek Road #123 to the River Road#030. Closure is ¼ mile North of River Road between the Colson Creek Road and Squaw Creek Road.

BNF: The area immediately south of the Hughes Creek Road #9630 until it meets the eastern edge of section T26N, R22W, Section 2, then running south along the eastern edge of sections 11 and 14 until reaching the Thunder Mountain Trail (#95). The closure remains west of trail #95 until it reaches the Idaho border. The closure follows the private land boundary south of the Hughes Creek road in until reaching Chicken Creek Trail (#138). The closure remains just south of the Chicken Creek Trail. The closure continues along the Chicken Creek Trail and junction with the Razorback Mountain Trail (#106) and until intersecting with Trail #139, then south along #139 until intersecting with Trail #614. Then south along trail #614 until reaching the Idaho border near Reynolds Lake.

For additional information on the closures, contact the **North Fork Ranger District at 208-756-2700 or the West Fork Ranger District at 406-821-3269.**