

Saddle Complex Fire Update

September 9, 2011

Bitterroot and Salmon-Challis National Forests

Betsy Ballard, Public Information Officer
Phone 406-349-8013

Madonna Lengerich, Public Information Officer
Phone 208-756-5204

Date Started: 8/10/2011

Cause: Lightning

Size: 30,301 acres (15,522 on SCNF, 14,779 on BNF)

Percent Contained: 0%

Resources: 3 Helicopters; 1 Water Tender
13 Engines; 5 Crews

Total Personnel: 217

Residences: 20 threatened, 0 destroyed

Residence: 20 threatened; 0 destroyed

Outbuildings: 10 threatened; 0 destroyed

Injuries to Date: 4

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.

The Saddle Complex fires did not make any big runs on Thursday and everything is holding. Weather continued to be dry and temperatures reached 80 degrees yesterday. Observed fire activity consisted of creeping, smoldering and isolated torching. Hot spots on the northeast edge of the fire were kept in check with helicopter water drops. Smoke inversion continued throughout most of the day covering the fire area. Today helicopters will be used to keep the fire from becoming established in Deer Creek, keep it on the north side of Woods Creek and to retard fire movement downhill toward the Salt Creek Road. Crews will continue to secure the Salt Creek Forest Road 091 in the Devils Creek area removing brush and fuels in case it is needed for holding the fire in the future. Firefighters continue to patrol and monitor fire activity and put out hot spots that could be a threat in the future. Smoke inversion continued throughout most of the day covering the fire area. Winds may pick up slightly today, which could clear the air but produce a modest increase in fire behavior. The Smoke Monitoring Station near Painted Rocks Reservoir indicates unhealthy sensitive to moderate 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/ajq.asp>, once on the site select real time data, location Montana.

IDAHO: SADDLE COMPLEX: Thursday the fire was again under a heavy inversion for nearly the entire day. As a result, fire behavior was significantly moderated, even the high elevation areas on the divide. There was some clearing by the Lookout Towers late in the afternoon. Oreana Lookout reported a few sprinkles of precipitation that lasted about ten minutes. The chance of precipitation has been negligible. A spot fire from yesterday that is south of the Horse Creek road was mopped-up and secured. A field observer in the Cathedral Rocks area reported mainly creeping and smoldering fire behavior with some isolated torching. An old hand line from a previous fire was located by crews in the Gattin Ranch area. It extends down into Gattin from the old fire scar. This will be used to provide additional protection for the Ranch. Crews also scouted the trail to the north in East Reynolds Creel for burn out as another option. Fire managers will continue to impose the area closure and assess its continuation on a daily basis.

Closures and Restrictions:

The previously reported area closures are still in effect on both the Bitterroot and Salmon-Challis National Forests; and will remain until access is safe for the public and firefighters. 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.