



Salmon-Challis National Forest Fire Update Saturday, September 10, 2011



Contact Fire Information: 208.756.5204

Beginning Monday, September 12, the new fire information phone line will be 208.756.5177.

OVERVIEW: One new fire was reported on the Forest yesterday afternoon. The Fernster Fire is .1 acres in size. One engine and one helicopter responded to the fire. The cause of this fire is under investigation. The forecast calls for similar temperatures as on Friday with a slight chance of thunderstorms and very little wind. It's likely to be less smoky than in the past few days.

The Salt Fire area closure and evacuation order are still effective, as is the area closure around the Saddle Complex. Fire managers are assessing these closures on a daily basis and will reopen all areas when it is determined that it is safe to do so.

SALT FIRE: On Friday, the air was clearer than in many days, and the 19,464 acre Salt fire burned mainly within its own perimeter, gaining just 1,240 acres. The fire is now 19 percent contained. The cloud cover and hazy conditions raised humidity and moderated burning. All lines held well, firefighters reported. On the southern part of the fire, the vegetation is becoming more scattered and rocky, further slowing fire spread. Structure-protection crews continued structure-protection planning at Morgan and Hat creeks. On Saturday, mop-up will take place in many areas of the fire. Firefighters will patrol and monitor, and look at opportunities to attack the fire.

Public Meeting: There will be a public meeting at Elk Bend at 5 p.m. on Saturday at the fire hall. The meeting will give residents the latest information on the Salt fire.

Resources: 7 helicopters; 20 engines; 4 bulldozers; 14 water tenders; 460 Total Personnel.

Start Date: 25 August **Cause:** Lightning

SADDLE COMPLEX: Today's operation went well, in part with help from the weather. Overall it was a quiet day. The inversion kept things calm until early afternoon. When the inversion lifted the fire area became clouded over for the remainder of the afternoon from cumulus cloud development. Crews in Gattin scouted all the trails to the north, northwest, west, and south, and assessed them for use as contingency lines in the event the main fire moves to the west of the East Fork of Reynolds Creek. Firefighters continued to secure and mop-up portions of the previous day's burn out along Horse Creek. Crews mopped up below the Oreana Lookout road.

All lookouts reported minimal activity on the Idaho side, though the fire appears to have reached the saddle on the MT/ID divide. Firefighters conducted hand and aerial ignition on Alligator Ridge and Cabin Creek. The Spring Creek road continues to be improved by the Forest grader, and should be nearing completion of the project. The majority of personnel are staying overnight at Gattin Ranch. This is minimizing traffic and exposure on the Spring Creek road.

Resources: 3 Crews; 5 engines; 1 watertender; 87 Total Personnel

Start Date: 10 August **Cause:** Lightning **Idaho Acreage:** 15,612

SHIP ISLAND FIRE: The fire grew 464 acres since the last infrared flight. Total acreage is now 1,276 acres. Most of the growth occurred yesterday afternoon as reported by Long Tom Lookout. The fire primarily grew on the west side to the north and south of Ship Island Creek. Several firefighters will be flown to Stoddard Lookout to resume fire monitoring and data collection this morning. Heavy continuous timber stands, with dead and dying trees, are what is fueling this fire. In this particular area, there has not been a significant fire for many years.

The Alpine fire did not show significant activity yesterday as reported by the Middle Fork Peak Lookout. The Alpine fire which started on August 5 is 7.5 acres. It is located in the Big Horn Crags area, 7 miles south of Ship Island Lake, west of Alpine Creek. The fire is being monitored.

These fires are being managed to return fire as a natural partner in ecosystem management. The fire is burning about 3.5 miles up Ship Island Creek from the Middle Fork of the Salmon River in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness.

Resources: 1 Crew; 17 Total Personnel

Start Date: 25 August

Cause: Lightning

VELVET FIRE: The Velvet Fire, located about 5 miles northeast of the Boundary Creek launch site, has grown to about 3,001 acres. Velvet fire continues to spread to the east into Muskeg and Soldier Creeks. There has been little growth to the west. The primary concern is if the fire backs down the bottom of the ridge and "leapfrogs" up and down ridges ultimately reaching the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. Firefighters have installed a pump, hose lay and sprinklers at Joe Bump Cabin. Should there be a need to start the pumps to protect the Joe Bump Cabin, it is ready. Velvet Fire is being managed for multiple resource objectives, including the return of fire to the ecosystem.

Resources: 2 Total Personnel

Start Date: 12 August

Cause: Lightning

To learn about how to better prepare your home to withstand a wildfire, go to www.idahofirewise.org. For more information on area closures and on fires burning on the Salmon-Challis National Forest, visit <http://www.inciweb.org/unit/46/>.