

Fire Information – Elbow Pass Complex

August 27, 2012 10:00 AM

Incident Team: Lewis & Clark Forest Type 3 IMT (King/Inabnit))

Cause: Lightning

Acres: 19,934 acres

Resources: 2 helicopters

Containment 0%

Total Personnel: 30

Contact: Glenda Scott 562-3791

The Elbow Pass Complex is comprised of five different lightning ignitions from July 12 through July 31. These four fires have merged into one fire, the Elbow Pass Complex: Triple Divide Fire, Rapid Creek Fire, Elbow Pass Fire, and Bar Creek Fire. The fires are generally located 25 miles west southwest of Augusta, Montana. The Falls Point fire is south of the Complex. All are located in inaccessible terrain in heavy fuels. The fires are in the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas and are on three national forests.

The Elbow Pass Complex is currently 19,934 acres; approximately 16,108 acres has burned on the Lewis & Clark National Forest, 3,340 acres on the Flathead National Forest, and 485 acres on the Lolo National Forest. Additionally, fire managers are managing the Falls Point fire on the Lolo National forest, currently 205, and the small Moonlight fire on the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

The Elbow Pass fire area sits within a mosaic of past burns and has spread into Cigarette Rock fire (2006), Bunyan Point fire (2000), Canyon Creek fire (1988) and South Fork Burn (2003, 2011). The past burns act to “check” fire spread and reduce intensity thus reducing the chance of crown fires. The Elbow fire has been creeping and smoldering and burning small fingers of vegetation in portions of the old fires.

Yesterday's Activities: The Wildland Fire Module installed the sprinkler system into Ellis Creek. Once hooked up, it will serve to secure the fire line between the existing fuels breaks if fire moves into this area. The Straight Creek trail into the Green Fork cabin has been cleared and protective wrap removed from the cabin. Fire managers are monitoring fire behavior and spread. Hot spots of the fire remain in the So. Fork Sun River, Dry Fork Blackfoot River along the southside of the Continental Divide, and the vicinity of Green Fork. Individual and group torching and small fire runs occurred; minimal spread was observed. Transitioned to Type 3 Incident Commander Bill King at 1830.

Today's Planned Activities: The high pressure will continue to sit over the area creating warm and dry conditions. The fires in Idaho are creating most of the smoke in the valley. The fire will continue to smolder and creep and there is likely to be an increase in widespread single tree and small group torching with the dry conditions. The fire is likely to spread slightly in the southwest (Dry Fork) portion of the fire. Fire personnel will monitor fire behavior and collect fuel samples in the Danaher and Basin cabin areas. Fire managers have a reconnaissance flight planned to monitor fire behavior and map new fire spread. Long term fire planners continue to evaluate weather, changing fuel conditions and fire behavior to update fire strategies. All three lookouts are staffed. The helicopters are available to support initial attack operations if needed by the forest.

Recreation Opportunities: While the Benchmark Road is open, the area is closed beginning a half mile west of the road. Numerous trails remain closed. Please check with local offices for specific recreation information. Please note that vehicles parked at the trailhead could be at fire risk due to possible future fire activity. The Benchmark Air Strip is closed, the Augusta air strip is open.

For more information on these or other wildland fires, and related information visit:

www.inciweb.org or call:

Augusta Information Station

406-562-3247

Choteau District Office

406-466-5341

Seeley Lake Ranger District

406-677-2233

Spotted Bear Ranger District

406-758-5376