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News Release

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Mason Fire continues steady growth while improving forest health

Tusayan, Ariz., July 9, 2015—For Immediate Release. The Mason Fire continues to be the most active of the four lightning-caused wildfires being managed to improve forest health on the Tusayan Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest. At more than 650 acres in size, the fire is growing steadily while providing significant resource benefits, and fire managers anticipate that trend will continue given the drier weather pattern in place.

The other three fires that are part of the Jar Complex are still active but are not growing significantly due to greater amounts of localized precipitation over the last several days. The 5-acre Old Fire, which is located within the 16,100-acre planning area established for the Mason Fire, is the most likely of those fires to increase in size and activity over the coming days.

The planning area for the Mason and Old fires is located about 7 miles southeast of the Town of Tusayan and 4 miles south of Grandview Lookout Tower. While much of the forest in the area has been treated in recent years by other wildfires managed to meet resource objectives and by prescribed burning, the Mason Fire is moving into forested areas that haven't seen treatment in 50-plus years.

"The Mason Fire is doing exactly what we hoped it would," said Quentin Johnson, fire management officer for the Tusayan Ranger District and the incident commander for the Jar Complex. "It is backing through forest that really needs to burn because it hasn't seen fire in a very long time, much longer than the historic fire return interval of 5 to 15 years. We are seeing the kinds of effects we want. The fire is cleaning up accumulated fuels and improving the overall condition of the forest."

As the Mason Fire continues its steady growth, smoke will be more visible from surrounding areas. While smoke has largely been pushed toward the northeast away from the Town of Tusayan and Grand Canyon Village, it is likely that increasing fire activity will lead to a visible smoke column over the coming days that will be noticeable from Desert View, Cameron, Tusayan and highways 64 and 180.

A road crew is continuing to haul gravel, blade, and make other improvements to heavily-used roads in the fire area. Motorists using forest roads 301, 301A, 302 and 320 are asked to use caution due to the presence of heavy equipment for the road improvement work and firefighting trucks and personnel.

Additional Jar Complex information, photos and maps are available through the following sources: InciWeb <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4344/>; Kaibab National Forest Fire Information Phone Line (928) 635-8311; Text Message - text 'follow kaibabnf' to 40404.

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