

NEWS RELEASE

Kaibab National Forest



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For Immediate Release

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Resource-Benefit Fires Near Tusayan Treat More Than 6,500 Acres

TUSAYAN, Ariz. – The two resource-benefit fires southeast of Tusayan have treated a total of 6,711 acres since they were started by lightning last month, improving overall forest health and helping restore the historic fire regime in the ponderosa pine and pinyon-juniper ecosystems in which they are burning.

Yesterday, crews completed what were expected to be the final managed ignitions associated with the now 5,505-acre McRae Fire. Over the next few days, the fire will spread slowly within the predetermined boundaries established for it. Fire managers plan to monitor the fire closely to ensure that all containment lines hold and to begin preparing the area for the eventual lifting of the closure that was put into effect for public safety. Firefighters will remove fire-weakened hazard trees and begin putting out hot spots, a technique known as mopping up, near road edges.

As expected, the Hammer Fire increased in activity yesterday due to drier conditions. Crews burned grass, brush and other forest fuels along the north and east perimeters of the fire planning area, a technique known as black lining, in order to strengthen containment lines ahead of the approaching main fire. Today, the 1,206-acre Hammer Fire will likely grow significantly due to dry conditions. Crews will continue black lining along the north and east perimeters of the planned fire area on forest roads 317 and 339 in order to ensure the fire remains within defined boundaries. Smoke is expected to move toward the northeast today, away from developed areas.

“On the Kaibab National Forest, wildland fire is used to protect, maintain and enhance resources and, as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural role in the ecosystem,” said Holly Kleindienst, forest deputy fire staff officer. “Restoring the historic fire regime is one of the highest priorities for our fire managers. Recurring fire across the landscape is integral to forest health.”

On the Williams Ranger District, the Sitgreaves Complex has had a resurgence in fire activity following a few days of dry conditions. Smoke is visible from a number of areas within the 4,150-acre fire, and increased fire behavior and growth are expected over the next few days. The Sitgreaves Complex, which is located about 5 miles northwest of Parks, will likely show increases and decreases in fire activity over the next few weeks as weather conditions vary. This is common during a long-duration managed fire and is an example of allowing a fire to continue burning as it would naturally as long as it can be safely managed while benefiting forest resources.

Additional information, photos and maps are available at the following locations:

- Inciweb: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>
- Kaibab Fire Information Line: (928) 635-8311
- Text message: text ‘follow kaibabnf’ to 40404