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UPDATE 7

Smoke from Willard, Pothole, and General Fires to decrease; Fire and smoke to increase on Bar M Fire

Flagstaff, Ariz. – Fire activity was lower on the Willard, Pothole, and General Fires yesterday and produced less smoke, however it continues to settle in the Sedona and Verde Valley areas overnight. Yesterday's poor ventilation didn't allow much opportunity for the smoke to disperse. Today's forecast calls for ventilation get better throughout the day which should help lift the smoke. Over the next several days, fire behavior and smoke on these three will continue to decrease. Residents in Sedona and Verde Valley should expect it to continue to become lighter, but still settle in the area in the evenings.

Crews are conducting burnout operations on the Bar M Fire, and expect size and smoke to increase. The majority of smoke is moving to the east and settling overnight in Mormon Lake Basin. Some may drift down canyon toward the Verde Valley.

"It is important to remember that these are *wildfires* and with fire comes smoke. We cannot simply 'turn them off,' but we can influence how they move through the landscape and we can utilize tactics to minimize the duration of the heaviest smoke impacts," says Rick Miller, Fire Management Officer on the Flagstaff Ranger District.

"With any wildfire, we develop and implement a clear strategy. We determine boundaries where control lines will be effective and safe for firefighters, conduct burnout operations to solidify those perimeters, and use burnouts to keep fire behavior moderate as it progresses." Completing the large burnout operations in a few days minimizes the overall duration of heavy smoke.

The efforts are paying off. Flames have helped to raise crown heights (removing low-laying branches) and consumed heavy fuels from the forest floor – all of which could have been "ladders" leading to crowning fires in hotter drier conditions. Reducing the risk of severe fire in the future provides **a safer space for the public and firefighters**. In addition, nutrients that were stored in the dead vegetation were released back into the soils, which will allow healthy forbs and grasses to appear. This type of fire is fulfilling a role that no other thinning or mechanical treatment can replace.

Bar M Fire

Size: Approximately 1,600 acres

Behavior: 1-2 foot flame lengths across the forest floor. Some isolated torching, which is natural and expected.

Location: 5 miles southwest of Mormon Lake near Forest Roads 240 and 91.

The public should expect an increase of smoke tonight in the Mormon Lake area. It may also drift down-canyon toward the Verde Valley

The immediate fire area is closed for public safety, including a portion of Forest Roads 127 and 126.

Willard Fire

Final Size: 2,020 acres – no growth, increased number is due to more accurate mapping. Fire crews and equipment remain on scene to monitor fire activity as pockets within the interior continue to burn. The immediate area is closed for public safety, but the main roads and trails are open.

Pothole Fire

Final Size: 2,200 acres. Very little activity within the perimeters, and not much smoke. Forest Road 142F, as well as the Tramway and Maxwell Trails leading into the West Clear Creek Wilderness are temporarily closed for public safety.

General Fire

Final Size: 2,089 acres.

Subdivisions in the Blue Ridge community should anticipate smoke decreasing in the coming days. Fire managers hope to reopen the Fred Haught Trail and a portion of the Arizona Trail soon.

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