



U.S. Forest Service
Coconino National Forest
1824 S. Thompson Street
Flagstaff, Ariz. 86001

News Release



www.coconinonationalforest.us
www.twitter.com/coconinonf
www.flickr.com/coconinonationalforest

MEDIA CONTACTS:
Brady Smith, (928) 527-3490, bradysmith@fs.fed.us
George Jozens, (928) 527-3412, gjozens@fs.fed.us

On-Call PAO Line: (928) 224-8306

Coconino fire managers busy with 104 lightning fires so far this year

Flagstaff, Ariz., July 28, 2016, For Immediate Release — Lightning-caused wildfires occur on the Coconino National Forest more often than people realize and they keep Forest Service firefighters busy—especially during monsoon.

Fire managers seek to safely and strategically manage some lightning-caused wildfires to allow fire to accomplish multiple objectives—including, but not limited to, keeping communities safe from large severe wildfires and allowing fire to play its natural role in the ecosystem by cleaning up the forest under safer conditions and producing less smoke than would naturally be present each year.

With a total of nearly 10,500 lightning-caused fires over the last 40 years, **the Coconino NF has averaged 262 lightning-caused fires annually**. To-date, the forest has had 104 lightning-caused fires, and monsoon is not over so it's likely there will be many more.

Of these 104 fires, Coconino NF fire managers have managed four of them in order to allow fire to clean up the forest under safer conditions and keep fire present in this fire-dependent ecosystem. The total acreage of landscape burned by these managed fires includes 49,420 acres.

According to the National Interagency Fire Center's last 15 years of data, lightning-caused fires average 410 acres each. Using this and the number of lightning-caused fires the Coconino NF receives each year, **the total of 107,420 acres would typically burn annually if allowed unchecked by the Forest Service**. In reality, and due to the unhealthy conditions of the forest, the acreage and severity of these fires would likely be much larger and extremely severe.

For these reasons, fire managers on the Coconino NF seek to manage some lightning-caused wildfires when it is safe to do so and in an effort to keep up with the natural role of fire on the landscape.

Unfortunately, with any fire comes smoke. However, due to the actions taken by fire managers to strategically manage some lightning-caused fires, less smoke is put into the air than would be caused naturally each year. The forest also benefits from these actions and is moved closer to a healthier state.

The Coconino NF currently has five active lightning-caused fires, with one of those being managed for multiple objectives. The following outlines the current status of each of these fires:

- **Crackerbox Fire** – began July 20; currently about 40 acres and located four miles southeast of Clints Well. This fire is being managed for multiple objectives and has been slowly creeping across the landscape cleaning up the forest above the Mogollon Rim. It is burning between areas that were previously managed with fire and will likely connect those areas, minimizing forest fuels across a large swath of land. This can be a tremendous aid to firefighters in the future should there be a severe wildfire threatening the community near

Blue Ridge. Smoke will be noticeable by those recreating near Blue Ridge Reservoir and Clints Well.

- **Stump Fire** – began yesterday; currently one acre, located about one mile northeast of the Oak Creek Vista Overlook. This fire is being actively suppressed but will produce noticeable smoke to those traveling along state Route 89A between Flagstaff and Sedona.
- **Pine Hill Fire** – began July 21; about four acres, located four miles east of Mormon Lake. Fire managers are determining whether or not to manage the fire to benefit the area.
- **Thunderstruck Fire** – began yesterday; currently 150 acres, located approximately five miles northeast of Clints Well along the north side of state Route 87. This fire is producing noticeable smoke in the area and will be visible to travelers along the road, as well as subdivisions near the area such as Clear Creek Pines and the Blue Ridge community. Fire managers are deciding whether or not to actively manage this fire. Management techniques began today to suppress some areas of this contained fire.
- **Eden Fire** – began yesterday; currently 20 acres, located about two miles west of the Thunderstruck Fire. This fire is also producing smoke that will be noticeable to those traveling in the area along Lake Mary Road and state Route 87. Fire managers are deciding whether or not to actively manage this fire.

As wildfire seeks to fulfil its natural role in the ecosystem, fire managers continue to consider many factors in managing fire—including available resources, weather conditions, smoke impacts to the public, risk to firefighters and benefit to the landscape.

Fire is a natural part of the forest ecosystem and will occur—either catastrophically or under safer conditions such as prescribed and managed fires.

Follow us on Twitter @CoconinoNF for quick updates on these fires and other happenings around the forest, or visit <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/unit/303/> to keep up-to-date on the details of managed and other large fires on the Coconino National Forest.

###