Bitterroot National Forest

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WILDFIRE UPDATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bitterroot NF Fire Update

HAMILTON, MT; SEPTEMBER 1, 2007 5:00 PM.

Three new starts were reported on the Sula Ranger District Friday and Saturday. The fires were caused by lightning strikes from thunderstorms that passed through the area on Thursday and Friday.

Two of the starts burned about one mile from Fish Lake. The Moose Ridge start grew to almost one acre, and with the help of two helicopter rappellers was put out. The Fishing Fire is at about one half acre and is currently staffed with three rappellers and four firefighters.

The third start, known as the Shadow Fire, is one mile east of Shadow Lake and is estimated at two acres. Eight helicopter rappellers are fighting the blaze.

Official closures of areas, roads and trails resulting from fire activity change frequently. Please call the Bitterroot NF at 406-363-7176 or visit www.inciweb.org for the most current closure and fire activity information.

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California

BITTERROOT WILDLAND FIRE USE COMPLEX

September 1st Fire Update

Fire Complex Location: Bitterroot National Forest in the Selway Bitterroot and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, west of Darby, Montana

Fire Complex Acreage: 19,464 acres

Fire Complex Status: Most of the fires started on July 18. The Ingomar and Bell Lake fires started on August 10 and the BH fire started on August 16. Many of these fires may continue burning throughout the fire season while resource and fire management objectives continue to be met.

The numerous lightning fires in the wilderness have been grouped into four geographic areas within the Bitterroot Wildland Fire Use Complex:

Sawtooth area- fires in the Sawtooth Creek drainage: Ingomar Fire (76 acres).

White Cap area- fires north of Cooper Point and Watchtower Peak includes: El Cap (4,406 acres), Capitain Creek (<1 acre), Watchtower (40 acres), Snake (201 acres) and Bell Lake Fire (340 acres).

Magruder area- fires south of the White Cap area and north of Salmon Mountain, and Storm Creek Flat includes: Indian (38 acres), South Saddle (446 acres), Magruder (4,034 acres), Magruder #2 (inactive), BH (708 acres), Halfway Pete (4 acres), Haystack Creek (<1 acre), and Salamander fires (<1 acre).

Harrington Ridge area- fires south of the Magruder area, includes: Elkhorn (3,087 acres) and Harrington fires (6,084 acres).

CLOSURES!

Expect intermittent closures along the Magruder Corridor road between the Magruder crossing and Salmon Base Camp (to Elk Creek) during daylight operational periods or while active fire is burning. Closures may last 24 to 48 hours or until fire and debris are clear of the road. There is a trail (Trail #580) and area closure in place for the Rock Creek Drainage above Lake Como due to the Bell Lake Fire.

Contacts:

Fire Information: www.inciweb.org or
(406) 821-2055- ***Last day this number will be in use!***

Bitterroot National Forest Fire Information: (406) 363-7100.
www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot/

Saturday's Activities

Today, the California Fire Use Management Team is transferring management of the Bitterroot WFU Complex back to the Bitterroot National Forest. After today, please use the Forest's Fire Information phone number for updates on the wilderness fires (see below).

Yesterday, the Bell Lake, Magruder, South Saddle, Elkhorn, Harrington, and BH fires had some fire activity but not much perimeter growth.

Fire activity and falling trees continue to pose a safety concern along the Magruder Corridor Road, travelers should continue to expect intermittent closures along this route (see CLOSURES).

More wilderness visitors may be expected over the holiday weekend so please use caution while traveling in areas with fire activity and emergency vehicles.

Saturday's Weather

Chance of thunderstorms and dry lightning

Temperature: 72-78° F

Winds: West-southwest 5-13 mph with gusts from 16 to 20 mph.

Relative Humidity: 22-26%

Smoke: Morning inversion breaking up by noon and some haziness expected throughout the afternoon from numerous fires in the area.

Wildland Fire Use

Wildland fire use events are naturally-ignited fires managed over a long period of time to restore the role of fire as a critical natural process.

Firefighting personnel and equipment that are available to the Fire Use Management Team are also available to quickly extinguish new fires or put out portions of current fires in areas where fire is undesirable.

Southern Area Incident Command Team / Rombo Mountain Fire Update

September 1, 2007 @ 9 a.m. Bitterroot National Forest Fire Information: (406) 821-1065 http://www.inciweb.org/ or www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot

Acreage 24,704 / 15% contained. Yesterday on the north and northwest corner of the fire, a hand line/dozer line was constructed and a burnout was completed. With the help of yesterday's light rain the line west of Shook Mountain to the East Fork of Piquett Creek should be completed today.

There was an injury on the fire line yesterday. A firefighter fell in steep terrain, was transported to St. Patrick's in Missoula and returned to fire camp last night. Thankfully, she is doing fine today.

The Southern Area Incident Command Team (Type I) is handing the fire over to the Northern Rockies Western Montana Zone Incident Management Team (Type II) today. All firefighting activities will continue without interruption during the transition.

Location: 5 miles south of Conner, Montana and 2 miles northeast of Painted Rocks Lake

Date and Time of Fire Start: July 31, 2007 at 1:40 pm **Cause:** Lightning

Cooperating Agencies: West Fork and Painted Rocks Rural Fire Departments, Ravalli County Department of Emergency Services, Ravalli County Sheriff's Office, Montana Department of Natural Resources, Sula Volunteer Fire Department, Darby Volunteer Fire Department and Corvallis Volunteer Fire Department.

Committed Resources: 265 total personnel including 6 crews, 20 Engines, 4 Dozers, 6 Water Tenders, 2 helicopters, and fire support personnel.

Structures Threatened: 134 **Structures Damaged:** 0 **Structures Destroyed:** 0

The following Stage 1 Pre-evacuations remain in effect:

- **West Fork Road from Nez Perce Fork to Painted Rocks Reservoir.**
- **West Fork Road from Lavene Creek to Trapper Creek Job Corps Center.**
- **West of Highway 93 from the Conner Cutoff to the Sula Store.**
- **South of the Conner Cutoff to the West Fork Road and south of the West Fork Road to Trapper Creek Job Corps Center.**

Fire Restrictions and Closures: Highway 93 and West Fork Road are open. The area closure remains in effect starting at the Forest Boundary on Road 49 (Piquett Creek Road) going northeast past Trapper Creek Job Corps Center; then following the Forest Boundary going southeast along Highway 93 to Lost Trail Pass and the boundary line with the Salmon National Forest, then following the Bitterroot National Forest Boundary going west to the Sula/West Fork Ranger District boundary. Continuing to the Saddle Mountain area; then southwest on Trail 606 to the junction with Trail 650; continuing south to Hughes Creek road (9630), continuing west to the West Fork road at Alta and then following the Forest Boundary north to the beginning. This includes Bitterroot National Forest System Lands east of the West Fork road. The area closure excludes Warm Springs and Indian Trees Campgrounds. Forest officials ask the public to cooperate with the closure for public and firefighter safety.

Visitors are reminded that southwest Montana is in Stage 2 fire restrictions which include no campfires or smoking outside of a vehicle or building - except in cleared, designated areas.