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USDA FOREST SERVICE, 160A ZILICOA STREET, ASHEVILLE, NC 28801

NEWS • RELEASE

Contacts: Incident Information Desk 828-437-0171 Room 212
Bill Sweet 404-354-6005 (cell)
Deborah Walker 910-975-0803 (cell)
Terry Seyden 828-231-4009 (cell)

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Firefighters Make Progress on Linville Gorge Wildfires

Firefighters made progress today on containing three wildfires near Linville Gorge which have burned over 1,466 acres of national forest land in Burke and Avery counties. The 600 acre Dobson Knob Fire located just west of Linville Gorge received rain overnight and is now 95% contained. The Shortoff Mountain Fire within Linville Gorge still had not received any measurable precipitation as of 6 pm today and has burned about 800 acres. The 67 Cold Mountain fire in nearby Avery County also received rain overnight and was declared 100% contained today.

The Shortoff fire continues to slowly burn downhill on the east side of Linville River within the Linville Gorge Wilderness. The steep, rugged terrain in Linville Gorge Wilderness makes direct attack on the fire extremely difficult. “We currently have 293 personnel working the fires,” said Incident Information Officer Bill Sweet. “This includes 9 crews, 4 helicopters, 8 engines, one dozer and one fixed wing support aircraft. We worked today to make sure the fire lines on the south end of Linville Gorge Wilderness were in good shape and we hope to begin a burnout operation tomorrow in order to further protect adjacent private property,” Sweet said.

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Wildland firefighters often use burnout or “back fires” to clear out combustible fuels inside the control lines to make it more difficult for wildfires to jump the lines. The burnouts will be done in stages and may take several days to complete.

The Linville Gorge Wilderness remains closed to the public until further notice. “It is still not safe for the public to enter these areas, especially as we do the burn out operations and before the fire is declared totally under control,” said Grandfather District Ranger Joy Malone.

The public can check for updated fire information at the National Forests in North Carolina website <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>. Detailed maps showing the current locations of the fires have recently been posted on this site

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