



NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

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NEWS • RELEASE

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Firefighters Make Progress on Linville Gorge Wildfires

JUNE 14, 2007--Scattered rain showers across the area last night and today were not enough to put out the fires which continue to burn in Linville Gorge in the Pisgah National Forest. Over 330 federal and state firefighters continued working on two fires in Burk County which by Tuesday afternoon had burned nearly 1,500 acres.

The Dobson Knob Fire located just west of Linville Gorge continued to actively burn and briefly jumped containment lines today. The NC Division of Forest Resource's amphibious CL125 air tanker scooped water up from nearby Lake James and made water drops on the Dobson Knob fire while U.S. Forest Service constructed new fire lines to contain the blaze.

The Shortoff Mountain Fire within Linville Gorge was still actively burning today backing down toward the Linville River. Crews began burnout operations on the southern end of the Wilderness and worked to strengthen fire lines around the east and north perimeter of the fire. The steep, rugged terrain in Linville Gorge Wilderness makes direct attack on the fire extremely difficult.

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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 make take several days to complete.

“We currently have 332 firefighters working on these fires” said Incident Information Officer Bill Sweet. “We also are using 4 helicopters, 8 engines, one dozer and one fixed wing support aircraft, Sweet said. “Our priority is to protect private property and to confine the fire within the Linville Gorge Wilderness,” Sweet added.

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.

“We are watching the weather radar closely and hoping that one of the heavy thunderstorms moving south through the area will finally dump some heavy rain on the fire, but we can’t count on it, said Terry Seyden, spokesman for the National Forests in North Carolina. “We have had such a prolonged drought in the Linville Gorge area it is going to take several inches of rain to put a real damper on the fires,” Seyden said.

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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