



NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

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NEWS • RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Hot Dry Weather Causes Linville Fires to Spread

JUNE 25, 2007----It has been ten days since any measurable rain has fallen in Linville Gorge and the recent hot, dry weather has caused the Shortoff Fire to start actively burning again. Firefighters plan to conduct a series of burnouts over the next several days to confine the wildfire within the Linville Gorge Wilderness area and ensure that adjacent private property remains protected.

Over the last week the Shortoff Fire has increased in size from 1,900 acres to nearly 3,000 acres. "There are currently 108 personnel working on the fire along with two helicopters, four engines and one dozer," said Incident Information Officer Gil Knight. "Four additional Hot Shot crews from California and at least for more engines will be arriving tonight to assist with the possible burnout operations the next few days," Knight added.

"Extremely high temperatures and low humidity coupled with record low precipitation levels for the year continue to challenge firefighters," Knight said. "If weather conditions and preplanning allow, the main burnout operation will begin on Tuesday. It will be done in small increments as dictated by conditions at the time. If the entire planned area does need to be burned, it is estimated that it will cover an additional 2,000 acres," Knight said.

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Wildland firefighters use burnouts or “back fires” to clear out combustible fuels inside the control lines to make it more difficult for wildfires to jump the lines.

A hotspot also flared up along the containment line of the 816 acre Dobson Knob fire today. Firefighters are using helicopter water drops to control this blaze. As of 7 PM June 24, the two wildfires had burned over 3,800 acres, almost all on national forest land in Burke County, NC. They both started from lightning strikes June 8th.

Portions of the Linville Gorge Wilderness west of Linville River are still open to public. On the eastern side of Linville River, everything from the Blue Ridge Parkway south to Spence Ridge Trail is also open at this time. The remaining area south of Spence Ridge Trail from the Linville River east to the Wilderness boundary down to the southern edge of the Wilderness is still closed until further notice.

“We hope that the Linville area will finally get some of the scattered showers that parts of Western North Carolina have received this week, but we cannot count on it,” said Terry Seyden, spokesman for the National Forests in North Carolina. “If we don’t get the needed rains and have to proceed with the burnouts, people in the surrounding counties may start smelling smoke again for several days,” Seyden said. .

The public can check for updated fire information at the National Forests in North Carolina website <http://www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc>.

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