



NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

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

NEWS • RELEASE

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April 29, 2007

For Immediate Release

Pinnacle Wildfire Continues to Burn in Linville Gorge Wilderness

The U.S. Forest Service reports today that, while some progress has been made, the Pinnacle Fire in Linville Gorge Wilderness still continues to burn. According to U.S. Forest Service Incident Commander Bill Champion, “A drying trend and strong gusty winds will make it likely that this fire will continue to spread further north into the Linville Gorge Wilderness.” To date, no injuries or structure damage have been reported and currently no private lands are directly threatened by the fire.

The Pinnacle fire, which started on April 25th, has burned an estimated total of about 750 acres as of 7 am Sunday. The fire is located within the Pisgah National Forest in Burke County, approximately 15 miles west of Morganton, NC. The NC Division of Forest Resources and local volunteer fire departments assisted in the initial response to the fire and continue to help protect adjacent private land. According to Champion, “The fire continued to actively burn over night, but we were successful in securing the southern flank of the fire and the fire lines there adjacent to private property are secure.” The fire is burning in steep, rugged terrain within Linville Gorge Wilderness. Pockets of dead pine killed from previous years pine beetle attacks have contributed to the fire’s spread.

There are approximately 200 firefighters helping the Pinnacle Fire and a number of fire engines and dozers are available on the scene. A helicopter has been used to make water drops on hot spots within the fire to prevent its spread onto private land.

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The cause of the fire is still under investigation but it appears that the fire may have started from a campfire. Anyone having any information about the possible cause of the fire should contact the U.S. Forest Service office in Nebo, NC at 828-652-2144.

Joy Malone, Grandfather District Ranger, urged people to exercise caution. "Please be very careful with fire because of the unusually dry and windy conditions we have out on the Forest for this time of year. Check with the State Division of Forest resources before you attempt any open burning." Malone also urged hikers to postpone any planned trips into the Linville Gorge Wilderness until the Pinnacle Fire has been officially declared under control. Kistler Memorial Highway (Old HW 105) which runs along the western edge of Linville Gorge Wilderness is closed until further notice.

Overall control of the fire will be turned over tomorrow morning to the Eastern Arizona Incident Management Team, an interagency team specially trained to coordinate attack on difficult wildfires. In addition to this overhead team, two "Hot Shot" hand crews have been brought in from out of state, one from Arizona and one from New Mexico.

Note to media: For more information, contact Jonetta Holt, Incident Information Officer for the Eastern Arizona Incident Management Team at 520-396-0574.

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