

## WILDLAND FIRE USE ON THE HUMBOLDT-TOIYABE

***Note:** The Humboldt-Toiyabe's scenic 6.25-million acres make it the largest National Forest in the lower 48 states. It includes many high-elevation getaways across Nevada and a small portion of the Eastern Sierra in California. Forest Supervisor Ed Monnig offers his thoughts about managing wildland fires in more remote areas.*

**Wildland Fire Use** is the management of lightning-caused fires to achieve resource benefits, where fire is a major component of the ecosystem. Many resources can be enhanced by allowing fire to play its natural role when risks to private property and other values are low.

Historically, fire periodically burned across the land removing or modifying fuels such as grass, brush, or trees. A century of aggressively fighting all fires, increasing temperatures, and decreasing precipitation, have contributed to today's unbalanced ecosystems. Our forests and rangelands are more susceptible to catastrophic wildfire. In the right settings, fire can actually maintain and improve our natural resources by:

- Reducing fuels;
- Breaking up continuous vegetation and creating mosaics (a mix of young and old forests),
- Improving wildlife habitat;
- Returning nutrients to the soil; and,
- Invigorating native plants by removing non-natives.

Wildland Fire Use also has the potential to decrease future fires' size by creating small islands of young vegetation. It can reduce suppression costs by using fire fighting resources to focus more on priority fires.

On the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, these Wildland Fire Use fires occur mainly in Wilderness areas above 7,000 feet. The Forest currently has five such fires burning:

- **The East Slide Rock Ridge Fire**, located about 15 miles southeast of Jarbidge, in the Jarbidge Wilderness on the Jarbidge Ranger District, is currently about 100 acres, and was detected on August 10.

- **The Whiskey Fire**, located approximately 30 air miles northwest of Las Vegas in the Mt. Charleston Wilderness on the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area just 3 miles southwest of Cold Creek, is less than .1 acres, and began on August 6.
- **The Crown Fire**, located 1/2 mile north of Yosemite National Park in California, approximately 1/4 mile west of Crown Lake in the Hoover Wilderness on the Bridgeport Ranger District, is 1 acre, and began on August 2.
- **The Arnot Fire**, located at 8,700-feet in elevation, approximately 4 miles south of the Wolf Creek Trailhead in the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness in the Sierra Nevada on the Carson Ranger District, is 3 acres, began from a lightning storm on July 14, and was discovered on July 28.
- **The East Creek Fire**, located 25 miles northeast of Ely, in the High Schells Wilderness in eastern Nevada, on the Ely Ranger District, is 525 acres, and began on July 6.
- Two other earlier fires have either been suppressed or have gone out on their own.

Approximately 16 lightning-caused fires occur annually in 17 Wilderness areas and the North Snake Mountain Range, where Wildland Fire Use is an option. Each fire is evaluated against the following criteria to determine whether to suppress or manage the fire for its resource benefits:

- Threat to life, property, or resources;
- Relative risk to escape a pre-defined boundary;
- Current and expected fire spread, intensity, severity, and size, weather and fuel conditions; and,
- Potential effects on social and economic values, and natural and cultural resources.

Wildland Fire Use is one tool managers can use to create resilient forests and rangelands across the Humboldt-Toiyabe. Learn more about Wildland Fire Use at [http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/fireuse/wildland\\_fire\\_use/use\\_index.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/fireuse/wildland_fire_use/use_index.html).

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