



Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840 (406) 363-7100

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact: Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
(406) 363-7113, 531-1130**

New Fire Start Northwest of Stevensville

Hamilton, MT. July 12, 2009. Bitterroot National Forest officials report a new fire start on the Stevensville Ranger District.

The lightning caused start is located in Kootenai Creek northwest of Stevensville. The fire, located about 5 miles up the drainage on the north side of the creek has burned approximately 5 acres of timber in steep, rugged terrain.

Stevensville Ranger District fire officials are assessing the fire. For more information call Nan Christianson at 531-1130.

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Contacts:

Nan Christianson

Public Affairs Officer

Office Phone: 406.363.7113

Cell Phone: 406.531.1130

nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke

Executive Assistant

Office Phone: 406-363-7182

jmlubke@fs.fed.us

**FOR IMMEDIATE
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Bitterroot National Forest

**1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840
406.363.7100**

NEWS RELEASE

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Monday, July 13, 2009

Hamilton, Montana, July 13, 2009— Three new fires were generated by the recent thunderstorms that have passed across the Bitterroot National Forest in the past two days. A total of five fires are currently burning on the Bitterroot National Forest.

Fortunately, these storms have produced some relatively significant moisture in addition to the lightning which has helped limit fire starts and growth. Additional showers and thunderstorms are expected on Tuesday followed by a warming trend later in the week.

Here's a run down of our current fires:

Stevensville Ranger District:

- **Kootenai Creek Fire.** Reported late in the afternoon on July 12th, the Kootenai Creek Fire is now estimated to be 7 acres in size. It is located in dispersed timber, brush and grass on the steep south-southwest facing slope of Kootenai Creek, approximately one mile west of the Wilderness Boundary. The fire's location along the steep, rocky canyon precludes direct firefighting efforts. Eight firefighters are on site and monitoring the fire.
- **Brooks Fire.** Also reported late on the afternoon of July 12th, the Brooks Fire is located mid-slope on the face of the Bitterroot Mountains, between Bass and Sweeney Creek drainages northwest of Stevensville, MT. The fire is comprised of two 'spot' or very small fires, which combined total less than 1/10 of an acre. Two heli-rappellers, firefighters who rappel from helicopters to reach a fire, are assigned to this fire. They expect to complete containment by late this evening.

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Sula Ranger District:

- Hell Rock Fire. Discovered late this afternoon, the Hell Rock fire is located approximately 1 mile southeast of Sula Peak. This fire is a single, smoldering snag. Four firefighters were dispatched to this fire.
- Tolan Ridge Fire. This 1/10 acre fire is smoldering in timber on the ridge between Mink and Tolan Creek drainages. Four fire fighters responded to this fire.

West Fork Ranger District:

- Echo Fire. Located in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, this fire was located by the Hells Half Lookout mid-afternoon today. This fire is estimated to be 1/10 acre in size, and will be managed to burn, generating benefits for a diverse set of natural resources.

Little change is expected in these fires this evening. The next scheduled fire update will be Tuesday afternoon. Contact Nan Christianson at 531-1130 for additional information.

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Contacts:

Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

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Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jmlubke@fs.fed.us

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NEWS RELEASE

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Tuesday, July 14, 2009

Hamilton, Montana, July 14, 2009— The Bitterroot National Forest currently has a total of five fires caused by lightning. Here is an update of the two higher priority fires.

Fire Update:

- **Kootenai Creek Fire.** Reported late in the afternoon on July 12th, the Kootenai Creek Fire is now estimated to be 40-50 acres in size. It is located in dispersed timber, brush and grass on the steep south-southwest facing slope of Kootenai Creek, approximately one mile west of the Wilderness Boundary. The fire's location along the steep, rocky canyon precludes direct firefighting efforts. Today the Kootenai Creek fire had no movement and is holding steady. It is smoldering in large fuels and will have a more accurate acreage with GPS by air patrol tomorrow. For more information, call the Stevensville Ranger District at 777-5461.
- **Hell Rock Fire.** The Hell Rock Fire at Sula Ranger District was caused by a lightning strike on July 13th in a single snag. It is located on the ridge above the East Fork Highway at about MP 2. It is in an area of burned over snags from the fires of 2000 and west and below of the Sula Peak Lookout. There is a high concern for firefighter safety in this area. Anticipate seeing smoke in this area for the next couple of weeks as the firefighters take a cautious approach. If you have any questions please call the Sula Ranger District at 821-3201 for more information.

Contacts:

Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
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Executive Assistant
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NEWS RELEASE

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Thursday, July 16, 2009

Hamilton, Montana, July 16, 2009— Fires on the Bitterroot National Forest remain relatively quiet.

Fire Update:

- Kootenai Creek Fire. Reported late in the afternoon on July 12th, the Kootenai Creek Fire is now estimated to be 28 acres in size. Earlier reporting of 40 – 50 acres was corrected by aerial surveillance on Wednesday. The fire has been relatively quiet, with only an occasional tree “torching” or burning. The fire has moved slightly to the west, towards a fairly moist avalanche chute, and towards a small ridge to the east, as well as down the slope. Five firefighters are posted in Kootenai Canyon, and are monitoring the fire. The fire’s location along the steep, rocky canyon precludes direct firefighting efforts. For more information, call the Stevensville Ranger District at 777-5461.
- Hell Rock Fire. The Hell Rock Fire at Sula Ranger District was caused by a lightning strike on July 13th in a single snag. It is located on the ridge above the East Fork Highway at about MP 2. It, too, has been relatively quiet and remains confined within the black line that firefighters created around it earlier this week. If you have any questions please call the Sula Ranger District at 821-3201 for more information.

The fire weather forecast calls for hotter and drier conditions over the next several days.

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NEWS RELEASE

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Thursday, July 20, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.

Hamilton, Montana, July 20, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire Update: As many valley residents noticed, fire activity on the Kootenai Creek Fire picked up this afternoon. The fire is burning upslope to the north towards the ridge between Kootenai Creek and Bass Creek and has reached approximately 60 acres in size.

A similar increase in fire activity is expected to continue each afternoon this week, as the daily temperatures increase and humidity levels drop.

Due to the rugged and inaccessible terrain, no ground firefighters have been assigned to the fire. However, fire managers are actively monitoring the fire. Helicopter water drops were utilized on Sunday to prevent the fire from becoming established in the canyon bottom.

The fire is located 3 1/2 miles west of the Kootenai Creek trailhead and 1 1/2 miles inside the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary

The fire weather forecast calls for sunny, warm weather with the potential for thunderstorms late in the week.

For additional information about the fire, call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 during the day, or visit www.inciweb.org.

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Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Thursday, July 21, 2009 at 4:00 p.m.

Hamilton, Montana, July 21, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire Update: As expected, fire activity increased on the Kootenai Creek Fire as the day heated up. The fire doubled in size today, and is estimated at 125 acres. The fire continued to move up slope and slightly to the west. Activity on the fire's lower, or southern boundary, remains relatively quiet.

Fire weather predictions call for continued hot and dry days through Thursday, with a chance for thunderstorms late on Thursday and on Friday. Kootenai Creek Fire managers expect fire activity to quiet as evening temperatures drop and humidity increases, with a reverse trend – more active burning – as each day's temperatures increase and humidity levels drop.

Due to the rugged and inaccessible terrain, direct ground-based suppression action is not being taken at this time. Fire managers are actively monitoring the fire, and have established plans to utilize helicopter water drops as the fire moves into areas where such action can be effective.

The fire is located 3 1/2 miles west of the Kootenai Creek trailhead and 1 1/2 miles inside the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary

For additional information about the fire, call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 during the day, or visit www.inciweb.org.

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Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Thursday, July 22, 2009 at 4:00 p.m.

Hamilton, Montana, July 22, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire: Hot afternoons continue to spur increased fire activity. During the past 24 hours, the Kootenai Creek Fire has expanded to approximately 175 acres.

On the eastern flank, the fire is burning actively but still holding just west of the avalanche chute, which is a primary natural barrier that fire managers are working with. The heel of the fire has burned downhill to the south and is approximately 400 – 500 yards above the trail. Fire managers are utilizing a helicopter equipped with a bucket to drop water, to slow the spread of the fire toward the canyon bottom.

The fire has also moved to the west, with runs toward the ridge top to the northwest.

Two lookouts are posted in the field, at St. Maries Lookout and at the head of Larson Creek, to monitor fire activity and call in helicopter water drops as the fire moves into areas where water can have a desired effect.

Fire weather predictions remain unchanged: higher than normal temperatures through Thursday, with a chance for thunderstorms on Friday.

The Bitterroot National Forest has established a Fire Information Station utilizing the Bitter Root Resource Conservation & Development's FireSmart Wagon. The Fire Information Station is located in the parking lot of Super 1 at the Stevensville Wye and will be staffed from 1:30 – 8:00

p. m. . In additional fire updates will be delivered to area businesses over the weekend to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is readily available to area residents and visitors.

No trail or area closures are in affect at this time. "We are closely monitoring this fire, and will initiate a trail or area closure if necessary." explained Forest Spokeswoman Nan Christianson. "In the meantime, we encourage recreationists to consider other destinations, especially if one is hoping to head into the backcountry for several days. Conditions can change quickly. Protecting the safety of the public and firefighters is our primary concern."

For additional information about the fire, call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 during the day, or visit www.inciweb.org . The Forest is issuing brief announcements of fire updates via Twitter and those interested in receiving 'tweets' are encouraged to search for and become a follower of the Bitterroot National Forest.

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Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Thursday, July 23, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. Fire Growth & Trail Closure

Hamilton, Montana, July 23, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire: The west-northwest corner of the Kootenai Creek Fire is burning actively again today. The fire has reached the ridge between Kootenai Creek and Bass Creek, and is approximately 400 acres in size.

On the eastern flank, the fire is burning less actively, moving toward an avalanche chute which forms a natural barrier for firefighters. The heel, or southern edge, of the fire continues to back, or burn slowly, downhill. Fire managers are utilizing two helicopters to drop water on this portion of the fire to check the fire's intensity and rate of spread.

The Forest has closed the Kootenai Creek Trail, and the area ½ mile on each side of the trail and the lakes to the public. The closure is designed to help ensure public safety, and will be lifted as soon as conditions permit.

Two lookouts remain posted in the field, at St. Mary Lookout and at the head of Larson Creek, to monitor fire activity and call in helicopter water drops as the fire moves into areas where water can have a desired effect.

Additional information about the fire can be obtained in one of several ways. One can:

- stop by the FireSmart Fire Information Station located in the parking lot of Super 1 at the Stevensville Wye from 1:30 – 8:00 p. m. daily,
- call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 or the Bitterroot National Forest headquarters at 363-7100 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily.
- Visit www.inciweb.org where daily updates are posted, and available 24 hours a day, or
- Sign-up to receive 'tweets' from the Bitterroot N.F. via <http://twitter.com/>

In addition, the Forest Service will provide updates to local businesses in an effort to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is readily available to area residents and visitors.

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Kootenai Creek Fire Fire Information

Bitterroot National Forest
July 23, 2009

Background...

- The Kootenai Creek Fire is lightning-caused, and was reported at 5:30 PM on July 12th
- The initial start was located approximately 3.5 miles west of the Kootenai Creek trailhead and 1.5 miles inside the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary.
- The fire is burning in sparse timber, brush and grasses on a steep, south-facing slope.
- The primary management objective is to suppress this fire's growth, especially to the east and south. However, ground-based suppression actions are not practical at this time, given the terrain in which the fire is burning.
- Due to the rugged and inaccessible terrain in which the fire was started, this is a challenging fire to manage. It is unsafe to put firefighters on the ground, and use of aerial resources such as air tanker retardant drops would be ineffective. Strategic use of helicopter water drops has been, and will continue to be used, to check the fire's intensity and growth in strategic locations.
- Fire managers are focused on the fire's potential to spread to the east, north and south.
 - Just east of the fire is a green, bushy avalanche chute. Fire managers will use this natural barrier, supplemented with potential water drops, to limit the fire's spread to the east.
 - As the fire creeps downhill, fire crews may be stationed along the trail and the creek to prevent the fire from crossing the canyon and moving to the south.
 - The fire is likely to burn actively upslope, towards the north and the ridge between Kootenai and Bass Creeks. Fire managers will take advantage of natural barriers and less dense fuels, and will utilize water drops if it is determined that water can effectively check or divert the fire's spread.
 - There is less concern about the fire's movement to the west and deeper into Wilderness.
- Fire managers are monitoring the fire's activity throughout the day and decisions will be made regarding direct and indirect suppression as opportunities become available.
- Kootenai Creek Trail will be closed to public use starting July 23rd, in order to protect public safety. The safety of firefighters and the public is our highest priority.
- For more information contact the Stevensville Ranger District at 777-5461 or www.inciweb.org

Contacts:

Nau Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
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Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Friday, July 24, 2009 at 3:30 p.m. Fire Growth & Trail Closure

Hamilton, Montana, July 24, 2009—

NOTE: There will be a public meeting this evening at 7:00 p.m., at the Stevensville High School Gym. The purpose of the meeting is to brief area residents about the Kootenai Creek Fire – its status and our short- and longer-term fire management plans.

The Forest continues to manage the Kootenai Creek Fire which is located on the west side of the Stevensville Ranger District. In addition, we have located one new start that resulted from the lightning storm which passed over the Forest late Thursday evening.

Kootenai Creek Fire: Now estimated at 650 acres, the Kootenai Creek Fire continues to most actively burn in the northwest corner. Somewhat intense burning has been observed periodically, as single trees torch and short 'crown runs' – instances where the fire moves from tree top to tree top – have occurred.

Some significant spread has also occurred on the southern flank, where the fire has reached the trail in the bottom of the canyon. One small spot fire crossed the trail, but firefighters were able to contain that activity. Fire managers are using the trail and the creek, both located in the bottom of the canyon, as effective barriers to help prevent the fire from moving south, into the

Continued...

more densely forested, north facing canyon wall. On the eastern flank, the fire continues to burn less actively but still moving toward an avalanche chute which forms a natural barrier for firefighters.

Twenty-eight firefighters are assigned to the fire. Fire managers are utilizing two helicopters to drop water on this portion of the fire to check the fire's intensity and rate of spread.

The Kootenai Creek Trail and the area ½ mile on each side of the trail and the lakes remain closed to public use. The closure is designed to help ensure public safety, and will be lifted as soon as conditions permit.

Moose Fire: The Moose Fire, located in the Chain of Lakes area on the Sula Ranger District, was started by lightning on July 23rd. It is less than 1/10 of an acre in size; 4 heli-rappellers are assigned to this incident.

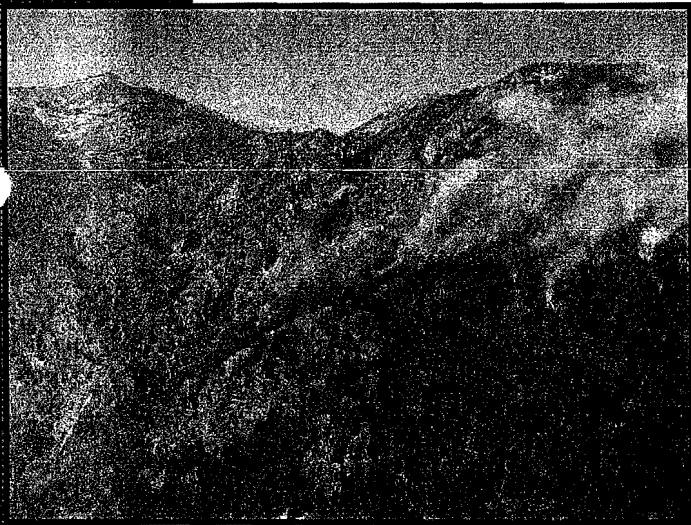
Additional information about Bitterroot National Forest fires can be obtained in one of several ways. One can:

- Attend the public meeting scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Friday, July 24th, at the Stevensville High School Gym,
- Stop by the FireSmart Fire Information Station located in the parking lot of Super 1 at the Stevensville Wye from 1:30 – 8:00 p. m. daily,
- Call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 or the Bitterroot National Forest headquarters at 363-7100 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily.
- Visit www.inciweb.org where daily updates are posted, and available 24 hours a day, or
- Sign-up to receive 'tweets' from the Bitterroot N.F. via <http://twitter.com/>

In addition, the Forest Service will provide updates to local businesses in an effort to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is readily available to area residents and visitors.

###

Kootenai Creek Fire Community Meeting



You'll Get:

Update on Fire Status and Fire
Management

Fire Weather Forecasts

Information on ways to stay
abreast of fire activity in the
days ahead.

Friday, July 24th

at 7:00 p.m.

Stevensville High School
Gym

Contacts:

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Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jmlubke@fs.fed.us

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NEWS RELEASE

MEDIA: Please call Elizabeth Ballard, cell phone, 239-5105, if you need additional information.

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Friday, July 25, 2009 at 3:30 p.m. Fire Growth & Trail Closure

Hamilton, Montana, July 25, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire: Now estimated at 727 acres, the Kootenai Creek Fire continues to most actively burn in the northwest corner near the knife ridge between the Kootenai Creek and Bass Creek drainages. The fire has experienced minor spotting over the ridge but is stalled near the knife ridge above a cirque basin.

Fire fighters are making good progress, with the aid of water pumps and hoses, on both the southern flank of the fire and on the southeast corner of the fire.

Twenty-eight firefighters are assigned to the fire. One fire fighter had a minor injury today. Fire managers are utilizing two helicopters to drop water on the fire to check the fire's intensity and rate of spread, and assist the firefighters on the ground.

The Kootenai Creek Trail and the area ½ mile on each side of the trail and the lakes remain closed to public use. The closure is designed to help ensure public safety, and will be lifted as soon as conditions permit.

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Moose Fire: The Moose Fire, located in the Chain of Lakes area on the Sula Ranger District, was started by lightning on July 23rd. It is still less than 1/10 of an acre in size; 4 heli-rappellers are currently fighting this fire. The fire is not contained.

Additional information about Bitterroot National Forest fires can be obtained in one of several ways. One can:

- Stop by the FireSmart Fire Information Station located in the parking lot of Super 1 at the Stevensville Wye from 1:30 – 8:00 p. m. daily,
- Call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 or the Bitterroot National Forest headquarters at 363-7100 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily.
- Visit www.inciweb.org where daily updates are posted, and available 24 hours a day, or
- Sign-up to receive 'tweets' from the Bitterroot N.F. via <http://twitter.com/>

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Kootenai Creek Fire Fire Information

Bitterroot National Forest
July 23, 2009

Background...

- The Kootenai Creek Fire is lightning-caused, and was reported at 5:30 PM on July 12th
- The initial start was located approximately 3.5 miles west of the Kootenai Creek trailhead and 1.5 miles inside the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary.
- The fire is burning in sparse timber, brush and grasses on a steep, south-facing slope.
- The primary management objective is to suppress this fire's growth, especially to the east and south. However, ground-based suppression actions are not practical at this time, given the terrain in which the fire is burning.
- Due to the rugged and inaccessible terrain in which the fire was started, this is a challenging fire to manage. It is unsafe to put firefighters on the ground, and use of aerial resources such as air tanker retardant drops would be ineffective. Strategic use of helicopter water drops has been, and will continue to be used, to check the fire's intensity and growth in strategic locations.
- Fire managers are focused on the fire's potential to spread to the east, north and south.
 - Just east of the fire is a green, bushy avalanche chute. Fire managers will use this natural barrier, supplemented with potential water drops, to limit the fire's spread to the east.
 - As the fire creeps downhill, fire crews may be stationed along the trail and the creek to prevent the fire from crossing the canyon and moving to the south.
 - The fire is likely to burn actively upslope, towards the north and the ridge between Kootenai and Bass Creeks. Fire managers will take advantage of natural barriers and less dense fuels, and will utilize water drops if it is determined that water can effectively check or divert the fire's spread.
 - There is less concern about the fire's movement to the west and deeper into Wilderness.
- Fire managers are monitoring the fire's activity throughout the day and decisions will be made regarding direct and indirect suppression as opportunities become available.
- Kootenai Creek Trail will be closed to public use starting July 23rd, in order to protect public safety. The safety of firefighters and the public is our highest priority.
- For more information contact the Stevensville Ranger District at 777-5461 or www.inciweb.org

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Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
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NEWS RELEASE

MEDIA: Please call Elizabeth Ballard, cell phone, 239-5105, OR 777-7421 if you need additional information.

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Friday, July 26, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. Fire Growth & Trail Closure

Hamilton, Montana, July 26, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire: The Kootenai Creek Fire size is estimated at 786 acres, based on information from an aerial infra-red mapping flight from last night. There is one fire spot east of the main fire in the avalanche chute. Helicopters are actively dropping water on this spot as well as other hot edges of the fire on the east to check the fire's intensity and rate of spread, and assist the firefighters on the ground.

The fire continues to burn in the northwest corner near the knife ridge between the Kootenai Creek and Bass Creek drainages, with a minor spot fire over the ridge that is stalled near the knife ridge above a cirque basin.

Fire fighters continue to make good progress, with the aid of water pumps and hoses, on both the southern flank of the fire and on the southeast corner of the fire.

Thirty two personnel are assigned to the fire. Fire managers are utilizing two helicopters to drop water on the fire.

The Kootenai Creek Trail and the area ½ mile on each side of the trail and the lakes remain closed to public use. The closure is designed to help ensure public safety, and will be lifted as soon as conditions permit.

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Other fire activity on the Bitterroot National Forest: There were 6 small new fires on the Forest today. Fire fighters were assigned to 5 of these fires and they are now out. The Moose Fire on the Sula ranger District is out. The Bald Top fire, less than 1/10 of an acre on the Darby Ranger District, is burning within the area that burned in 2000 and is being managed for resource benefits and is being monitored.

Expected weather today and tomorrow include a chance of afternoon thunderstorms with temperatures ranging from 80-90 degrees.

Additional information about Bitterroot National Forest fires can be obtained in one of several ways. One can:

- Stop by the FireSmart Fire Information Station located in the parking lot of Super 1 at the Stevensville Wye from 1:30 – 8:00 p. m. daily,
- Call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 or the Bitterroot National Forest headquarters at 363-7100 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily.
- Visit www.inciweb.org where daily updates are posted, and available 24 hours a day, or
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In addition, the Forest Service will provide updates to local businesses in an effort to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is readily available to area residents and visitors.

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Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Monday, July 27, 2009 at 4:00 p.m.

Hamilton, Montana, July 27, 2009— Intense lightning storms accompanied by varying quantities of precipitation had predictable effects on fire activity over the past 24 hour period.

The Kootenai Creek Fire received only 1/10 inch of rain, but with higher humidity and lower temperatures, the fire remained relatively quiet. Crews completed the task of securing the southern flank along the trail late Sunday afternoon; the little burning that did occur today appeared to be internal to the existing fire perimeter within a cirque basin in the northwest corner. Two lookouts continue to monitor the fire's activity and the fire's size remains at 786 acres.

Most of the nine new starts that have been located since early Saturday morning remain small, or have been fully contained. Two of those new starts were staffed early this morning. An engine with five crew members responded to the Slate Fire, a 1/10 of an acre fire in grass and timber, on the West Fork Ranger District while a second engine with three crew members responded to the Knife Ridge Fire – a single snag hit by lightning – in the Skalkaho area on the Darby Ranger District.

Fire weather calls for another day or two of cooler weather with drying and warming temperatures later in the week. Fire managers expect a few more new starts from the recent lightning storms to emerge in the next few days.

###

Contacts:

Nan Christianson
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406.363.7100

NEWS RELEASE

MEDIA: Please call me on my cell phone, 531-1130, if you need additional information. NC

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Monday, July 27, 2009 at 10:00 AM Fire & Trail Closure Information

Hamilton, Montana, July 27, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire: The Kootenai Creek Fire received some rain last night, although less rain fell on the fire area in the Kootenai Creek canyon than many areas of the Bitterroot valley. The fire activity has calmed considerably.

The fire crews completed their objective of securing the southern flank and southeast corner of the fire and have been released from the fire. The crews were able to confine fire spread using natural barriers with helicopter support dropping water.

Fire observers on the ground will be monitoring the fire's progress for the next several days, in order to determine the need re-engage resources to carry out management actions. As weather returns to being warm and dry, it is expected the Kootenai Creek fire will continue to produce smoke as fuels dry. Seven personnel are assigned to the fire. Fire managers have helicopters available to work the fire.

The Kootenai Creek Trail and the area ½ mile on each side of the trail and the lakes remain closed to public use. The closure is designed to help ensure public safety, and will be lifted as soon as conditions permit.

-continued-

Other fire activity on the Bitterroot National Forest: There was one new small fire from the storm last night, on the West Fork Ranger District, in Slate Creek and that fire is contained. The Bald Top fire, less than 1/10 of an acre on the Darby Ranger District, is smoldering within the area that burned in 2000 and is being managed for resource benefits and is being monitored.

It is expected to be mostly cloudy today, with scattered showers and thunderstorms, with temperatures ranging from mid 70's to mid 80's. A trend consisting of a slight chance of showers and thunderstorms with temperatures in the 70's to 80's is predicted through next weekend.

Additional information about Bitterroot National Forest fires can be obtained in one of several ways. One can:

- Stop by the FireSmart Fire Information Station located in the parking lot of Super 1 at the Stevensville Wye from 1:30 – 8:00 p. m. daily,
- Call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 or the Bitterroot National Forest headquarters at 363-7100 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily.
- Visit www.inciweb.org where daily updates are posted, and available 24 hours a day, or
- Sign-up to receive 'tweets' from the Bitterroot N.F. via <http://twitter.com/>

In addition, the Forest Service will provide updates to local businesses in an effort to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is readily available to area residents and visitors.

###

Contacts:

Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jlubke@fs.fed.us

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

Bitterroot National Forest

**1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840
406.363.7100**

NEWS RELEASE

MEDIA: Please call Nan Christianson @ 531-1130 if you need additional information.

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Tuesday, July 28, 2009 at 4:00 p.m.

Hamilton, Montana, July 28, 2009—

The Kootenai Creek Fire remains relatively quiet with isolated areas inside the fire's perimeter continuing to burn. Most of the current fire activity appears to be in the northwest corner, the southwest corner and in a patch of vegetation within the avalanche chute on the east side.

"Some areas of the fire have cooled down considerably," reported Bruce Windhorst, Stevensville Ranger District Fire Management Officer. "However, we don't want to mislead people that this fire is over. We have 6 – 8 weeks of fire season still to come with the potential for our typical hot, dry days and strong winds."

Two lookouts continue to monitor the Kootenai Creek Fire's activity; the size remains at 786 acres. Temperatures for the next five days are expected to be cooler than average.

Forest Dispatch reported one additional new fire today. The Basin Fire is located approximately 1 mile south of Sabe Saddle on the West Fork Ranger District. This fire was started by lightning and will be managed to create benefits for natural resources in the area.

###



Nan
Christianson /R1/USDAFS
07/31/2009 02:32 PM

To r1_bitterroot@FSNOTES
cc
bcc
Subject Bitterroot NF Fire Update for July 31st



09_0731pm_BitterrootNF NewsRelease_Wildfire Update.doc

Contacts:

Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jmlubke@fs.fed.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840
406.363.7100

NEWS RELEASE

MEDIA: There will be **NO NEWS RELEASES** over the weekend unless fire activity changes significantly. Please call Nan Christianson @ 531-1130 if you need additional information.

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Friday, July 31, 2009 at 2:30 p.m.

Hamilton, Montana, July 31, 2009—

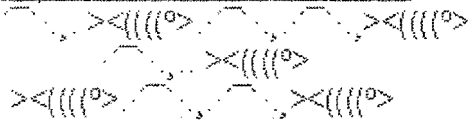
Activity on the Kootenai Creek fire has decreased throughout the day. The fire holds some heat on the eastern flank, near the avalanche chute, but less smoke, which is an indicator of less fire on the ground, is being produced in the middle of the afternoon than earlier this morning. Lookouts will continue to monitor the Kootenai Creek Fire as the weekend's predicted warmer, dryer weather moves in. Fire activity is expected to increase within the fire's existing perimeter as temperatures increase and humidity drops.

Thirty firefighters utilized pumps and hose to confine the Lost Horse fire to 2 acres. The

fire is 65% contained and full containment is expected by later this afternoon.
Firefighters will remain on the fire through the weekend until it can be declared out.

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Nan Christianson, Staff Officer
Northern & Intermountain Regions State & Private Forestry
And Bitterroot National Forest
1801 North 1st Street - Hamilton, MT 59840
Office: 406.363.7113
Cell: 406.531.1130
Fax: 406.363.7159
nchristianson@fs.fed.us
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/bitterroot>



Contacts:

Man Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
mchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jlubke@fs.fed.us

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406.363.7100

NEWS RELEASE

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Tuesday, August 4, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

Hamilton, Montana, August 4, 2009—

Spurred by unanticipated winds, the Kootenai Creek Fire grew from less than 900 acres to over 1500 acres this afternoon.

Initially, the fire moved to the west then burned upslope toward the ridge between Kootenai Creek and Bass Creek. As the fire reached denser fuels, it burned into the crowns and spotted across the canyon south of the creek and trail. Strong winds continue to push the fire up the north facing slope towards the ridge, and to the east, toward the mouth of the canyon.

No structures or private property are currently threatened. Any additional growth today or tomorrow will be strongly influence by winds in the canyon.

The Kootenai Creek Trail was closed earlier today from the Wilderness boundary west.

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Contacts:

Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jmlubke@fs.fed.us

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1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840
406.363.7100

NEWS RELEASE

NOTE TO MEDIA: If you want to pursue a more in-depth article or interview about the decision process we utilize to determine which fires we suppress and which we manage for resource benefits, please call West Fork District Ranger Dave Campbell at 406-370-8088.

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Wednesday, August 5th at 4:00 pm Kootenai Creek Trail Closure Expanded

Hamilton, Montana, August 5, 2009—

The Kootenai Creek Fire actively burned throughout the night, but by dawn, heavy cloud cover, colder temperatures and higher humidity generated the desired effect of quieting fire behavior.

The fire, pushed by yesterday's unanticipated, strong winds, added nearly 200 acres to the west on the north side of the creek. It also moved east beyond the avalanche chute which had provided a natural fire break, and fire managers are using helicopter water drops along this portion of the fire today, to check the fire spread. As the fire moved into new fuels on the north side of the creek, it made several runs which generated spot fires across the creek on the south side of the canyon. Throughout the late afternoon and much of the night on Tuesday, these spot fires grew and made significant runs to the top of the ridge line.

Since early Wednesday morning, the fire quieted and has expanded very little although it continues to creep and burn, and thus generate smoke, within its new perimeter. At its closest point, it remains 4 miles west of the trailhead.

The Kootenai Creek Trail closure has been expanded to include the entire Kootenai Creek trail system, from the trailhead west to the ID-MT divide.

The FireSmart Wagon has been re-opened in the Super 1 parking lot. Current maps and fire activity information are available at the FireSmart Wagon from 1:00 – 8:00 pm daily during periods of significant fire activity. Current information is also available at the Stevensville Ranger Station, at 777-5461.

While many have asked about the intent to 'let this fire burn', agency officials are quick to confirm that this fire is not being "allowed to burn" or managed for resource benefits. Fire managers established a goal to suppress this fire right from the start, but recognized that due to the hazardous conditions on the ground, there would be limited opportunities to utilize ground-based firefighters or air-based resources safely and effectively. Fire managers have identified natural barriers and changes in terrain and fuels where, as the fire moves into those locations, aggressive suppression actions will be immediately taken to prevent the fire from moving on to private lands.

Elsewhere on the Forest, the lightning storm that moved across the Forest Wednesday morning generated eight new starts on the West Fork Ranger District. Each of these new starts is reported to be 1/10 of an acre in size. Four of the eight new starts are located within or adjacent to wilderness areas and will be managed to create resource benefits by reintroducing fire on the landscape. The remaining four will be suppressed, and firefighters were dispatched to each.

Evaluating and determining which fires are best suited to generate resource benefits and which should be suppressed "requires careful consideration," explained West Fork District Ranger Dave Campbell. "We consider the potential of each fire individually but also the full extent of current fire activity on the forest" to determine which, if any, fires should be managed for resource benefits.

The fire weather forecast indicates cooler temperatures over the next few days, with a 60% chance of rain Wednesday evening and an 80% chance of rain on Thursday and Friday.

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Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840 (406) 363-7100

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
(406) 363-7113 or 531-1130

Or

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
(406) 363-7182

Kootenai Creek Fire Update – August 11, 2009 - 3:00pm

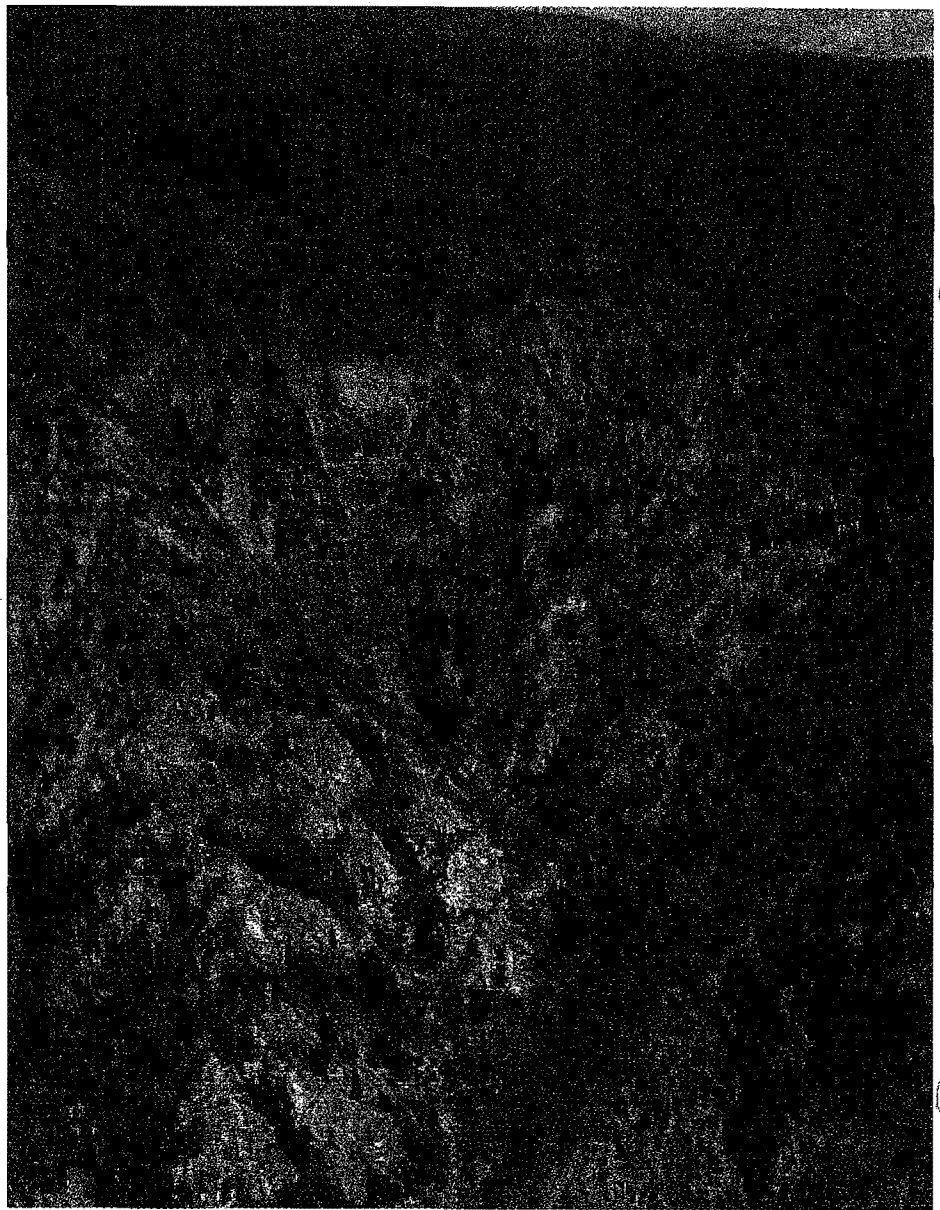
Hamilton, MT - A hot and dry day with strong winds has increased the fire activity on the Kootenai Creek Fire. Fire activity is occurring on the north side of the creek, east side of the fire. At this point, fire observers are seeing some isolated torching at about mid slope.

For more information, please call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461.

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8/11/09 Kootenai Creek Fire

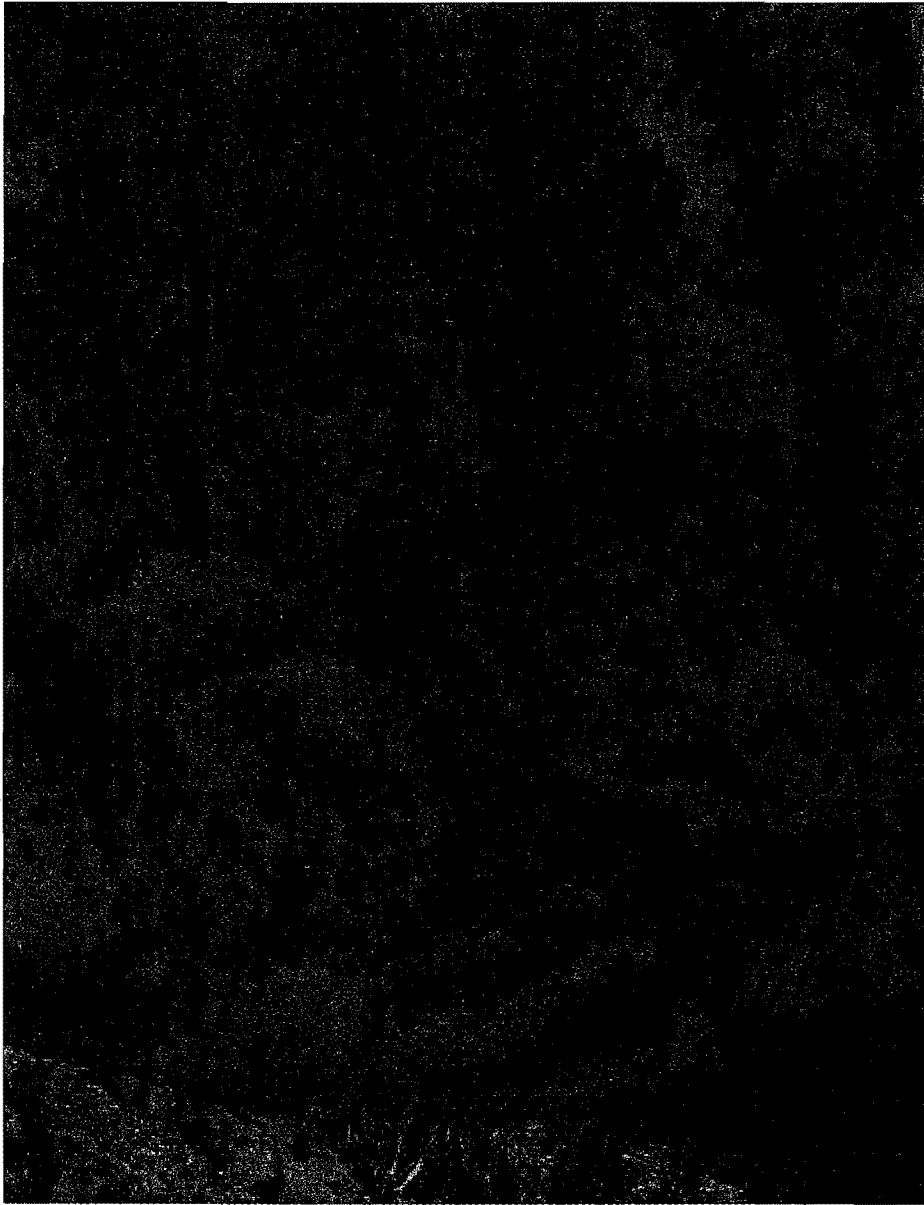












Contacts:

Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jmlubke@fs.fed.us

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Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840
406.363.7100

NEWS RELEASE

Bitterroot National Forest Update

Hamilton, Montana, August 25, 2009—

Forest officials want to remind folks that the second in a series of **Travel Management Planning open houses** will be held at the Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor's Office on Wednesday, August 26th.

Travel Management Team members will be available from 11:00 a.m. until 7:00 pm to answer questions and explain information contained in the recently released Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The set of 40 maps will also be available for public review and perusal. Public comments regarding the proposed action and other aspects of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement are due on September 21st. The Forest will continue to host open houses every Wednesday throughout the comment period; the DEIS and associated maps are also available for public review at Libraries in Darby, Hamilton, Stevensville and Missoula, and in all Bitterroot National Forest offices.

Big Creek is once again open to public use. Bear managers were not able to find the small cinnamon-colored bear that harassed hikers in the area earlier in July. While the drainage has been reopened for use, recreationists are cautioned to follow advice for hiking or camping in bear country remembering five simple steps that can help prevent human-bear encounters:

- Camp away from trails and areas where you see bear signs.
- Keep a clean camp at all times. Keep tents and sleeping bags free of odors.
- Avoid cooking smelly foods.
- Hang all food, trash and other odorous items well away from camp and at least 10' above ground and 4' from any vertical support, or store in a bear-proof container. Livestock feed should be treated the same as human food.
- Don't sleep in the same clothes you wore while cooking or eating.

Additional information about co-existing with bears can be found on the MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks website: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/livingwildlife/beBearAware/default.html>

Wildfire Update: The Kootenai Creek Fire continues to consume available fuels primarily within the existing perimeter and along the western flank on the south side of the creek. On Monday, the fire added 3-5 new acres on the eastern flank north of the creek and is now estimated to be 1800 acres in size. As of early Tuesday afternoon, fire activity and associated smoke increased as the fire moved upslope on the eastern flank. Fire managers expect burning to become more active each afternoon this week, as temperatures approach 90 degrees and the humidity drops.

In addition, the Forest reported one new fire late on Monday afternoon. The Big Spruce Fire, a human caused fire, was located approximately ten miles up the Big Creek drainage, and was creeping around in timbered fuels. The District dispatched three firefighters to the 1/10 acre fire late Monday; the fire was quickly controlled and declared out.

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Contacts:

Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jmlubke@fs.fed.us

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Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840
406.363.7100

NEWS RELEASE

NOTE TO MEDIA: I will be out of the office Aug 27-28th. If you need additional information regarding fires or other activities on the Bitterroot National Forest, please contact Joni Lubke at 363-7182

**Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Wednesday, August 26th at 3:00 pm
-- Kootenai Creek Trail Temporarily Closed 1 Mile west of Trailhead --**

Hamilton, Montana, August 26, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire: The Kootenai Creek Fire, ignited by lightning on July 12th, continues to burn in the Kootenai Creek drainage west of Stevensville, MT. By mid afternoon on Wednesday the fire was beginning to heat up again, and fire managers expect it to expand again today just as it did yesterday. More accurate mapping indicates the fire is now 2187 acres in size.

On Tuesday, the fire grew in size primarily on the northeastern flank, although it also grew modestly on the southwestern flank. The fire moved toward the northeastern ridge of the Kootenai Creek drainage then backed down the hill into the creek bottom. A few small spot fires crossed the Kootenai-Brooks Face ridge. Today, fire managers are utilizing helicopter water drops on those Brooks Face spot fires. Fire lookouts are posted in both Larson and Bass Creek drainages to monitor activity and quickly locate any additional spot fires that may result from today's activity.

Due to fire activity in the canyon bottom, the Stevensville Ranger District has once again closed the Kootenai Creek Trail from one mile west of the trailhead up through the western portion of the drainage. The District has also re-opened the FireSmart Wagon as a public fire information center; the FireSmart Wagon will be staffed from 1:00 – 8:00 each day that the fire is actively

burning. Current maps and information can be viewed at the FireSmart Wagon, or at the Stevensville Ranger District.

Other wildfire news: Two fires on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, just to the east of the Bitterroot National Forest, are growing in size and may be noticed by valley residents. The Lily Lake Fire is northeast of Wisdom and is approximately 32 acres in size. The Sand Basin fire is southwest of Philipsburg and appears to be due east of the Bitterroot's Skalkaho drainage. Estimates from earlier today projected its size at 33 acres; a large smoke column is clearly visible from the Bitterroot Valley.

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Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840 (406) 363-7100

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
(406) 363-7113 or 531-1130

or

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
(406) 363-7182

Kootenai Creek Fire Update – August 27, 2009

Hamilton, MT – This afternoon, residents of Stevensville are getting a glimpse of the most active part of the Kootenai Creek Fire located on the Bitterroot National Forest. What is being seen is the most eastern edge of the fire, which is still a mile and half up the canyon. Currently, the fire is making good progress along the ridge at Brooks Face, but is not quite as exposed to westerly winds as it was previously. The fire is burning with moderate to aggressive ground fire, with very little crowning or torching. The fire, at this time, is being mapped at 2,357 acres.

At the moment, fire managers are feeling confident that they may do crew action tomorrow to tie in the trail to a rock ledge along the Kootenai-Brooks divide ridge.

Yesterday, the Stevensville Ranger District once again closed the Kootenai Creek Trail from one mile west of the trailhead up to North and South Kootenai Lakes. The District has also re-opened the FireSmart Wagon as a public fire information center at Super 1. The FireSmart Wagon will be staffed from 1:00 – 8:00 each day that the fire is actively burning. Current maps and information can be viewed at the FireSmart Wagon, or at the Stevensville Ranger District.

For more information, call the Stevensville Ranger District at 406-777-5461 or visit <http://www.inciweb.org/incident/1733>.

###



Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840 (406) 363-7100

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
(406) 363-7113 or 531-1130

Or

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
(406) 363-7182

August 28, 2009 5:30 pm

Kootenai Creek Fire Update and Prescribed Fire Notification

Hamilton, MT – The Kootenai Creek fire was less active today due to cooler weather conditions and light winds. The fire has grown approximately 50 acres since yesterday. The Bitterroot Hot Shot crew finished construction of fire line from the Kootenai Creek trail north to tie into a rock ridge. The crew is also working on spot fires along the trail. The fire is continuing to creep and smolder on the ground with some torching and is moving slowly down slope to the east. Fire managers had helicopters dropping water buckets on spots along the ridge between Kootenai Creek and Brooks Face.

For the weekend, the intent is to keep the crew working the spots along the trail and to have helicopters continue to drop water. The weather forecast is calling for a good chance of precipitation on Sunday.

Prescribed Fire Notification - The West Fork Ranger District on the Bitterroot National Forest is planning to ignite 15 acres for a prescribed burn, starting on Sunday, August 30th. This prescribed fire unit is located at the junction of Woods Creek and Beaver Creek, at the top of Woods Creek Pass approximately 40 miles southwest of Hamilton near the Idaho-Montana border. Conditions are good for achieving prescribed fire objectives in the southern end of the Forest.

For more information, call the West Fork Ranger District at 406-821-3269.

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Contacts:

Nan Christianson
Public Affairs Officer
Office Phone: 406.363.7113
Cell Phone: 406.531.1130
nchristianson@fs.fed.us

Joni Lubke
Executive Assistant
Office Phone: 406-363-7182
jmlubke@fs.fed.us

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406.363.7100

NEWS RELEASE

Bitterroot Wildfire Update for Monday, August 31st

Hamilton, Montana, August 31, 2009—

Kootenai Creek Fire: The Kootenai Creek Fire was active periodically over the weekend, growing to 2685 acres. The fire received 0.6 inches of rain late Sunday through early Monday, and shows very little activity today. The Kootenai Creek Trail remains closed from one mile west of the trailhead further west throughout the drainage. Current maps and information can be viewed at the FireSmart Wagon, or at the Stevensville Ranger District.

Other wildfire news: Saturday's lightning started three new fires that were discovered on Sunday. Each of the fires is less than 1/10 of an acre in size; all are located within the Wilderness Areas on the West Fork Ranger District and will be managed to create benefits for resources in the area.

The Forest received a significant number of lightning strikes from Sunday evening's lightning storm. Additional new starts may be found in the next few days, if warmer, dryer weather returns.

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