

# MONTANA

OFFICE OF TOURISM

## **MONTANA OFFICE OF TOURISM FIRE UPDATE**

**August 26, 2013**

### **Recent Articles on Montana's Fire Season**

**Lolo Creek, Gold Pan fire crews await 'season-ending event'**

(Missoulian, August 26, 2013)

**Lolo air quality listed as unhealthy** (Missoulian, August 26, 2013)

**Missoula-Ninemile storm delivers 100 lightning strikes, 9 fires** (Missoulian, August 26, 2013)

**Missoula Rural Fire chief offers tips as Lolo Creek evacuees return** (Missoulian, August 24, 2013)

**Evacuation orders lifted for Lolo Creek fire; highway reopens** (Missoulian, August 24, 2013)

**Rock Creek fire heated up slightly on Sunday** (Billings Gazette, August 26, 2013)

**Wildfires make little progress in southwest Montana** (Bozeman Daily Chronicle, August 26, 2013)

**Firefighters battle blaze north of Helena in Sieben Flats** (Helena Independent Record, August 26, 2013)

### **Current Fire Activity as of: *Monday, August 26, 2013***

A map of locations of any major fires in Montana can be found at: <http://activefiremaps.fs.fed.us/>

For the most up-to-date information on fires in Montana, visit: <http://www.inciweb.org/state/27/>

Analyzed Fires and Smoke from Satellite:

<http://www.firedetect.noaa.gov/viewer.htm?box=-1490116.93859803:282654.815634218:-292646.984705805:1062563.20058996&Layers=11100000101010101011100000001&ActiveLayer=2>

This Update is also available in PDF format on our Fire Conditions page at:

<http://www.visitmt.com/fire>

## [Glacier Country](#)

**LOLO CREEK COMPLEX** (10 miles west of Lolo, MT, in the Bitterroot and Lolo National Forest) – The fire spread to more than 10,892 acres on both sides of the Hwy 12 and is at a containment of 45%. (This fire combined the West Fork 2 Fire and the Schoolhouse Fire.) Both fires started on August 18, due to lightning strikes and is considered a full suppression fire. A National, Type 1 Incident Management Team is on site. Active firefighting is now focused on the northern edge of the fire that remains uncontrolled. The fire has been moving into National Forest lands on the higher reaches and more inaccessible areas especially in the rough terrain of the Woodman Creek canyon. The south half of the fire, as well as east and west sides are now in full mop up and patrol status. The fire now poses an immediate threat to the 500 KV Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) powerline located one mile south of Blue Mountain. Activity was moderate due to decreased winds and the head of the fire backing downslope in lighter fuels. The fire is burning in a mixture of timber and grass in a canyon area. Today's weather will be similar to yesterday, with isolated thunderstorms developing by late afternoon along with increasing temperatures and lowering humidity, and will continue over the next few days.

### Temporary Closures & Evacuations:

- **US Highway 12 has reopened** and the evacuation order for residents along the highway corridor was lifted, although notices are still in effect. Speeds are limited of 45 mph from milepost 20 to 32, with no stopping or parking alongside the highway until further notice.
  - Fire Managers ask that road users drive with headlights on and observe safety rules. Smoke can be heavy, especially in the morning before the inversion lifts.
- The MT Dept of Transportation (MDT) has identified a detour route for eastbound traffic from Idaho & Lolo Pass. At milepost 16, traffic is diverted at the Graves Creek/Petty Creek Road north to I-90 near Alberton. Note: This is a gravel road and rough; please use caution. All semi-trucks and large motor coaches must use an alternate route other than Highway 12
- MDT has closed the Fish Creek Road from I-90 (Fish Creek exit) to Highway 12 (at Mile Marker Six) and also Graves Creek/Petty Creek Road is closed until further notice.
- **For public safety an Area Closure is now in place for the Schoolhouse and West Fork Two Fires.** The closure boundary is in two segments on the Lolo NF one north of Highway 12 and one south of Highway 12.
- **The north segment:** From the Main Blue Mountain Trailhead west to the Grave Creek Road on National Forest lands. The north boundary of this segment is includes Road 9961 and the Telephone Butte area. The southern boundary of this segment is the National Forest boundary.
- **The South Segment:** Beginning at Lolo NF lands south of Highway 12 just west of the town of Lolo and extending all the way west to the Earl Tenant Campground. Then south to the Idaho/Montana border and then east along the border with the Bitterroot National Forest.
- **For specific information on closure boundaries please see the closure area map on this Incident site or call the Missoula Ranger District at 329-3814**

**DAMNATION FIRE** (21 miles southeast of Swan Lake, MT) - The Damnation Fire was started by lightning on August 11, 2013 and is located within the Bob Marshall Wilderness. It is currently at 56,103 acres. The management objective for this fire is to allow the fire to play its natural role in wilderness, while providing for public and firefighter safety and protecting values at risk.

#### **Temporary Closures:**

- For public safety the Helen Creek Trail #100 is closed from East Side Trail # 80 over Pagoda Pass to the White River Trail #112. The Trail in the Mist #220, Hodag Creek Trail #701 and Mud Lake Lookout Trail #470 are also closed.
- Due to increased fire activity, East Side Trail #80, trail users are being directed by on-the-ground trail personnel, to the West Side Trail #263. This rerouting is from Black Cabin area to the Woodfir Creek area.

**GOLD PAN COMPLEX** (35 miles sw of Conner, MT) – Lightning on July 16 started the 4 fires – Nez Peak, Goat, Thirteen and Gold Pan - that make up this fire and is primarily burning in Idaho and the Bitterroot National Forest. It is currently at 37,138 acres with 0% contained and a growth potential of extreme and high terrain difficulty. Approximately 2,100 acres has burned in Montana. A Type 1 Incident team accepted command on August 19. Fuels include unburned mixed conifer stand, bug killed DF and LPP, as well as numerous old fire scar areas in and around the fire. Large area closure remains in effect due to potential for continued fire growth. As predicted it continues to move north/northeast into Cayuse, Scimitar and Gabe Creeks. Approximately 285 personnel are used, with shared air resources from Montana when requested.

#### **Temporary Closures:**

- Contact the Bitterroot National Forest for details. West Fork Ranger District- Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Areas & Selway Bitterroot Wilderness (North & South) of Magruder Road Corridor and South of Tough Creek Road and south of Barecone Lookout back to Salmon Mtn Lookout. Closures are also reported on Inciweb.
- The road closure order was adjusted today, Monday, August 26, on the southern boundary of Closure Area B to allow public access to Deer Creek trail #139.

#### **Yellowstone Country**

**ROCK CREEK** (5 miles south Red Lodge, MT) – This human caused fire is 900 acres with approximately 25% contained. It is burning along Hwy 212 in the Custer National Forest. The fire is burning in steep heavily timbered terrain. A Northern Rockies Type 2 Incident Management Team has arrived and work to further secure the fire on the north and east flanks. Smoke may become more visible in the early afternoon due to the inversion lifting around 1:30 p.m. Crews are continuing to make progress on securing the fire perimeter, as well as establishing safe access to reach the western portion of the fire. Helicopters will continue to be used in fire suppression activities. Air resources will continue retardant drops on the ridge between the fire and the West Fork of Rock Creek. Two bulldozers have built containment line on north flank of the fire, while aerial drops and 90 personnel are assisting. Temperatures today will be in the low 80's with relative humidity in the mid 20's and southwest winds of 5-10 mph. Thunderstorms may be expected this afternoon with accompanying erratic winds.

#### **Temporary Closures & Evacuations:**

- The Beartooth Pass / U.S. Highway 212 is open to all traffic with 35 mph speed limit through the fire area. There are no evacuations in effect at this time.
- All campgrounds in the local area are open.

- Trails temporarily closed are: **Trail # 102 Silver Run Trails, #64 Ingles Creek Trail and #8 Beartrack Trail is closed.**
- A temporary flight restriction (TFR) is in effect surrounding the Rock Creek Fire area.
- Stage 1 fire restrictions are in place for the Beartooth Ranger District of the Custer National Forest.
- **Public Meeting:** A meeting will be held on Monday August 26 - at Red Lodge County Fairgrounds 6:00 PM

**MINER PARADISE COMPLEX** (8 miles south of Emigrant and the Tom Miner Basin area) – This fire is 11,658 acres with approximately 15% contained. It is composed of four fires: Emigrant, North Eightmile, Horsetail and Sheep Fire. All are lightning started. Fire personnel totaling 492 will continue to use heavy equipment and crews will construct direct and indirect handline and mechanized lines where appropriate and use natural geological features and aerial drops also. Today, while conditions will not warrant a Red Flag, there is little to no moisture on the ground and temperatures are expected to be higher. Less moisture and warmer air presents the opportunity for increased fire activity.

#### **Temporary Closures & Notices:**

- **Horse Tail Fire Closures: East side of Hyalite Dam**, including Chisholm, and Hood Creek campgrounds and Palisades, Emerald Lake and Flanders Creek Trailheads will be closed. Windowrock and Maxey Cabin are closed.
  - Blackmore Day Use Area will remain open.
- **Tom Miner Basin / Sheep Fire Closure:** the Tom Miner Basin area on National Forest System Lands affected by the Sheep Fire along the southern portion of the Tom Miner Basin which will include the Tom Miner Campground. Map will be made available on Inciweb.
- The Divide Creek Road (#3250) in the Tom Miner basin has been temporarily closed.
- **North Eight Mile Fire Closures:** East Fork Hyalite - East Fork of Hyalite closed including Palisade Falls Trailhead and picnic area, Emerald Lake Trailhead and Flanders Creek drainage. Closure map is available on Inciweb.
- **The Emigrant Fire Closure:** Expanded to include National Forest System lands along the western boundary, north to Chico area in section 13, 17 and 18, running along the east Chico Peak to Monitor Peak and south to the over to Dome Mountain WMA.
  - **Trails closed include:** the North Fork of Bear Creek #60, Knox Lake #64, #279 Monitor Peak Trail on the Gardiner and Yellowstone R.D.'s, the Monitor Peak Trail #61, Trail #62 to Knox and Fish Lakes along with Trail #33 bumping into Trail #60 to Monitor Peak from the South.
  - The Sixmile Creek Trail (#61) and North Fork of Sixmile Creek Trail (#606) will be closed to their junction with Trail #601 north of Monitor Peak.
  - The Forest Service portion of Sixmile Creek Road from its junction with the Dailey Lake Road will be closed until further notice.
  - Connector Trail #601 will remain open.
  - No evacuations are in place along the north boundary or in the Chico area
- Be aware of increased fire traffic on the various roads in the Paradise Valley and use caution if on these roads. Traffic will be especially heavy in the mornings and evenings as firefighters are travelling between the fire and fire camp.

- As of August 22, Park County has implemented a [burn ban](#) for all outdoor burning.
- Stage 1 Fire Restrictions are in effect for the Gallatin National Forest including the Absaroka –Beartooth Wilderness and the Beartooth Ranger District, Custer National Forest (excluding the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness)

## YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK –

### Yellowstone National Park Fire Update for August 23, 2013 – 9 am –

There are several fires burning in Yellowstone National Park, and has been named the Druid Complex Fire. It is composed of the Alum, Alder, Druid, Snake and Passage. All fires produced tall smoke columns visible for several miles in all directions. In addition, smoke from fires outside the park to the north and west in Montana and Idaho also contributed to occasionally hazy conditions at some locations at times during the day. A National Incident Management Organization team is arriving and fire managers will continue to focus on providing for public and firefighter safety, and for the protection of structures, communities, and natural and historic resources. Fire activity within the Druid Complex was minimal on Sunday and similar fire behavior is expected to continue Monday. Monday's forecast includes a high of 70 degrees with light winds. The fires continue to smolder and slowly creep in large timber with flames occasionally torching a tree or small group of trees.

- **Alum Fire:** The fire perimeter remains within a mile of the Grand Loop Road. The road between Canyon Village and Fishing Bridge through Yellowstone's Hayden Valley. Visitors are cautioned to reduce their speed well below the posted speed limits through this section of road and can expect reduced visibility due to low-level smoke across the road.
  - [The Mud Volcano area has been reopened.](#) However, LeHardy Rapids, and several picnic areas and pullouts and some backcountry trails in the area remain temporarily closed.
- **Alder Fire:** This fire at the south end of Yellowstone Lake is hemmed in by water on three sides and by a recently burned area to the south. Several backcountry campsites on The Promontory have been temporarily closed.
- **Druid Fire:** This fire burning in a steep heavily timbered area on Druid Peak is visible at times from along the Northeast Entrance road.
- **Snake and Passage Fires:** These remain small, but visible columns may be seen on web cams and along the road.
- Please note that **most roads to and through Yellowstone are unaffected** by fire activity and remain open to travel. While a few trail segments and some backcountry campsites are temporarily closed, all Yellowstone park entrances, roads, campgrounds, lodging, stores, and other visitor services are open. Updated park road information is available 24-hours a day by calling 307-344-2117.
- [All other roads in Yellowstone are open, as are all park entrances, lodging, stores, campgrounds and other visitor services.](#) Gateway communities are also open and operating to meet visitor's needs.

## [Southwestern Montana:](#)

**EUREKA FIRE** (38 Miles SSW of Ennis, MT) – This lightning caused fire started on August 12 is 6,468 acres and 40% contained. Firefighters will “mop up where safe” to reduce hot spots within the perimeter to prevent escape. Sprinklers remain in place to provide protection of important whitebark pine stands. Structure protection will continue at the Sheep Camp, while an engine is at the Black Butte cabin. Firefighters are meeting the objectives set for the fire; the fire remains within the contingency line, and the grass between the timber stands is still not burning. Fire crews finished constructing hand line on the northwest side of the fire yesterday, and today they will continue to improve and cool that area. The heliwell will be dismantled and removed from the fire area.

### [Temporary Closures & Evacuations:](#)

- From August 17, 2013 until September 30, 2013 the entire area within the Eureka Fire, including all roads and trails as specifically listed, are closed:
  - **Roads:** 237 Standard Creek, 1012 Cottonwood Creek , 1206 Elk River, 9654 Poison Creek, 71891 South Poison Creek, 8342 Unnamed, 347 Eureka Basin, 9627 Fish Lake, 9626 Fish Creek, 290 Metzel Creek, 9630 Unnamed, 9629 Patchtop
  - **Trails:** 6029 Wolverine Basin Trail, 022 Gazelle Creek Trail, 6409 Freezout Trail, 6679 Elk River Trail, 6700 West Fork Trail, 6410 Snowshoe Trail, 6420 Lobo Trail, 6406 Cascade Trail, 6404 Poison Creek Trail, 6411 Cottonwood/ Coal Creek Trail
  - No evacuations are ordered at this time

**RED SHALE** (41 miles west of Choteau, MT) – This lightning sparked fire started on July 18 and is currently at 12,001 acres. The fire is in heavy timber with litter and understory with planned actions to continue to monitor the fire. A new lightning start, the Rock Creek Fire, was detected at the head of Rock Creek and is estimated at 10 acres. Due to the remote location of this new start, low values at risk and existing trail closures in place for public safety, no resources will be re-directed to this fire.

### [Temporary Closures](#)

- For public safety, several trails are closed within the Sun River Game Preserve, the Upper North Fork of the Sun River and along the south and north Chinese walls and the Continental Divide Trail. All forest visitors travelling in the backcountry are urged to use caution and be observant of changes in weather and fire behavior. Trail closures are updated frequently: for the current detailed map, please visit [inciweb.org](http://inciweb.org).
- The following trails are closed in full length as of Aug. 21: #108 Route Creek (w/in the Wilderness boundary); #109 East Side Sun River Tr. (from Jct. w/ Tr. #165 north to jct. w/ Tr. #108); #110 North Fork Sun River Tr. (from pack bridge north to the jct. w/ Tr. #116 Open Creek.); #111 Rock Creek; # 117 Washboard Reef (w/in the Wilderness boundary); #125 Moose Ridge Lookout; #130 Red Shale, #132 Moonlight Peak; #151 North Fork Lick Creek; #157 Nesbit-Oley Creek. (w/in the Wilderness boundary); #162 Gates Creek; #163 Ray Creek Cut-off; #164 Ray Creek; #166 Gates - Moose Creek; #174 North Wall Tr. from #130 north to #132; #175 Wall trail, north of; #176 larch Hill; #187 Wrong Ridge; #188 Monroe Cutoff; #194 My Lake.

## [Southeastern Montana:](#)

There are no active fires at this time.

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**Current Air Quality as of: *Monday, August 26, 2013***

For the latest Air Quality Update <http://svc.mt.gov/deq/smokereport/mostrecentupdate.aspx>

Air quality is poor over much of western and central Montana and Idaho. Cumulative particulate concentrations are at levels that are **UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS** in Frenchtown, Missoula, and Seeley Lake, but hourly concentrations have been **GOOD** all morning in each location.

Weather today will be near-critical fire weather, with high temperatures, low relative humidity, breezy afternoon winds, and the chance for afternoon thunderstorms. There is some smoke visible high in the atmosphere over central and eastern Montana this morning, but this smoke is not affecting air quality at ground-level.

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**Current Fire Restrictions as of: *Monday, August 26, 2013***

For current Fire Restrictions Information: <http://firerestrictions.us/mt>

**Stage I restrictions exist across much of the western and southern portions of the state.**

Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

- [State Park, FAS & WMA Fire Restrictions, Closures & Reopenings](#)
- [Current Drought & Fire News](#)

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**FOREST SERVICE CLOSURES & RESTRICTIONS as of: *Monday, August 26, 2013*** *Click on forest for the most updated information posted on their websites regarding any closures and restrictions:*

[Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest](#)

[Bitterroot National Forest](#)

[Custer National Forest](#)

[Flathead National Forest](#)

[Gallatin National Forest](#)

[Helena National Forest](#)

[Kootenai National Forest](#)

[Lewis and Clark National Forest](#)

[Lolo National Forest](#)

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## Other Resources

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/montanawildfires>

Twitter: [@MTDNRCFIRE](https://twitter.com/MTDNRCFIRE)

Montana DNRC fire season information page: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/publicinterest/fireseasoninfo.asp>

US Forest Service's current large fire incidents map (national): <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/sitreprt.pdf>

Billings Gazette: <http://billingsgazette.com/>

Bozeman Chronicle: <http://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/>

Helena IR: <http://helenair.com/>

Montana Standard: <http://mtstandard.com/>

Missoulian: <http://missoulian.com/>

Great Falls Tribune: <http://www.greatfallstribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/frontpage>

Daily Interlake: <http://dailyinterlake.com/>

Flathead Beacon: <http://www.flatheadbeacon.com/>

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