

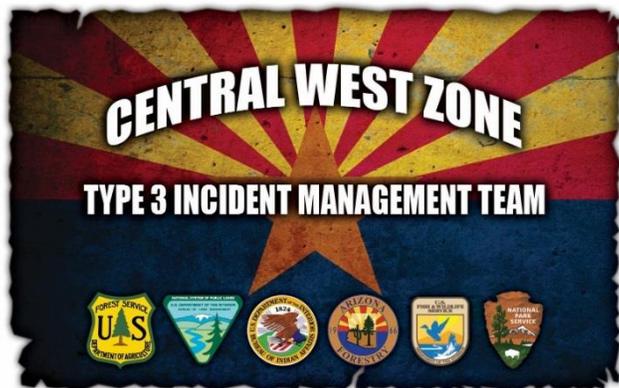
NEWS RELEASE/FIRE UPDATE

JUNIPER FIRE

Incident Commander: Andy Mandell; with Barry Johnson, IC-Trainee

Information Contact: Gabrielle Kenton—928-462-4308 Ext 308

Between 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.



Today's Date: May 25, 2016

Fire Start Date: May 17, 2016

Size: Approximately 2,500 acres

Cause: Lightning caused

Growth Potential: Fire will continue to grow fairly slowly

Percent Contained: 0%

Resources Assigned: There are 267 total personnel on the fire, with six hotshot crews, four Type 3 and nine Type 6 engines, plus many support personnel. Large equipment includes one Type 3 helicopter and three dozers.

Key Points:

- **Smoke from the Juniper Fire will be heavy at times today and will increase each day through the Memorial day weekend. Smoke is expected to be heaviest south and west of the fire, along Cherry Creek down toward Roosevelt Lake, but may be evident in other locations.**
- **There is an area closure around the fire planning area. It includes areas east of State Route 288 from FR 202 (Board Tree Saddle) south to the junction with FR 203; and then west of FR 203 back up to State Route 288. Roads and campsites east of State Route 288 are closed.**
- **State Route 288 is open, but is subject to delays of up to three hours between mile post 285 and 291. Pilot vehicles will be escorting traffic through. Visibility may be limited due to smoke. Drivers along the road should take extra care and drive slowly as there may be a great deal of fire traffic.**

Summary: For the next few days fire crews will continue to prep areas and conduct some burn out operations to direct the Juniper Fire away from sensitive resources and private inholdings and into areas where it can burn safely. The eight-day-old fire is behaving as fire managers had anticipated and is providing many benefits to the landscape. “By allowing a lightning fire to burn under these conditions – cooler, with higher moistures – we can increase the health and resilience of this fire-adapted landscape on which it’s burning,” stated Mary Lata, PhD., fire ecologist. “The effects of the Juniper Fire will increase the diversity of surface vegetation while decreasing the potential for more severe wildfires,” she added.

The Juniper Fire is believed to have started on Tuesday, May 17, from a lightning strike in a fairly remote location of the Sierra Ancha Wilderness Area on the Tonto National Forest, though it was not observed and reported until Friday, May 20th. The fire has moved slowly through the surface duff and understory grasses and brush. Once the fire has burned through, there will be an increase in soil nutrients and sunlight which will promote new growth. This multiple-objective fire will increase in size as time goes on, and firefighters will be conducting burnout operations to facilitate where and how the fire moves through the landscape.

Because of safety concerns for firefighters due to the very steep, rugged, and relatively inaccessible terrain, as well as the low fire behavior which is benefitting natural resources, suppression efforts are focused on protecting values such as homes and structures on private inholdings, historical and cultural sites and features, Mexican spotted owls and their habitats, high quality timber and older trees, and riparian areas. Safety for fire fighters and the public is the number one priority.

Smoke may be heavy along State Route 288 south of Young and in nearby forest areas. Smoke is expected to increase throughout the week as the fire increases in size and as burn out operations continue. Smoke will become more noticeable over time, though will still be much lighter than that of a severe wildfire. Fire managers will closely monitor smoke impacts to communities.

Road safety for fire fighters and the public is the number one safety concern at this time. The public is asked to be cautious and, when possible, to avoid roads and areas near the fire due to heavy fire traffic. This includes along State Route 288 and Forest Road (FR) 202, FRs 487 and 410 to the west of Sierra Ancha Wilderness, and FR 203 on the east side of the Wilderness. Expect delays of up to three hours along State Route 288 between mileposts 285 and 291 from Thursday, May 26 through Monday May 30. This is due to fire crews and burn out operations along and near the road. Pilot vehicles will be escorting traffic in some sections. Fire vehicles and support equipment will also frequently be coming through the town of Young, so please drive with extreme caution.

There is an area closure around the fire planning area. The planning area is the area being evaluated to determine where fire should be allowed to burn and where it should not. The closure area includes lands east of State Route 288 from FR 202 (Board Tree Saddle) south to the junction with FR 203; and then west of FR 203 back to State Route 288. These perimeter roads themselves are not closed, though will be delays along them; however, all forest roads and trails, as well as developed and dispersed camp sites within these boundaries, will remain closed through the Memorial Day weekend and beyond.