



News Release

Contact: Cindy Harger, Teton County Public Information Specialist

Phone: 307-732-5786 (office), (307) 264-9102 (mobile)

Email address: charger@tetonwyo.org

Cliff Creek Fire Update

Expect Cliff Creek Fire to be here “long term”

Teton County commissioners hold special meeting to ratify Granite Creek public closure

Jackson, Wyo. – July 22, 2016 – Wildland firefighters are putting great effort into keeping the lightning-caused Cliff Creek Fire from migrating north or south toward areas with people, structures and livestock. However, the fire’s eastern/northeastern front will be allowed to advance in a less guarded fashion into remote backcountry wilderness toward rocks and cliffs where it will have natural controls and ecological benefits.

Cliff Creek Fire Incident Commander Tony DeMasters said he expects the Cliff Creek Fire to be a long-term management effort, with the blaze continuing to “skunk, punk, continue to grow,” until Mother Nature changes the weather. If the fire simmers in Wilderness areas, “I’m going to go out on a limb and say it’s going to be there until the snow flies,” DeMasters said.

In a community meeting attended by an estimated 100 people at the Hoback Fire Station yesterday evening, Great Basin Team 7 leaders and interagency partners described current fire management plans and answered audience questions. Great Basin Team 7 travels the country managing fires and assumed leadership of the Cliff Creek Fire on Tuesday morning.

As of Friday, July 22, the Cliff Creek Fire had crossed a total of 11,534 acres and was 10 percent contained, according to Julie Thomas, Incident Management Team Public Information Officer. The fire has been burning in a mosaic pattern – leaving patches of meadows and fields unscathed, while igniting stands of dense timber, where there are significant amounts of dead and fallen trees.

Personnel numbers are at 620 people today, up from Thursday morning’s count of 464. There are seven helicopters, 33 engines, two bulldozers, and two “Super Scooper” planes deployed to confine and contain the fire, and to protect structures, Thomas said.

U.S. Route 189/191 was reopened to the general public at noon today (July 22). Firefighters request that drivers keep moving through the fire area and avoid pausing to gawk or take pictures. No passing is allowed in passing zones within the fire area, no stopping is allowed along the roadway, and no parking is allowed in pullouts within the fire area, Thomas said.

While overall fire management leadership is in the capable hands of Great Basin Team 7, Teton County has jurisdiction over the Granite Creek evacuation and over public closures of county territory.

The Teton Board of County Commissioners called a special meeting on Friday at 10 a.m. to approve a resolution officially closing the Granite Creek area to the general public. Wyoming Statutes give the Board of County Commissioners the authority to close areas to the public when fire danger is deemed extreme.

The closure order also gives the Sheriff the ability to arrest members of the public violating the order. The resolution can be accessed on Teton County's website at the following link:
<http://www.tetonwyo.org/bcc/news/granite-creek-area-closure-resolution/13088>

The interagency Cliff Creek Fire team has placed a broad closure on the fire management area, which encompasses lands in the administrative boundaries of the Jackson and Big Piney Ranger districts, Bridger-Teton National Forest, as well as Sublette and Teton counties.

The closure -- as described on InciWeb -- begins south of highway 191/26 (Hoback Canyon) encompassing Cliff Creek Road (Forest Road #30530) east to the private land boundary. The closure area also includes the area north of highway 191/26 (Hoback Canyon) immediately to the north of highway 191/26 west past the Granite Creek drainage, then following the hydrologic divide between Little Granite and Granite Creek to the Granite Creek trailhead (excluding private land), then following the ridge north of the Shoal Falls trail (#4122) to Comer Peak then to the Gros Ventre/Shoal Creek divide then south and east of the Shoal Creek trail to Tin Can Park, then south and east of the Rock Creek trail to the private land boundary.

Roads included in the closure order include all roads in the Granite Creek drainage including Little Granite Creek (#30500, #30505, #30503, #30518), Riling Draw #30640, #30640A, and #30624.

Granite Hot Springs, Granite Campground, and Kozy Campground are closed. Closed trails include access to all trails originating in the Little Granite and Granite Creek drainages, Shoal Falls trail, Shoal Creek trail, Jack Pine trail, Shoal Lake, Rock Creek trail, and Parody Draw.

The purpose of the closure is to protect public safety in the presence of an active fire and from falling timber after the fire has passed, Thomas said.

For updates on closure areas, road conditions and other fire information, the Cliff Creek Fire Incident Management Team now has a dedicated phone line for public information. That number is (844) 708-7667.

Please do NOT call 911 or the Teton County Sheriff's Office dispatch for fire updates.

MORE INFORMATION:

- Those interested in receiving Teton County-specific updates on the Cliff Creek Fire can sign up by texting the word TETONCLIFFCR to 888777 to register. Users can also sign up for those or other community notices online at www.Nixle.com.
- For Sublette County-specific updates, sign up here: <http://public.alertsense.com/SignUp/?regionID=1075>
- For general Cliff Creek Fire management information, InciWeb provides the latest updates from the U.S. Forest Service: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4865/>.
- The American Red Cross of Wyoming is available to assist those ordered to evacuate with shelter or other needs in Teton County. Evacuees who would like to register with the Red Cross, may call (307) 222-8272.

###