

NEWS RELEASE

Ashley National Forest

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For Immediate Release

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Early Fires are Exemplary of Extreme Fire Danger

Vernal, Utah ... Fire crews responded to five separate fires last week that were either on or immediately adjacent to the Ashley National Forest. The largest of the fires was approximately 250 acres in size. Two fires were started by lightning and three others were human caused.

The largest fire occurred on Friday, June 15, as a result of a lightning strike. The fire was located on the Flaming Gorge Ranger District in the area of the 2002 Mustang Fire. The fire grew rapidly due to dry conditions, strong winds, and high temperatures. Approximately 65 ground personnel were assigned to fire, with additional resources including six engines, multiple air tankers, and two helicopters. The fire was contained on June 18.

Fireworks were responsible for a small fire near Dutch John and a human-caused fire burned sixteen acres on a small island on the Green River. Two other small fires were located on the Duchesne Ranger District --one of which was caused by lightning and the other was due to a campfire that was not properly extinguished.

"The Forest has not seen these types of extreme fire conditions this early in the season for several years", stated Ivan Erskine, Fire Management Officer for the Forest. "Fuel moisture levels are exceptionally dry for this time of year. In addition, there is an abundance of already cured grasses and other light fuels that remain from last year's above average precipitation."

According to John Erickson, Forest Supervisor, "These early fires are a reminder that, given the extreme fire danger conditions, visitors need to be exceptionally careful with any activity that could potentially cause a fire."

Fire restrictions went into effect June 14, with open fires prohibited except in designated areas. Fireworks are prohibited on the Forest at all times. As we approach the Fourth of July, fireworks are a major concern and have already caused one fire on the Forest this year.

Visitors who violate fire restrictions can be cited and individuals that are responsible for causing a wildfire may be required to pay the costs of the fire.

For more information on fire restrictions and a list of Forest Service developed sites where campfires are allowed, visitors are encouraged to contact their local District Ranger office, or at 435-789-1181.