



Saguaro National Park News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Contact: Scott Stonum at (520) 733-5101 or Fire Information Hotline at (520) 733-5150

DEER HEAD FIRE TO BE MANAGED FOR MULTIPLE OBJECTIVES

Tucson, AZ – The lightning-ignited Deer Head Fire burning in the Rincon Mountains of Saguaro National Park is estimated to be approximately 115 acres as of Friday afternoon. Fire behavior was mild due to high humidity and showers. Saguaro National Park will be managing the fire for multiple objectives, including using fire to achieve natural resource benefits and to reduce hazardous fuels.

Lightning-ignited fires are important in maintaining healthy forests in the mountains of southern Arizona. Fire historically burned through the high elevation ponderosa pine forests of southeastern Arizona every few years, but past fire suppression has created unnatural conditions with a build-up of downed trees and dense underbrush in many places. Periodic low to moderate intensity wildfire helps prevent large, intense wildfires, recycles nutrients, and fills many other roles. The fire is burning in wilderness, where it is functioning in its natural role, helping reduce fuel loads and maintain wildlife habitat. Values to be protected include Mexican spotted owl habitat and the historic Manning Cabin, located approximately one mile from the fire.

For the safety of hikers and campers, some trail and campground closures have been enacted. The following temporary backcountry closures in the Rincon Mountain District will be effective immediately. Trail closures include Italian Spring (south of Park boundary), Cowhead Saddle, North Slope, Fire Loop, Spud Rock, Switchback, Mica Mountain, Mica Meadow, Bonita, Devils Bathtub, East Slope, Deerhead Spring, Turkey Creek (west of Park boundary), Miller Creek (west of park boundary), Heartbreak Ridge, and Manning Camp (east of Douglas Springs intersection). This includes a segment of the Arizona Trail: Italian Spring Trail at the park boundary extending to the Douglas Spring-Manning Camp Trail intersection), Campground closures within the park include Manning Camp, Grass Shack, Happy Valley, and Spud Rock. All off-trail areas within Saguaro National Park east of Douglas Spring Trail and Manning Camp Trails are also closed.

Fire managers conducted a reconnaissance flight yesterday afternoon. Due to the fire's remote location, observed fire behavior, current and expected weather and fuel conditions, predicted fire behavior, and anticipated benefits, fire managers are monitoring its natural progression from the ground.

Seven firefighters were flown to Manning Cabin by helicopter this afternoon, and seven additional firefighters and support staff will follow tomorrow, if weather permits. They will use Manning Cabin as a base camp.

Firefighters will scout the area for rocky outcroppings and trails to utilize as natural fuel breaks to limit the fire's spread within an area where it can be managed safely. Firefighters use Minimum Impact Suppression (MIST) Tactics, a "light hand on the land" approach to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources while minimizing impacts to park resources.

The Deer Head Fire was first detected late morning on July 24, 2014. The fire is burning within the Saguaro Wilderness, near Spud Rock Spring. It is burning in steep, rugged terrain, at an elevation of approximately 7,500 feet. Vegetation in the area includes ponderosa pine, oak and brush. The area has burned six times since the 1940s, and most recently during the 1994 Rincon Fire. The fire is moving into areas burned by prescribed fires lit by the park in 1993-2010. Part of the area was planned for a prescribed fire this summer or fall.

Smoke is sometimes visible from Tucson, Vail, Benson and the surrounding area. Minor intermittent smoke impacts are expected until the area receives a significant amount of rain. Smoke may settle in the east side of Tucson when air temperatures cool at night and in the early morning hours. Smoke usually lifts during the day. Poor visibility in the Tucson Basin and through much of southern Arizona today is largely due to dust from thunderstorm outflows in Mexico last night. The fire is producing relatively little smoke. Smoke impacts are a key consideration in how to manage this fire.

For updated information please visit <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3999/>, <http://Facebook.com/SaguaroNPS>, <http://twitter.com/SaguaroNPS> or call the park's Fire Information Hotline at (520) 733-5150. For information about the natural role of fire, visit the park's website: <http://www.nps.gov/sagu/parkmgmt/firemanagement.htm>.

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