

INCIWEB REPORT SUMMARY

9-9 Inciweb update: The lightning-caused Mill Lake Fire located on the north side of Mill Canyon and north of Mill Lake, has grown to 1,589 acres (*note--this turned out to be greatly overestimated—on 9-17 when they were able to view it, it was downsized to 898 acres*). Most of the growth in the last two days occurred on the north and west sides of the fire, pushed by winds from a passing cold front. According to the latest mapping, there has been little to no growth on the east side of the fire (further down canyon) towards Pinesdale and private property.

Blodgett fire: With recent smoke this week, the lightning-caused Blodgett Lake fire wasn't as visible via aircraft and has increased in activity. The Blodgett Lake fire located approximately 3.5 miles east of Blodgett Lake and 7 miles west of the Blodgett Creek Trailhead is now estimated at 70 acres after several days of easterly winds. The fire did cross the main Blodgett Creek on the east flank of the fire and is smoldering in the down and deal fuels, with isolated pockets of open flames on the south and west flanks. Most of the progression of the fire was parallel to the creek and to the south (up drainage).

Planned Actions: Multiple helicopters (Type 1 & 2) have been conducting water bucket drops on the fire each day this week. The helicopters have been very effective at checking and slowing the fire's spread. Helicopters will be used again today, and this weekend (water drops) as needed.

Firefighters are continuing to clear brush and thin fuels along Sheafman Road from Cow Creek Trailhead to Sheafman Trailhead. They are also doing fuels prep/reduction from Cow Creek Trailhead along the private land down to and including Mill Creek Trailhead.

Safety Concerns/Closures: No structures or infrastructure are currently threatened by the Mill Lake Fire

9-12 Inciweb update: Mill Creek drainage continues to be filled with heavy smoke, limiting fire staff with viewing the fire perimeter via aircraft. The fire area is estimated around 1,608 acres and had minimal growth yesterday. A few small spots to the west of the main fire above Mill Lake are burning in the rocks and in a small band of timber with smoldering and creeping. The main fire is currently smoldering and creeping in the down and dead. There is little to no movement to the east (down canyon) from the last report. Fire was flown briefly yesterday before winds and smoke obstructed fire viewpoints.

Directly south of the Mill Lake fire, is the Blodgett Lake fire which exhibited extreme fire behavior yesterday and is now estimated at 1,200 acres in size. Late afternoon aircraft observed extreme crowning and spotting occurred at least a quarter of a mile ahead of the main fire front. Fuels and slope are driving dead, down and cured shrubs. The fire has crossed the main Blodgett Creek on the east flank of the fire and is smoldering in the down and deal fuels, with isolated pockets of open flames on the south and west flanks. The fire remains active.

9-14 Inciweb update: The Mill Creek and other drainages continue to be filled with heavy smoke, limiting aerial reconnaissance. A few small spots are burning west of the main fire above Mill Lake. Fuels are sparse, and the fire is smoldering and creeping, finding pockets of trees where occasional single tree torching occurs. There is little fire movement east, down the canyon.

The Blodgett Fire is now estimated at 1882 acres. The fire has crossed the main Blodgett Creek along the east flank, where it is smoldering in down and dead fuels. Recent moisture and cooler temperatures have slowed fire progression

9-15 Inciweb update: Northern Rockies Team One has responsibility for the five fires listed above. Today crews will scout the area, continue with line preparation, and fire managers will work on a long-term plan for this incident. This planning effort will include fuel removal and alternate line locations between Blodgett and Kootenai canyons.

Crews constructed a thirty-foot-wide shaded fuel break on the west side of Sheafman Road (FS-438) from Cow Creek trailhead to Sheafman trailhead. Crews will scout opportunities for control lines north to Fred Burr Creek. Crews continue working on indirect control lines along the Forest Service Private Property boundary from Mill Creek south to Blodgett Canyon, utilizing heavy equipment. Firefighters will continue to scout for strategic line locations and control features that could check/slow the fire's spread east towards private and DNRC lands

Recent moisture and cooler temperatures have slowed fire progression: Blodgett: 1882 acres; Mill Lake: 1608 (overestimated by 700 acres)

9-16 Inciweb update: This planning effort will include fuel removal and alternate line locations between Blodgett and Kootenai canyons.

Recent winds improved air quality and allowed the use of aviation resources for aerial reconnaissance. These flights revealed that the fires have not grown eastward down the canyons since the Monday, September 12.

Crews continued constructing a thirty-foot-wide shaded fuel break on the west side of Sheafman Road (FS-438) from Cow Creek trailhead to Sheafman trailhead. Firefighters will build a hand line from the south end of road #1327 to the rock cliff face above Fred Burr Creek. Crews will continue work on indirect control lines along the Forest Service - Private Property boundary from Mill Creek south to Blodgett Canyon, utilizing heavy equipment.

The fire has crossed Blodgett Creek along the east flank and is smoldering in down and dead fuels. Recent moisture and cooler temperatures should result in limited fire behavior today.

Blodgett: 2185 acres; Mill Lake: 1608 acres (overestimated by 700 acres).

9-17 Inciweb update: As reported yesterday, these flights revealed that the fires had not grown eastward down the canyons since Monday, September 12. More accurate mapping from these flights have resulted in a decrease in the estimated Mill Lake fire size.

This planning effort will include fuel removal and alternate line locations between Blodgett and Kootenai canyons.

Crews will work on indirect control lines along the Forest Service - Private Property boundary from Mill Creek south to Blodgett Canyon, utilizing heavy equipment. Firefighters are scouting strategic line locations and control features that could slow the fire's spread east towards private and DNRC lands..

The Blodgett Fire is now estimated at 2270 acres. Mill Lake 898 acres.,

9-18 Inciweb update: Weather conditions over the Blodgett Lake and Mill Lake Fires favor low fire activity. Winds remain terrain driven. Little or no down-canyon growth towards the valley is expected.

Crews are continuing work on a shaded fuel break along the forest boundary in case of a return to warm and dry fire weather. Shaded fuel breaks are mechanically created buffer zones that remove shade tolerant brush, but mature trees that are more fire resistant are left standing. Without the lower and mid-level brush and trees, fires lack the "ladder" mechanism for fire to reach the tree canopy and become a high-intensity fire.

9-19 Inciweb update: Fire activity remains light as wet weather moved into the Bitterroot Valley yesterday, accompanied by brief gusty winds and lightning. The wet conditions continue to moderate fire spread; however, firefighters expect some smoldering fire behavior in the mid-afternoon today.

Crews continue to work on the shaded fuel break along the forest boundary. Much of the larger fuels have been removed, and work is now shifting to chipping smaller limbs and debris. The fuel break is the first line of defense in case weather and winds align to drive this or future fires east towards the valley. Crews will continue work on a continuous indirect control line along the Forest Service - Private Property boundary from Mill Creek south to Blodgett Canyon, utilizing heavy equipment

Blodgett: 2290 acres(increase of 20 since 9-17); Mill Lake 908 acres (increase of 11 since 9-17).

9-20 Inciweb update: Due to recent precipitation and cooler temperatures, the Bitterroot National Forest has lowered its fire danger to "High" down from "Extreme". The Forest is also lifting Stage 2 Fire Restrictions effective immediately.

fire officials expect minimal growth.

9-21 Inciweb update: Progress continues on a shaded fuel break east of the fire, where firefighters are working on containment lines west of the Bitterroot Valley. The fuel breaks are intended to provide a high probability of success for fire suppression should fire progress downslope on this or future fires.

Little growth occurred as the recent wet weather and shorter burn windows restricted growth. Fire managers expect smoke to remain visible from the valley in the coming weeks as warm and dry weather returns next week.

9-22 Inciweb update: Work is nearing completion along the shaded fuel break east of the fire, where firefighters are working on containment lines west of the Bitterroot Valley. The fuel breaks are intended to provide a high probability of success for fire suppression should fire progress downslope on this or future fires.

Rain will remain through today and may last most of the night. A half inch to a little over an inch of rain is expected from this system. **Very little fire spread has occurred** due to the recent rainfall and shorter burn windows.

Note: 9-22 Rainstorm totals: 1.11" in Lost Horse residential area; 2.3" at Twin Lakes Snotel.

9-23 Inciweb update: Matt Anderson, Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor: **"We ordered the Northern Rockies Team 1 to manage five fires in the wilderness on the Bitterroot Front with uncertainty in the forecast and extreme fire danger. The team not only protected our communities and kept these fires from reaching homes and private property but also left us with a strategy that we can implement for years to come in this area. The indirect lines that we're completed, the Strategic Risk Assessment, the over 1000 structure assessments, and work with the community over the last week has propelled our ability to manage fire in this landscape."**

Outgoing Incident Commander Doug Turman of Northern Rockies Team 1 highlighted the work performed since the team arrived on September 14th. According to Turman, **"Our firefighters constructed an indirect control line on Forest Service ground in the vicinity of the Forest Service boundary generally between Blodgett Canyon and Gash Creek."** According to Turman, the line was built using various techniques, including mechanical shaded fuel breaks, improvements (limbing and brush removal) along established trails and roads, and fuel breaks connecting natural features such as rock faces. When combined with prescribed burning or firing operations on future wildland fires, this work will help keep communities and private property as safe as possible."

9-23 BNF reduces fire danger to moderate.

9-25 Inciweb: Planned actions: Continue to scout indirect fire line opportunities. Prep the 438 Sheafman Road from Cow Creek Trailhead to Sheafman Trailhead. **Continue fuels prep/reduction from Cow Creek Trailhead along the private land down to and including Mill Creek Trailhead.**

Projected Incident activity: 12 hrs: creeping and smoldering fire behavior; 24 hrs: Creeping and smoldering fire behavior."

Blodgett: 2307 acres(increase of 17 since 9-19); Mill Lake: 915 acres (increase of 7 since 9-19).

10-3 Inciweb: Mill Lake fire: Creeping and smoldering behavior. Blodgett Lake: Minimal fire behavior has been observed due to wide spread wetting rain. Fire will continue to creep and smolder as grass and FDF dry out.

Planned Actions: Continue construction, improvement, and rehabilitation of indirect control lines on National Forest Lands. Continue reconnaissance to determine primary and contingency line locations on private lands.

Projected Incident Activity: 12 hours: Minimal fire behavior is expected. 24 hours: Minimal fire behavior is expected.