



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Carlsbad Caverns National Park

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Carlsbad Caverns News Release

For Immediate Release

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Managing Fire for Multiple Objectives

Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM---- The New Fire is currently 16,201 acres (12,976 on NPS, 2681 acres on BLM, 364 acres on State Land) and is 40 percent contained. There are currently 450 firefighters and support resources assigned to the fire including 11 hand crews, 4 helicopters, 12 engines, 15 water tenders, and 149 overhead personnel, and 2 camp crews. Vegetation in the area is mostly a mixture of grass and shrubs. The 450 acre Yucca Fire remains inactive.

When the New Fire was first ignited by lightning on May 16, fire managers monitored it as it progressed naturally within the Carlsbad Caverns Wilderness. The fire grew gradually over the first few days. Weather, fuels, and topography then influenced a period of increased fire activity. Firefighters have made significant progress securing the eastern portion of the fire to prevent its spread toward the park visitor center. Firefighters also secured the northern portion of the fire where it threatened oil and gas facilities on BLM lands.

The western portion of the fire is burning into steep, inaccessible terrain. Fire managers will monitor the fire as it progresses naturally in this area. This will increase firefighter safety, help minimize the use of retardant in the wilderness, and create a healthy mosaic of burned and unburned fuels that will benefit plants and animals in this fire-adapted ecosystem.

The main cave at Carlsbad Caverns remains open for visitors. **The scenic loop drive, called the Walnut Canyon Desert Drive, will reopen to the public today.** All backcountry trails, including Yucca Canyon Trail, Slaughter Canyon Trail, and the Rattlesnake Canyon Trail remain closed for public safety due to fire activity. Evening bat flight programs resumed May 24.

The public is invited to join park rangers and firefighters at the visitor center tonight at 5 pm to learn about wildland fire in national parks, wildland fire gear and equipment, and ask questions about the fire. There will also be a formal ranger talk on the New Fire at the bat flight amphitheater at 6 pm.

Open fires including cigarettes, camp fires, and stoves are currently not allowed. For fire information, please call 575-644-9678 or 801-928-7040 or visit www.inciweb.org.

0800 May 26, 2010

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