

# OVERVIEW SUMMARY: CAMERON PEAK

August 13 - December 13, 2020



## Overview

The Cameron Peak Fire was reported on Thursday, August 13 at approximately 1:48 PM. The fire was burning in steep, rugged terrain, approximately 25 miles east of Walden and 15 miles southwest of Red Feather Lakes near Cameron Pass.

The fire burned through an area of 208,913 acres on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests in Larimer and Jackson Counties and Rocky Mountain National Park. The cause of the wildfire remains under investigation. Large scale and long duration evacuations took place throughout the fire.

During the time the Cameron Peak Fire was burning, there was another fire (East Troublesome) burning simultaneously to the west of the Cameron Peak Fire, on the west side of the Continental Divide. On October 22, the East Troublesome Fire spotted over the Continental Divide, and created what became known as the “Thompson Zone” of the East Troublesome Fire. This zone was managed by the Cameron Peak Fire Incident Management Team until November 9, upon which time command returned to the East Troublesome Incident Management Team.

On the Cameron Peak Fire, extreme temperatures, low humidity, rough terrain and gusty winds reaching over 70 miles per hour were just some of the elements that contributed to extreme fire behavior and rapid rates of spread. A major contributing factor to the large fire growth was the tremendous amount of beetle kill trees and the drought-stricken Ponderosa Pine, Engelmann Spruce and mixed conifer stands available as fuel.

The heavy concentration of standing bark beetle-killed snags, along with steep, loose terrain made it difficult to get firefighters safely into the fire for direct attack; however, this fire was always managed as a full suppression fire. Firefighters worked to protect homes and outbuildings using a combination of heavy equipment and fire personnel to build fire lines. Road systems were used as control lines where crews initiated firing operations to slow the fire spread. Air support was utilized in fire suppression efforts throughout the incident, but at times was limited due to conditions.



## Overview Continued

After 62 days of burning, on October 14, the Cameron Peak Fire became the largest recorded wildfire in Colorado's history, surpassing the Pine Gulch Fire that burned near Grand Junction in 2020.

On October 18, the Cameron Peak Fire became the first in Colorado history to burn more than 200,000 acres. Prior to 2002, there was never a fire larger than 100,000 acres in Colorado.

Approximately 30,000 acres or 9 percent of Rocky Mountain National Park was impacted by the Cameron Peak Fire, and both the Grand Zone and Thompson Zone of the East Troublesome Fire.

Over the duration of the Cameron Peak Fire, there have been 10 Incident Management Teams before transferring the fire back to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland. Teams include six Type 2, three Type 1, and one Type 3.

Once the Cameron Peak Fire reached 100% containment on December 2, a significant amount of suppression repair work remained. Due to weather conditions, some of the work was delayed until the following spring.

Resources have traveled from over 46 states and Puerto Rico to work on the Cameron Peak Fire.

## Damage Assessment Teams (DAT)

The Larimer County Damage Assessment Teams (DAT) completed assessments of all known structure damage caused by the Cameron Peak Fire on November 6. The Larimer County Sheriff's Office released the following:

A total of 469 structures were impacted by the fire as follows

- 461 structures destroyed (residential and outbuildings)
- 224 residential structures were destroyed and 4 sustained damage
- 220 outbuilding were destroyed and 4 sustained damage
- 17 business structures were impacted (Shambhala Mountain Center)
- 42 of the residential structures impacted were primary residences

Dates and locations of damage

- September 7 – Poudre Canyon south of Highway 14 near Archer's Poudre River Resort and the Monument Gulch area
- September 25 and 26 – Poudre Canyon between the Fish Hatchery and Rustic, the Manhattan Road area, and the Boy Scout Ranch Road area

## Additional Facts

- Communities near the fire included Estes Park, Red Feather Lakes, Crystal Mountain, Storm Mountain/Lake, Rustic, Pingree Park, Buckhorn, Poudre Canyon, The Retreat, Glen Haven, Cedar Park, Colorado State University Mountain Campus, and other private housing, ranches, and camps
- Fire perimeter is 325 miles long
- 232 miles of suppression repair work is in progress to return impacted areas to pre-fire conditions
  - 108.6 miles of dozer line and hand line
  - 123.4 miles of road
  - 317 additional areas used for staging, helicopter landing spots, safety zones, drop points, etc
- 549 water pumps were utilized across the fire area



## Timeline of Major Events

The Cameron Peak Fire was reported on Thursday, August 13, at approximately 1:48 PM.

Between September 4 and September 7, the fire grew over 78,000 acres in a 3-day period.

On the evening of September 8, 8-14 inches of snow fell and temporarily halted the growth of the Cameron Peak Fire at 102,596 acres. Authorities were hopeful the snow would help firefighters focus on problem areas. The moisture lasted for two days before temperatures began to warm up and dry out, bringing an increase in fire activity.

The next period of record-breaking critical growth was from October 13 through October 18. 70+ mile per hour winds drove the fire over 68,000 acres eastward during these 6 days.

- On October 14, after 62 days of burning, the Cameron Peak Fire became the largest recorded wildfire in Colorado's history, surpassing the Pine Gulch Fire that burned 139,007 acres near Grand Junction in 2020. The Cameron Peak Fire would measure at 164,140 acres by the end of the day.
- On October 18, the Cameron Peak Fire became the first in Colorado history to burn more than 200,000 acres.

On October 22, the East Troublesome Fire spotted into Rocky Mountain National Park, between the Continental Divide and Estes Park. Due to this threat, evacuations were put into place for Estes Park. This spot, which was called the Thompson Zone, was subsequently placed under the command of the Cameron Peak Fire Incident Management Team.

On October 24 and 25, a winter storm brought 8-18 inches of snow across the entire fire area. This season -slowing event helped firefighters increase containment.

On November 2, the Cameron Peak Fire grew to 208,913 acres.

On November 2, the Larimer County Sheriff's Office lifted all mandatory and all voluntary evacuations for the Cameron Peak Fire and the East Troublesome Fire.

On November 4, the containment was raised to 92% and would remain there for 24 days.

On November 6, the Larimer County Damage Assessment Teams (DAT) completed assessments of all known structure damage caused by the Cameron Peak Fire.

On November 9, the Thompson Zone of the East Troublesome Fire was transitioned back to the East Troublesome Fire team.

On November 28 the containment increased slightly to 94%. Containment continued to increase slowly over the next few days to 97% on the morning of December 2.

On the evening of December 2, the Cameron Peak Fire was declared 100% contained. This occurred 112 days after ignition on August 13.

On December 13, the Cameron Peak Fire was transferred back to the host unit, Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland to be managed by a local Type 4 team.

# Incident Management Team History

The Type 2 Rocky Mountain Incident Management Blue Team assumed command of the fire on August 15.

The NIMO Portland Type 1 Team and the Type 2 Rocky Mountain Incident Management Black Team assumed command on August 26.

The Southwest Area Type 2 Incident Management Team 3 assumed command on September 12.

The Northwest Area Type 2 Incident Management Team 6 assumed command on September 29.

The Rocky Mountain Type 1 Incident Management Team assumed command on October 14.

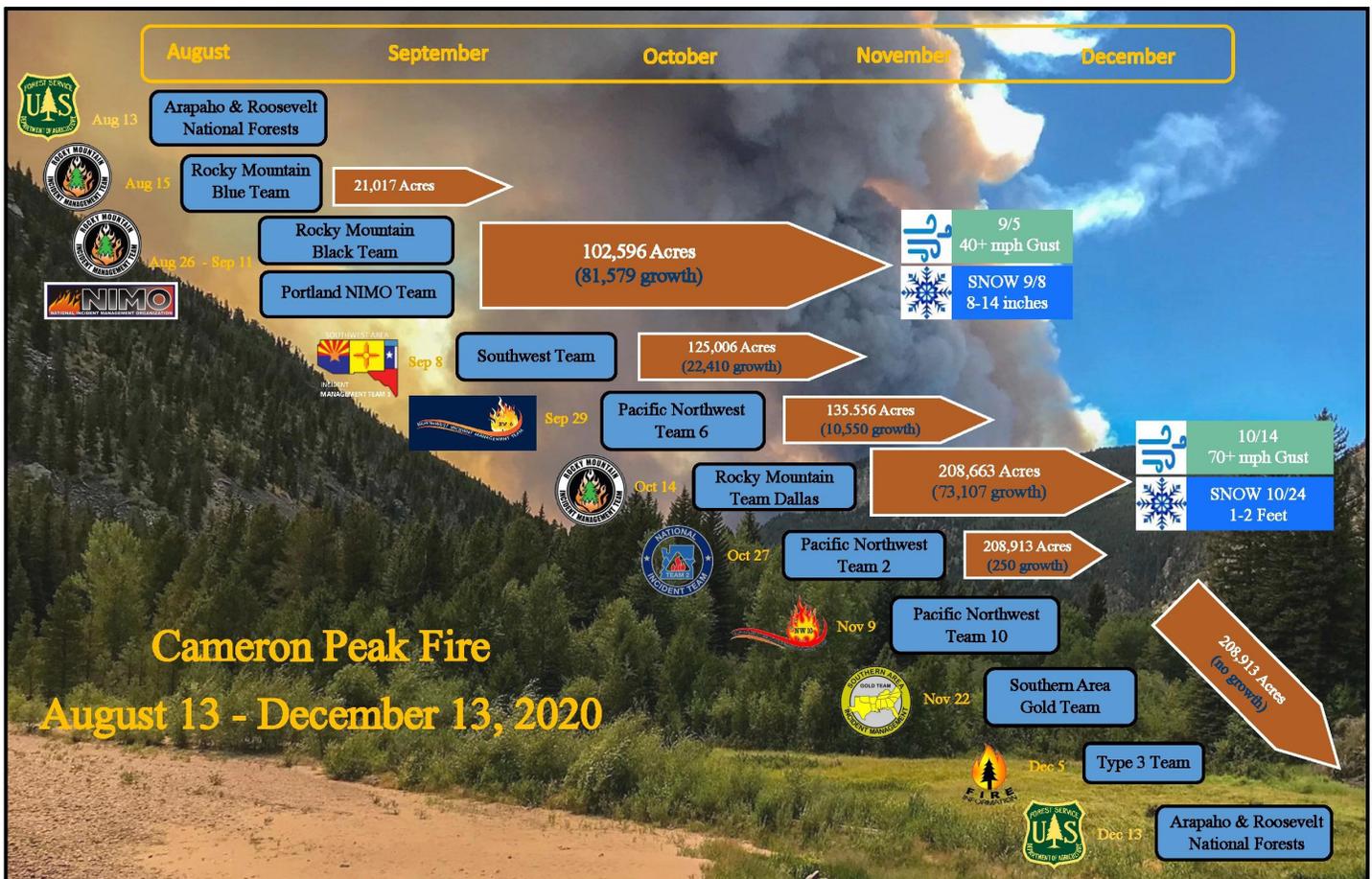
Pacific Northwest Type 1 Incident Management Team 2 assumed command on October 27.

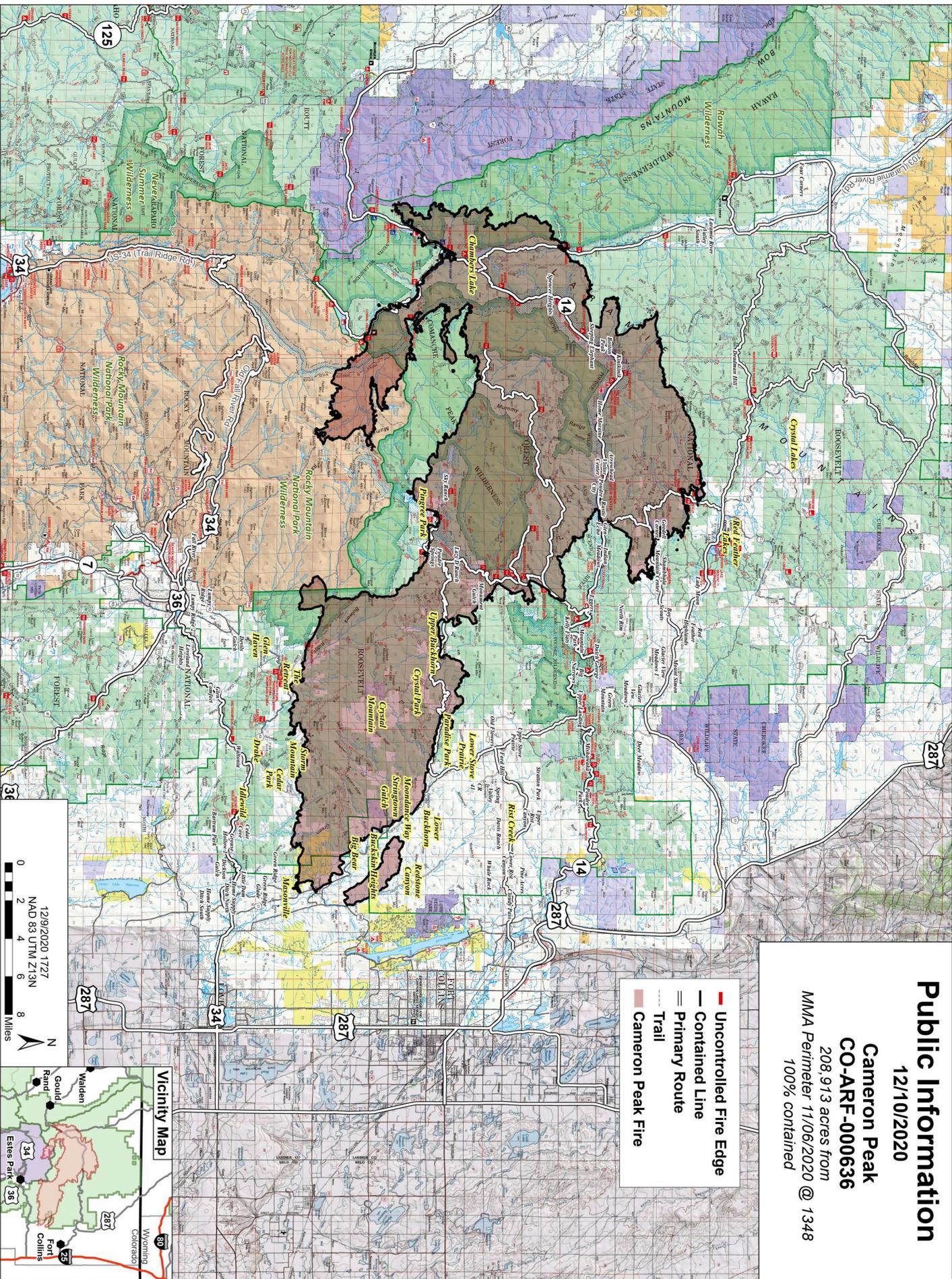
The Northwest Type 2 Incident Management Team 10 assumed command on November 9.

The Southern Area Type 2 Incident Management Gold Team assumed command on November 22.

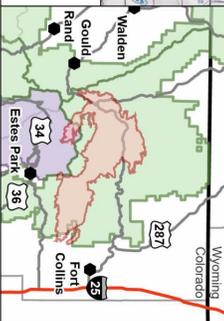
A Type 3 Incident Management Team assumed command on December 5.

A local Type 4 Team for the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland assumed command on December 13.





12/9/2020 1727  
 NAD 83 UTM Z13N  
 0 2 4 6 8  
 Miles



- Uncontrolled Fire Edge
- Contained Line
- Primary Route
- Trail
- Cameron Peak Fire

**Public Information**  
 12/10/2020  
**Cameron Peak**  
**CO-ARF-000636**  
 208,913 acres from  
 MMA Perimeter 11/06/2020 @ 1348  
 100% contained