

Arizona city watches, worries as mountain area burns

July 23 2019, by Felicia Fonseca



Pockets wildfires within the Museum fire create an ocean of light lapping at the slopes of the San Francisco Peaks as the fire burns Sunday, July 21, 2019, in Flagstaff, Ariz. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun via AP)

Anxious residents packed up prized possessions Tuesday as hundreds of

firefighters worked to keep a wildfire in a forested Arizona city away from homes and hoped the weather might bring some relief.

About two dozen homes have been evacuated in Flagstaff, a popular [mountain](#) getaway in the largest Ponderosa pine forest in the U.S.

Residents of another 5,000 homes have been told to be prepared to flee the fire in Coconino National Forest.

Justina Ferrara and her grandmother readied for possible evacuation by gathering important documents, photographs and treasured family heirlooms such as Kachina dolls and Native American blankets.

Ferrara was more worried about the mountain than her home.

"It's the devastation to what's going on in the vegetation," she said. "It's not going to come back anytime soon."

Another wildfire was burning near a nuclear energy research site in Idaho, prompting the evacuation of non-essential employees mainly because of wind changes and smoke.

The fire was located on about 10 square miles (16 square kilometers) of desert near the center of the 890-square mile (1,432 kilometer) property, away from the buildings that make up Idaho National Laboratory.

In Arizona, firefighters were expecting much-needed rain along with erratic winds at times that could shift the direction of the fire.



A helicopter carries a bucket of water to attack hot spots on the Museum Fire in Flagstaff, Ariz., Sunday, July 21 2019. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun via AP)

"If those winds kick up, that can cause real challenges for the firefighters," fire information officer Steve Kliest said. "When it spots farther ahead than equipment and resources, it can be a real problem."

Forecasters also warned of potential flooding if enough rain falls on scarred [mountain slopes](#).

A top-tier federal team took over managing the fire late Monday, bringing more resources to fight the blaze and making it a priority regionally, incident Commander Rich Nieto said.

He estimated the fire had charred 2.8 square miles (7.2 square kilometers) in a mountain pass that's a prime spot for recreation within minutes of downtown Flagstaff. The size will be updated after aerial mapping overnight.



A tree erupts in flame in the face of the Museum Fire Sunday, July 21, 2019 in Flagstaff, Ariz. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun via AP)

The labyrinth of dirt trails in the Dry Lake Hills area attracts hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders to sweeping views, groves of aspen and the sound of frogs croaking in [shallow water](#).

"That's where the good surf is, akin to that notion," Kyle Hornbeck, a mountain biker who owns a bike shop in town.

Campfires outside designated areas have been banned at Dry Hills Lake since 2017 under special restrictions.

Officials say the [fire](#) was human-caused but they haven't determined exactly what started it.



The Museum fire burns Sunday, July 21, 2019, as seen from the top of Switzer Mesa in Flagstaff, Ariz. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun via AP)



A helicopter drags a Bambi Bucket full of water through the sky on it's way to quench hot spots at the front of the Museum Fire burning in Flagstaff, Ariz., Sunday, July 21, 2019. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun via AP)



A heavy lift helicopter dragging its water collection hose flies into the Museum Fire in Flagstaff, Ariz. to work on putting out hotspots jumping ahead of the fire line in support of firefighters on the ground below Sunday, July 21, 2019. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun via AP)



A helicopter comes out of the Museum Fire to refill it's Bambi bucket at a municipaL water tank on Schultz Pass Road in Flagstaff, Ariz., Sunday, July 21, 2019, while fighting hot spots in the fire. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun via AP)



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