

Wildfire hits Brasilia National Park amid drought

September 6 2022



Flames consume an area of the Brasilia National Park in the Brazilian capital September 5, 2022.

Firefighters raced Tuesday to contain a massive blaze devastating a national park in the Brazilian capital, which is suffering from a heat

wave and more than four months of drought.

The fire, which hit the park Monday, has burned through around 2,000 hectares (nearly 5,000 acres) of the 42,000 hectare reserve in Brasilia, according to the national parks service, ICMBio.

Forty firefighters from ICMBio and the Brasilia fire department managed to control one of the fire's two fronts Monday night.

The blaze is concentrated in an area around 30 kilometers (19 miles) from the presidential offices, the Planalto Palace.

"Severe conditions," including temperatures of more than 30 degrees Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) and critically low humidity of around 30 percent, have exacerbated the already flammable situation left by the drought, ICMBio said.

The Brazilian capital has not had rain in 122 days.

Officials said they did not yet know what caused the fire.

Brasilia National Park was established in 1961, the year after the ultra-modernist capital was inaugurated in Brazil's central-west—a region with a prolonged dry season that typically runs from May to September.

The Brasilia blaze comes as officials report an alarming surge in fires in the Brazilian Amazon.

Last month was the worst August in 12 years, with 33,116 fires detected in Brazil's share of the world's biggest rainforest, according to satellite monitoring by the national space agency, INPE.

President Jair Bolsonaro, who is up for reelection in October, has faced

international outcry over a surge of fires and destruction in the Amazon, whose billions of carbon-absorbing trees are a key buffer against global warming.

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