

Helicopter, drones bomb Colorado's 3,378-acre Little Mesa fire with igniting ping pong balls

August 16 2023, by Bruce Finley, The Denver Post



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A lightning-sparked fire southwest of Delta was burning on 3,378 acres Tuesday morning after firefighters deployed a helicopter and drones to

drop hundreds of ping-pong balls filled with glycol chemicals that ignite on impact to create backfires on mesas and clear unburned dead trees.

This Little Mesa [fire](#), discovered on July 31, has been burning in pinon, juniper, and sage forest about 15 miles southwest of Delta in the Dominguez Escalante National Conservation Area. The aerial ignition of backfires fits into a "confine and contain" strategy that federal Bureau of Land Management officials have adopted in trying to control the fire—one of multiple fires burning on more than 6,700 acres around western Colorado.

A bit of rain Monday helped control flames on the south side of the fire. Firefighters on Tuesday were focused on the north side area from Black Point to Dry Mesa.

"There's just a lot of dead and downed trees. They are trying to burn those out," BLM spokeswoman Deana Harms said. "They are working at the [natural barriers](#)."

The fire also was burning on Uncompaghre National Forest terrain. Smoke from the fire spread eastward Monday evening into the North Fork Valley and around Delta and Hotchkiss. Federal officials advised precautions for residents in the area with respiratory sensitivity to stay indoors and use air filters.

The ping pong balls dropped from a helicopter and drone aircraft, which ignite, kicking out smoke as they hit, create deliberate backfires across wide areas as part of efforts to deny fuel for fires.

"It is safer. You don't have to put as many [firefighters](#) into dangerous situations," BLM spokeswoman Niki Carpenter said. "We also use the [drones](#) for recond on the fire."

2023 MediaNews Group, Inc. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Helicopter, drones bomb Colorado's 3,378-acre Little Mesa fire with igniting ping pong balls (2023, August 16) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-08-helicopter-drones-colorado-acre-mesa.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.