

Forest wildfires continue to burn

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Smoke impacting Valley air quality

It is not that unusual for fires to be burning in the forest this time of the year, but having four burning at once and smoke impacting Valley air quality is unusual.

The four wildfires, Hidden, Meadow, Jacobson, and Slate, are burning above Springville on the Sequoia National Forest. They will continue to smolder and burn until wet weather arrives, said the Forest Service on Friday.

Smoke from the fires is visible from the Valley and on Friday was blowing north and then out over the Valley. The smoke contributes to already bad air and led the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to place a ban on fireplace burning.

Forest officials said despite cooler temperatures, the brief periods of higher humidity hasn't dampened the vegetation enough to extinguish the fires.

The lightning caused Hidden Fire, burning in the Golden Trout Wilderness and along the eastside of Mountain Home Demonstration State Forest, has grown to 404 acres. Firefighters from the Forest Service and CalFire are working to contain the western edge of the fire along a road, and the southern edge along a trail in the Silver Creek drainage. The fire is expected to continue spreading further into the Wilderness, up the North Fork of the Middle Fork Tule River drainage.

The lightning caused Meadow Fire, located east of the Trail of 100 Giants in the Western Divide Ranger District, is being managed to achieve resource benefits. This fire has reached an estimated 1,724 acres in a forest of mixed conifer impacted by the recent tree mortality. Interior pockets of dry vegetation continue to smolder and burn. Activity is expected to increase as humidity decreases over the weekend, crews may add fire to the ground to strengthen holding lines and direct the fire to where it would do the most benefit.

Visitors should be aware of fire traffic along the Western Divide Highway, M50, Last Chance, and Lloyd Meadow Road. Temporary road closures may be necessary to protect the firefighters and the public.

Meanwhile, the human caused Jacobson Fire continues to smolder in the Golden Trout Wilderness, keeping many backcountry trails closed to protect visitors. It has burned 1,750 acres and is 50 percent contained.

The lightning caused Slate Fire near Ponderosa has not spread, but smoke is visible coming from interior pockets of unburned fuel. It has consumed 2,160 acres and is 90 percent contained.

Firefighters continue to manage the Slate Fire for resource benefits, and additional firing to direct the wildfire into another section of the planning area, may take place if conditions allow.

Fire officials continue to work with the Air District and Forest Service air quality specialists to monitor particulate matter from smoke and share that information with the public, as well as advise them of precautions they can take to reduce their exposure.

There are also three small fires in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, none larger than 50 acres.