



MCFPA.ORG

Date: October 25, 2021

Contact: Kristin Mortenson, DNRC-SWLO Fire Prevention,
406-542-4321 or Kristin.Mortenson@mt.gov

FIRE SEASON IS NOT OVER--

Residents and Visitors Asked to Use Caution with Campfires and Burning

October 25, 2021 -- Missoula, Montana – While many of us are feeling the chill of winter approaching, wildland firefighters in Missoula County are still feeling the heat of fire season as they run from one end of the County to the other, working long hours to put out wildfires caused by human carelessness. Eight (8) human caused wildfires occurred in Missoula County over this past week, the result of abandoned campfires, illegal debris burning, and careless sparks. Missoula County Fire Protection Association fire managers want to remind residents and visitors that fire danger remains **Moderate** in the Missoula area—despite the chilly mornings and periods of rain or snow. The area is still under severe drought and the precipitation received so far has not been widespread...there are many areas throughout the County that remain extremely dry. Even if an area has received moisture, warming fires are often placed in dry cubby holes such as under the protective branches of a large pine surrounded by a thick bed of pine needles...a dangerous spot for a campfire to be! Especially if it is not extinguished adequately, which was the case on the Game Creek 2 Fire by Potomac.



PHOTO CREDIT: BEAU MACIAG, DNRC-MISSOULA UNIT

As reiterated by Ashleigh Burwick, Fire Management Officer for the DNRC Southwestern Land Office's Missoula Unit, "Even though the rain is bringing a much-needed reprieve from the current dry conditions, long term drought conditions remain in effect. Recreationists need to be cognizant of where they have a fire, especially if utilizing the canopy of a large tree. If utilizing a tree canopy or something similar, in order to get out of the weather, understand also that those weather impacts may not be affecting the dry fuels that are also sheltered from the canopy."

Fire season does not pack up and leave until snow or rain is widespread and continuous. The moisture received in our area is helpful but has not been enough to fully replenish our dry fuels at this time. The weather forecast does call for an extended period of moisture, but while we wait for consistent WIDESPREAD moisture to come, **please use caution**. Cool mornings and warming fires go together but remember that if your campfire is too hot to touch, then it is too hot to leave! Drown, stir, drown some more, then feel. One less spark is one less wildfire!

Missoula County has experienced 185 wildfires this year, with nearly 70% of those caused by humans. While abandoned campfires are a leading cause, illegal or careless debris burning is the top cause. Outdoor burning in Missoula County is by permit only, and the only burning that will be permitted currently is prescribed wildland and essential agriculture burning. Within Missoula City limits, parcels must be at least one acre or more in size to be eligible for an outdoor burn permit and recreational fires are banned year-round, with exceptions for barbecues. General Burning Season is closed until March 1, 2022. Visit www.MissoulaCounty.us/airquality or www.MCFPA.org for more information on outdoor burning seasons, permits, and current restrictions.

###