

Area fires down but not out, officials say

*By Cory Hatch, Jackson Hole, Wyo.
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Rain, snow and cold temperatures squelched the growth of several large fires in the Greater Yellowstone Area on Wednesday and Thursday, but officials say those fires are still active and could pose a danger to forest users.

The Gunsight Fire in the Gros Ventre mountains grew to 3,025 acres before half an inch of snow fell on it. Officials reopened Gunsight Road and Cottonwood Road in the area, but they said hunters need to use caution.

"The things that hunters really need to be cognizant of are dead standing trees, or snags," said Traci Weaver, public information officer for Teton Interagency Fire. "A lot of the time, the fires can burn out tree roots and cause holes that can be hazardous, as well."

In Grand Teton National Park, the Bearpaw Bay Fire also received moisture but didn't receive much snowfall.

"The only place we saw much [fire] activity was on the far northwest flank of the fire, which is going to be near the Bearpaw Bay area of Jackson Lake," said Weaver, adding that an engine is patrolling the fire and a crew is doing rehabilitation work on the Leigh Lake Trail. "We still have some closures in place at backcountry trails and campsites, and Spaulding Bay Road is still closed."

Weaver said the Lower Gros Ventre Prescribed Burn is "pretty quiet."

In Yellowstone National Park, the Arnica Fire grew to 10,700 acres before rain and snow reduced fire activity. On Thursday, park officials began escorting travelers on the Grand Loop Road between Lake Village and West Thumb.

The section of road was previously closed because of fire activity.

The road is open for travel three times a day: from 6 to 8 a.m., from noon to 1 p.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m. A maximum of eight vehicles at a time will be escorted in each direction. Vehicles must follow the flow of traffic; no stopping will be allowed.

For information on travel conditions in the park, call 307-344-2117.