



DAILY NEWS photo by Susan Lockhart

**FIRE WARNING:** The “Fire Danger” sign about a mile from Tuesday’s fire warns of the dry conditions in Wind River Canyon and elsewhere in the Big Horn Basin as spring and summer greenery turns to fall brown.

## Canyon fire sparks warning of dry conditions in basin

**By Susan Lockhart**

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THERMOPOLIS — A blaze Tuesday near Wind River Canyon is a reminder that summer’s wetter-than-average conditions have provided abundant fuel for fire.

“There has been a lot of moisture this year in the Big Horn Basin,” said L.J. Brown, Bureau of Land Management fire operations supervisor. “This has produced a large amount of grass and other fine fuels. As these fuels continue to dry, they become more susceptible to wildfire.

“Fires in these light fuels can move rapidly and be dangerous to firefighters, the public, and homes. We ask that the public be extra careful when working around these dried fuels. Pay attention to ignition sources (i.e. burn barrels, welding, weed burning and parked running vehicles) that are near dried grass and avoid these areas if at all possible.”

Sarah Beckwith, BLM public affairs specialist, said the fire south of Thermopolis on the rim of Wind River Canyon was sparked by lightning and was burning on 10-12 acres of private and Bureau of Indian Affairs land.

“It’s pretty close to BLM land, probably about 200 yards,” Beckwith explained. “It’s burning in a pocket of junipers right now. There’s grass on one side and on the other side is the canyon.

“The fire is in Section 33 of Hot Springs County, just north of the Hot Springs County line, so it’s in Hot Springs County just barely. It’s on the east side of the canyon, just east of Boysen Peak.”

Beckwith said 15 BLM firefighters (two BLM engines and one fuels crew), one engine from Hot Springs County, one inmate crew from the Riverton Honor Farm (16 to 20 firefighters), a Wyoming State helicopter from Casper and two engines from the BIA (six people) were actively fighting the fire.

“L.J. said the helicopter stayed in Thermopolis overnight so it is going to be working the fire again (Wednesday, dropping water),” Beckwith said.

“They’re expecting containment mid-morning (Wednesday) and they’ll probably call it controlled (Wednesday or Thursday).”